



## **Fresh from the Garden January 2008**

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### **Flower Farmers' Little Secrets!**

Going into my 11th season as a commercial flower farmer I think it's time to share some of the little secrets in this farming community I have become a part of. One thing for sure, becoming a farmer is also about a lifestyle, not just a career choice. This is good in most ways and interesting in others.

The month of January is what brought this subject to mind. This is the month my good farming buddies often migrate to Mexico for a month of R & R. They lie in the sun reading seed catalogs and placing seed orders. I haven't had the pleasure of indulging in this behavior yet, but hear that it is what all good farmers should do to recover from a grueling season.

Which brings me to a little problem many flower farmers have but never talk about---our seed-buying problem. It is easy to understand how enjoying a tropical vista in Mexico's 85 degree in January can lead to ordering way more seeds than you can ever plant. However, for those of us at home deeply submerged in winter weather, you would think there would be more restraint. But year after year we all

do it! Our eyes are far bigger than our backs are strong and space is available!

To add to the problem, we cannot bring ourselves to throw out the old seed from years gone by. So this means that most of us have a drawer stuffed with seeds that we cannot bear to part with. These seeds will never know the touch of soil or see the light of day because good growers know- you always start with fresh seed!

My new year's resolution is to part with all old seed and to resist overindulging in this year's seed order! Fat chance of this working anymore than the diet, but what's important is that I confessed, right?

I will be on the road in the coming days at flower and garden shows and giving programs for both public and private groups. I look forward to meeting you and hearing your seed stash stories because I know farmers are not alone in this!

Gardening is good for the mind and body,

Lisa Z

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## **"In the Garden" Programs**

Start next week!!

Our Events Calendar has been updated and, boy is it full! I have added some new topics and hope that you will join us. Our first one is just around the corner and is one that I haven't offered before. Remember that the programs are free, but require registration. Seating is limited and programs fill quickly, so register early.

If you haven't attended one of our programs, let me tell you that we have lots of fun! If weather permits, we usually take a trip to the garden. If not, there is enough to keep us busy in my workshop area. Because I house the stock for our online garden store in the same building, folks are welcome to pick up supplies while they are here for programs. We have developed a family of folks that attend these programs, and I am looking forward to seeing you all again very soon!

In the Garden "**Gardening 101**" **Thursday, February 7, 2008, 6:30 in Newport News, VA.** Lisa will share her trials and blunders that have paved the way to an easier and greener way to garden. This program will touch on the hot topics of pruning, invasive plants, irrigation, mulching, seeds versus plants in the garden, organics and more. "In the Garden" programs are free but require registration. [Click here](#) to register.

To view the entire Events Calendar [click here](#).

## **Lisa Ziegler Public Lectures**

### **Mid-Atlantic Home & Flower Show**

February 17, 2008, Virginia Beach Convention Center.

Lisa will be a guest speaker:

Sunday 2:30 "Establishing a Cutting Garden"

(In the Horticultural Classroom)

Sunday 4:30 "Seed Starting for Beginners"

(On the Garden Stage).

For more information: [click here](#).

### **Maymont Flower and Garden Show**

February 21- 24, 2008, Greater Richmond Convention Center, Richmond, VA.

TGW will be a retail vendor and Lisa will be a guest speaker:

Thursday 2:00 "Growing Cut Flowers like the Pros"

Sunday 1:30 "Getting Started from Seed: A Simple Success!"

Both programs will be held on the show floor "Bouquet of the Day" stage.

For more information: [click here](#)

TGW has Advance Tickets on Sale until Feb 15

Email us or 757-877-7159

Advance Tickets \$8 Box Office Tickets \$10

## Flowers are Dancing in the Garden

Our working cutting garden, although covered in a blanket of snow right now, is hard at work getting ready for spring. During those days of warmth a couple weeks ago, I took the opportunity to spring myself from the office and went to the garden to work. I was greeted by just oodles of growing seeds and plants planted in the fall.

Some of the other guests that I found under the floating row cover were a group of ground beetles sunning themselves on top of the black irrigation tape. Those little guys were lined up like teenage girls next to a pool, under the floating row cover safe from predators, toasty from the warm sun, and I may have heard snoring. Lots of earthworms were also poking their heads up on the surface taking advantage of the warmth. This is another one of those why-I-love-my-job things; all of my co-workers are pretty likeable, don't have much to say, and are even entertaining at times.

I knew that I had fairly good stand of plants from my fall planting, but I was surprised how much some of them had grown with just a little bit of warm weather. The snapdragons, sweet peas and larkspur are really growing! It was such a pleasure to weed and mulch where needed. I even planted a few more seeds. The snapdragons and sweet peas have multiple shoots coming up around the main stem and all this makes me so excited! This is why I love fall gardening. You get to enjoy the fruits of your labors far longer than when plants are planted in spring and summer. If I don't go to that garden to gaze once a day, I go twice a day to check it out.

My volunteer garden was especially fun to root around in for surprises. Volunteer means they completely plant themselves, some know it as reseeding. I no longer plant seed of Bupleurum or Nigella in the working cutting garden. I can dig plenty of plants from this volunteer bed to transplant into the working beds. Other great winter hardy volunteers: rudbeckia, larkspur, sweet peas, bachelor buttons, monarda, sage, yarrow, poppies, and feverfew.

I have posted on my blog photos of many of the seedlings in my garden to help you ID yours- so check them out under "Seed Starting".

[Click here](#) to go to Lisa's blog.

It might be winter but there is still plenty to keep us busy!

## **Fresh Flowers for Sale** (Be here before you know it!!)

A Great Valentine's Day Gift....Flowers all Summer Long!!

How would you like to have a fresh bouquet of naturally grown beautiful local cut flowers each week? You can and we have made it even easier!

3 ways to purchase our flowers:

- Friday Garden Share You pick up: [Buy a Share](#)
- Monday Subscriptions We drop off: [Buy a Subscription](#)
- Yorktown Market Days at the River: To view schedule [click here](#).

**About our flowers:** This will be our 9th season of offering our "first dibs" flowers to our loyal customers. We grow a variety of proven "cut" flowers, some available for several weeks or months and others only a week or two. Our flowers have a long vase life and you will find varieties not readily available anywhere else. Customer satisfaction is fully guaranteed. Our season normally starts in May and ends in September.

**What is a Garden Share?** Garden Share members pick up their share of flowers from the garden on any and every Friday morning during the season in the Denhigh section of Newport News. Flowers are harvested, conditioned, ready and waiting for you on pick-up day. Garden pick-up of flowers is only available to Garden Share members. Garden Shares are \$100 each.

**What is the Subscription?** We offer Monday drop-off service of mixed bunches of our fresh-cut flowers. Drop-off is available to the following zip codes: 23608, 23602, 23606, plus Oyster Point Park of Newport News, and the Riverside Hospital Complex. Ten-week drop-off into a bucket or vase at your business or home: \$225. Limited number available.

## **Group Programs**

If your group would like to learn more about growing cut flowers, seed-starting or gardening in general, [click here](#) for more

information.

Lisa's most popular programs:

- The Easy-Keeper Summer Cutting Garden
- Fall Planting is for Lazy Gardeners Like Me!
- Getting Started from Seed and More!
- All for the Love of Flowers!

**Contact us** today to schedule your group!

## **Winter Garden Chores:**

- Get your pruners, pocket saws and loppers out. This is the month to cut out the dead wood, limbs that are rubbing and to shape up those that are out of control. Not sure about what to do? There are many clinics offered by Master Gardeners in the various localities.
- Got Vole trouble? Now is not the time to give up. January through April is the best time in my experience to get them to nibble on the bait and their entrance holes are most visible now. Try mousetraps with peanut butter and apples right outside of the holes, covered with a pot turned upside down to keep untargeted animals out.
- Collect bags of leaves to use in your garden as mulch later in the season. I always wish I had more.
- Now is a great time to plan your garden. I don't always stick to my plan but sometimes it comes in really handy. Making a list of what it is going to take to accomplish the task completely is a major one for me, so I have all the supplies and tools available at the time of the job.
- It is certainly easier to think a garden idea through in your living room chair with a cup of coffee and a pad of paper, than standing in a garden center facing a huge sea of plant choices.
- Go through your garden tool chest. Rid yourself of those things you haven't used in a year or more.
- Clean and sharpen your tools. I spray WD-40 on rusty spots and use steel wool if needed. My husband has the job of sharpening, but I seldom request my tools be sharpened. My hoes, spades and trowels do just fine with out a sharp edge to cut me. I have enough troubles in the kitchen with knives.
- Use compost for your fall mulching. It will suppress weeds and feed your soil.
- Use your garden fork to open the soil around the drip line and beyond of your shrubs and then mulch with compost. Your shrubs will be thanking you all next season.
- Compost all healthy refuse from your garden.

- Vegetable and working cutting gardens will benefit after fall clearing with adding compost and mixing it in. This will have you ready come spring.
- Top off all bare ground with a layer of compost as a mulch to prevent winter weeds and soil erosion.
- There is never a need to send leaves to the landfill. They are a valuable resource for the garden. Broken-down leaves turn into the black gold known to gardeners as "leaf mold." An easy way to process leaves is to mulch the garden pathways with leaves in the fall/winter and then next fall/winter rake the pathways into the beds and repeat all over again. I won't go on and on here about leaves, but they are priceless in our opinion!
- There is a growing problem out in my garden right now and I usually don't even notice it until it is to late.....spring weeds. Chickweed is the main offender here, when spring comes it seems to come from nowhere. Weeds are out there right now, looking small and innocent and ripe for hoeing!! If I would just take a couple hours on one of these warmer days, use the Garden Hoe and run it along under the mulch and wipe them out, spring would be less work and more fun!
- Seed-starting season is almost upon us and it is always so exciting to get started. A note about when to start your seeds: young transplants out-perform large overgrown transplants over their lifetime. Younger, healthier, non-root bound plants don't suffer from transplant shock and will hit the ground running. Soil-blocked transplants go to the garden quicker than other methods; keep this in mind when making your plan. Check out our Transplant Guide on our Learning Center for guidance as to when to start your seeds.
- Our Sweet Pea Flower vines that we planted in the fall are growing like mad. If you have Sweet Peas going, now is the time to start thinking about trellising them for the best show and for good cuts. They will be cascading all over the ground soon, which is fine if that is what you want! We have several trellising options available.
- Get your body ready for the gardening season! Start stretching and walking now to prevent shovel back and so you can get up off the ground!

Please tell a friend about The Gardener's Workshop!

Hope to see you "In the Garden"!