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Sweet Potatoes, Iris and MacLean's on Anti-Pesticide

More on growing Sweet Potatoes across Canada; plus an expert's comments on Iris this year; and Mac-lean's magazine says anti-pesticide regulations, municipally and provincially, are nonsense!


by Art Drysdale

by **Art Drysdale**

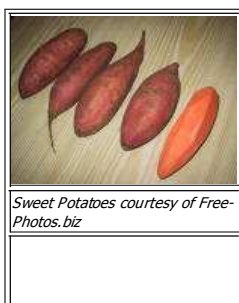
email: art@artdrysdale.com

Art Drysdale, a life-long resident of Toronto and a horticulturist well known all across Canada, is now a resident of Parksville, British Columbia on Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo. He has renovated an old home and has a new garden there. His radio gardening vignettes are heard in south-western Ontario over two radio stations: Easy 101 FM out of Tilsonburg at 2 PM weekdays and CD98.9 FM out of Norfolk County at 11:40 AM weekdays.

Art also has his own website at <http://www.artdrysdale.com>



March 11, 2012



This week, let's start with a question on one of my favorite subjects—sweet potatoes. It comes from Cecelta Bryniawsky in Vernon, B.C., right in the sunny Okanagan Valley.

"I am a member of Grow Together garden group, a group of gardeners learning to grow their own food and become more self-sufficient. We are of all ages and levels of experience. Our group this year wants to try to grow sweet potatoes and wonder if you could advise us. We are in Vernon in the Okanagan Valley and are interested in a variety that has good flavour, good yield and stores well. (Carver and Georgia Jet were two varieties we think might do.)

"I am wondering if you could also advise us on where to get slips (we want organic slips) as so far I have only found Mapple Farms in New Brunswick and not sure if they are organic. It seems an awful long way to ship plants. Thank you for any advice you can give us."

While it is a long way to ship plants Cecelta, Mapple Farms is, I think, the only grower that will be able to supply what you want. Gregg Wingate who runs it is very knowledgeable and may make additional suggestions.

He does publish a catalogue which is available if you send him a #10 envelope with a stamp on it. He also sells *Ken Allan's Sweetpotato Book* (\$20) which is all-encompassing. With both the book and his catalogue you should have all the answers to any questions you have. However, even the catalogue has all of the planting and care directions you will need.

By the way, sweet potatoes are not the only veggies that Gregg grows and sells. He is a grower/supplier of certified organic (OCIA, MCOG, NOP) seed and plant stock. His specialties include: short-season sweet potatoes, distinctive tomatoes, Jerusalem and Chinese artichokes, French shallots, Horseradish, Egyptian onions and more.

If you wish, you can get in touch with him by e-mail: wingate@nbnet.nb.ca. Or, send him a stamped, self-addressed envelope (.52 cent stamp) to: 129 Beech Hill Rd., Weldon, New Brunswick E4H 4N5. Please let him know, though, where you're based (in serving residents from outside Canada they need to pass on some added info). From outside Canada, send \$1 U.S.; Canada Post won't accept U.S. stamps.

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And, by the way, as noted above, everything he has is Certified Organic.

* * *

This week I exchanged e-mail messages with Chuck Chapman in the Guelph Ontario area. He is the owner of Chuck Chapman Iris, and both a leading grower of all types of Iris, as well as a well-known hybridizer of Iris. Here is his comment on just where things are with him and the Iris this year.

"I'm still sorting out how everything survived winter before setting up my new introductions for this year. Seems to be soft rot but not sure how much yet."

If that is the case for Chuck, there is likely a reasonable possibility the same may apply to Iris in private and public gardens. My own Iris here are up substantially and look to be in good shape. As spring advances, if there is more to report on this subject, I'll put the comments in future columns here.

* * *

On March 6th, 2012, *MacLean's* magazine issued a report on the carnage caused by the unscientific panic against pest control products.

MacLean's, the respected Canadian national weekly news magazine, stated, in one form or another, that pest control products are scientifically-safe. *MacLean's* magazine has also stated that, essentially, any prohibition against pest control products is not justified because strict regulations based on scientific research already protect our health and our environment. Every prohibited pest control product has been certified as safe for residential use by the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada.

"Anti-Pesticide prohibitions represent a triumph of sentiment over science. Anti-Pesticide prohibitions are validated not on the basis of scientific evidence, but rather a vague mock unease about chemicals in general.

"Not all prohibitions make for a healthier environment. Do prohibitions provide a net benefit to society?

"There are numerous unintended consequences [i.e. catastrophic carnage] to Anti-Pesticide prohibition.

"There is little debate about the fact that Ontario looks shabbier and weedier because of Anti-Pesticide prohibition [i.e. Ontario looks like a garbage dump].

"In Ontario, parks, sports fields, and home lawns have become wholly infested with dandelions and a variety of other weeds, and there is no practical way to remove them, other than hand-pulling.

"In Highland Park, Illinois, Anti-Pesticide prohibition was a disaster—weeds accounted for over 60 percent of the ground cover, and sports fields were unusable—Highland Park rescinded prohibition.

"When it comes to pest control products, provinces like Manitoba [and British Columbia] can learn a lot from the experience of those who have gone before—if the goal is to reduce verifiable risks, promote a more natural environment, and encourage healthy activities, prohibiting pest control products seems a strange way to go about it."

