

SEPTEMBER 2022

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**PLANTING FOR
POLLINATORS**

AND OTHER AUTUMN READING



THE OHS PARTNERS WITH
JUST FOOD OTTAWA TO BUILD

POLLINATOR GARDENS

by Rob Brandon & Rebecca Last

As with so many other in-person activities, the recent Covid pandemic required the OHS to suspend its community planting projects for two years. The last project, in 2019, was the creation of garden beds at the City of Ottawa-managed Peter D. Clarke long-term care home. Prior to that, the OHS had built garden beds at the Ottawa Little Theatre downtown. Despite significant effort and funding from the OHS, neither the Little Theatre nor the long-term care home were able to maintain the gardens once they had been built.

With Covid lockdowns ending and the possibility of resuming the OHS's civic planting projects, it was time for a re-think. Inflation was making it harder for more people, including people in our community, to afford enough food. Many people in Ottawa also live in "food deserts," areas where there are no grocery stores within easy walking distance. Rebecca suggested we consider focusing on food-growing as a way to contribute to local food supplies.

We both had some knowledge of Just Food Ottawa, and so Rob did further research. Founded in 1999, Just Food's mission is "to work towards vibrant, just and sustainable food and farming systems in the Ottawa region." Contributing to their mission, Just Food manages the Community Gardening Network of Ottawa (CGN), which is celebrating





the 25th anniversary of its founding this year. Food security doesn't get more local than community gardens, which are today's Victory Gardens.

By early 2022, when the OHS Board approved this new direction, there was a new reason to support local food security. The war in Ukraine had broken out, threatening global food supplies of important crops like sunflower oil, maize and wheat.

Rebecca contacted Harveen Sandhu, Just Food's CGN coordinator. In a series of emails, we established the geographic areas where OHS members were most likely to be able to support a civic planting project. This led to a focus on gardens between Fallowfield to the south, the Ottawa River to the north, and between Eagleson Road to the west and St. Laurent Boulevard to the east. While this overlaps with areas served by other gardening groups, we had learned that the OHS was the only horticultural society that had ever approached Just Food.

In early April, Rob, Rebecca, Harveen, and Moe

Garahan, Just Food's Executive Director, met on Zoom to discuss how the OHS might partner with them. We learnt that Just Food's main sources of funding are the City of Ottawa, other government departments, and private donations. They have rigorous criteria for what they will fund, and how funding is accounted for, which reassured us they would be a strong partner.

Harveen, who works part-time, explained the challenges of managing the 120 gardens in the CGN. Sometimes her job involves volunteer coaching to build the community as well as the garden. In order to ensure this OHS civic planting project would be maintained, Rob and Rebecca decided to focus on gardens that have strong leadership.

The next question was how to decide on specific projects. Just Food's mandate prevents them funding ornamental plantings. Yet, today, we understand that mixing flowers, especially native pollinator plants, with food crops supports a healthy environment for growing food organically. Plus, pollinator gardens enhance the appearance of food

gardens, so supporting their creation is in line with the OHS's mission: "To cultivate an interest in plants and gardening in order to create a beautiful community." Thus, the decision was made! We would focus on helping community gardens that wanted to add a pollinator-friendly component.

Ending the meeting, we agreed Harveen would identify some gardens the OHS might consider supporting.

At the April OHS Board meeting, Rob and Rebecca presented their findings and recommended a pilot project with two gardens identified by Just Food as having stable and committed operations. A budget of \$4,000 for both projects was agreed, with final approval to be based on receiving and approving project proposals.

By the end of April, Harveen had two possibilities for us. She introduced Rob to the organizers of the Centretown United Church Donation Garden located on Bank Street. Meanwhile, Rebecca became the liaison person with the Goldenrod Community Garden located on NCC land off the Parkway. Both gardens wanted to install pollinator gardens.

The Centretown garden was keen to get a new raised bed constructed before their volunteer carpenter left on an extended holiday. Rob decided to modify the Just Food's agreement template and use their funding process. This process involves providing funds to the garden coordinator based on a signed agreement. Receipts for expenditures plus a project report are supplied to the OHS once the project is completed and any unused funds are returned.

Serendipitously, OHS members Sheila Burvill and Margaret Scratch were already volunteers with the Centretown project. Gloria Sola provided

some pollinator plants, and the OHS allocated funding of \$1,050 for materials. Centretown's volunteer carpenter Mike Velichka built the new wooden planter and delivered it to the garden by 28 May; Linda Pollock, the Donation Garden coordinator, and volunteers Silvia Satta, Carol Ann Cameron, Susan Palmi, Rebecca Dalton and Brian Ure filled it with earth. Sheila and Margaret purchased additional plants and planted them by 11 June. Linda was responsible for the excellent project management.

The Goldenrod project requires NCC permission and they have just completed a major expansion. Consequently, this project will likely proceed and be funded in the fall of 2022, which falls into the OHS's 2022/23 fiscal year.

Future newsletter articles may supply more information on these pollinator gardens, together with a review of this new OHS civic initiative. If successful, this may be a new direction for future years. Harveen informed us that over 1 in 8 Canadian families are food insecure, and community gardens are needed to help alleviate this problem.



IT'S ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY:

The Centretown Donation Garden

By Margaret Scratch and Sheila Burvill

All photos by Sheila Burvill

There is a small oasis of green amid the pavement desert of Bank Street between Argyle and Catherine Streets. Ten raised beds provide vegetables for the Centre 507 food program, located within Centretown United Church, which provides daily meals for people in need in the community. An eleventh raised bed has just been added thanks to the Ottawa Horticultural Society's decision to focus its community planting program on the production of food. This eleventh bed proudly raises herbs to liven up the church meal program and flowers to attract pollinators to an otherwise arid part of downtown.

Centre 507 was founded by members of the church but, as the needs and programming expanded, it was eventually taken over by the City of Ottawa as part of its drop-in centre program. Currently, 80 percent of Centre 507's funding comes from the City of Ottawa with donations (many from church members) making up the remaining 20 percent.

Using a grant from Just Food, the Centretown Donation Garden was also founded by Centretown United Church. (The full story may be found online at http://www.centretownunited.org/life_work/Story_Of_The_Gardens.htm.) In the garden, all the work is done by volunteers, organized by Linda Pollock, who is the garden's liaison with Just Food. Key volunteer Brian Ure, a graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College and with a long career in fruit and vegetable research and production, provides the expertise to plan and manage the vegetable crops at Centretown. Some of the vegetables are grown from seed sown directly

in the garden, some from seedlings grown either by garden volunteers or purchased in flats from various vendors. Those purchases, along with the soil and manure that revitalizes the beds every year, are funded by donations from Centretown United Church members.

Just Food continues to offer support, information and education to all the Community Garden coordinators across the city (Linda being our coordinator) and on many occasions the Centretown Donation Garden has benefitted from that. They were key in providing help, particularly during Covid, to encourage gardens like ours to reopen.



Herbs & Gloria's perennials planted June 8th

The new pollinator planter at Centretown is another example of several communities coming together, this time after the Ottawa Horticultural Society got in touch with Just Food to find existing well-run community food garden projects that needed additional funds for a specific purpose. In very quick order, some Centretown Donation Garden volunteers had met with the OHS (in the person of Rob Brandon); prepared a budget for construction of the pollinator planter; enlisted the construction help of Mike Velichka, a Centre 507 Board member and volunteer carpenter who had earlier built the other garden planters; organized a delivery of soil, and prepared for planting pollinator-friendly plants. We used advice from the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton to guide our purchase of annuals and herbs for the planter, the herbs being purchased at the Main Street Farmers Market and the annuals at a couple of local nurseries.

As for the perennials in the planter, we were lucky that OHS member Gloria Sola, who helps maintain a pollinator garden at Christian



Pollinator box on July 31

Martyrs Catholic Church, heard about our project. She donated divisions of some native plants from the Christian Martyrs garden; along with a few perennials donated by a garden volunteer, we hope these will form the basis of the pollinator garden for years to come.

This year the vegetable beds are producing a beautiful array of lettuces in different colours, gorgeous deep green kale, several varieties of beans, tomatoes of varying sizes, impressive Savoy cabbages, and cucumber plants which



**New crop of beans as of July 31;
Savoy cabbage as of mid-july**

are threatening to cross Bank Street. All of these make for some delicious meals in the Church. The pollinator bed adds another dash of spice to the meals with its herbs but offers a selection of flowers chosen to attract the bees, butterflies and other pollinators so important and so threatened by changes in the environment. The vibrant yellow of the coreopsis and the purple alyssum, along with native plants such as pearly everlasting, monarda, golden Alexander and others, give passersby a beautiful flower bed to enjoy.

We have been volunteering at the Centre 507 garden since 2021, watering, weeding and sometimes harvesting on a weekly morning shift. This volunteer activity makes us part of a series of overlapping communities that make a project like this possible and successful. There is, first of all, the Centretown United Church community which embraced the idea of Food Sovereignty and replaced six ash trees felled by the ash borer with vegetable beds to feed a second community of people who were in need. This group has access to nutritious fresh

food and the sense of being valued by the program. They often use the garden as a place to sit and talk as they wait for lunch or one of the other meals available inside the building. They also talk frequently with members of the third community - the volunteers who tend the garden. The need for social contact can be great among people in difficulty in our often rather heartless cities and, as volunteers, we try to be open to chat with the users of the program.



Has our pollinator garden been successful? Well, take a look at this *Echinacea* blossom.

A fourth community consists of the passersby on Bank Street. They are a varied group, some hurrying from one place to another, others out for a stroll and ready to stop, look and chat whenever they come across something interesting. Even the people in a hurry often tell us with a wave of a hand how much they enjoy the garden and what a wonderful project it is. The strollers, along with Centre 507's clientele, often have their own garden stories to tell, whether it be about a mother's potato crop in the teller's childhood, some advice about how best to grow carrots or to give help identifying the rapidly spreading cucumber plants. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village of communities to create a successful food garden. Thanks go to the Ottawa Horticultural Society for joining our village.

The Book Nook

24 TITLES SUGGESTED BY THE OTTAWA PUBLIC LIBRARY FOR OHS MEMBERS



The Collection Development staff at the Ottawa Public Library have specially selected a list of materials for OHS members. This list includes new titles added to the OPL collection.

Among the titles for this issue are books, in English and French, relating to:

- Hydroponics
- Wild plant culture
- Houseplants
- Cacti and succulents
- Invasive plants
- Botany for gardeners
- Les jardins de Métis
- Growing joy
- Refreshing gardens
- Crops in pots
- Seed detective

There are books on herbs, roses, and colour in the garden, as well as flower guides and gardening month-by-month.

In addition, there are books on reviving forgotten homes and gardens, on individual gardens, and on killer plants!

Click on the link below to see the complete list from the Library. This also allows you to view availability and place a hold from the link.

https://ottawa.bibliocommons.com/list/share/354296247_collection_development/2149192379_ottawa_horticultural_society_fall_titles

POLLINATOR GARDEN

AT CANADIAN MARTYRS CATHOLIC CHURCH

by Gloria Sola

The pollinator garden is located on a small 10 by 12 ft. corner by the church parking lot at 100 Main Street in Old Ottawa East.

It was a deserted piece of land inhabited only by weeds and some orange ditch lilies (*Hemerocallis fulva*), surrounded by a chain link fence covered with Virginia creeper. The soil is hard packed and infertile. The only thing in its favour is it receives lots of sun.

In 2017, after a chat with Sandy Garland from Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) about the appropriateness of the spot, in particular its small size, the weeds were removed as well as some of the ditch lilies. A small 4-pack of native plants put together by the Canadian Wildlife Federation and sold through Home Depot were planted. The 4-pack contained one butterfly weed (*Asclepiis tuberosa*), one swamp milkweed (*A. incarnata*), one gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*) and one threadleaf coreopsis (*Coreopsis verticillata*). These were joined by some prairie smoke (*Geum triflorum*) and golden Alexander (*Zizia aurea*) purchased at the FWG annual sale. The following year, Fr. Tim, the pastor, with the help of an old trusty pickup, pulled down the fence and cut off the metal posts. A group called "Faith and the Common Good," which encourages pollinator gardens



Prairie Smoke - *Geum triflorum*

in churches, donated sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), hairy beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*), grey-headed coneflower (*Ratibida pinnata*) and bee balm (*Monarda fistulosa*).

Little by little the plants have grown and propagated. This in spite of the fact that the soil is still "lean." Except for weeding and the occasional watering, nothing is done; no fertilizer or pesticides are used. Although only a

few butterflies have been seen, many bees have found the garden and some can be seen in the spring trying to burrow into the open ground.

This year we were able to donate divisions and seedlings of our plants to Centretown United Church's Donation Garden (this year's OHS community project) for their new pollinator garden.

If you are in the area, come by and take a look.

PHOTOS BY GLORIA SOLA:

1. Butterfly weed - *Asclepias tuberosa*
2. Overall garden
3. Beardtongue - *Penstemon hirsutus*
4. Sneezeweed - *Helenium autumnale*





AN URBAN POLLINATOR GARDEN

BY ADEY L. FARAH

The Frank Street Bee and Butterfly Garden starts at the corner of Bank Street by Books Bazaar and extends on the north side of Frank alongside the Staples parking lot. The project started in June 2021. City Councillor Catherine McKenney expedited permission to use the City property. Volunteer-run, it is affiliated with the Trees & Greenspace Committee of Centretown Community Association. It will be an oasis for pollinators in downtown Ottawa. Wildflowers in the garden include 54 native species and 31 non-native plants.

IMPORTANCE OF POLLINATORS

With farmers and gardeners using pesticides and the disappearance of habitats for insects to live in, bee and butterfly populations are in sharp decline throughout much of the world. The Frank Street Bee and Butterfly Garden is dedicated to doing what they can to attract pollinators rather than swat them away. Realizing that planting native plants is so important (and not everyone is so inclined), we chose species that are better suited to adapt to the local ecosystem, in turn providing the nectar and pollen that pollinators require. If you take a stroll down the block, you'll find species such as New England aster and sneezeweed that attract bees, and purple coneflower that attracts a variety of butterflies.

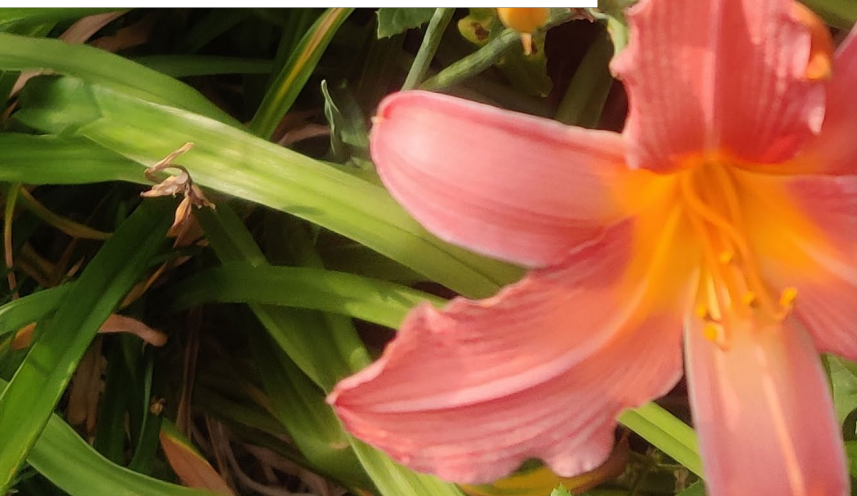
VOLUNTEER DRIVEN

"Seeing people come together to work on positive goals is the best for me. Organizing the people is even more chaotic than managing the plants, but so worth it as the "flower of kindness" comes out." "I love to work with the pollinator garden because it's praxis. Meeting my community, practising direct ecological love and learning are all fulfilling to the soul." These sentiments come from our volunteers Carlos and Sam about what keeps them volunteering at the garden. All are welcome to join, regardless of experience! Volunteers perform a variety of tasks needed to keep the garden (and our pollinator friends) happy. From weeding to watering to collecting data on observed pollinators to maintaining the fairy sanctuary - all in good fun and with community, the garden has become both a social and learning environment for volunteers.



JOIN US

Every Wednesday at 6:30 pm, volunteers meet at the Frank Street Garden. It's an opportunity to understand how the garden is run, learn from others, and see what work needs to be done in the garden - an opportunity to breathe some fresh air all while helping your local ecosystem.



THE NEW ESTHETICS OF WILDLIFE GARDENING

by Rebecca Last

One silver lining of Covid has been online learning. I was enthralled by the “Tending Nature” series offered by Ohio State University. (The recordings are still available). Talks from scientists like Douglas Tallamy, who spoke to the OHS in May 2021, provide fact-based tools for home gardeners so we can all become better stewards of our small slices of planet Earth.

Many flowering plants offer nectar and pollen for pollinators. However, gardening for wildlife means choosing native plants that will support the whole food web, providing food, water, and shelter for creatures throughout their lifecycles. For example, insect larvae eat plants, converting the energy that plants get from the sun into food for anyone who eats the larvae. A single pair of breeding chickadees needs six to nine thousand caterpillars to rear one clutch of young. Fortunately, Tallamy’s research tells us which plant species are most beneficial. Native trees and shrubs such as oaks, willows, cherries, pines, and poplars are so useful for supporting wildlife that they are considered keystone species.

Many native plants are easy to love both for their ornamental value and ease of care. I’ve always had lots of native plants but changing my maintenance routine to accommodate wildlife has been more challenging. For example, supporting insects in their larval state so they can feed birds means putting up with chewed leaves – something gardeners usually try to avoid. Now when I see caterpillars munching a prized plant, I remind myself that without caterpillars, there are no butterflies and

fewer birds. Eventually, the bird population will catch up and keep the caterpillars in check.

The Queen Bee of garden maintenance for wildlife is probably Rebecca McMackin, who honed these techniques during her ten years as Director of Horticulture at Brooklyn Bridge Park (BBP). Horticultural work at BBP is oriented around the life cycles of over-wintering bugs and migrating birds. For example, a resident birder advises the horticultural staff on the best timing for pruning shrubs and planting new trees, so the birds’ breeding and brooding cycles are not disturbed.

I’m a lazy gardener so foregoing the fall cleanup is not a problem! Good thing, as it turns out many native bees and other wildlife overwinter in our gardens. Leaving herbaceous plants provides winter food for birds, nesting sites for native bees and winter interest for me looking out on an otherwise undifferentiated snowy garden. Early in my gardening career I learned to leave the fall leaves or rake them onto garden beds where they provide extra insulation for plants and shelter for overwintering wildlife such as toads and woolly bear caterpillars, which later become gorgeous isabella tiger moths (*Pyrrharctia isabella*).



Two crab apple trees (*Malus* spp.) but the one on the right offers a soft landing, while critters descending from the one on the left have to brave lawnmower blades. Photo by R. Last.

Changing my spring clean-up routine has been more difficult. I used to love pulling back last year’s dead, brown material to reveal the fresh, green growth of early spring. At BBP, dead plant material is left standing not just for winter, but also during the spring, when migrating birds need those standing seed heads.

To avoid harming native bees and other insects that lay their eggs in the hollow stems of native plants, I practised a “chop and drop” technique for spring clean-up. This entailed removing the stems in spring and leaving them to lie undisturbed. However, the result is unattractive and experts like **Heather Holm** and **Lorraine Johnson** taught me this is also not the best approach. When the stems are open at both ends, baby bees are more vulnerable to predators. A better method, both esthetically and for protecting wildlife, is to chop just the tops off the stems, leaving twenty to sixty centimeters (8” to 24”) standing to host baby bees. New growth quickly conceals the older stems, which will eventually rot down to enrich your soil.

McMackin notes that many gardening traditions originated in very different circumstances and may not serve our current purposes. For example, park-like settings with widely spaced trees and little undergrowth echo the historical landscapes of stately European homes where the gentry practised deer and fox hunting.

In older neighbourhoods like mine, we often see a large native tree anchoring a garden landscape. These trees offer many benefits to wildlife but when they stand in the middle of a lawn or next to a driveway, wildlife suffers. Species like moths, butterflies, bumble bees, fireflies, lacewings, and beetles spend part of their lifecycle on the ground. If the ground is asphalt or a neatly mowed lawn, it becomes a death trap. Bee expert Heather Holm offers a solution – provide a **“soft landing.”** This is your excuse to take up a bit more lawn and create another garden bed around your tree so plantings of native species, plus leaf litter, duff, and dead plant material, provide shelter for ground-dwelling wildlife.

Similarly, many of us were trained to separate plants in the garden so each could be admired individually. Mulched spaces between plants created a neutral backdrop that highlights the beauty of individual plants. However, many kinds of mulch offer little shelter for wildlife, can prevent ground-nesting native bees from moving into your garden, and impede the lives of beneficial soil organisms. BBP offers a **useful guide** to when and how

mulch should be applied. A living mulch of densely planted low-growing native plants offers the best option for supporting wildlife.

The challenge with a closely planted garden, especially when we minimize maintenance, is that it can start to look like a jungle. The solution is “mullet gardening.” Like the 1980s haircut, it’s business up front and a party in the back. The idea is to create an intentional edge to garden beds, so they look neat up front, while still providing habitat for the wildlife we want to welcome. With more birdsong, frogs and other visiting wildlife, I’m learning to love the jungle, and you can too!

Thanks to Carol English and Douglas Tallamy for providing editorial reviews of the foregoing.



An example of “chop & drop” in mid-May in the author’s garden. Esthetically unsightly, this is also not the best strategy for wildlife. Photo by R. Last.



A study in contrasts – traditional gardening on the left, with a more wildlife friendly garden on the right side of this semi-detached house. The intentional, mowed edge on the right creates a neat frame and is an example of “mullet” gardening. Photo by R. Last.



Taken to extremes, showcasing individual plants results in “separation anxiety”. Photo by R. Last.



THE PLAGUE AND THE OHS

A SHORT TRIP INTO HISTORY

By DJ Smith

Sometime in 2020, Sheila Burvill asked me what happened to the OHS during the 1918-1919 flu pandemic. How did they cope, assuming that they too were shut down without, of course, our communication technology?

The answer turned out to be that things were different a hundred years ago - Ottawa was a different city, public health was a different structure with a different amount of science behind it and, above all, the OHS was a very different Society.

What should probably be called the 1918-1920 influenza came at the world in three waves. After that, the virus settled down into the common-place seasonal illness, although with occasional severe outbreaks that have persisted up to the present day. The origin of the influenza virus is as obscure as that of the Coronavirus causing Covid-19, though with less politics and rhetoric. The only thing the various influenza origin theories agree on is that Spain had nothing to do with it.

What the world was dealing with was a new strain of Influenza A (H1N1), which possibly made the cross-species jump to humans

about 1917. Yet, because it was influenza, the medical establishment assumed they were dealing with a variant of the influenza they had known before. Not realizing it was a new strain meant they did not foresee just how fast and how far it would spread, nor how deadly it was to be. What did not help was the censorship of war.

In the spring of 1918, Ottawans would have had no idea from reading the newspapers that the first wave of a pandemic was underway. As the press was not reporting stories that might cause general dismay, there were only occasional stories of eminent individuals having influenza. Certainly there was nothing to suggest anything other than normal seasonal influenza. And so life continued as usual, including for the OHS. Over four evenings in the week of March 11th, 1918, it held a special series of well-attended public meetings on war-time gardening.



News started to come out in July with reports of outbreaks on ships entering the ports in eastern Canada. This was the wrong time of year for seasonal influenza but the news remained upbeat. Even as some sailors were reported as having died on the voyage, those who were merely sick were recovering well. By September, however, it was clear this flu was a bigger threat than first reported.

Yet Ontario's public health establishment was still dismissing concerns over the flu. Ottawans read on September 21, 1918 that the Ontario Officer of Health said too much fuss was being made about the flu and the outbreak would disappear once the wet cool weather of the day turned warm. On September 25th the *Journal* reported the advice of an Ottawa doctor. He was certain there was no reason an outbreak would happen in Ottawa but if you did start to feel chills followed by a high fever and body aches, go to bed, call a doctor and follow instructions.

Despite the official line on September 25th that nothing significant was happening, on the 26th the *Journal* carried five news items on the outbreak. As front page news, the *Journal* quoted various local doctors who stated that the illness was the usual annual influenza. However, no one actually knew how many cases there were in Ottawa, or anywhere else, because the province had not declared influenza a communicable disease. Doctors were only reporting cases that ended in death. But, in the back pages, the *Journal* carried a statement from Ottawa's

Board of Health warning that this influenza was very infectious. To protect oneself it was important, according to the Board of Health, to maintain "vitality" through fresh air, exercise, and moderation in eating and drinking. Death was only a possibility if poor health led to the complication of pneumonia.

The emergency nature of the disease became clear as the medical system began to buckle at the end of September. By October 7th, one Ottawa hospital with a normal capacity of 146 patients had admitted 196, while another hospital had 17 nurses off sick.

With no direction coming from the Province, on October 4th Mayor Harold Fisher called together Ottawa's Board of Health. The doctors continued to advise keeping healthy by fresh air, exercise, and moderate food and drink but with one new suggestion: wear a handkerchief or other bit of cloth over the nose and mouth. However, at no time, despite all the pictures of masked people which we see in so many influenza history books, were masks mandated. A history of the British experience actually found that people who wore masks were a minority.

The Board of Health and the Mayor went one step further than just advice. They ordered closed, effective the next day, October 5th, all public gathering places including schools, theatres and any other such places. Churches were the only exceptions but they asked churches to voluntarily refrain from holding services. Most of the churches did this or

limited their services to the bare minimum. To be quite clear, the Board and the Mayor also declared all lectures and public meetings cancelled. The shut-down lasted five weeks.

And this is where we finally come to Sheila's question. What happened to the OHS? Well, as I started by saying, the OHS of 1918 was a different Society from today's OHS. We now aim to spread horticultural knowledge and the love of growing plants through talks, with competitions as supplements to show the best possible specimens of blooms. Then, the Society was dominated by the Victorian idea that people learned by seeing good examples and they were encouraged to learn by the spirit of competition. Shows were king in the old OHS.

The main job of the Directors was to run the committees that put on the flower shows that made up the public outreach of the Society. In 1918 there were six shows, all of which took place as scheduled between May 14 and August 29. When influenza became a known health danger in September, the OHS had finished its program for the year.

All that was left to do in October and November was the nomination meeting for Board members (usually end of October) and the Annual General Meeting (usually early in November). All members were invited to

attend the nomination meeting so, technically, it was a public meeting and therefore under the order to close. In practice it seems a bare handful of members came out, usually the Board and Board hopefuls plus one or two duty-driven members. Nevertheless, the Board obeyed the health order. The 1918 minutes stated that "due to influenza" the nomination meeting was held on November 14. This was immediate upon the lifting of the closures when schools, theatres, churches and all were allowed to go back to normal living. This delay of about two weeks then caused the AGM to be delayed to November 22, with the minutes again saying "due to influenza."

And so Sheila's question led me on a short history trip—effectively a short by-pass of one of the big stories at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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CLOSE SCHOOLS, THEATRES, ETC. TO CHECK "FLU"

Drastic Action Taken by Ottawa Board of Health at Special Meeting; Also Asking Churches to Discontinue Services on Sunday.

ORGANIZE REGISTRY OF NURSES TO GRAPPLE WITH THE EPIDEMIC

Every theatre, every school and seminary, and all places for public gathering in the city, are closed to the public until further notice.

Such is the drastic action taken by the local Board of Health at a special meeting in the City Hall, which lasted until after midnight on Friday, to check the spread of the influenza epidemic, which is reported to be increasing hourly. In addition to closing the above-mentioned institutions and places, the board is requesting the churches of the city to discontinue divine service on Sunday, and the owners of the Ottawa Electric Street Railway to ventilate their cars as much as possible until further notice.

Saturday: Some showers.

OL. XXXIII.—No. 201.

OTTAWA, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1918.—TWENTY-FOUR PAGES.

HOME EDITION.

PRICE TWO CENTS.

CONSIDER CLOSING CHURCHES TO STAY EPIDEMIC

BRITISH LANDING AT VLADIVOSTOK

MAY BE TOO DEAD IN AN EXPLOSION IN NEW JERSEY

Great Shell Landing, Fleet Wrecked By Fire and High Blow-Up.

SHELLS WHISTLED OVER

Exploding Ammunition Keeps Rescue Parties Busy From the Wreck.

AMERICAN STEAMER IN FLAMES

REAR ADMIRAL, U.S. NAVY, SAYS THAT THE STEAMER WAS WRECKED BY A MISSILE WHICH HIT THE FORWARD PART OF THE STEAMER.

THE FOREIGNER PROBLEM FACES THE METHODISTS

ANY HUN DEAD YANKS CHARGED

As the Canadian Or the British.

HULL CITY. Public Notice.

At a meeting of the Hull Board of Health, held on October 10th, the following resolution was adopted:

Moved by Ald. Navion, seconded by Ald. Lambert, in view of the outbreak of Spanish Influenza, it has been found necessary to adopt measures to curb it. It is therefore decreed that all schools, theaters and poolrooms in the city, shall be closed, and public gatherings discontinued. All stores in the city shall close every evening at 6 o'clock with the exception of Saturday.

Religious authorities are requested to shorten services and physicians ordered to make semi-weekly reports of cases of La Grippe, so the Board of Health may watch the progress of the epidemic.—(Advt.)

LEADING MEN OF NEW YORK CLEAR LECTURER'S NAME

Researcher and August Belmont Make Statements Violating New Van der Fluor.

LEAVE: G. H. ROCHESTER.

MINISTERS MEET TO DECIDE ABOUT CHURCHES' ACTION

EMERGENCY MEETING OF MIN. ALSO BARON VILHELM A. H. B.

GERMANS SEEK TO RETARD ADVANCE BY NEW ATTACKS

LOCAL GAINS AT MANY POINTS ON WESTERN FRONT

British Round Up 500 Prisoners in Their Operations Yesterday.

FINCH ARE ACROSS THE AISNE CANAL

about Fighting Continues To North Of St. Quentin, Says Paris War Office.

PAKISTAN GOVT. Closes the doors of French and American consulates in Calcutta to check the spread of the epidemic.

DEATH AND GRIEF, says service men of the British, according to the War Office statement today.

DEATH OF THE BRIDGE THE FRENCH, in touch with the German guards, have reached the bridge southeast of Brest.

WORK OUT THEIR OWN Determination.

THEY ARE NOT SURE.

BOTANICAL ARTISTS

IN OTTAWA

BY GILLIAN MACDONNELL



The OSBA group working at the Ornamental Gardens at the Experimental Farm, copyright Kerri Weller.

Over the past decade, botanical art organizations have come into being across Canada, nurtured by local botanical art classes and inspired by the global renaissance in the genre. One of these is the Ottawa Society of Botanical Artists (OSBA).

Botanical artists portray plant subjects with accuracy and artistry, within the fine art traditions of drawing, painting and printmaking. Watercolour, graphite or coloured pencil are customarily used to create the artwork by hand. The plant is the focus of the work and identifiable to genus if not species. Botanical art is created for scientific illustrations, commercial and fine art purposes.

The City of Ottawa's Nepean Visual Arts Centre (NVAC) played a key role in the development of botanical art in the National Capital Region. Beginning in 2006, NVAC worked with instructor and botanical artist Kerri Weller (kerriweller.ca) to present classes in botanical art and to hold small exhibitions of students' artworks. Today, NVAC continues to expand its classes offered by botanical art instructors.

In 2012, Kerri and a core group of students joined together for exhibitions, meetings and fellowship. Today, over 40 botanical artists in the region gather under the OSBA umbrella.

The group's aim is to create a greater awareness of both the region's botanical artists and the plants they portray. Membership and botanical subjects are drawn from the National Capital Region. Member meetings and guest speaker presentations are regularly held on the second Monday in April, June, September and November.

OSBA provides its members, whether new to botanical art, experienced botanical artists, or botanical art enthusiasts, a welcoming community where they can develop and pursue their interest in botanical art. Many members have flourishing gardens as well – what better place to keep your specimens close.



Hydrangea leaf
by Gillian Macdonnell

OSBA exhibition venues have ranged from City of Ottawa galleries to a major exhibition. In 2018, members created the exhibition "Plant Portraits: Native Plants of Canada," presented by the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum. Also in 2018, volunteers from OSBA worked with colleagues countrywide and our partner, the Canadian Museum of Nature, to produce a national botanical art exhibition and a three-day conference in Ottawa that brought together botanical artists from across Canada. The resulting "Art of the Plant" exhibition was displayed in the museum's Stone Wall Gallery and viewed by over 21,000 visitors! The juried component of "Art of the Plant" included works by five OSBA members.

March 2020 saw the closure of public spaces around the world because of the COVID-19 pandemic. With local art classes cancelled, and motivated to stay connected, a small group of Ottawa botanical artists banded together to make a calendar and mark this extraordinary year. The group learned skills beyond botanical art to produce the calendar for family and friends.

This year's projects include creating their website, making another calendar, and mounting an online exhibition in the Fall. Never a dull moment with this group.

**To find out more about the
Ottawa Society of Botanical
Artists and perhaps become a
member, see
www.ottawasocietyofbotanicalartists.ca**



Lisianthus
by Gillian Macdonnell

GREENLEAF NURSERY

MONETIZING A HOBBY

By Alex Epp

I have always been a vegetable gardener. For a long time, I have had an interest and passion for growing my own food. As I've moved around throughout my twenties, I think I've tried to grow vegetables in every conceivable way. I have built my own raised beds, I have grown herbs on my windowsill, I have tried to grow massive indeterminate tomatoes in large pots on the driveway, and I have simply dug a hole and planted something with no other prep at all. One thing has always remained constant in my gardening adventures: I have always started my own seeds.

Seed starting is a completely different skill set from gardening. Some people hate it – it's much more clinical than gardening, and unpredictable. When it goes wrong, it can affect your whole season. I love it, though. When I'm starting seeds, I get to play around in the dirt while there's still snow on the ground. Best of all, I can pick my own varieties of plants, and avoid going to an overcrowded greenhouse that has more whiteflies than useful information about the plants they are selling.

Recently, my husband and I moved to a new house. It was (and still is) a bit of a fixer-upper, but we love the neighbourhood, and it offers us a lot of space and potential. Also, attached to the kitchen and garage there was an interesting little addition: a 12' x 8' greenhouse. We were not specifically looking for one, but this greenhouse kind of fell into our laps.



We moved in November 2021, and have been renovating ever since. Somehow, in between the renovations and our day jobs, it became clear that we would be embarking on a much larger gardening project than we had ever taken on in the past. With a greenhouse to extend our season, we had an interesting opportunity to start more plants than ever. We were going to need to invest in some equipment to make it happen: a heater; some work benches; shelving, lights and heat mats for seed starting; pots, soil, fertilizer; the list goes on. For a hobby, the costs were starting to add up.

We decided that we would sell some plants to cover some of the costs so, in February, I started my first seeds: tomatoes, peppers, and some herbs. It was the perfect time to start the peppers, but too early for the tomatoes. This was a recurring theme – I didn't want to be too



late with my veggie seedlings, but being too early meant that my limited space was soon stretched. I spent hours repotting and re-organizing my seedlings. My tomatoes quickly outgrew even the greenhouse. By April we were hanging grow lights in our garage – and learning about how you can use temperature to control their growth!

My ideal scenario was to sell my seedlings online, and have folks come and pick them up in person. This was not as successful as I had hoped. I made a website, and took nice pictures of my seedlings. I found that family and friends were happy to shop online but, although I was able to direct traffic to my site, most strangers wanted to come and look at them first. I held a few driveway sales as the weather warmed up, and these were far more successful than I thought. People were very willing to stop their car or take a detour to check out a plant sale.

Overall, I ended up selling about half of what I planted initially. This was both better, and not as good as I had hoped. It seems like one part of me expected complete and utter failure, while the other seemed to expect instant and wild success. It went a good part of the way to covering our infrastructure costs, and whatever I didn't sell I planted in my own fledgling backyard garden (which we are harvesting and canning from now!).

Currently, my renovations have overtaken my business aspirations, and I have not yet expanded into other types of plants. I have started planning next year's edible seedlings: there was a lot of demand for dwarf or patio

varieties of crops; herbs were much more popular than I anticipated; and apparently no one wants to grow their own eggplant. As well, most people buying seedlings are interested in novelty vegetables that might come in unexpected colours or shapes (e.g., purple bell peppers, lemon cucumbers, cucamelons). Moving forward, I would love to be able to supply Ontario native plants to my customers. I also have a dream of learning about and getting into the world of orchids and roses.

It has been an interesting and rewarding journey to start thinking about my longtime hobby as a business, and there is still lots to learn. I expect that I will continue to sell plants for many years, but I also expect that I will continue to be an extremely small-scale operation. I hope to continue using permaculture principles to operate my own garden and as much of the nursery business as possible. I hope to continue to be able to offer people help and advice as they look to grow their own flowers, herbs, and food. I also expect that I will continue to enjoy working my day job – at this scale, a nursery business cannot be expected to replace a salary income.

I also hope to be able to share my journey with friends and followers as I continue to learn and grow. If you want to follow along, check out my website at www.greenleafnursery.ca, and follow me on social media. I also hope to hear more from my customers: Do you buy seedlings or start your own? What types of seedlings would you look to buy for your garden? I hope to hear from you soon!



NATURAL AUTUMN LAWN MAINTENANCE FOR A BEAUTIFUL LAWN & GARDEN

by James Edgar

IMAGE: Lawn maintenance https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lawn_maintenance.jpg

A soft, green grass lawn can be an invaluable part of any garden. There is no better playing field for lawn sports and games, it is an essential platform for picnicking, and a great spot for kids and pets to hang out in the summer sun. It also brings great benefits for your garden by producing a consistent supply of what I like to call “green gold” - grass clippings! These are an essential part of my organic gardening practice as an organic mulch for my vegetables, and a popular high-nitrogen addition to my compost heap.

Autumn is the perfect time of year to take a good look at your lawn and do some maintenance (or a full-on renovation!) to get it ready for next spring. This is especially true for those of us who do not like to use pesticides, fungicides or herbicides in our quest for a beautiful, healthy lawn. Timing is everything in the garden, and the same goes for your lawn.

I will lay out my usual fall routine here, and then go into detail into one of the most misunderstood steps: de-thatching.

I strongly believe that every lawn can benefit from the following exercise in the fall, and I like to aim to do it around Labour Day weekend. If you can get all of this done in a day or two, that is best. You want as much time as possible for the sward (a term used to describe the grass and soil that it has grown into) to mature and prepare for winter. If you do it right, you should be able to look out over your lush grass until our Ottawa snow covers it up!

FALL ROUTINE

- 1 MOW LOW.** Mow as low as you can comfortably get with your mower and grass type. Depending on whether you use a rotary or cylinder mower will determine how low you can go.
- 2 CORE AERATION.** This will pull plugs from the lawn and allow you to fill the holes with the top dressing material of your choice. Be sure to collect these cores with a rake, or a scarifier (see below), before moving on to the next step. Otherwise, they can flatten out when compressed and smother your grass.
- 3 DE-THATCH.** Don't be afraid to rent a power rake unless you are looking for quite a workout with a hand-rake!
- 4 TOP DRESS.** I like to use a mix of 50/50 compost (or topsoil) and sand. You want to use a coarse screened sand like masonry sand. The sand will always sink down to the lowest spots, promoting a level lawn and good drainage over time. The compost or topsoil will help with your soil life and culture. While this step is possible with a wheelbarrow and a rake, I would recommend a top-dresser or soil spreader.
- 5 FERTILIZE.** I usually use a “starter fertilizer” to promote quick germination and strong early growth. If you have good nutritious compost, you can probably skip this step, but otherwise look for something with low nitrogen (N) that provides good phosphorus (P) and potassium (K).
- 6 OVERSEED, WATER, AND WAIT!** Remember when we said to mow your lawn as low as possible? This is because you want to let the seedlings catch up to the established grass.

DE-THATCHING

Autumn is a great time to inspect your lawn for signs of summer wear-and-tear, like a build-up of thatch (old grass stems, dead moss and other debris) in the profiling of your lawn. If you find that your lawn does have quite significant amounts of thatch, then it is important to handle the situation appropriately to avoid damage. Take a look at the image on the right - you will see a thick thatch layer. This thatch can stop water and nutrients getting to your grass roots.

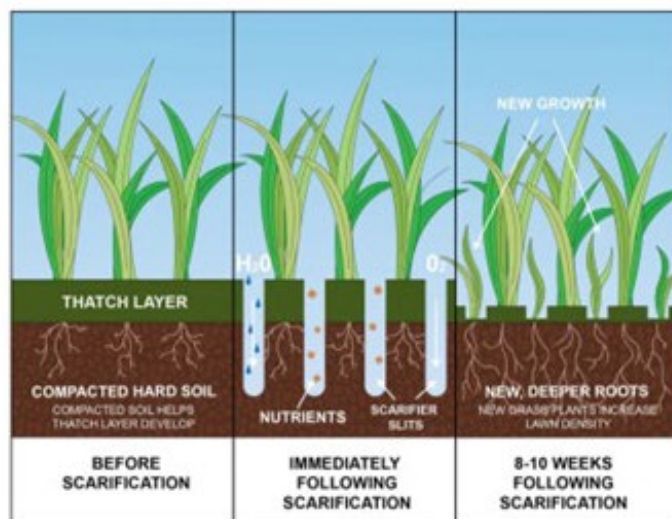
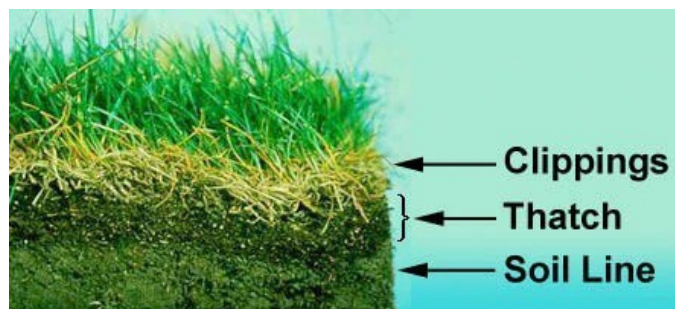
I recommend that you should be scarifying (creating shallow cuts into the thatch layer, and removing debris) your lawn "little and often," meaning at least once a month during the mowing season. Regular scarifying of your lawn keeps thatch at an acceptable and manageable level that will not cause damage to your lawn. This is crucial, as large layers of thatch (i.e., greater than half a centimeter deep) can stop water, fertilizer and other nutrients from reaching the roots of your grass.

If you are leaving thatch to build up all summer, you could be starving your lawn of nutrients and water at a time when it needs it the most. You may find that if you don't scarify over the summer months your lawn will turn yellow quickly because it is starved of water. A thatchy sward could also be affecting the height of cut that you are able to achieve, and the colour of your grass.

In fact, if you have a very thatchy lawn and you put fertilizer down, you will see that fertilizer has very little effect. This is because the thatch is absorbing the fertilizer before it has a chance to make it to the roots of the grass. Older lawns that have not been scarified regularly can sometimes have up to four inches of thatch above the soil, which is no good for the grass plant and should be acted upon rather quickly.

HOW TO REDUCE THATCH

The first tip is to not drop your grass clippings. This reduces the amount of material that will build up in the thatch layer. What do you do with those clippings? I like to mulch my veggies with them, or mix them into my compost heap as a high-nitrogen, 'green' material.



The next tip is to reduce thatch slowly. This will be a rather mechanical exercise which involves cutting into the thatch layer and removing material a little bit at a time. I suggest "little and often" so your lawn has a chance to recover, as de-thatching can be traumatic for existing grass.

Thatch reduction can be done by hand with a common garden rake – I did this manually for many years, and I have the biceps to prove it! Now, I use an Allett cylinder mower with a few different attachments to save me some time and effort. **You can learn more about those at www.allett.ca.**

You might be amazed at how much material comes out of your thatch layer, and your lawn will thank you for it!

If you are interested in learning more about pesticide- and herbicide-free cultural practices, check out www.allett.ca for some inspiration.

ABOUT US

This newsletter is published by the Ottawa Horticultural Society (OHS) and is distributed to OHS members free of charge.

We depend on our members for ideas, articles and information about what is going on in the gardening community.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO:

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The newsletter welcomes articles about all aspects of gardening.

A Submission and Style Guide has been prepared and is available on the OHS website:

<https://ottawahort.org/previous-ohs-newsletters/>

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