



## Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening, Inc.

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Happy Spring!

With the equinox on Sunday, March 20, we welcome the First Day of Spring. I've capitalized it because we certainly deserve a real holiday from all the ice and snow that came this winter. At this point the days and nights are finally 12 hours each in length. The longer days ahead will bring warmth, fresh greenery and color to our landscapes.

The first flower to bloom in my garden is always the Snowdrop, *Galanthus elwesii*. These diminutive bulbs slowly increase over the years, and we generally plant them in small clumps in the fall. I like to site them by a walkway, foundation or raised bed where you will really notice them this month.



Snowdrop

### Quick Links

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## Congratulations Brianna!

Brianna Asbury is a familiar face to many, especially those in Concord and points east. Brianna is entering her fourth season with Pumpkin Brook Organic Gardening and this year will be taking on a new role as Project Manager. I am going to utilize Brianna for plant buying, scheduling and client follow up. She will continue to run a crew in our "eastern district" and will also be assisting with writing articles for this newsletter and developing new markets for our services.



Brianna holds a B.A. in Sustainable Community Development from Prescott College. She sees landscaping as an opportunity to restore ecological balance, and is passionate about native plants and habitat restoration. Her background includes working as a manager and fundraiser for the Unity Tower Community Garden in Boston and working as a farm manager for Unity For Free. She is a NOFA Accredited Organic Land Care Professional, a Massachusetts Certified Horticulturist, and a Certified Permaculture Designer. In her spare time, Brianna enjoys surfing the chilly waters of southern Maine and growing vegetables in her community garden.

Please wish her well and feel free to contact her at [brianna@seedlingspecialist.com](mailto:brianna@seedlingspecialist.com).

## DEADLINE EXTENDED TO APRIL 1ST

for Services Survey,  
Plant Health Care  
Contract &  
Seedling Orders!

Please return your Services Survey, Plant Health Care Contract, and/or [seedling order](#) now if you haven't already. For duplicate copies of these materials, please phone Doris in our office, 978-597-3005, or send a quick [e-mail](#)

## Plant Pick - Witch Hazel

**Hamamelis x mollis, Hamamelis japonica and Hamamelis vernalis**

The Chinese and Japanese witch hazels are the early spring bloomers, and often show color in late winter. There is a native spring bloomer from the Ozark Mountains called *Hamamelis vernalis*. Many varieties are fragrant, and all are very long blooming. The sight of a witch hazel in bloom truly heralds spring for me. By

lucky accident I discovered that planting a drift of blue Iris cristata 'Harmony' beneath yellow Hamamelis 'Arnold Promise' makes a lovely spring combination!

Last March I attended a lecture on this fascinating plant given by my trusted colleague at Broken Arrow Nursery, Adam Wheeler. He is the plant propagator there and has been my frequent advisor these past few years when I am plant shopping for all of you! Here are a few notes from Adam:

These great plants offer three seasons of interest: early spring color, large leaves for summer shade and striking fall color. They are often well-sited as a foundation plant at the corner of a border as space allows. You want to be able to see bloom from the house, drive or a walkway. The best flower color will come in full sun situations with rich soil and even moisture. Another good siting choice is in front of a bank of needed evergreens. Pruning is minimal if properly sited. If size needs control, in early spring either remove entire branches back to the main trunk or prune off vegetative growth to two buds above their origin.



Hamamelis

## So Just What Is Compost Tea, Anyway?

[Carmine](#) would love to talk to you about compost tea. Compost tea is an actively aerated liquid, an extract of compost and microbial foods.

What does it do? A properly brewed compost tea will improve the microbial life in the soil of your garden.

What does healthy microbial life in the soil do for my plants?

- Improves nutrient cycling and retention
- Builds soil structure
- Provides better water retention
- Promotes overall plant health by maintaining proper root and shoot growth and vigor



Carmine preparing the compost tea.



Checking on microorganisms

We take great care to brew the best compost tea possible for you, high in microorganisms that will populate your garden and give you the best results over time. A typical application schedule is spread between the months of April/May, June-August, and September/October. Here's Carmine at work in the preparation stages, behind the scenes at our workshop in West Townsend.

It's not too late to sign up for a compost tea program in 2011! For more information, contact [Carmine](#) or [Priscilla](#).

## Pest to Watch Out For...Eastern Tent Caterpillar

Look for silken webs in the crotches of plants in the Rose family such as Apple, Crabapple, and Cotoneaster. Lilacs may also be susceptible. The webs can be hand removed and the twigs sprayed with Insecticidal Soap to inhibit the growth of the ravenous caterpillars who feast on tender new leaves.



Eastern Tent Caterpillar



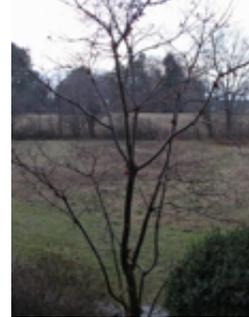
Tent Caterpillar Web

With the start of spring, it's a good idea to keep a pest

and disease log to share with us. Make a quick note of the date and any damage you notice and pass on the info. Timing is everything in the world of organics, and this will help us help YOU prevent plant damage in the future. Naturally, we will be scouting for pests and diseases as we work in each garden, but sometimes an extra pair of eyes right on the scene is very valuable.

## March Is the Time For:

- Shearing ornamental grasses and winter interest perennials to the ground
- Removing boughs, salt marsh hay, and pine needles gradually from the plants they covered all winter to avoid sudden dips in temperature and the resulting "burn" to tender foliage
- Checking shrubs and trees for winter damage, pruning out broken branches and finishing dormant season pruning
- Cleaning up sand, salt and winter debris from walkways, lawns and driveways
- Applying gypsum to counteract salt damage to beds or lawns
- Shaping lavender, sage and other woody herbs to remove tattered foliage and provide good structure for new growth to begin
- Pruning Caryopteris, Buddleia, Hydrangea arborescens, Callicarpa, Spiraea with a hard cutback
- Pruning fruit trees, blueberries, raspberries and grape vines
- Making notes about plants to divide, transplant or add in April



Time to Prune the Trees

## Pre-Season Update

As the snow melts, we'll be starting our dormant season pruning and horticultural oil applications. This work was delayed due to inclement weather in February and early March.

We've also posted a list of perennials and a few shrubs available from our own PBOG Nursery on our website. Click [here](#) for the list. Please let us know if something catches your eye!



One of the many perennials available from our nursery.

Here at Pumpkin Brook we are putting the finishing touches on our preparations for the upcoming season. We all look forward to seeing you and getting back in the garden real soon.

Sincerely,  
Priscilla



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