

## Ground Hog Day

~ taken from the Old Farmer's Almanac

Traditionally, February 2 was the day when farmers tried to determine the weather for the next 6 weeks. They believed that if an animal came out of hibernation on this day and saw its shadow, winter would continue.

For centuries, farmers in France and England looked to a bear; in Germany, they kept their eye on the badger. In the 1800's, German immigrants to Pennsylvania brought the tradition with them. Finding no badgers there, they adopted the groundhog to fit the lore. Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil has announced spring's arrival since 1887. His accuracy rate is believed by some to be 100 percent.

From 1956 to 2006, two successive albino groundhogs named Wiarton Willie made annual weather prognostications in Wiarton, Ontario, with an accuracy of about 90 percent. In 2007, a third albino Wiarton Willie assumed the role of weather prognosticator.



Even for us gardeners here on the west coast, looking at our calendars on February 2, we can generally expect another 6 weeks of winter. While winter for us doesn't usually mean drifts of snow and below zero temperatures, even the most optimistic don't really expect spring just yet. However, on February 2, just maybe, we just might have a cloudy day. And just maybe, our token groundhog won't see his shadow after all. And just maybe, spring will just be around the corner. I guess we'll just have to wait and see!

# Send me your secrets!

Send to Cheryl Fiddis @ [ecfiddis@telus.net](mailto:ecfiddis@telus.net)

Remember, we would love to have more members share their 'secrets' and garden thoughts. Don't be shy! If you have been on a trip, please share some highlights with us!

## Saint Valentine's Day...

~ fun facts and other trivia

This February 14th tradition that brings many business owners the most glee, especially those who run flower shops, is the custom of giving a loved one flowers on this special day. Chocolates, cards, teddy bears and jewelry are also widely given.



Did you know that approximately one billion Valentine cards are exchanged each year...the largest seasonal card-selling occasion of the year next to Christmas?

February 14 is the most important holiday for florists, accounting for 32% of annual sales. 73% of people who buy flowers to send on Valentine's Day are male.

California produces 60% of American roses, but the vast majority sold on Valentine's Day in the

United States and Canada are imported...mostly from South America.

Approximately 110 million roses...the majority of them being red...will be sold and delivered within a three-day time period during the Valentine's Day celebrations. Roses have long symbolized love, making a bouquet the perfect gift to give on Valentine's Day. Those who may not be beset with love can still choose from an array of other roses that declare different meanings. Deep red is the most passionate and popular Valentine color, meant for the special soul mate. Folks can offer pink roses for gratitude; yellow to denote friendship; white for purity and humility. For those hit with love at first sight, a purple or white lilac rose does the trick.

So, don't forget that special someone on Saint Valentine's Day! After all, it's a tradition!

## Those Showy Cyclamens!

~ The Almanac for Farmers & City Folk, W. Burge

During the winter, there are few flowering plants as strikingly attractive as the cyclamens. The large flowers, borne high on erect stems above marbled foliage, range in color from red to white, pink, salmon, mauve, and purple.

Some varieties are bi-colored, with white edging on pastel petals. The petals curl back like the wings of a swan, lending the plants a windblown appearance. The heart-shaped leaves are dark green, and mottled with white or silver.

Members of the primrose family, all cyclamens like cool temperatures and high humidity. There are many hardy and half-hardy types, but the most common cyclamen in North America is *C. persicum*, grown primarily by florists and nurseries for winter sales and indoor blooming. Like poinsettias and Christmas cactus, cyclamens are excellent winter holiday gift plants.

When purchasing cyclamen plants, avoid those with sparse buds and fading flowers. Select those with a full appearance, and plenty of buds developing at the base of the plants. Under ideal conditions, - high humidity and cool temperatures, it's not unusual for cyclamens to bloom from October to April. You'll want to place plants near a cool window away from heating ducts. To increase humidity around the plants, place the pots in trays filled with pebbles and water, being careful not to allow the plants to rest in



the water.

Cyclamens are also easy to start from seed. Start the seedlings in peat pots filled with commercial potting soil, one seed per pot. Cyclamen growers suggest keeping the pots in total darkness for 30 – 40 days, keeping the soil moist and warm to ensure germination. When the seeds sprout, move the pots to a window that gets filtered sunlight.

Cyclamens grow slowly. When roots appear outside the peat pots, move the seedlings, - peat pot and all, into 3 inch pots, planting no deeper than they were before. Keep the soil evenly moist, and never allow the soil to dry out completely. Water the plants by standing the pots in water until the soil surface is damp, then remove from the water and allow the pots to drain before moving the plants back to their window. Be sure to always water from the bottom. As soon as the first buds appear, start feeding the plants every two weeks with a good water-soluble houseplant fertilizer. To keep the buds and flowers coming, pinch off the spent flowers and any damaged or yellowing leaves.

Most people discard cyclamens when flowering halts, unaware that the plants can be rejuvenated to bloom again next winter, and even for several winters to come. As flowering tapers off and no new buds form, stop feeding the plants and reduce watering. Once all the blooms are gone, place the pots on their side in a shady area in your yard or garage for the spring and summer. Keep the soil damp to the touch to keep the corms alive. Near the end of the summer, or early fall, new growth will appear.

Now is the time to repot the corms in slightly larger pots with fresh soil, setting each corm at the same depth it had been in the original pot. Move the pots inside, and start the feeding and watering process once again to encourage growth and blossoming.

With luck, you'll have wonderful blooms in time for the holidays once again.

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## Membership reminder:

Please note that the 'dues are due' for 2012! If you haven't yet paid, you can pay by cash or cheque at the next meeting. Please see Anne at the Membership desk. Only \$12.00 per year.

## BRAGS Membership/Meetings

Annual membership cost \$12. Members share various gardening interests and enjoy 10% discount of regularly priced items at Garden Works by presenting their membership cards.

All meetings start at 7 pm at the Burnaby Village Museum, - Main Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. It's centrally located and there is ample parking. Refreshments are served. All are welcome. Bring your own mug to be eco-friendly!

## Upcoming Meetings

### February 1, 2012

Enjoy a special presentation by Lee Valley Tools on garden tools. Just the meeting to get you in the spring spirit! Bring the men along to this one!

### Special: February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 (Saturday, 11:00 am)

As advised in the November newsletter, a special visit has been arranged for BRAGS members to visit Westcoast Seeds in Ladner. Mark the date and see Rosemarie for more information and to confirm your interest.

### March 7, 2012

Tasha Murray, Coordinator Greater Vancouver Invasive Plant Council, will give a talk on invasive plants.

## Out and About

### February 16th, Thursday - all day @ Gardenworks

Customer appreciation Day! 15% Discount!

### Garden Quote:

*"When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant".*

*~author unknown*

*\*\*BRAGS extends sincere condolences to Coni O'Neill and her family on the loss of Brian. He was an active member within BRAGS for many years, and throughout the City of Burnaby. He will be missed.\*\**