



# GROWING GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH EASTERN ALBERTA



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About our organization

CFCA's Growing Gardeners Newsletter aims to support gardeners of all experience levels in Medicine Hat and area. To sign up for our mailing list, email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com).

# NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

## DOTTED BLAZING STAR

*Liatris punctata*

Dotted blazing star is one of the most stunning native wildflowers on the prairies. It can tolerate drought thanks to its long taproot. It also makes a lovely addition to container gardens.

**Type:** Herbaceous perennial

**Family:** Aster

**Height:** 20-60 cm

**Flower:** Purple

**Bloom:** Aug - Sept

**Light:** Full Sun

**Soil:** Dry, well drained

**Supports:**   

**Start from:** Seeds or seedlings from nurseries/greenhouses

### Benefits:

- Cut flowers (but leave some for the pollinators!)
- Medicinal uses
- Supports native insects and birds
- Drought tolerant

## MATERIALS



Paper Towel



Water



Seeds



Zip-Top Bag

## HOW OLD WILL SHE GROW?

*Some seed can sprout for decades, others last only one year. Here is a simple germination test to help figure out if seeds are still good to grow.*

1. **Moisten the paper towel with water.** It should be more than damp, but less than soaking.
2. Fold the paper towel and **place it inside the zip-top bag.**
3. Put **10 seeds** to be tested (5 if seeds are big) onto the moistened paper towel inside the bag.
4. Fold the paper towel to **cover the seeds** inside the bag. Add another folded piece of moistened paper towel to cover if folding isn't an option.
5. Close the bag and **label it** with the date and type of seed inside.
6. **Watch and wait.** The seed packet should list days to germination. This can be anywhere from 2 days to several weeks.
7. **Check on the seeds** every couple of days to ensure they haven't dried out and see if any have sprouted. Add a little water if dry.
8. After the estimated days to germination have passed, **tally the seeds** that have sprouted.

### Sprout Results:

**0-3 / 10** = Probably not worth planting

**4-6 / 10** = OK but plant twice as many

**7-10 / 10** = Excellent viability

**Remember,** most seeds last longer when stored in a cool, dark, dry (but not too dry!) environment.

### Reference:

*Dotted Blazing Star.* (n.d.) Prairie Pollination. March 20, 2024, from [https://prairiepollination.ca/plante-plant/liatris\\_poncuae-dotted\\_blazingstar/](https://prairiepollination.ca/plante-plant/liatris_poncuae-dotted_blazingstar/)

# THIRSTY GARDENS

Now that April has arrived, many of us are spending time outdoors, looking for signs of spring, and making plans for the growing season. It's looking like water may be in short supply with the expected drought. But don't lose hope! We can start taking action now to set ourselves up for success this year in several different ways.

## LEAVE THE LEAVES

By keeping leaf litter and other organic matter (like grass clippings or dead plants from last year) on the surface of the soil, we prevent the evaporation of moisture that accumulated over winter. This protective layer is also vital for beneficial insects overwintering in the soil and in the leaves. Wait until the daytime temperature is consistently 10C or above before removing, or better still, keep the soil mulched all year!



## MAKE A PLANTING PLAN

For anyone planting a vegetable garden this year, we should plan to grow only what we will use, which means planting foods we enjoy eating and know won't go to waste. When water is scarce, overcrowded plants suffer, so follow plant spacing recommendations and control weeds that may compete for moisture in the soil.

## TRY DRY VARIETIES

Whether it's ornamental plants, shrubs, trees, grasses or vegetables, it's time to look for drought-tolerant varieties. These plants are adapted to stay healthy with less water, which is perfect for our prairie landscape. Species native to SE Alberta are excellent choices. But remember, new plantings need sufficient water for the first few years to get established.



# APRIL PLANTING CALENDAR

sun	mon	tue	wed	thurs	fri	sat
	1 <b>Start Indoors:</b> Cauliflower Eggplant Tomatillo Tomato	2	3	4	5	6
7 <b>Start Indoors:</b> Lettuce Green Onion Brussels Sprts Kale + Collards Swiss Chard	8 <b>MHHA Meet</b> <b>Sow Outdoors:</b> Spinach Radish	9 <b>Yard Waste Collection Starts</b>	10	11 <b>Seed Restock + Garden Talk</b>	12	13 <b>Plant Swap</b>
14 <b>Start Indoors:</b> Green Onion Brussels Sprts Kale + Collards Okra Swiss Chard	15 <b>Sow Outdoors:</b> Spinach Radish	16	17	18 <b>Olla Workshop</b>	19	20 <b>ANPC Workshops</b>
21 <b>Seedy Sunday</b>	22 <b>Start Indoors:</b> Green Onion Okra	23 <b>Sow Outdoors:</b> Peas Lettuce + Chard Beets	24 <b>CFCA Garden Club</b>	25	26	27 <b>Community Garden Orientation</b>
28 <b>Start Indoors:</b> Cucumber Green Onion Okra Squash	29 <b>Sow Outdoors:</b> Peas Carrot + Turnip Beets + Chard Radish + Spinach	30				

## MHHA MONTHLY MEETING

### MH Horticultural Association

Mon, April 8th, 7:30pm. 504 2 St SE.  
April General Meeting with guest speakers, authors Sheryl Normandeau and Janet Melrose. Free to attend.

## YARD WASTE COLLECTION STARTS

### City of Medicine Hat

City green bin (yard waste) collection begins for the season April 8th.

**SEE PAGE 5 + 6 FOR MORE INFO ABOUT THESE EVENTS:**

### ANPC WORKSHOP

Alberta Native Plant Council

### PLANT SWAP

MH Horticultural Association + MHPL

### SEED RESTOCK + GARDEN TALK

### OLLA WORKSHOP

### SEEDY SUNDAY

### GARDEN CLUB KICK-OFF

# APRIL EVENTS



## SEED RESTOCK + GARDEN TALK

Chat with fellow green-thumbs about the upcoming growing season while supporting the community Seed Library. We will sort and repack seeds, swap garden stories and learn about other upcoming events for plant people. Bring spare seeds (saved or purchased) to share with the community.



**6 PM - 8 PM THURSDAY  
APRIL 11, 2024  
HONOR CURRIE ROOM  
MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC LIBRARY**



Community Food Connections (CFCA) is a local non-profit focused on supporting food security in the community through education, programming, partnerships, and policy support for improvements in food, nutrition, health, and local agriculture. We are grateful to partner with the **Medicine Hat Public Library** for the Seed Library project.



## PLANT SWAP

Do you have houseplants that no longer spark joy? Bring them (healthy plants/clippings) to the Library for our Plant Exchange in partnership with the Medicine Hat & District Horticultural Association!

**APR  
13  
2-4 PM**

If you have clean pots or planters that you'd like to use or share, bring those along! Volunteers will be available to help with repotting and to answer any questions.







**36th Annual ANPC Workshop**  
**Saturday April 20, 2024**  
Medicine Hat College

**Native Plant Superheroes**  
The Plants & People Who are Saving the World

### Schedule

Registration 8:00 AM  
Workshop 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM  
AGM 5:00 PM  
Banquet 6:00 PM



### Fees

Member	\$80 (early), \$95 (late)
Non-Member	\$95 (early), \$110 (late)
Student/Senior	\$40 (early), \$50 (late)
Virtual	\$25
Banquet	\$50
Field trip	Free

### Important Dates

APRIL 5 Early Bird Rates End  
APRIL 18 Registration Closes  
APRIL 20 Workshop  
APRIL 21 Field Trip

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CFCA'S 9TH ANNUAL  
**SEEDY SUNDAY**

GARDEN PRESENTATIONS  
SEED EXCHANGE  
EXHIBITORS  
PRIZES + MORE



APRIL 21, 2024  
1:30 - 3:30 PM  
504 2 St SE,  
MEDICINE HAT, ALBERTA

Bring those spare seeds, garden tools, etc down to St. John's Presbyterian Church (West entrance), to share with other gardeners at this FREE garden event. It is guaranteed to be fun, inspiring and informative. To sign up as an exhibitor or volunteer to help out, email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com).




# CFCA GARDEN CLUB + WORKSHOP

2024 will be our 3rd year offering Growing Gardeners Education Program, CFCA's free garden club. We are excited to continue to provide ecologically-responsible advice and the opportunity for gardeners of all experience levels to learn from one another in Medicine Hat. We are tremendously grateful to be able to host garden club at the Root Cellar Food & Wellness Hub. We also plan to explore some other garden sites in the city this season to highlight different types of growing conditions. Sign-up for our mailing list to get up-to-date information about Growing Gardeners and events like our Olla Workshop below! Email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com).



**Growing Gardeners**  
Education Program

**GROW YOUR OWN FOOD  
PREVENT WEEDS + PESTS  
SUPPORT BENEFICIAL INSECTS  
USE WATER WISELY  
AND MORE!**

**April 24, 7pm - Root Cellar**  
**Getting Started in the Garden**

**May 1, 7pm - Root Cellar**  
**Transplants + Hardening Off**

**May 15, 7pm - TBD**  
**Moisture + Mulch**

For more information, contact our Garden Program Coordinator, Genevieve ([cfcagarden@gmail.com](mailto:cfcagarden@gmail.com)).

Community Food Connections Association  
FoodConnections.ca

**fcss**  
Family and Community Support Services

Growing Gardeners Education Program (aka Garden Club) is back! Our free, hands-on garden club covers different topics relevant to our climate throughout the growing season. Registration is not required and children are welcome if accompanied by an adult guardian. Watch our social media pages to get updates about dates, topics and locations. We meet mostly outside meaning adverse weather may force us to cancel or move sessions around.



CALLING ALL GARDENERS!

**SELF-WATERING OLLA WORKSHOP**

Learn how to water wisely and build your own olla! These **low-tech, passive watering systems** put water where your plants need it most; at the roots. Tools and material provided. Registration required. Email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com) to sign-up!

**6:30 - 8PM  
THURSDAY  
APRIL 18, 2024  
KIN COULEE  
25\$ / OLLA**

Community Food Connections Association  
FoodConnections.ca

## ABOUT COMMUNITY FOOD CONNECTIONS ASSOCIATION (CFCA)

Community Food Connections Association is a non-profit organization based in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Launched in 2003, we have been working to support food security in the community through education, programming, partnerships and policy support for improvements in food, nutrition, health and local agriculture.

Our programs include the Good Food Club, Community Kitchens, the Local Food & Producers Directory, Medicine Hat Community Gardens, and Growing Gardeners Education Program. To find out more, head over to our website, [FoodConnections.ca](http://FoodConnections.ca), or social media accounts:

 [@COMMUNITYFOODCONNECTIONS](https://www.facebook.com/COMMUNITYFOODCONNECTIONS)



[@CFCA MH](https://www.instagram.com/CFCA_MH)  + 