



# *Spruce Cottage Farm's*

## *Periodic Newsletter*

*April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

Greetings Gardeners,

The nursery is full of little green seedlings and they are really enjoying this mild spring! Here's hoping this weather is a prelude of the summer to come, with the perfect amount of sunshine and precipitation.

I have been busy in the nursery, nurturing seedlings and planning the nursery season ahead. I'm delighted to announce the nursery will open on Friday May 6 and be open every weekend until the end of June. At the end of last season, I built a new outdoor display area, with a wattle wind-break as the feature. What is wattle, you ask? Wattle is simply a collection of stakes, interwoven with pliant branches. According to Wikipedia, wattle building has been around since Neolithic times! I can see why, as it is a cheap, effective and easy method for building a fence. In warmer climates than ours, wattle is a construction technique as well. Nothing like the wind in the Alsek Valley to test a wind-break and I'm happy to report the wattle fence works exactly as it should!

As promised, here a bit of information about organic fertilizers and how to use them. While organic gardeners first and foremost are feeding their soil in order to feed their plants, sometimes we need an extra boost for our gardens and containers. This is where organic fertilizers come in. These fertilizers are naturally sourced (as opposed to synthetically manufactured) which enables the soil's microbes to break them down (chemical fertilizers harm microbial life), thereby releasing the desired nutrient to the plants. Even when fertilizing, organic gardeners are still feeding the soil!

Commercial organic fertilizers come in basically two forms: granular and water-soluble. Granular fertilizers are a blend of different meals (finely ground matter), rock phosphate, greensand and dolomite lime to create a balanced Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium (NPK) ratio. These fertilizers are a once or twice per season application - they are slow-release fertilizers. I usually apply them when planting; mixing 1-2 tbsp of fertilizer into the soil under the plant I'm planting. Granular fertilizers can also be broadcast over the area to be planted and incorporated into the soil before planting or top-dressed (placed on top of the soil and lightly mixed in) next to existing plantings. Water-soluble organic fertilizers are a liquid (fish emulsion) or powder concentrate (kelp) that is diluted in water and then applied by watering the dilution onto your plantings. Below is a list of some components found in granular organic fertilizers and the nutrients they provide.

Seed (soy, cotton) meals - Nitrogen  
Dolomite lime - Calcium, Magnesium  
Blood meal - Nitrogen  
Fish meal - Nitrogen  
Bone meal - Phosphorus  
Kelp meal - Potassium, micronutrients  
Rock phosphate - Phosphorus  
Guano - Nitrogen  
Greensand - Potassium  
Alfalfa meal - Nitrogen

Using these components, one can make their own granular organic fertilizers, customizing the NPK ratio. A few things found around the house can be used in the fertilizer blend too: eggshells (Calcium) and Epsom salts (Magnesium).

Compost, manure or kelp teas are a wonderful way to give your plants, containers and soil a microbial boost. To make a fertilizer tea, fill a burlap bag with your organic matter of choice (compost, horse or chicken manure, seaweed) and place the bag in a garbage can. Fill the can with water and snap the lid on. Let it steep for a couple of weeks, stirring every couple of days. Once steeped, remove the bag and compost the contents. Water the tea onto all of your plantings (containers, raised beds or ground) once a week. It will be smelly, so be prepared!

Happy Spring everyone and I hope to see you all at the nursery! Bring your gardening questions and come out for a visit.

In growing harmony,

Jolene Billwiller

~ Gardening Maven ~



[jolene@sprucecottagefarm.com](mailto:jolene@sprucecottagefarm.com)

[www.sprucecottagefarm.com](http://www.sprucecottagefarm.com)

1 (867) 335-9769

P.O. Box 5498  
Haines Junction, YT  
Y0B 1L0