

## Gardening 101: Lesson Seven - Choosing and Obtaining Plants

Let's assume you have a plan for your garden or at least some idea of what sort of plants you'd like in the garden. Here's how to go about getting those plants.

First of all, know that there are quite a few gardening reference books which give very useful information on plants. For instance, *Canadian encyclopedia of plants and flowers*, published by Dorling Kindersley in 2001. The Canadian editor-in-chief is Trevor Cole, former curator of the Arboretum at the Central Experimental Farm and a widely-respected gardening expert. The book (and many other such reference sources), organizes plants into the big categories such as Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, etc. and then lists them seasonally, then by size and then by colour. So if you're looking for a perennial (let's say) which will bloom in the fall, be quite tall and with a blue flower, you can find it in such a reference book. Just be sure you check to make sure it's hardy to zone 5 and note both the plant name and variety.

Whether you have a plant list or prefer just to choose plants from what's on display locally, you'll need to know where to shop for them.

Luckily we have quite a few good nurseries in the Ottawa area, as well as the usual box stores and grocery chains which run seasonal garden centres. Loblaw's, Loeb and Canadian Tire stores all have seasonal sales of plants but there are many more. Do be aware that the choice of plants available at such places is likely to be limited, featuring what a plant wholesaler has provided to them in that particular year. It's a good idea to check the source of the plants which are being sold. In general, a plant raised in the Ottawa area will do better in an Ottawa garden than one raised in North Carolina (as an example).

The Byward and Parkdale markets are other places where you can see a variety of plants for sale. The market is a good place to find annuals and vegetable bedding plants although, once again, the variety may be somewhat restricted to the more common or popular types. There are also some perennial vendors in the Byward Market. Most are around the periphery of the main market building or on York Street as it runs west from Byward St. My favorites are two which are to the west of the market building – Quenneville Greenhouses has good perennials and herbs and the stall immediately to its south has some of the best annuals and vines in the market. Incidentally there are often bargain-priced perennials available in the markets in late summer.

But let's say you want a wider variety of plants to choose from or you have some specific variety in mind. Head directly to an independent local nursery or garden centre. These places are run by plant experts who spend considerable time researching and sourcing plants which will appeal to gardeners and which will do well in Ottawa. Most of these businesses will offer continuing support and will replace plants which have not done as promised so that's an added bonus. My favourites are Peter Knippel Nursery (4590 Bank St.), Gambles Greenhouses (3392 Jockvale Rd.), Make It Green Garden Centre (5200 Flewellyn Rd.), Artistic Landscape Designs (2079 Bank St.), Whitehouse Perennials (594 Rae Rd, near Almonte) and Rideau Woodland Ramble (210 Burritt's Rapid Rd., just off of highway 43). There are always gardening experts available

for consultation at such garden centres so do take advantage of their expertise and ask them all the questions you have.

If you want to get some good bargains in plants, keep your eyes open for information on local plant exchanges or sales held by gardening groups. The Ottawa Horticultural Society sells plants which come from members' gardens on Mother's Day at the Friends of the Farm plant sale on the Central Experimental Farm (May 11 in 2008) and at the Old Firehall on Sunnyside Ave. on Sept. 11, 2008. They also will hold a plant auction at Tom Brown Arena (141 Bayview) on May 20, 2008. The Old Ottawa South Garden Club usually has at least one plant exchange in Brewer's Park.

Here's a tip: a \$15 annual membership in the Ottawa Horticultural Society gets you discounts at select local nurseries; check the membership page of the website for more information: [www.ottawahort.org](http://www.ottawahort.org).