

S W A N T O N , V E R M O N T

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Welcome to Hamlen's
Helping Hand!

2nd Newsletter of 2009

DESIGN YOUR OWN LANDSCAPING ON COMPUTER

Wondering how to landscape your home? Have the expertise of a landscape designer help you turn your dream design into a workable plan. This 30 minute session is only \$25.

When: 10:00AM Saturday, April 18th
Where: Hamlen's Garden Center.

Hamlen's Helping Hand



Hamlen's Garden Center
157 St. Albans Road
Swanton, Vermont

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If you haven't taken a drive over to Hamlen's yet, don't delay another day! We're already "springing it up" with truckloads of flowers, wonderful items for your patios and porches, nectar feeders to attract those amazing little humming birds, seed packets galore to get your vegetable gardens growing, and a great variety of yard and garden treasures to purchase.



Good Soil Makes All The Difference!



So, spring is here and you are ready to make a creation of beauty in your garden. You have all the tools you need; you know what you want to plant; and you have a good idea where you want to place each one of your plants . . . but, wait! **What about the soil in your garden?** Yes, of course, you have dirt . . . but, we're talking soil. And, dirt and soil are definitely not equal.

Did you know that good soil is made up of 50%

solid material, 25% water, and 25% air? By solid material, we mean mineral bits—sand, silt, clay, and organic material (compost, manure, peat moss, etc.). If you are working with sandy soil, organic matter acts like a sponge to hold water and nutrients around the roots. If you are working with clay soil, it enables water, nutrients, and air to travel more easily through the root system.

So, in order for you to enjoy the fruits of your garden labor — the beautiful green leaves, delightful blossoms, wonderful smells, gorgeous colors—you will need to have happy plants that have happy roots surrounded by nutritious soil.

And nutritious soil means creating a thriving ecosystem of busy worms and nematodes and the tiny organisms of fungi and bacteria that work constantly to allow plant roots to breathe and take in water. This also means keeping track of the acidity of your garden soil.

The combination of acid rain, fertilizers, and too much iron introduced into soil can create a ground environment that is too acidic for plants to successfully grow. If you are concerned about the pH content of your garden soil, visit your local garden center and purchase a pH kit. Then from the test results, you'll know exactly what you need to do to create a needed balance.

Also, keep in mind that just because you've bedded your plants in good soil, doesn't mean they can go without food. An encouraging word now and then a little fertilizer throughout their growing season will keep them "smiling" day in and day out! Check out the packages of fertilizers at your garden center and you'll find that nitrogen (N) is essential for stem and leaf growth—dark green foliage. Potassium (K) is a must for good plant metabolism and food manufacturing. Phosphorus (P) is vital for flower production, fruit development, and root growth.

According to research, plants cannot recognize whether you've applied organic or inorganic fertilizer to your garden; but the soil can. Inorganic fertilizer is less expensive, slow acting—remains in the soil longer for the plants' intake—but can burn plants if not applied properly. Organic fertilizer, on the other hand—made from vegetable and animal byproducts like blood meal, fish emulsions, animal manures, and sewage sludge—usually provides much lower amounts of nutrients per pound and is bulkier and more expensive.

So go and get started with your garden! **Take the dirt you have and turn it into the soil you need.**

- Test your dirt so you'll find out what you need to add.
- Then mix the dirt with organic material. Compost is great to start with. You can also use aged manure, chopped leaves, peat, and saw dust to transform your dirt into the soil mixture just right for your plants. Soil still too acidic, just add a little limestone.
- **And watch your garden grow!**

"A love of life begins in the garden . . . A life of love grows in the heart"

**"A love of life begins in the garden
. . . A life of love grows in the heart"**
by Malcolm Peckham



There is peace within a garden, a peace that's deep and calm,
That when the heart is troubled it's like a soothing balm.

Life's cycle in the garden, resembles that of man.
The seed is sown and given care, the plant grows straight and strong.
With rain and sun and tender care. The fruit from buds do soon appear,
The bounty safely stored, the miracle of nature awaits the coming years.

There's glory in the garden at every time of year,
Each season has its gifts, to fill the heart with cheer.

So ever tend your garden site, its beauty to increase,
For in it you'll find solace and in it you'll find peace.

*Malcolm Peckham is a cousin of Dave Hamlen and is a retired professor from
Cornell University.*

Hamming It Up

A bird in the hand is worth two in the workplace . . .

A man entered a pet shop, wanting to buy a parrot.
The shop owner pointed out three identical parrots on a perch and said,
"The parrot to the left costs \$500."
"Why does that parrot cost so much?" the man wondered.
The owner replied, "Well, it knows how to use a computer."
The man asked about the next parrot on the perch.
"That one costs \$1,000 because it can do everything the other parrot can do, plus it
knows how to use the UNIX operating system."
Naturally, the startled customer asked about the third parrot.
"That one costs \$2,000."
"And what does that one do?" the man asked.
The owner replied, "To be honest, I've never seen him do a thing, but the other
two call him Boss!"

(July 2008 issue of GCP&S)

Hamlines

One of the most delightful things about a garden is the anticipation it provides.

—**W.E. John, The Passing Show**

Half the interest of a garden is the constant exercise of the imagination.

—**Mrs. C.W. Earle, Pot-Pourri from a Surrey Garden 1897**

Before everything else, getting ready is the secret of success.

—**Henry Ford, 1863 -1947**

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Hamlen's Garden Center

Route 7, 157 St. Albans Road, Swanton, Vermont 05488
(802) 868-4255 - (888) 426-5367 - hamlens@sover.net

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