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Soleaceae Trials

As promised, the tomato (and potato) trials for '03: I delayed delivery of tomatoes this year until after the first of May. I actually had potted the new arrivals up to larger plants, but Memorial Day weekend was such great transplanting weather that they went right in the

ground. I use great, clear plastic cloches about one-foot high to cover them with at night. I take the covers off after the day warms up, though on cool days the covers stay on all day.

Three plants suffered from damping-off after being put in 4" pots. Two of these, Willamette VF and Purple Calabash, I planted extra deep so

that the good part of the plant had good soil contact and they remain alive, though not as vigorous yet as the others, most of which are starting to bloom. The third, Gold Medal, is gone. That space will be used for another bush zucchini.

have nearly the problems this year that I have had in the past. I'm waiting for some of my

seedlings to get a little taller and more established. Ducks have no respect for baby plants. I will start letting them in the yard again soon.

Summer is nearly here, enjoy the weather (whatever it is), plant something and get outside!

The remaining tomatoes on trial this year are returning favorites First Lady, Sun Gold and Tiger Like. New-to-me this year are Italian Gold (a sauce roma-type), Matina, Bell Star, Taxi, and Jolly Elf. I actually have cut back on the number of tomatoes in the garden, with only 10 plants this year. I hope to be able to make lovely tomato salads and salsas with red, yellow, orange and purple tomatoes.

A word of warning: Soleaceae is the same family as Deadly Nightshade, which is very poisonous according to Socrates and other authorities. Sometimes, potatoes have small green fruits that look like miniature tomatoes and I have seen a garden weed that looks like a small viney green tomato. These are not tomatoes and should NOT be eaten, especially by children.

Since I write stuff down now, I decided to order a variety of seed potatoes. Last year, Dennis thought he bought and planted Yukon Golds (which we love) but what came out of the ground was certainly not Yukon Gold. This year, I ordered Caribé (early red), Yukon Gold, Red Cloud, Butte, and Swedish Fingerling. Then I got three small French Pontiac seed potatoes from the plant trade. After that, since we (my sister and I) had left a bunch of stuff at the trade, a nice person brought our stuff out along with a whole bag of potatoes with foot-long eyes. Dennis planted these in

the corner of the pasture around Abby's tree and then replanted with good seed potatoes of unknown variety when none of the long-eyes grew. Potato harvest should be a lot of fun this year.

Let's see, what else is happening? So many flowers! The most incredible stand of blue iris I have ever seen, a white Siberian iris that will bloom for the first time, the old climbing rose and the clematis in front are putting on a great show right now, the borders have mostly been weeded, bark dusted and planted with annuals, the outside edge of the garden is all flowers, dwarf dahlias have just started blooming, a professional looking bed of white alyssum and pansies that blends into a nice patch of variegated Bishop's weed that lights up the shady bed at the top of the driveway. The hedge in front and a perennial bed still need significant weeding and trimming. There's always something to do. Just walking around the yard is a great joy.

The ducks spent a good part of the last month in the yard. A pair of female Khaki Campbells are very cooperative about coming in through the yard gate. After a couple of days they would come up to the gate and wait to be let in the yard. They had a great time eating worms and must have eaten a lot of slugs, too. I don't have nearly the problems this year that I have had in the past. I'm waiting for some of my seedlings to get a little taller and more established. Ducks have no respect for baby plants. I will start letting them in the yard again soon.

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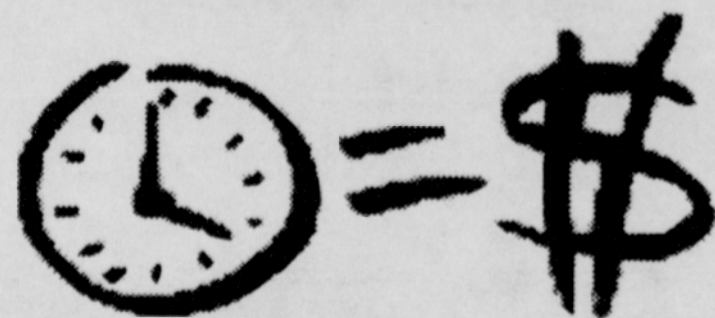
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