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Fences are perfect for keeping pets in and deer out

by Mike Lange
PALMYRA — Just like youngsters that want to go out and play on the first sunny day of spring, hundreds of deer are emerging from their winter yards this time of year.

While the animals are great to view and photograph, some are going to be hit with vehicles while many others will damage flower and vegetable gardens.

"A healthy adult deer will jump 10 feet," said Don Hill of ADA Fence in Palmyra. "So if you really want to protect your garden, an 8-foot fence will probably work."

Hill, a retired Newport Elementary School principal, and his wife, Ann, started ADA Fence in 1998. The company is now owned by their daughter, Danielle McGrath, and her brother Allen Hill.

Although the firm is located in Palmyra, their fences have been installed from Vinalhaven to southern Anneton County. "We go just about everywhere except the Portland market," Hill said. "There's a lot of competition down there."

As expected, business picks up since there's a long stretch of mild weather. Hill said that while he gets inquiries about protecting land from deer on a regular basis, there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution.

"We have a special deer fence that's less expensive than a regular chain link fence," he said. "But another thing to consider is an escape plan. If a deer does get in, you need to have some way for it to get out."

Electrified fences also work — to a point. "Deer will go on their knees and climb right under an electric fence while bucks will jump right over them," he said.

ADA Fence also carries ornamental, vinyl and wood fencing as well as pet kennels and gates. They also install fencing on baseball and softball fields, tennis courts, outdoor basketball courts and enclosed pools.

"We do a great deal of commercial work," Hill said. "But we still have plenty of homeowners who want fencing to keep their kids and pets safe."

ADA helps customers select the right type of fencing which usually depends on the "lay of the land," Hill explained. "For example, if you don't have a relatively flat surface, you'd probably want a chain link fence. In other cases, vinyl and wood will work fine."

ADA installs fence posts three to four-foot deep to make sure they're below the frost line. "If we hit logs, we drill right through it and attach the post," Hill said.

For those who want to install their own fencing, ADA sells all the material necessary and always offers free advice.

The Today's Homeowner website offers a few more suggestions on fencing. "The right fence properly installed can dramatically alter the appearance of your property as well as add substantial value and improve 'curb appeal.' One of the first things you should do is take a look around your neighborhood and surrounding areas and begin to take notes of the style and appearance of fences that appeal to your own personal taste.

"The cheapest fence to install is not always the most economical in the long run. Considering factors such as maintenance and installation costs will help determine the total cost of a fence over its lifetime.

For more information, contact ADA Fence at 938-2530, visit their office on Route 2 in Palmyra or check out their website at www.adafence.com.

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When planting annuals, be patient and handle with care

by Mike Lange

COBINNA - Soja Cianchette has a simple rule when it comes to planting annuals in the ground.

"If I put my hand in the soil and it's too cold for comfort, then it's too cold to plant," said Cianchette, the owner of Through the Garden Gate in Corinna.

Since Mainers are recovering from a winter that seemingly didn't want to end, there's a natural tendency to start planting as soon as the temperatures hover in the fifties.

"If you plant too early in cold ground, they just won't grow - period," Cianchette said. "Take your time and let the soil warm up. Then make it pliable; don't compact it too much, or there won't be room for the roots to breathe."

Give your annuals room to grow, too, Cianchette advises. "Every flat or hanging plant that goes out of our nursery has a tag with instructions, so it's important to read and follow them," she said. "If you don't leave enough space between plants, you'll not only crowd them but could help plant diseases spread."

Cianchette said she takes a great deal of pride in her Proven Winner line of plants. "They're my pride and joy," she said. "And I do get upset when something goes wrong because somebody didn't follow instructions."

So what are the best plants to start in late spring or early summer? "Pansies are usually pretty safe and can withstand some cold," she said. "But after a winter like this, it's better to be safe than sorry. Wait for it to warm up. Summer will get here

eventually!"

Sherry Desmarais of Rockwell Gardens in Guilford likes to use the old farmer's adage of waiting until the last full moon in May before planting anything. "This year, there are full moons on May 10 and June 9," she said. "If we have some decent weather in May, it may be safe to plant almost anything by Memorial Day weekend. But if we get another cold snap, I'd wait until early June."

Desmarais said that even though there have been many wet and cool springs in recent years, this one is unusual for its longevity. "We usually have trees leafing out by now, but so far we've seen little or nothing," she said.

Nevertheless, Rockwell Gardens stuck with its traditional opening date on the same day as the Piscataquis River Race - April 22. "Even though people may not take their flats home and put them in the ground right away, we still have a good sales day," she said.

Desmarais also agreed that pansies are a safe bet to put in the ground early, even if there's still a nip in the air. "Violas are also pretty resilient, but I'd wait until it warms up before I'd plant marigolds," she said. "They really like the heat and sunlight."

Both nurseries have Facebook pages with photos and more information including directions and operating hours.

More helpful hints about all types of gardening are available at the UM Extension Service website: www.extension.umaine.edu.



IN BLOOM - Soja Cianchette is pictured with some of her perennials at Through the Garden Gate in Corinna. (Eastern Gazette photo - Mike Lange)

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Spring clean-up tips from the Maine Forest Service

Spring clean-up is a good way to start a healthy 2017 growing season. In case you were not able to get to it in the fall, cleaning up leaf debris and pruning dead wood from trees decreases the potential for disease and insects to harm trees.

Avoid pruning living tree parts to prevent creating entry points for diseases to enter and become established and to avoid attracting unwanted insects.

Look out for silvery browntail moth webs at the tips of hardwood branches and prune

them out, destroying the webs by submerging them for 24 hours in a bucket of soapy water or by burning them.

Unwrap and unshade trees protected in the fall.

Spring is also an excellent time to plant most tree species, of

course keeping in mind a "right tree for the right place" philosophy.

A lot can happen in the woods over winter, so take an opportunity to get out and inspect for changes to your woodlot, such as blow downs and other damage that occurred

over the winter.

Salvaging severely damaged trees and clearing paths may be in order.

For more information about insects or tree disease, contact Allison Kanoti at the Old Town Regional Office at 827-1813.

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Joe Sherburne Memorial Garden now reorganized as Shared Earthly Blessings

by Mike Lange

DEXTER – The Joe Sherburne Memorial Garden in Dexter, which has helped put fresh vegetables on the tables of senior citizens and low-income families for the past five years, has been renamed Shared Earthly Blessings.

But the nonprofit organization still has the same mission and goals. "We're going to pull together some of the folks who worked on it before; and hopefully, recruit some new and younger people to help out," according to volunteer and board member Stacy Halford.

The major addition this year will be a \$2 by 12-foot greenhouse that "will help extend our growing season at both ends," Halford said.

Shared Earthly Blessings also hopes to work with the Maine Academy of Natural Sciences at Goodwill-Hinckley where students often serve internships at working farms or agricultural enterprises. "In the future, we hope to start an educational program in cooperation with the local schools so youngsters know more about gardening," she said.

The community garden will also be broken up into 10 sections this year so that volunteers can be assigned to a specific plot each time they work, Halford said. "This way, we won't have a lot of people in one section and hardly any in another," she explained.

Shared Earthly Blessings will also be "as organic as we can," Halford said. "We're going to set up a 'no-till' section as an experiment and see how it works out."

With the unseasonably cool weather last month, work will probably not begin until mid-May when the ground dries out.

Fred Sherburne, a longtime dairy farmer, donated the use of the acreage for a garden in memory of his late brother Joe, who passed away in 2008. Joe Sherburne was well known as an organic farmer and creator of the soil supplement "Compost Almost."

Deb Burdin, the owner-operator of Bwarte Plants in Dexter, was one of the people who came up with the concept of a community garden in 2012-13. But she emphasized that without a dedicated group of volunteers, it would have never gotten off the ground.

"We've had a lot of senior citizens who have helped out over the years, but they're getting pretty tired," she said. "Now, we hope to get some younger people involved."

Burdin said she's "stepped aside" from an active role in the garden, but is available as an adviser.

Halford said that a supplemental food source like the garden can mean the difference between eating regularly and going to bed hungry. "One senior citizen I know gets \$49 a month in food stamps and a very small Social Security check," she said. "So she only eats breakfast and lunch. If she ate three meals a day, she'd run out of food by the end of the month."

For more information or volunteer opportunities at Shared Earthly Blessings, contact Halford at 341-1999.



COMMUNITY GARDEN – The Joe Sherburne Community Garden in Dexter is now known as Shared Earthly Blessings. (Eastern Gazette photo – Mike Lange)

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Keep driveway cracks from spreading with sealer and filler

by Mike Lange

The harsh winter that left most of Maine's highways peck-marked with potholes has probably done something similar to your driveway.

While it may not have two-foot wide craters, chances are it has cracks that will only widen as the weather gets warmer.

That's why one of the most popular items at your local hardware store nowadays is driveway sealer and filler.

Although asphalt is one of the most reliable materials for road surfaces, it's still at the mercy of natural elements.

As the handyman's website DiyYourself.com explains, "When exposed to heat, sunlight, water, salt, wear and tear and other extreme weather conditions, asphalt driveways tend to break down and get damaged. If the cracks produced in the driveway

are left untreated, the lifespan of the driveway is greatly reduced."

In cold weather, water seeps into small cracks, freezes and makes them wider. When the weather gets warm, grass and weeds grow in the crevices.

With spring weather finally on the horizon, Dover True-Value Hardware is anticipating brisk sales of Black Jack driveway sealer, available in two grades. The major difference is that the less-expensive Drive Seal 200 has a two-year durability cycle while the Drive Keto 500 protects surfaces for up to five years, according to customer service specialist Ashley Robinson.

"We'll probably sell a lot of those between now and Memorial Day weekend," Robinson said. "You should only apply it when it's 65 degrees or warmer and we usually don't get those temperatures consistently until

mid-May."

While the Drive Keto 500 is more expensive, Robinson said that the extra cost is probably worth it to the average homeowner. "It really depends on how often you want to do the job," she said. "Most people would rather do it every five years than two."

A 5-gallon bucket of sealer covers 350 square feet and the manufacturer recommends that two thin coats be applied instead of one thick one.

Dexter Ace Hardware carries Gardner Pro 7 and Drive 5 sealers and the major difference between the two is the anticipated "life span" of the coating, said owner Tom Tillson. "One is five years and the other is seven," he said. "The most important thing is to follow directions carefully, clean the surface thoroughly before you apply the sealer and make sure it's dry before you put any weight on it."

Average drying time for Gardner sealers on a 75-degree

day is four to five hours when it's safe for foot traffic. However, it's recommended to wait at least 24 hours before parking a vehicle on the surface. Like any other coating, humidity will also have an effect on drying time.

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