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In the Garden

On gardening with Bill Cary

Archive for April 18th, 2008

New Heuchera From Terra Nova Nurseries

April
18

My heucheras are slowly coming back to life after what seems to be a very late spring. I like these easy-care perennials because they hold onto their attractive ruffled foliage well into December — even later in some winters.

Year after year, Terra Nova Nurseries comes out with bigger and brighter heucheras for home gardeners. This spring, gardeners are welcoming a new variety called 'Southern Comfort' into their perennial beds. It offers huge cinnamon-peach leaves and a lush growing habit.



Over the course of the seasons, the foliage color changes from cinnamon peach to burnished copper to amber. Creamy white flowers arrive in late summer.

This new variety from Terra Nova, which is based in Canby, Ore., has been bred to do well in humid weather. It's hardy to USDA Zone 4.

Known more commonly as coral bells or alum root, heucheras have been best friends with shade gardeners for many years. Within a year or two, 'Southern Comfort' will form a dense clump that measures 24 inches wide and 14 inches tall.

Heucheras are not particularly fussy about garden soil, but they do need water in periods of drought. They are supposed to be somewhat deer resistant, but I wish someone would tell that to the deer that took most of mine right down to the ground last month.

Look for 'Southern Comfort' in the better nurseries and garden centers (or online, of course).

Posted by [Bill Cary](#) on Friday, April 18th, 2008 at 3:38 pm | [■](#) [📄](#)

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Aerating Your Lawn

April
18

The latest Q&A with our stable of master gardeners.

Q: The grass is green and growing. It's time to work on the lawn. Someone told me that aerating the lawn is very important and is the solution to compaction. Tell me more, please.

A: Weeds and other pests thrive in lawns where there is excessive soil compaction or buildup of thatch.




Aerators, either foot or gas powered, remove plugs of soil and improve drainage and air movement. Under these conditions, thatch is decomposed more easily by soil arthropods and microbes. Do this once or twice a year.

A stressed lawn is usually suffering from lack of water or fertilizer, excessive compaction and improper mowing.

Removing plugs of soil will enable the water to penetrate easily to the root zone, and oxygen used by plants during respiration will be able to escape from the soil.

Do this when the grass is growing most vigorously, and remove plugs one-fourth to one-half inch apart. Break up the cores and top off with organic dressing of half sand and half compost or manure to one quarter-inch deep.

— Linda Treitel, Larchmont, master gardener with Cornell Cooperative Extension, Westchester

Posted by [Bill Cary](#) on Friday, April 18th, 2008 at 7:15 am |   
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Garden Calendar

April
18

Here's our latest calendar for gardening-related events in our area. If you can spare time out of your own garden, there are lots of classes, flower shows and plant sales this time of year.

April 19

Tappan: Garden Walk. Rain date: April 26. Free. 11 a.m. Tappan Library, 93 Main St. 845-359-3877.

April 23

Bronx: Garden Walk. Speaker: Scott Canning. Topic: Climate change and planting. Free. 11 a.m. Wave Hill, 675 W. 252 St. 718-549-3200.

April 24

Spring Valley: Perennials: Planning for a Sequence of Bloom. Speaker: Tolly Beck. Free. 7:30 p.m. Finkelstein Memorial Library, 24 Chestnut St. 845-352-5700.

April 25

Chestnut Ridge: Organic Beekeeping Workshop. \$185. 4:30-9 p.m. Pfeiffer Center, 260 Hungry Hollow Road. 845-352-5020.




April 26

Bronx: Garden Workshop. Speaker: Laurel Rimmer. Topic: Alpine troughs. Registration. \$55. 1 p.m. Wave Hill, 675 W. 252 St. 718-549-3200.

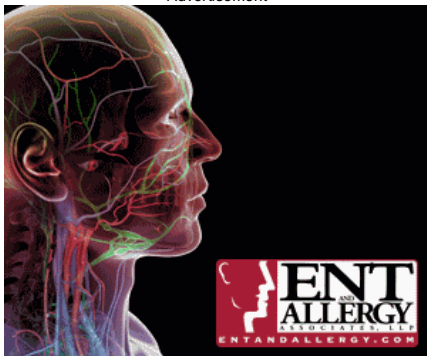
Chestnut Ridge: Organic Beekeeping Workshop. \$185. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Pfeiffer Center, 260 Hungry Hollow Road. 845-352-5020.

May 1

Spring Valley: Gardening in the Shade Workshop. Speaker: Tolly Beck, horticulturist and instructor at the New York Botanical Garden. Free. 7:30 p.m. Finkelstein Memorial Library, 24 Chestnut St. 845-352-5700. [Read more of this entry](#) »

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What to Do This Week in the Garden

April
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Just in time for your weekend chore list, here's the latest Do It Now column from Susan Henry.

Perennials

Weed, weed, weed. It is important to eliminate pests like wild mustard before they go to flower and spread their seeds. Cut back clematis vines. Make sure their roots are shaded and they have a trellis or some other form of support.

Looking for your columbine? They may have perished but spread their seeds elsewhere in the garden. Aquilegias are short lived but prolific.

Here's columbine in bloom on Wildflower Island in Teatown Reservation, by Peter Carr.



Flowers

If the weather is mild, hardy annual seedlings may be moved to a cold frame to harden off. Close the cover on cold nights — and open it on warm days.

Vegetables

Continue planting onions, carrots, beets, broccoli and lettuce in the garden. Plant potatoes as soon as the soil is warmed and somewhat dried out. Give new seedlings plenty of light. Fertilize with a weak solution. Set out strawberry plants and mulch.

Trees and shrubs

Fertilize and lime fruit trees; finish pruning before bud break. Prune late-blooming hydrangeas. Blue and pink hydrangeas are dependent on the pH of the soil. Alkaline soil produces pink flowers; acidic soil produces blue flowers. White hydrangeas are not affected by soil pH. The new Endless Summer hydrangeas bloom on new and old wood, but it is still a good idea to prune lightly in the spring.

Lawns

Continue cleanup and seeding. The best way to get rid of dandelions is hand digging — a few at a time. It's good exercise!

Houseplants


Repot oversized plants. Discard any that have become tired or will not survive the summer.

General

Biodynamic sowing is a complex system that takes into consideration the position of the moon, sun and con.

— Susan Henry

Posted by [Bill Cary](#) on Friday, April 18th, 2008 at 7:01 am |  

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Features writer Bill Cary writes about gardening in the Hudson Valley.

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 - Karen Rockwell: We have had a small greenhouse for years for growing tomatoes and cucumbers and onions, but this...
 - Elaine Mays: I am just wondering how people are going to be growing their own food when they are working 2 and 3 jobs...
- **A Visit to Rainbeau Ridge (1)**
 - Liz Johnson: I heart goats.
- **Plants for a Children's Vegetable Garden (1)**
 - Cathy: I once heard in planting a veg. garden, you plant certain plants next to each other for the pest reasoning....
- **Keeping Deer Out of the Lilies (1)**
 - Allyn Paul: Great tips, thanks! Here in Indiana, I use Milorganite to keep the deer off my Stellas and also away from...
- **Free Program on Bluebirds (1)**
 - Erowlyoblilia: It is difficult to soar with the eagles when you work with turkeys. -----...
- **Raised Beds for a Vegetable Garden (1)**
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- **John Mickel on His Favorite Ferns (1)**
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- **Garden Antiques at NY Botanical Garden (3)**
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- **Science Demos at Institute of Ecosystem Studies (1)**
 - Duncan Brine/ Garden Large: Bill-As I've written, your site is doing a great service for the area. Curious,...

About the author



Bill Cary grew up in Louisville, Ky. His gardening was limited to growing parsley and impatiens on the windowsill of Manhattan walkups until the mid-1990s when he bought a rundown old chicken farm on 8 acres in the Hudson Valley. Now he spends his weekends chasing deer, hacking away at invasive shrubs and vines and wondering why he doesn't have more meadow and less lawn.

www.RollnGrow.com

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- A Couple of Flower Shows
- Deer-Resistant Planting Tips
- Home and Garden Tour in Upper Nyack
- Keeping Deer Out of the Lilies
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- What to Do This Week in the Garden
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