



"We pledge that we do not knowingly buy or sell genetically engineered seeds"



SET THE TABLE FROM YOUR GARDEN

E-Newsletter Archives

March 2013

Priority: Pollinators



Honeybees have been disappearing in record numbers. And they are not the only pollinators that are imperiled. Some butterflies and native bees have experienced significant population declines. It was just a few years ago that homeowners were asking what they could plant that would not attract bees. Now, the question is more likely to be, "How can I attract bees and other pollinators to my garden?"

Pollinators are a diverse and fascinating group of invertebrates and we have them to thank for beautiful blooming meadows, juicy summer berries, bountiful vegetable gardens, and colorful pumpkins and gourds. We encourage all home gardeners to help the cause of pollinator protection by planting more flowers and herbs, important food resources for all kinds of bees and butterflies. Every flower border, bed, and windowbox helps! [More Articles On Pollinators](#)



You can help the [Great Sunflower Project](#) with research to understand the challenges that bees are facing by watching and recording the number and types of pollinators visiting plants (especially sunflowers) in gardens, school gardens and parks. Our [Lemon Queen](#) sunflower is a lovely branching variety particularly attractive to bees. [Order Bee Attracting Flowers and Herbs](#). When you use the coupon code **FR225A** at checkout, we will make a donation of 25% of the total value of your order to the Great Sunflower Project.

This Month's Web Special:

Porcelain Doll Pink Pumpkin

Porcelain Doll's unique pink color makes it a real show stopper! Besides, their pretty pink exteriors, Porcelain Doll pumpkins have delicious, deep orange interior flesh, perfect for baked goods, soups or casseroles. These big beauties start out beige and then turn a standout coral/pink color as they mature.

Renee's Garden donates \$.50 from each Porcelain Doll packet sale to The Pink Pumpkin Patch Foundation, created by pumpkin breeders and growers to aid in the fight against breast cancer.

[Click Here to View & Order](#)

The Foundation provides grants to organizations involved in breast cancer research and oversees the donations to ensure that the funds go directly to reputable organizations with the highest percentage of dollars spent on actual research in the US and Canada.

\$4.99

PUMPKIN
Porcelain Doll F1

Pink Pumpkin Patch Foundation

+Renee's Garden+

Approx. 10-12 Seeds Powdery Mildew Tolerant



March in the Trial Garden – Choosing Cover Crops



Nitrogen Fixing Nodules on Fava Bean Roots

We are in the process of choosing a cover crop mix to offer to our customers as they are so beneficial in building healthy soil. They protect the soil from erosion during the winter months, improve soil structure, and take up extra nutrients that would otherwise leach away. At the start of the growing season, cover crops can be incorporated back into the soil by digging/turning them into the soil, so they break down in about 5-8 weeks, releasing the captured nutrients back into the soil. Another option that we utilize here at the trial garden is to pull the cover crop out of the ground, adding its biomass (roots, leaves and stalks) to the compost pile where it breaks down, so we can then add it back into the garden beds in the finished compost.

The cover crop blends we are evaluating include members of the legume family that replenish nutrients by fixing nitrogen from air into their root nodules. When incorporated back into the soil or in the composting process, these nodules break down releasing valuable usable nitrogen into the soil, a natural fertilizer. Components in the Brassica family have deep tap roots that mine deep subsoil nutrients and minerals, and are excellent at breaking up shallow layers of compacted soils. Oat and rye grasses have very thick roots which work to hold the soil protecting it from erosion. These cover crop components all produce a great amount of biomass that improves the soil structure, helping create a soil that is well-draining, holds onto water, and resists compaction at the same time.

We are also evaluating different mustard varieties as "green manure". Mustards have very high levels of glucosinolates that have a natural fumigating effect in the soil to help fend off soil dwelling pests and pathogens. It is the perfect cover crop to grow after tomatoes, potatoes, basil and anything affected by soil born pests and pathogens. Mustard also takes up large amounts of nutrients that would otherwise be leached out in winter and releases these nutrients back into the soil when it is incorporated – hence the name "green manure" for this beneficial cover crop. We are planning to introduce the best mustard seed variety in a new "green manure" Bonus Pack in late 2013.

We have found our favorite cover crop mix is a combination of Winter Rye, Austrian Peas, Purple Top Turnips, Daikon Radish, Vetch and Pacific Gold Mustard. This blend of plants that is beneficial for the soil cover the



Digging in the cover crop



Long Tap Roots

ground with a blanket of green all winter. We plan to introduce the seed blend in late 2013 as a Scatter Garden Canister that will cover 600 to 700 Sq. Ft.



Pacific Gold Mustard



Cover Crop Mix

Come Visit Often!

Please visit our [website](#) to view all of our [articles](#) and [online catalog](#). Ordering is quick, easy and secure. We look forward to hearing from you. Best Wishes, *Renee Shepherd*



What's On Renee's Blog
Rethinking Metro Detroit



Recipe of the Month

Sweet Lemon and Onion Relish

Meltingly delicious with baked ham, lamb or chicken.



[See all Renee's Online Recipes](#)

