

# Arrowsmith Greenhouses

## *Nursery Notes*



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"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."

~Albert Camus

With our spectacular weather through July and August we are seeing a lot of signs of stress in our gardens. From the hanging baskets to the garden beds the common theme this summer has been trying to keep everything hydrated. With most of us having sandy fast draining soil this will continue to be an issue right into fall as most rain that falls will quickly drain away. For this reason we cannot stress enough how important it is to keep trees and especially broadleaf evergreens well watered. If they have not had a chance to re-hydrate adequately before we receive freezing temperatures they will suffer through the winter. Our bulbs will be arriving the first week of September and as always we will have a good selection of fall flowering plants available. We will be open until October 31 and then we will close for our usual winter break. We look forward to seeing you before then.

## In This Issue

Figs

Invasive Species

Plant Pick of the Month  
Oakleaf Hydrangea

Combating Powdery  
Mildew

To Do List



We are open 7 days a week 9-5



## Edible Figs *Ficus carica*

The edible fig is one of the oldest cultivated plants. They date back to almost 10,000 BC and may well be the first agricultural crop ever grown. In hot climates they produce 4 harvests per year. In our climate we can potentially get 2 harvests - one on the previous summer's growth (the breba crop) and the second on the current year's growth. This will only happen in our climate in a very mild winter and for the most part we will just harvest once per year on current growth in mid summer. Fresh figs are very different than the dried fruits that most of us are accustomed to. Fresh figs have soft skin with juicy sweet flesh.

There are many great varieties that are well suited to our climate if you provide the right situation for them. All varieties need sunny protected sites for the plants to grow to tree form. If they are planted in exposed sites they are quite often killed to the ground in winter and although they will almost always grow from the root they will not maintain the tree form. If this happens they will grow as a multi stemmed shrub form but will still produce fruit. Figs have deep, extensive roots systems which is why they will regenerate so easily after a cold winter but caution should be used and not planted above a septic field. Figs do not need supplemental fertilizer and will grow in moderately fertile soils.

**Brown Turkey Fig** - This is one of the hardiest figs to grow. The brown coppery coloured fruit is very sweet. This variety is best used for eating fresh.



Shrub Form of Brown Turkey Fig

Cont'd on Page 3



Desert King - Light green to yellow skin. This variety is a heavy producer with sweet fruit.



Italian Honey - This variety has greenish yellow skin with ivory white flesh. The fruit is sweet and will produce 2 crops per year in an average year.

Peters Honey - This fig is similar in appearance to Desert King but with a thinner skin. Very sweet when ripened on the tree.



Jordan - Jordan figs have black red skin with red juicy flesh. The skin starts to turn black just a few days before ripening.

Negronne - Small jet black fruits with dark red flesh. This is a good variety for containers.





## September - October Plant Profile

### Hydrangea Quercifolia

#### Oak Leaf Hydrangea



The Oakleaf hydrangea is a dramatic, white-blooming shrub with four seasons of interest. It blooms best in areas where summers are somewhat hot. A tremendous advantage of the Oakleaf is that it can

thrive in much dryer locations than other types of Hydrangeas and caution should be taken not to plant the Oakleaf in an area that does not drain well.

The Oakleaf gets its name from the shape of its beautiful large leaves. These leaves often turn to colours of brilliant red, orange, yellow and burgundy in the fall if planted in a sunny location with a little afternoon shade. The Oakleaf hydrangea can tolerate and even thrive in much sunnier areas than the mophead and lacecaps (macrophyllas).



The flowers of the Oak Leaf are similar to the Peegee Hydrangea. The real standout feature of this shrub is its beautiful fall colour.

## Combating Powdery Mildew

If you have ever had a favourite plant covered in powdery mildew you will know how annoying the problem can be. Powdery mildew are fungi that grow on many species of plants and most are specific to one species. So the mildew that affects your roses is not going to be the same fungus that affects your bee balm.



Mildew is most prevalent in humid conditions. Shady areas can also be a problem for mildew. With some plants no matter what you do you

will have mildew. Some plants will show more signs of stress than others when afflicted with mildew. If the plant you are growing has mildew but seems to thrive otherwise sometimes the best advice is to just ignore. On the other hand if your plant defoliates immediately then you may need to try to eradicate it. The best treatment to use is garden sulphur in a wettable form that you spray on the plant. This can also be done as a preventative, from early spring onwards. Another good eradication spray is a 5% solution of Baking Soda. Soda is effective but you may find it more effective if mixed with a bit of Insecticidal Soap to help it to adhere to the leaf better. All of these sprays should be done when the temperatures are below 20 c. When cleaning up in fall take care to remove as much of the infected leaf material as possible to cut down on over wintering spores. If you have annuals with mildew it is a good idea to not plant the same plant the following year.



## To Do List

### September

- Now is the time to prune Birches and Maples as they will not bleed at this time of year.
- September is the season for seed collecting. Vegetable and Annuals can be propagated by seed if they are not hybrid varieties.
- Give Hedges a final light trim in early September. If you do it early enough you will get a light flush of new growth to protect for the winter.
- If you want to increase your peonies now is the time to divide. Only doing this if necessary as peonies can live many, many years without being divided.
- Continue fertilizing annuals as they should last well into October.
- Maintain vigilance when it comes to watering as this is the critical time for plants heading into winter. If plants are dry heading into cold weather they can suffer damage.
- Towards the end of September bulbs can be planted if the temperatures are not too high. If we are getting temperatures in the 20's then it is best to wait until October.
- Plant fall and winter veggies.



### October

- As we start to get frosty mornings the annuals will begin dying off. As they do clean and mulch the annual beds.
- October is the prime bulb planting month. Prepare the beds with compost before planting.
- Dig, divide, and replant perennials to improve their vigour and to increase numbers.
- Apply lime and a fall fertilizer to the lawn.
- This is a great month to plant trees and shrubs as the plants will root in all winter and need less care and watering the following spring.
- As the leaves start to yellow on Dahlias, Begonias, Cannas and any other tender summer bulbs they should be dug up and stored for the winter.





## Invasive Species

We, as gardeners live to buy new plants. We can't wait to get that new plant home to our gardens to fill in that spot we just know will look perfect. While nurseries try to be responsible and not sell any plants that will become invasive in our communities, sometimes plants are sold for one purpose and that might not always be communicated. For instance English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) is considered an invasive species and should not be planted directly in the ground but it still makes a great container plant where it will not be a problem as long as it is not allowed to escape the container. We all know the terrible problem Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is here on the island and you would never find a retailer selling it, however there are close cousins to this plant that do make good garden plants in our area and will not self seed and take over as the scourge of Scotch Broom does. There are varieties of *Lamium* that are also very destructive if they escape the hanging baskets they were intended for. Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a terrible problem for wetlands and should never be planted in any garden situation.



In some instances the species plant may be a problem but hybrids are not. Take for instance the Norway Maple. The *Acer platanoides* is listed as invasive for much of Canada however the hybrids that are sold in nurseries such as *Acer platanoides* "Crimson King" and "Crimson Sentry" are not invasive.

Using common names for plants can sometimes lead to confusion as to what plants should be planted and which shouldn't. For instance there are many plants that are referred to as loosestrife, some are invasive, some just aggressive and others are not a problem at all in the garden. For this reason when purchasing plants you should try and refer to the botanical name when in doubt as to whether a plant is suitable or not.

The best advise is to educate yourself when purchasing plants and when in doubt make sure you have a conversation with the sales staff as to your plans for using the plant. They will be able to tell you the best uses for that plant and in what situation it should be planted.