



Coming Events

Unless otherwise indicated the following events take place at 7:30 p.m. at the **Tom Brown Arena**, 141 Bayview Road. Consult the 2017 yearbook for a complete list of events for the year.

Website:

Ottawahort.org

April 28

A Dream Becomes Reality

Darren Heinbecker, Whistling Gardens

Sunday, May 14

Friends of the Farm Rare and Unusual Plant Sale

Sunday May 23 – Auction and Plant Sale

Auctioneer: Marilyn Light

June 27—Summer Show; and Front Yard Edibles

Jordan Bouchard, Coordinator of Community Garden Network of Just Food Ottawa

Saturday, September 9 - Fall Sale—

Held at the Old Ottawa South Porch Sale

The mission of the OHS is to cultivate an interest in plants and gardening in order to create a beautiful community.

Spring Newsletter

Ottawa Horticultural Society and Friends of the Farm Anniversary Projects

by Blaine Marchand & Tuula Talvila

2017 is a double anniversary year – Canada's 150th since Confederation, and the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Ottawa Horticultural Society. To celebrate these, the OHS proposed to the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm that, together, the two organizations undertake a commemorative project in the Ornamental Gardens at the Farm.

Several planning meetings have taken place between OHS and Friends members, and the project is well underway. Some information was provided to OHS members in a winter edition of the Grapevine and here is an update on the project activities. The project has two components: information panels about plant hybridizers and a planting of historical perennials. The information panels will be about noted plant hybridizers connected to the Central Experimental Farm, including Isabella Preston, A.P. (Percy) Saunders, and Dr. Felicitas Svejda, and there will also be a general panel on hybridization at the Farm. Each panel will contain a QR code which will allow visitors with a smartphone to access more information on the Farm's illustrious history of hybridization, as well as on the important work done by individual hybridizers: Preston on lilacs, Saunders on peonies, and Svejda on Explorer Roses. This information will be housed on the websites of the OHS and the Friends, and will include photos to accompany the text. Both the texts and photographs will be taken largely from the beautiful book,

Blooms: An Illustrated History of the Ornamental Gardens at the Central Experimental Farm by Friends member Richard Hinchcliff. All panels will be in French and English.



Pergola amongst Explorer roses, where the information panels will be mounted (photo by Tuula Talvila)

The panels will be located in the pergola surrounded by Explorer Roses and close to the Preston lilac collection. It seems a fitting structure to house these information panels, as twenty-five years ago the OHS worked with the Friends of the Farm to install the structure to honour the OHS's 100th anniversary. Both societies believe it is important that visitors to the Ornamental Gardens learn about the critical role the Farm and the individual hybridizers played in creating ornamental plants that are adapted to our region's climate and are so beloved by gardeners today.

The second component of the project will be a planting of historical perennials in the Macoun Memorial Garden. This garden, located at the north end of the Ornamental Gardens near the NCC Driveway, was opened in 1936 to commemorate William T. Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist from 1910 until 1933, on the site of his former house. With its sunken garden, sundial, and

pond, the garden is a favourite spot for photos. Macoun, by the way, was President of the OHS in 1899.



The Macoun Memorial Garden (photo by Richard Hinchcliff)

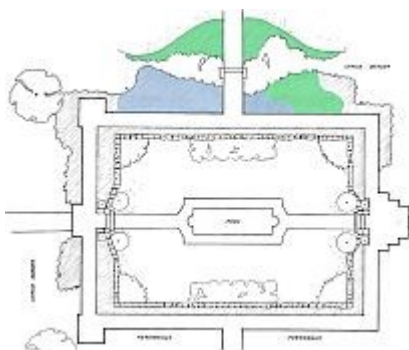
In 1916, Macoun co-authored an OHS document entitled *Ottawa, A City of Gardens*. Drawing upon this and other historical documentation, perennials favoured by Macoun will be planted in beds around the northern entrance to the garden close to the Driveway. This will be a two-year project, as time will be required to learn about the conditions, soil, and light in this part of the garden, and to access perennial plants from Macoun's era that will do well in this environment. Most likely, 2017 will see an array of annuals while the learning process is underway, but the colour scheme will respect colours preferred by Macoun in his plantings.

The current state of affairs for the various project tasks is as follows:

- Text for the information panels has been approved by Agriculture and Agri-Foods Canada and French translation is underway. Construction of the panels is commencing.
- A list of potential historical perennials is being drawn up, and we will then attempt to obtain some of these plants from other gardens with historical plantings, such as Rideau Hall and Mapelawn, and from OHS members. In the coming months, we will be providing a list of the plants we'll be seeking. Please check the Grapevine for further details.
- An application was submitted to the Ontario Horticultural Association for a Special Project Grant in

the amount of \$500 to be used for purchasing perennials.

- Lastly, we have a number of volunteers who have offered to help with planting, and we would be happy to have more. Please contact Tuula Talvila (tuula@ncf.ca) if you are interested in joining the planting group this spring, or have inquiries about the projects in general.



Green and blue areas indicate beds for historical perennial plantings in the Macoun garden

On Saturday, June 10th, the Friends of the Farm will be holding tours of the Ornamental Gardens and we plan to use that as the "opening day" of the Anniversary Projects. The information panels will have been installed and OHS members will be on hand in the pergola to introduce them to visitors and provide direction to the related plantings of lilacs, peonies, and roses. Similarly, members will be in the Macoun Memorial Garden to explain the historical perennial plantings and outline the plans for the garden. The Friends and OHS will be working together to publicize the event.

2017 will be a year of celebration. What better way than to have two of the key horticultural organizations in the capital working jointly to celebrate the significant contributions of the Farm.



President's Message

by Jamie Robertson

This past winter seemed to be topsyturvy; temperatures were all over the map with periods in the deep freeze and other periods of unseasonably mild temperatures. The snowfall, while apparently only above average, seemed to be concentrated in a few big storms and with only small amounts over extended days in February. It always is amazing how our gardens and plants can survive such climatic conditions, but most of them seem to do so successfully. Like good Ottawans, they have had to learn how to make it through.

Nonetheless, spring is always a period of renewal and hope, a time of fresh starts and boundless possibilities. All those garden catalogues and magazines have been teasing and tempting us in the cold, dark months. They are so packed with ideas. The seeds that we have ordered, or bought at Seedy Saturday, hold great potential. The first green shoots coming up, the swelling buds on the trees, spur on our optimism.

Spring is also a season of opportunities for the OHS. We are always seeking new members – and hoping new gardeners will join us so we can share our enthusiasms together. But existing members can also involve themselves in new ways. As the OHS is a volunteer organization, there are committees and activities that would benefit from willing hands and time.

Our two largest fundraisers are held in spring. This year, the annual Mother's Day plant sale at the Friends of the Farm is on May 14th, and our own annual plant auction and sale is on Tuesday, May 23. Donations of plant material and volunteers for these two events need your participation. Your contributions are welcomed and greatly appreciated. And as a side benefit, both sales are great places to pick up locally-grown choice plants.

The return of good weather means our

community planting and garden tours get underway. So if you would like to help with either of these, let us know. And, of course, our regular programs and activities continue apace.

If neighbours or passers-by stop to admire your garden and to chat about plants, please talk up the OHS and encourage them to join. If you meet a person who is new to gardening, you can also promote the OHS. Our society provides the opportunity for gardeners to meet and share ideas on successful gardening in the climatically-challenging National Capital region.

Happy gardening!

Did You Know

There is a Children's Garden located at the corner of Main and Clegg Streets in old Ottawa East. You will recognize it easily by the fence made from old hockey sticks, variously painted in a rainbow of colours. The garden is administered by a group of volunteers from the Children's Garden Advisory Board, who have gradually developed the parkette to entice children to take part in gardening activities or simply to enjoy being in a garden. For instance, vegetable and herb beds were planted by children (aided by helpful adults), and regular gatherings of pre-schoolers with their parents or caregivers in tow occurred throughout the spring, summer, and fall. But not this year!

Soil testing carried out by the City has revealed shallow contamination of some of the soil. This must be removed and replaced with safe dirt. Apparently the contamination is dangerous only if soil is ingested. But who among us has not, as a child, had dirt in the mouth at one time or another? The garden is expected to re-open in 2018.

Bytown's Shiners War and Control of the Bathurst District Agricultural Society: When Gentility, Politics and Amateur Societies Met

by D.J. Smith

We enjoy our horticultural society today as a place to learn about plants in the company of fellow enthusiasts. But in the early nineteenth century, the agricultural societies which directly spawned Ontario's horticultural societies were deeply entrenched within power relationships. And in Upper Canada, where there was power, there was often violence—even in an amateur society dedicated to the improvement of colonial livestock, crops, and horticultural knowledge.

Bytown had its own mini-Family Compact to complement the elite Tories who dominated Upper Canadian politics before the 1840s. Our elite were a small set of inter-related families made up of half-pay (or pensioned) military officers in Perth and Richmond, and settlers such as Hamnet Pinhey in March Township. The officers often had little money but they had rank and style. Pinhey had money from trade—a fortune too small unfortunately to buy the status of landed gentry in England but which he thought would be enough for the colonies. The two groups recognized each other as the "better sort" who were meant by a Providence (who was surely British) to dispense good Tory government in the backwoods. This also meant setting an example to the lesser folk of the district through cultural activities which displayed their gentility and, coincidentally, their right to power. Agricultural societies were the ultimate place in which these men shone in all their glory as cultured improvers of livestock, plants, and society in general.

Lumbermen such as Philemon Wright in Hull were outside the charmed circle. Nothing in Wright's life suggests he lost much sleep over this. Peter Aylen, however, did care, or more correctly, he cared about the power he could see in that circle. Aylen was a small lumberman who had arrived from Ireland about 1815. By the 1830s, he had reached a position of

some prominence in the Gatineau lumber trade limits as well as owning a substantial farm along the Richmond Road in Ottawa. But when he decided to try and control the timber trade, his method of choice was intimidation using unemployed Irish labourers. With the completion of the Rideau Canal, many had either moved on to other construction projects or had started farming, but there were enough left unemployed in the region to give Aylen his own private army of ruffians, the Shiners.

The violence Aylen unleashed began in 1832 in the shanties, pitting Irish against French Canadian. But while the shanty violence continued into the 1840s, his own ambitions were bigger than the lumber shanties. He wanted to control local politics. And that is where gentility and being part of such improving institutions as agricultural societies counted.

In August 1835, Aylen made his first big step in local politics and he did it at the Annual General Meeting of the Bathurst District Agricultural Society. The Bathurst District was a historic district in Upper Canada that existed until 1849. It was created in 1822 and contained Carleton County. Aylen arrived at the meeting with his raftsmen, crowding the room with men who did not normally show an interest in growing better fruit and vegetables. Each man paid his membership dollar. Then, when the election of officers began, Aylen struck. His men voted out the gentry executive who no doubt were astounded to have a real election underway. The raftsmen nominated from the floor men from among themselves to fill the positions and, worse from the view of the gentry, nominated and elected Aylen as president.

The gentry were able to block him when he made his next step in taking political control of local government. In the end, owning the agricultural society did not give him the Township political offices that were his ultimate target. What the gentry were not able to do was unseat him from the agricultural society. Instead, the Carleton County gentlemen were eventually forced to establish a new agricultural society.

Less than twenty years later, in 1854, Ottawa's civic elite came together in yet another improving society, the first Ottawa Horticultural Society. The founders might well have remembered the 1837 agricultural society election from their time as young men in Bytown. They would have remembered how once a society intended to improve agriculture was taken well beyond exhibits of apples to being a pawn in a very deadly political war. This did not stop them, however, from seeing the establishment of a horticultural society as an obligation of leadership in local society.

To read further on the history of horticultural societies that were formed in Ottawa between 1854 and 1892, please see Jeff Blackadar's article on the subject published in the Winter 2017 issue of the OHS newsletter.

Sources:

Carole Martin, *A History of Canadian Gardening*

Michael S. Cross, Peter Aylen (Valley) in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and "The Shiner's War" in *The Canadian Historical Review* (March 1973)



How to Prune your Rosebushes
Photo: Rosemary Campbell

Did You Know

The Ottawa Garden Days will run from June 9 to 18 in 2017.

Please see the OHS Garden Tours flyer for information on the tour we've arranged for members during Garden Days.

Editor's note: The original version of this article appeared in the April 2012 issue of the OHS newsletter. In this year of looking back at 125 years of our history (and the 150 years of Canada's), we thought it worthwhile to remind readers of this historic and significant walled garden on Richmond Road. Accordingly, we asked the author also to provide an update.

Maplelawn: Still a Garden for Everyone

by Kathryn Mikoski

A rich and exhaustive website exists for Maplelawn garden at www.maplelawn.ca. It contains all the facts about the property, the volunteers, and the plant materials, as well as many beautiful pictures. For this reason, I have chosen to offer a more personal view of the garden and to invite you to visit frequently and to volunteer if you have some time. The garden is at 529 Richmond Road (at Broadview Ave.), just west of Churchill Ave. You can reach it on the #2 bus, and there is plenty of on-street parking for those who drive.

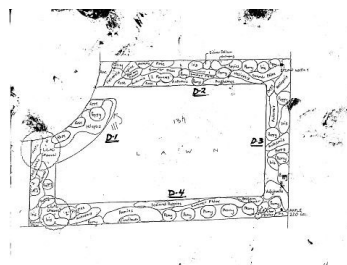
My relationship with Maplelawn began in 1984 when I moved to McKellar Park. It was my neighbour: a grand Georgian-style stone house built in the 1830's, complete with a walled garden. I would walk by, admiring the carpet of scillas in early spring, the tall phlox and poppies of summer, and the bright yellow heliopsis in the fall. At the time, I was vaguely aware that someone lived there and that the National Capital Commission (NCC) had some responsibility for the property. Then for a time, the house was vacant and I worried about vandalism and fire. Eventually, in about 1990, the house was rented to the Canadian School of Latin American Culture. Both the house and garden were declared heritage property. The NCC conducted a fall cleanup and began discussions about a call for volunteer help so that the grounds might be opened to the public at some point. But it wasn't until the summer of 1993 that the NCC sponsored the creation of a group of volunteers – the Friends of Maplelawn – to begin work on restoration of the neglected garden. At the same time, the house was re-

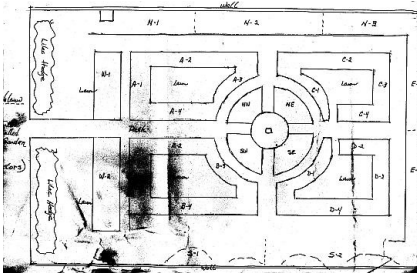
zoned to be developed as a commercial property separately from the garden.

I must have been naïve or out of my mind to think that I could make a meaningful contribution when I joined the several dozen volunteers at the inaugural meeting. I was a relatively new home owner with a challenging garden property of my own. I had a full time job and, with a partner, ran a Bed & Breakfast on the side. And, oh yes, there was also a lively dog to keep exercised. But I was concerned about the walled garden and eager to learn about plants that might serve well at my own century old house. My file reveals a document dated July 28, 1993, addressed to the Friends of Maplelawn Volunteers from Jim Curran, Chief of Operations, Capital Urban Lands, NCC, that states:

The Maplelawn Volunteers will commit to the project by "adopting" an area of the flower beds, and will make a determined effort during the late summer and fall of 1993 to remove the weeds, and reveal and document surviving cultivated plant material. After two major work parties, the gardeners will be familiar with the aims of the project, and the situation in the garden, and will thereafter work to individual timetables.

We were issued with nametags authorizing us to be on the property. We were headed by the very able and dedicated Ann Falkner and Nancy E.M. Smith. We were given an overall layout of the garden and a section to work on. I was assigned bed D3 which, according to the plan, contained peonies, hollyhocks, poppies, iris, anthemis and heliopsis. The latter had taken over most of the area and I spent a good part of this first summer pulling most of it out.





An early plant list for the garden included 30 perennials, 6 shrubs and 7 trees. Research revealed that there were no records of the earliest years in the walled garden, but generally such gardens in the mid- 1800's were more practical than ornamental; that is, full of fruits and vegetables and herbs. Perhaps the perimeter might have been lined with some decorative perennials. At an early meeting, the garden volunteers who would be working inside the walls voted to be named "avant-gardeners" (AG's for short). Other volunteers began intensive research to find relevant historical documents locally, at the Royal Botanical Gardens, and even in Scotland where the owners originated. Others concentrated on publicizing the garden and our efforts through the media. A brochure was developed and fundraisers organized.

Eventually, work in the garden unearthed the remains of stone-lined paths. Descendants of the family provided memories and pictures. A hunt was on to locate the decoration which had adorned the centre of the pool. In the 1940's, the Rochester family (the last occupants) had asked Warren Oliver, senior horticulturist at the Central Experimental Farm, to draw up a new planting plan for the walled garden. The NCC had done a new survey in 1985 and, when this was laid over the 1940 plan, it was found that the garden retained most of Oliver's plantings. It was determined that the volunteers would work toward restoring this plan. In the meantime, the NCC began to restore the wall, with a multi-year plan to rebuild where necessary, and to repoint and recap the entire wall.

In 1995, the *Maplelawn Café* opened in the house. Its proprietor, Peter Fallis, invited the volunteers for a tour and refreshments before opening to the public. He welcomed us to use both

the parking lot and the washrooms, and assured us that he saw the garden as an asset to his business. We had a good feeling about the type of place he envisioned and planned to hold our annual year-end wrap-up party there. About this time, I realized I could not continue being an active participant in the work of the Friends of Maplelawn, but as a neighbour I would continue to keep my eye on developments and, of course, enjoy the garden which was growing more beautiful with each season. It was with sadness that I read of the passing of Ann Falkner and was pleased to see a new tree planted in the garden in her memory. Nancy Smith is also now deceased. I was happy to observe improvements such as a new tool shed, outlets for hoses, new benches and bicycle racks. The plant materials were clearly and attractively labelled.

But what pleases me most is the extent to which the garden has become a source of enjoyment for so many.

- Dining at Maplelawn Café in its first years, we were able to take the time between main course and dessert to wander through the garden. I wonder if the faster-paced Keg Manor which has now taken over the house will allow this luxury?
- Gardeners living in apartments and condos are getting their hands dirty.
- Seniors residing in the nearby Amica Westboro Park can appreciate the garden from their balconies and from the dining room. Other seniors from farther afield enjoy a leisurely walk along the paths.
- Pre-school children help their fathers who volunteer at Maplelawn and learn about plants, insects, and gardening.
- Wedding and graduation parties
- Art classes draw, paint, and photograph whatever is in bloom.
- Dogs eat the apples which have fallen outside the wall; others, on

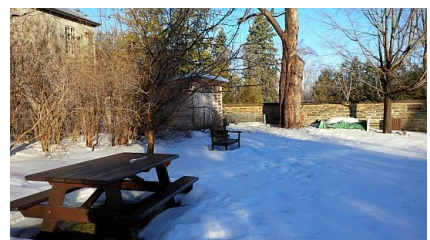
leash, inside the walls with their owners, sniff for the chipmunks and rabbits which run through the beds, or stop to view the tiny tombstones of the Rochester family pets.

- Workers from the nearby office building eat lunch on one of the benches.
- People on the right side of the #2 bus going west crane their necks for a view as they pass.
- Photos get used as screen savers on computers like this one by John Reid.



Photo: 2012

This is our garden to enjoy!



Maplelawn Update: March 8, 2017

I took this picture this morning, March 8, 2017, five years after writing my article about the Maplelawn garden for the OHS Newsletter. As you can see, the garden is not quite ready for guests other than the odd dog, local rabbits, and squirrels. But it shows the promise of the seasons to come.

A check of the website (www.maplelawn.ca) tells me that volunteers are still needed – experienced and novice gardeners, as well as those with organizational skills. An interesting piece by Wayne Rutherford

describes the changes that have occurred in the population of trees and shrubs over the century. He has also provided an interesting piece on the history of the stone wall that surrounds the garden, including recent efforts to restore and preserve it. The website continues to build an impressive gallery of pictures, a season by season look at the garden, and a list of plants.

The garden is as accessible as ever with plenty of adjacent on-street parking, the #2 bus continuing to run right past along Richmond Road, and, of course, The Keg right next door for those in need of refreshment.

Looking to the future of the garden, I can predict even more visitors, as the community of Westboro is exploding with condo developments, including the 25-storey Upper West just east of the garden. Plans are ready for construction of Phase 2 of the LRT, which will run along the Sir John A. MacDonal (SJAM) Parkway just behind Maplelawn. The tracks will be buried from Dominion Station to Cleary Ave., but the digging will be disruptive and the field beside Maplelawn will be used as a staging area. Once this construction is complete, the NCC plans to develop Rochester Field as a major "portal" to the SJAM Linear Park. So Maplelawn has the potential to be a crowd-pleaser of growing proportions.

The Founding of the Present OHS

The inaugural meeting was in January, 1893, with "some thirty gentlemen present" to listen to a lecture on the newest and best horticultural techniques. Society fees were set at one dollar in 1893 and, despite the changes in currency value, were only raised to two dollars in 1966.

The first meetings of the Society were mainly instructional, showing members how to garden. In July, 1893, members heard a lecture on strawberries, followed by a panel discussion. A lecture from 1901 was on "The Gold-banded Lily of Japan".

At the turn of the century, the Society

staged exhibits by well-known local amateur gardeners like Mr. R. B. Whyte. Mr Whyte had a beautiful half-acre garden in Sandy Hill where he grew Icelandic poppies, Oriental poppies, hemerocallis, columbine, and iris, as well as a fine wildflower selection.

The Dominion Horticulturist for Canada, Dr. W. T. Macoun, was an active supporter of the OHS and served as President of the Society one year. Dr. Macoun would bring new plants and display them for information to gardeners.

In 1897, Lord Aberdeen, then Governor General of Canada, took an active interest in the Society and became the first Honorary Patron. Many of our prized trophies have been donated by the incumbents of Government House (Rideau Hall) over the years.

From the beginning, the Society worked to increase knowledge of horticulture in Ottawa. In 1893, it published a pamphlet which listed the best annuals, perennials, and vegetables for the Ottawa district. By 1903, junior gardeners were receiving special attention. Geranium slips were given to the juniors with prizes for the best-shaped plants and the most flowers. In later years, one of our members, Jack Carr, gave radio talks at noon from an old station on Somerset Street. Today, we include among our members Master Gardeners, and provide a help desk and mentors to offer expert advice.

The early members also aimed at the beautification of Ottawa. One project from before the turn of the 20th century was the planning of plantings for the west bank of the Rideau Canal, done with the Parks Commission. At this time, the masonry walls lining the canal were not yet built, and the canal was nothing more than a ditch with locks and a beaten tow-path. Beautification of its banks was an important civic improvement. This civic pride continued through the years. In 1967, the Society landscaped and planted a special area of the City Hall grounds. Annual plantings, including sixty-six roses in 1986, and upkeep proceeded until 1990.

During the First and Second World

Wars, the Society helped develop war-time gardens. We provided seeds, plants, labour (if needed), and lectures on how to "Grow Food and Help Win the War". In the Great Depression of the thirties, the Society assisted in the "Relief Gardens for the Unemployed". Lands at Range Road and Mann Avenue, behind the Civic Hospital, and at Main Street and River Drive were divided into lots for public allotments.

Later, many hours were given to assisting the Billings Estate in re-organizing their flower beds and planning a restoration of their 1930 heritage gardens. The Society also presented the first official Street Tree policy to City Hall and did much to promote the adoption of the trillium as the floral emblem of Ontario.

Did You Know

Gardeners on Canada's west coast have to be extra careful when purchasing or potting up plants these days. Since 2010, the European fire ant, *Myrmica rubra*, has been spotted in the greater Vancouver and Victoria areas. These ants are aggressive, have a painful sting, and can swarm. It's no wonder they should be regarded as dangerous pests! They can also displace native ants. West coast gardening organizations that run plant sales for fundraising have to be very cautious in how they pot up and divide donated plants. Volunteers with the garden support group for Van Dusen gardens in Vancouver, for instance, carefully remove all soil from plants before potting them up for sale in clean growing medium. The contaminated soil is then destroyed.



Member to Member

There are OHS members who have a special interest in particular groups of plants. For some time now, we've been asking certain gardeners to share their expertise by telling us what their favourite varieties are so that we can look for them when we go plant shopping.

This installment features Pat Russell's choice of plants well-suited to be grown in troughs; it's a good companion piece to our last installment that covered rock garden plants. Pat Russell's trough gardens have long been a source of envy to all who have toured her garden, and her advice is well worth noting. Pat is a Past President of the Ottawa Horticultural Society and an OHS Life Director.

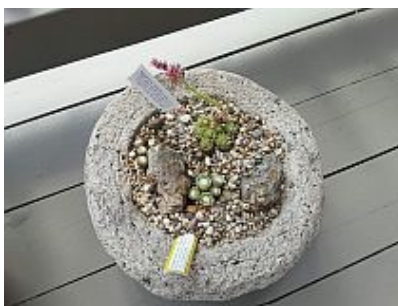
Favourite Plants for Troughs

by Pat Russell

Since many plants that thrive in troughs are native to arctic and alpine areas, they need good drainage, not too rich soil, and sun. My troughs are in sun all morning but in shade by mid-afternoon, which is preferable to just afternoon sun. Though they need little watering, I do water in periods of our dry, hot summer weather, pouring the water over the rocks to disperse it gradually and evenly over the surface of the trough. To ensure good drainage as they emerge from under their blanket of snow, the troughs should be propped up a little at one end to allow the melting snow to drain properly; otherwise the roots of the plants could get flooded and rot.

I will start off my list of plants with some advice for beginners. The easiest, most readily available plants for troughs are sempervivums (hens and chicks) and saxifrages. There are countless varieties of both; choose the varieties that are small and compact. I have tiny hens and chicks growing happily in my tufa rock troughs. My several varieties of saxifrages have spread slowly and nicely. They all have wintered over for many years now, have withstood drought and love full sun but do well in some shade. They are hardy from zones 1 to 6b. Both are

happiest in well-drained soils, among rocks and in crevices, and are disease free. I should note that I also have a number of larger species of both in my small rock and scree gardens.



Newly planted troughs of just saxifrages and sempervivums, planted up by Judy Wall of Rock Wall Gardens for a beginner friend.

Here are more of my favourites:

Eunomia oppositifolia is the very first of my trough plants to bloom, the flowers appearing when there is still some snow on the trough. As described in the catalogue from Wrightman Alpine Nursery, *E. oppositifolia* 'forms mats of fleshy, round, slate-coloured leaves, with dark terminal buds that erupt into fragrant cushions of light lilac/pink flowers'. I never fail to be delighted when I see the flowers of this tiny plant appearing from under the snow; it's like a miracle.



Eunomia oppositifolia in flower on 21st April.

Draba paysonii (3" high X by 3" wide) consists of very compact bright green cushions with bright yellow flowers that appear shortly after the snow cover has gone - a cheery sight after all the whiteness of winter. Its needs are few: full sun (though mine thrive in just full morning sun), excellent drainage, and not too rich soil. I find little seedlings growing happily around the main plant (see photo) and also in between the interlocking bricks on the path around the troughs. It would be a good and satisfying plant for beginners to try.



Draba paysonii in full flower with seedlings all around on 5th May.



Draba paysonii in flower with "hens and chicks" in the tufa rock.

Lewisia nevadensis is a miniature lewisia that has been thriving in a corner of one of my troughs for several years now. It has small white flowers blooming well above the plant for a long period of time.



Lewisia nevadensis in flower on 26th May.

Member to Member

Potentilla uniflora has interesting lemon yellow flowers and light green leaves with grey borders, similarly to its giant shrub sister.



Potentilla uniflora in flower on 20th May

Scutellaria orientalis is an interesting trailing plant with divided, fern-like, light green leaves and pale yellow flowers. It flowered twice for me last summer, the first year I had it, and the blooms were long-lasting. It is the only trough plant that has had a second flowering, blooming longer than any of my other plants.

Thalictrum kiusianum (dwarf meadow rue). I planted this two years ago and just loved the airy purple flowers that bloomed high above the dark green cushion of leaves practically all summer. Much to my dismay I thought I had lost it last year after a long period of drought when I was not home. After some time, without disturbing what looked like the remains of a dead plant, I noticed small signs of green appearing and am hopeful that it will have wintered over.

"Miniature" evergreen shrubs can also thrive in troughs and will provide all-season green. A good variety of these is available at Rideau Woodland Ramble. My husband chooses these plants and likes to bonsai them.



Saxifraga and *lewisia* in bloom on 11th June. Note the *Draba*, no longer in bloom at bottom left, and a small cedar at bottom right.



I am planting on 5th May. Note what is in bloom around the troughs: weigela, brunnera "Jack Frost", allium, bearded iris in bud, also my Japanese peony at top right.

I have to admit that not all of my trough plants have survived over the years. In fact quite a few have not. I must not add up my monetary loss; I tell people that I buy small and pay big. I cannot help myself; I am addicted! And the beauty of trough gardening is that you can always find enough space for yet another tiny plant. Already I have a list of plants I shall be looking for next year.

There are usually two good nurseries specializing in trough plants at the Rare and Unusual Plant Sale run by Friends of the Farm in May: Wrightman Alpine Nursery and Rock Wall Gardens.

Cool Native to Know: Bottlebrush Grass *Elymus hystrix*

by Trish Murphy

The attractive native grasses that bloom late summer into fall are warm-season, deep-rooted, and able to laugh at heat and drought. They do not even start their growth until the end of May. Lovely as many of them are in fall bouquets, they aren't going to be in flower or seed for the OHS meeting showcasing natives at the end of June.

However, there is a group of handsome native bunch grasses that might, given a reasonable spring, be in bloom by that date: the wild ryes in the genus *Elymus*. Canada Wild Rye, Silky Wild Rye, Virginia Wild Rye, and Riverbank Wild Rye are so similar in form that they are difficult for the non-expert to

tell apart. A close cousin, called Bottlebrush Grass, *Elymus hystrix*, is more distinctive with its spikier seed heads. Bottlebrush Grass is different enough to have been in a separate genus, *Hystrix*, until quite recently.

Bottlebrush grass is a cool-season bunch grass: it starts growing in early spring, has limited spread, and flowers in early summer. It holds its spiky seed heads through the summer. In the wild, it is found in open woods and at the woodland's edge. It likes moist soil in light or dappled shade. Three feet tall or more in flower, it is one of the tallest native grasses for shady gardens.



Did You Know

Even though tomatillos are commonly used in Mexican cuisine, they can be easily grown from seed in Ottawa. They are part of the nightshade family, which scientists had estimated was about 30 million years old. However, as reported by the New York Times in the January 9, 2017, Science Section, the family is much older. How do we know? Well, some fossilized tomatillos discovered in Argentina have been dated at being 52 million years old. It's amazing to think that we can grow something in our back yards that's been around since the time when dinosaurs were the dominant life on Earth.

Member to Member

For the Inquisitive Gardener: Growing the Litchi Tomato, *Solanum sisymbriifolium* by Tuula Talvila

A couple of years ago, I picked up one of these novel plants from the Ottawa Farmers' Market in Westboro's Byron Linear Park to try. I was delighted by it, although I can see that it would not be to every gardener's taste. The one I bought was labelled 'Litchi Tomato', but it has many other common names: sticky nightshade, vila-vila, red buffalo-bur, fire-and-ice plant, Morelle de Balbis, and wild tomato. *Solanum sisymbriifolium* is a short-lived perennial, neither a litchi nor a tomato, although it is in the nightshade family (Solanaceae) along with tomatoes.

These plants can grow up to 1.5 metres tall, with deeply-lobed leaves. White to purplish flowers are borne in racemes, with up to twelve flowers in each raceme. Almost all parts of the plant bear long, sharp prickles. The edible portion is the brilliant red fruit, a berry held inside a husk which opens with maturity. The tart and tasty fruits are about 2 cm in diameter, yellow inside with numerous seeds, and could be confused with a cherry tomato at first glance. However, they are firmer than cherry tomatoes and not as deep a red.



Litchi tomato flowers (photo: Tuula Talvila)

Native to South America, litchi tomatoes have naturalized throughout the world, including many areas of the United States and some parts of Ontario. They grow readily in disturbed and man-made habitats, including roadsides, field edges, landfills, and waste sites. Although not grown commercially on a large scale, the litchi tomato is a traditional food source in its native range, and can be grown

anywhere by interested home gardeners or small-scale farmers. For over two centuries, it has been grown as an ornamental in Europe and the United States.

As evidenced by their weed-like growth, the litchi tomato does not have demanding cultural requirements: it adapts to any soil type and pH level; it does well in hot, sunny locations but can tolerate low-light conditions; it requires moisture, but can thrive in peat and sandy soils. For Canadian growers, the most significant challenge is its need for a long growing season. While it can tolerate some frost, a minimum soil temperature of 16°C is required for growth. In the case of my plant, it produced a large number of fruit but, as temperatures cooled at the end of the season, the fruit did not all develop to maturity.

In warm climates, litchi tomatoes can reproduce both sexually, through self-sowing, and asexually, by spreading rhizomes. In our climate, the plants cannot over-winter and the seeds also don't appear to survive the winter outdoors. I looked for seedlings the year after I had my plant but didn't find any. This means it must be grown as an annual. Seeds should be started indoors 6-8 weeks before the last spring frost. They can be grown like tomato seedlings and planted outside after risk of frost, in well-drained soil, 3 feet apart. Growth may at first be slow but will soon be vigorous, and plants will likely need to be caged or staked. Fruit can be expected 90 days after transplanting, and can be harvested by (gloved!) hand when the fruit can be easily separated from the open husk. Because of the spines, plants should be located away from high-use areas. You don't want your guests to bump into one while dining al fresco!



Nearly ripe fruit (photo: Tuula Talvila)

In warmer areas where it can over-winter or self-sow, litchi tomato can rapidly out-compete local native flora and become an invasive weed. In fact, it is listed on the Global Invasive Species Database and is banned in South Africa.

Despite its invasive potential, litchi tomato has some important non-food uses that make it a valuable crop. The leaves and stems contain solasodine, a poisonous alkaloid chemical characteristic of the Solanaceae, which provides the plants with a natural defence against many diseases and pests (with the exception of tomato hornworms and potato beetles). Solasodine may thus prove to be a valuable ingredient in disease and pest control agents for other plants. Solasodine is also an ingredient in oral contraceptives. Thanks to its prickliness, litchi tomato makes an effective fence around other crops to exclude nibbling herbivores. It is also planted as a trap crop for potato cyst nematodes, significantly reducing nematode populations in potato crops. Substances produced by the roots stimulate juvenile nematodes to hatch but the plants themselves are resistant to infestation, thereby depriving the nematodes of a food source.

After kicking myself for not saving seeds from my plant, I was very happy to find some for sale by Aster Lane Edibles at Seedy Saturday in March this year. With luck, I will have some seedlings to donate to the OHS plant sales in May. Seeds can also be found for sale online, usually listed as an heirloom plant and/or edible ornamental. Information about litchi tomatoes generally states that a second plant is necessary for cross-pollination and fruit set. However, I had only one plant and it produced a lot of fruit. The reason for this discrepancy is unclear. Is it perhaps a myth that has been perpetuated? Or perhaps I happened to have a plant capable of self-pollination?

I'd be interested to hear the experiences others have had with growing this plant. It is an easy-care novelty, recommended for the inquisitive gardener who wants to try a tasty new fruit and can welcome a prickly, somewhat

Member to Member

scraggly-looking, addition to the garden.

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Penstemons for Ottawa Gardens

by Trish Murphy

The brightly-coloured **Penstemons**, or beardtongues, from western North America are among the most desirable little gems of rock gardening. I am a sucker for any red, tubular flowers which attract hummingbirds. Therefore, it will not surprise you to learn that I have purchased many pots of the lovely little shrubby evergreen *Penstemon pinifolius*, with its brilliant scarlet tubes, just to watch them fade away, and I have also tried the gorgeous firecracker beardtongue, *P. eatonii*, which disappears more promptly.

These plants are native to high plateaus in the American Rockies. What was I thinking, trying to grow them in eastern Canada? (Yes, it is sort of possible, but it's hard work.)

Fortunately, there are penstemons which are native to eastern North America, and they are among the easiest and most rewarding wildflowers for Ontario gardens. The native penstemons do not have the brilliant bloom colours of some of their western cousins, but they are elegant and beautiful in their own way. They also bloom in June, which is a relatively quiet time for our native flora -- after the sudden burst of bloom of the woodland flowers, and before the heat- and sun-loving milkweeds and gayfeathers and coneflowers get underway.

The first penstemon to bloom in our gardens at Beaux Arbres is **Pale Beardtongue**, *P. pallidus*. This one is said to require sandy soil, which is what we have. The white flowers are small, but they are produced in great abundance on stalks about 35 cm tall from a basal rosette of wide leathery leaves. I have planted them along a path in our rock garden and like them enormously. After they bloom, they get rather shabby. You can cut them back hard to tidy them up.



The next Penstemon to bloom is called **Hairy Beardtongue**, *P. hirsutus*. This is the most common of our native beardtongues in the wild but it is often over-looked. It grows in tough, rocky, and infertile places, and the wild plants are often sparse and struggling. Bring them into a garden, however, and they clump up nicely and produce a fine floral show. Hairy beardtongue has narrow lanceolate leaves, and the flowers have purple tubes with white lips. It is a little shorter than pale beardtongue - about 30 cm tall. There is a dwarf variety of this plant, *P. hirsutus* var. *pygmaeus*, which comes true from seed (more or less) and is particularly nice for trough gardens and other small-scale spaces.



The last of our Penstemons to bloom, in the latter half of June into July, is the tall and elegant **Foxglove Beardtongue**, *P. digitalis*. A remarkably tough and adaptable wildflower, it is widespread in eastern Canada, but uncommon due to habitat loss.

It thrives in semi-shade at the transition between meadow and woodland. The white tubular flowers are visited by the day-flying hummingbird clearing wing moths and many other pollinators. The tough leathery basal leaves turn burnished purple in cold weather and persist into the winter, making a weed-suppressing ground cover. The brown-seed capsules do not ripen until well into the fall. The flower stalks can be left on the plants to ripen the seeds and provide late season textural interest. In some gardens, this species volunteers profusely, and if that is the case in your garden, you may want to cut back the flower stalks before the seed capsules split open. Or you may want to have lots of foxglove penstemon, for the wild pollinators, for cutting, and to share with gardening friends. We have a large country garden and I am firmly of the opinion that one cannot have too many foxglove penstemons.



Did You Know

New OHS members Trish Murphy and Michael Peterson are proprietors of a native plants nursery in Bristol, Quebec, which is sure to be of interest to our members. They specialize in plants native to the Ottawa Valley and garden-worthy wildflowers from eastern North America. The plants are nursery-propagated and are never dug from the wild. The nursery site also features demonstration gardens, including a rock garden, swale garden, little bluestem meadow, and, new in 2017, a woodland garden.

Beaux Arbres Native Plants is located at 29 Ragged Chute Road, Bristol, Quebec. More information is available at <https://beauxarbres.ca/>. You may want to note on your calendar their Garden Open Day on June 11, 2017.

Member to Member

What's in a Name? - Penstemon

by Robin Woods

The genus *Penstemon* comprises about 250 species native mainly to Western North America but extending to Eastern Canada and the Kamchatka Peninsula. The Latin name is derived from Greek: *pente* – five, and *stemon* – stamen. The genus is characterised by the conversion of the fifth stamen to a staminode, a hairy filament in the mouth of the corolla, which gives rise to the common name of Beardtongue.

Penstemon was first described by the American physician and botanist John Mitchell (1711 – 1768), who was born in Virginia and studied medicine at the University of Edinburgh. Mitchell returned to America without an M.D. but practised as a physician with interests in natural history and botany. In 1746, he and his wife moved to England for the milder climate. In 1748, he was elected to the Royal Society for his botanical studies. In the same year, he published his description of *Penstemon*.

In 1753, Linnaeus included Mitchell's description in the first edition of *Species Plantarum*. However, Linnaeus allocated the new plant to the turtle-head genus, *Chelone*, and named it *Chelone penstemon*. This classification remained in use until about 1820 when *Penstemon* was recognised as a distinct genus. Until the early 21st century, the genus *Penstemon* was assigned to the *Scrophulariaceae*, the figwort family; however, recent DNA analysis has shown that *Penstemon* belongs in the *Plantaginaceae*, the plantain family. Gardeners find the flowers and growth habits of *Penstemon* attractive and many varieties have been developed, mostly in Europe. The Royal Horticultural Society has named thirteen cultivars as worthy of the Award of Garden Merit.

I imagined that the pronunciation of *Penstemon* would be straight forward – surely the emphasis should be on the first syllable, the defining *pen(t)*, to

give PEN-sti-mun. The website forvo.com gives equal weight to all three syllables: pen-sti-mun. In contrast, the Oxford and Collins dictionary sites allow both PEN-sti-mun and pen-STEE-mun, with the weight on the capitalised syllable. However, hortmag.com was adamant that *Penstemon* should be pen-STEE-mun, not PEN-sti-mun. So, if your audience looks blank at your pronunciation, just say, "You know – Beardtongue!"

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Plants We Hate

by Carolyn Sprott

I tend to be a person who rescues plants that other gardeners want to get rid of, and, on occasion, this has gotten me into trouble. The rescue of the trumpet vine, or trumpet creeper, *Campsis radicans*, is a case in point. Before I had done much gardening, my husband's Mom had this lovely trumpet vine which flowered all summer, loaded with big, beautiful, orange blooms, and lovely, dark green foliage. The vine covered the trellis on the side of the front balcony and crept up the side of the house.

My husband and I were very disappointed to visit one summer and find that the vine had disappeared. We couldn't believe that anyone would get rid of such a lovely plant. Mom said it was impossible to control... it couldn't be that bad, could it?

Going into my rescue mode, I was fortunate to find a few sprigs still growing

and took them home to start them in my own garden. Within a few summers the vine was well established, growing up a trellis and over the railing of the deck, providing lovely privacy and attracting hummingbirds and bees. The vine did not seem to require any special attention. We were delighted!

The delight was not to last. Tendrils of the vine allowed it to creep up the brick on the side of the house...it seemed to do it overnight. We realized it could damage the brick or any other building surfaces. Then, spreading by underground runners, shoots of the vine started appearing everywhere – in the lawn, in the flower boxes, and between patio stone. Furthermore, although the vine attracted hummingbirds and bees, it also attracted ants, thousands of ants!

Eventually, the cons to having this plant in our garden began to far outweigh the pros. In the process of getting rid of the vine, we discovered that the long tap roots and runners, once established, were very difficult to remove. Only after numerous attempts were we able finally to eliminate the vine from our garden.

I still have a love-hate relationship with this plant. Apparently one can now find trumpet vines in shades of red, yellow, and peach. I love to see it growing with wild abandon in someone else's garden, but I would say "don't go there" to anyone who is considering this plant for his or her own garden.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Member to Member

Canada Blooms - Toronto 2017 by Roberta Woods

The decision to relocate Canada Blooms to the Enercare Centre a few years ago, along with its amalgamation with the National Home Show, proved to be a great disappointment to several members of the OHS when they last visited two or three years ago. Although Canada Blooms still existed, it appeared to have been overtaken by the Home Show. What we remembered as “acres” of floor space devoted to seeds, flowers, indoor plants, floral art, and gardening displays, was now taken up with landscaping companies, garden lighting firms, conservatories, and patio furniture. We all agreed that Canada Blooms had lost its “wheelbarrow-garden shed” appeal. We vowed to visit no longer. And we haven’t. Since then, however, the winds of change appear to have been blowing, and bringing with them new management and a change in approach. So, with the benefit of a complimentary ticket coupled with the promise of more gardening and fewer paving stones, it was time to evaluate the nature of the change.

My first impression was that, overall, Canada Blooms had a “greener” look to it than I remembered from my last visit. There was a more generous use of large planters filled with spring bulbs and more planting of trees along otherwise sterile concrete passageways. This initial impression was reinforced by the retention of the Toronto Flower Show and the Botanical Art Show. The Flower Show attracted, as it had previously, numerous entries from enthusiastic and innovative flower arrangers. The featured artist for the Botanical Art Show was TM Glass, who exhibited photographs of flowers from the artist’s own garden displayed in vases from the collections of the Gardiner Ceramic Museum and the Royal Ontario Museum.

Another retained feature, which gardeners had always welcomed, was a full programme of talks by gardening

experts. Although the seating area was very much reduced (though adequate on the day I attended), and some of the topics had what I believed to be a somewhat tenuous connection to gardening, on the whole, there was something to suit a wide variety of interests. I chose Ken Brown’s “Vertical Gardening”. Brown will be familiar to many OHS members from the very enthusiastic presentation he gave to the Society a few years ago. He’s lost none of his humour and is as addicted to gardening as ever. See his website: ken@gardening-enjoyed.com

Other familiar exhibitors who gave the current Canada Blooms a more “gardener-friendly” atmosphere included the City of Toronto, the City of Brampton, the University of Guelph, the Ontario Horticultural Association, and the Native American Plant Society. In addition, there were Master Gardeners at hand to deal with visitors’ queries. To cite just two examples of the type of contribution these institutions made: the University of Guelph, while promoting a new red pelargonium hybrid, staged a variety of potted plants, some common, some not, and invited visitors to guess their identity; and the City of Toronto provided maps of all the gardens under its jurisdiction, a booklet promoting community gardening, and information on the perilous state of bees and other pollinators.

When I compared the current “Market Place” with what I remembered of the earlier sales area, I found it much reduced in size but with vendors more in tune with “all-things-gardening”. For example, there were more vendors selling seeds, including the two stalwarts of Canada Blooms, Floribunda Seeds and Urban Harvest. The former specializes in the preservation of heirloom flowers and vegetables while Urban Harvest deals only in seeds and plants it knows to be free of genetic modification. Of all the vendors, my favourite was the Toronto Botanical Garden, which offered for sale a wide range of merchandise, all related to gardening.

Given that 2017 marks Canada’s ses-

quicentennial, it was no surprise to find exhibitors commemorating this anniversary. Both the Toronto Flower Show and the Botanical Art work had themes referring to the 150 years of Canada’s existence. A Brampton company challenged visitors to celebrate by offering design concepts to beautify the back and front entrances to their homes. The most prominent celebrant of the anniversary was the Ontario Horticultural Trades Foundation which promised to plant 117,000 native trees along the Highway of Heroes to honour “each of Canada’s war dead since Confederation”. In conjunction with this proposal, a series of tableaux representing Canada from coast to coast had been installed along a passage way named “Floral Alley”.

Of the overall space for the Home Show and Canada Blooms, Canada Blooms occupied approximately one third. And, of that smaller space, about one third was given over to companies dealing with golf carts, swimming pools and spas, landscaping and its equipment. However, many of the other exhibitors who supported Canada Blooms did seem to be more focused on gardeners and gardening. The programme of speakers was extensive and catered to a broad range of interests. The plant material for sale was in peak condition and the various exhibits provided points of interest and inquiry to suit the most discerning of tastes. Yet, overall, I couldn’t help feeling that the decision to “co-locate” the two shows has deprived Canada Blooms of its former ambiance. To my way of thinking, there was no sense that what gardeners really love to do is to work with the soil in the hope of producing breathtaking flowers and delectable vegetables.



Botanical Art Show: TM Glass

Member to Member

The OHS Help Desk

by Karen Moore

Do you need help identifying a plant in your garden?

Not sure when to prune your roses?

Wondering about different ways to start seeds indoors?

You can ask gardening questions at the OHS Help Desk, available at our monthly meetings during the break, and before the meeting starts. You can also ask questions about the OHS itself, including how to get more involved on various committees and how to help with annual events like the spring and fall plant sales. Maybe you'd like to know who else in the OHS is a big fan of hostas, or daylilies, or vegetable gardening - the Help Desk can point you toward other members with similar gardening interests. Or, if there's a new gardening interest that you would like to learn more about, we can let you know who has experience.



Rob Brandon on the February Help Desk
Photo: Katja Gillmore

If you would like to be matched with an OHS mentor, the Help Desk can help with that too. After all, sometimes it is a little overwhelming to join a new group where everyone seems to know everybody else; an OHS mentor is a friendly and familiar face to connect with as you get your bearings amongst your fellow OHS gardeners and plant enthusiasts.

If, by chance, you can't make it to a meeting but still would like a mentor, contact TuulaTalvila at tuula@ncf.ca and (613)724-2004

Make This the Year You Enter an OHS Shows Event!

by Nancy McDonald

When I was looking for a way to volunteer at the OHS three years ago, there was a call for a Shows statistician, and I thought "that sounds good for me as I can fit in the volunteer time associated with two Shows a year". I immediately found that as statistician, I had become a member of the Shows Committee. As with any volunteer activity, there were details to know and learn but I managed to pick up the job quite quickly.

Now, I have never entered a Shows event. Certainly, I always enjoy seeing the entries and often thought to myself "I could do this". Will 2017 be the year I enter a Shows event? Since becoming the Shows statistician, I knew Nina Prestera was a recent OHS Shows event participant. I thought she would be a good person to ask for advice on what it was like to enter. She agreed! This is what I asked Nina and what she answered:

Q: What made you decide to enter an OHS Show Event?

Nina: I did not think that I would ever show at first, but as time went on, I was encouraged and thought it would be fun to be evaluated by others besides my friends and neighbours. I wanted and was ready to get validation at a different level.

Q: How was the experience?

Nina: It was a wonderful and positive experience entering. I was pleasantly surprised and pleased with the results of the competition.

Q: Would you do it again?

Nina: I look forward to this coming season to see what my garden will gift me to enter the Shows again.

Q: Do you have tips or advice to pass on to OHS members who may be considering entering an OHS Show Event

in 2017 for the first time?

Nina: I approached senior members for advice and guidance, and was well received. I strongly encourage members to enter the annual Shows; it is a great satisfaction for all the labour and dedication.

So, encouragingly, it was a very positive experience for Nina. The question for you and me is: will 2017 be the year we enter a Shows event at OHS? Let's try to make the answer to that question "YES".

Come one, come all and join the 2017 Bus Tour

by Gloria Sola

Come, pack your lunch, and join us and our Rock Garden Society friends for the 6th Annual OHS/OVRGHS bus tour on **Saturday, June 24th, 2017**.

This year we will take the **1,000 Islands Garden Trail**. Our tour will take us to **A Labour of Love**. This is a beautifully landscaped park-like setting along a country road that harbours a secluded Japanese courtyard with a pond, dazzling flower beds, a potager with an attractive greenhouse, and a naturalized pond with wildlife.

We will have a picnic lunch at **Van Berlo Gardens**, a privately owned property of 2.4 acres on the banks of the St. Lawrence, filled with a plant collector's dream plants. We will then visit **Maitland Garden of Hope**, a private 1.5 acre site with 23 themed gardens and over 5,000 perennial flowers, shrubs and grasses, and a registered *Monarch Way Station* and pollinator gardens. The next stop that day will be **Chillane Gardens**, gardens that surround a 169 year-old house. Paths through the 3-acre property are bordered by over 1,700 hostas of many varieties, and the plantings include a formal rose garden, a large English-style perennial bed, and an enclosed geometric herb garden.

Time permitting, we will also go to **Rideau Woodland Ramble Nursery** to indulge ourselves with their many

OHS Matters

varieties of plants, shrubs, trees and art.

Our tour begins at 7:30 am at two pick-up locations – one in the East (Walmart, Trainyards) and one in the West end (Eagleson Park and Ride). A comfortable coach bus takes us on an all-day trip; we return to the pick-up locations around 7:00-7:30 pm. The \$55 price includes the bus fare, donations to the charities supported by this tour, and the driver's gratuity. (Lunch is not included). Your seat is reserved once payment is received on a first-come, first-served basis.

The tour is for OHS members only and is just another benefit of membership.

New OHS Members

Michael Cullen
Annika Ek and Bruce Orloff
Gwynneth Evans
Ann Lindeis and Doug Chapman
Sheila McKay
Mila Meng and Jamie Xiong
Trish Murphy and Michael Peterson
Hannah Nicholls
Jane Nugent
Madeleine Riusseau and Stephen Rolfe
Pam Robertson
Maryann van Buuren
Margaret K. Weil

Notes from the OHS Board meetings

Ottawa Regional Science Fair: The 2017 fair, organized by Carleton University, will be held on March 31 to April 1. On behalf of the OHS Jeff Blacdkar will present the prizes to the winners in the horticulture category.

Getting to Know Tuula Talvila



How long have you been a member of the OHS and what prompted you to join?

I joined 7 or 8 years ago due to a growing interest in horticulture, but the first time I took part in anything was the September 2013 meeting.

Have you been gardening for a long time or are you a novice?

I've been tending the garden at our current house since we bought it 7 years ago. Before that I was growing tomatoes and morning glories on a balcony, and had an Edmonton veggie garden around 1995 (and ended up with almost 300 green tomatoes in my kitchen come September frosts). Both my parents were avid gardeners.

How would you describe your garden?

The house came with some foundation plantings of shrubs in the front, which is shaded by an old silver maple. The back yard was edged with perennial beds, with two lovely old lilacs anchor-

ing the corner. We also inherited a large vegetable garden. Much of that has been left intact while we've expanded the perennial beds over the years.

We've recently built a new deck that flows from the back door out into the yard, leading to a pergola. I've added a native plant garden which has grown into a jungle. It has a hidden bird bath and will soon have a secluded bench under the old lilacs. Generally, I'd describe the back garden as a colourful (but no pink if I can help it!), somewhat unkempt mix. There are no large trees in the back and we've been trying to add small trees for some height. We now have two magnolias ('Butterflies' and *Magnolia sieboldii*), a dwarf sour cherry, a columnar Katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*), a Korean maple (*Acer pseudosieboldianum*), and a Full Moon Japanese maple (*Acer shirasawanum*).

We've spent a lot less time and energy on the front yard, but did add a blue/purple-themed flowerbed in front of the steps with some lovely blue false indigo (*Baptisia* sp.), as well as *Campanula carpatica*, *Tradescantia* sp., and Monkshood (*Aconitum* sp.).

What do you like best about your garden? What least? Favourite plants?

I love our new back deck and pergola. They provide multiple vantage points for sitting and getting different perspectives on the garden. I'm also very fond of the native plant garden and all the insects - and one toad - it has attracted. I wish the yard was big enough to have bigger trees and shrubs to get some shade in the backyard and more privacy. The front yard is nearly impossible to dig because of all the maple

Getting to Know Tuula Talvila

roots. The tree is diseased and each year loses more limbs to City pruners; I look forward to its death so we can plant something more interesting there.

Favourite plants include native hairy beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*), a little 'Katsura' Japanese maple, spring-blooming merrybells (*Uvularia grandiflora*), the yummy rhubarb patch, devil's walking sticks (*Aralia spinosa*) from my parents' garden in Toronto, Korean maple 'Arctic Jade', *Hosta* 'Avocado', dwarf Ginkgo tree, a lovely-scented native plant called sweetfern (*Comptonia peregrina*), and a new dwarf Buddleia that just wouldn't stop blooming last fall. I'm also a big fan of castor oil bean plants (*Ricinus communis*) but haven't grown them in a few years.

Are you the main gardener or do you have help?

I am the main planner/obsessor, seed-starter, and planter. My husband gets stuck with a lot of the physical labour. If there's a plant he feels strongly about having, I make sure it gets included somewhere, like our recent addition of two 'Lawrence' wisteria on the new pergola. I feel it helps keep the eye-rolling at bay when I start getting crazy plans. He's also done most of the spring bulbs.

Do you have plans for your garden? Are there things in it you would do differently?

After spending the past 3 years working on the back yard, I'd really like to sit back and just enjoy and see how things are doing, but I say that every year and never really do. This year I plan to focus more attention on the oft-neglected veggie garden. The front yard could do with some creative inspiration - I'd like to have a native woodland garden in the shade of the silver maple - but that might wait awhile. I'm contemplating replacing the lilac hedgerow between our driveway and the neighbours' with something that will allow us to shovel snow into that

space and maybe even get into the car without having to fight the lilacs.

As for doing things differently: when we finished the work in the back, a square 'courtyard' garden was formed by the pergola, deck, and house. I tried not to fill it in too densely because I liked the spare, calm look of it. If I had waited and not planted it at all, I would've soon realized it was the perfect spot for the weeping redbud I've always wanted.

Are there gardening web sites that you look at regularly?

Aside from looking at availability of things at local nurseries online, not really. I do look up info on plants online all the time, but don't have regular sites I read.

Is there a garden you have seen that is a favourite and has given you inspiration?

Oddly enough, I can't think of any in particular. I think I tend to get inspiration more from magazine photos and library books.

When you aren't in the garden, what activities and interests do you pursue?

I spend a lot of time reading, doing cryptic crosswords, daydreaming, and taking photos. I'm obsessed with wet-felting but don't spend nearly enough time doing it. Prior to going on maternity leave 8 years ago, I had some fabulous jobs doing biology field work, later followed by cartography/GIS. Now I'm working towards a Horticulture Certificate through the University of Guelph. Two more courses to go!

www.friendsofthefarm.ca and clicking on 'Collections' and then 'Perennials'. Not all plants are listed as yet but the database will grow as volunteers document additional perennials.

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Did You Know

The Friends of the Farm maintain a gallery of information on perennials found in the ornamental gardens of the Central Experimental farm. It may be found by searching