THE OTTAWA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

# OHS NEWS

Jan 2018

## 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 2018 yearbook for a complete list of events for the year.

Website:
Ottawahort.org

**January 23** – **Gardening Design Trends**
Tina Liu

**February 27** – **Drystone Walls**
Jo Hodgson

**March 27 – Honey, I Shrunk the Lawn**
Julianne Lebreche

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

## Winter Newsletter

### Hardening Off — Boot Camp for Seedlings

*Reprinted with permission from Lee Valley. Edited to conform with the OHS newsletter format.*

Before seedlings are moved from the pampered pot, where they received just the right amount of light, nutrients and water, to the garden plot, they need a little toughening up. Gradually acclimatizing tender seedlings to the harsher outdoor conditions makes them better able to withstand the rigours of outdoor living. This strength and endurance training process is called hardening off. It's like boot camp for your seedlings.

As a general guideline, you can start hardening off seedlings ten to fourteen days before the last frost date. While this date varies from one region to another, fortunately, it's easy to find out the date by consulting publications such as *A Gardener's Journal, The Old Farmer's Almanac*, or seed catalogues. You can also obtain this information by doing a quick search on the Internet. As that date approaches, take notice of your local weather forecasts for a more realistic start date.

When weather conditions are favourable for bringing the seedlings outdoors, choose a partially shaded site near a fence, the side of a house or a hedge to prevent windburn and sunburn. Start exposing the seedlings to the elements for a few hours, and then bring them back indoors.

A drastic change in the weather and temperature can harm the seedlings. If the seedlings are exposed to direct sunlight, wind and lower temperatures too quickly, you may notice signs of distress, such as burning on the leaves or damaged flower buds. Weak plant material may also break in harsh wind.

Little by little, extend the time the seedlings spend outdoors and expose them to a little more sun, ensuring they are kept well watered, but being careful not to overwater. Within seven days (and weather still permitting), the seedlings should be able to withstand the entire day outside. After a few days of full exposure to the elements, the seedlings will be ready to be transplanted into their allocated garden setting. This is especially true if you see new growth, sturdier stems and bud formation, as these all show that the seedlings can now survive on their own. In cold climates, seedlings may need the full two weeks to adapt, while in warmer climates, seedlings may be ready for transplant in a week's time.

The hardening-off process is greatly facilitated by the use of frost protectors. You can cover the seedlings with blankets or burlap, or make use of a cold frame, cloches, row covers, or a greenhouse with removable or roll-up sides. They all allow you to gradually introduce seedlings to the outside world without having to bring them

back indoors when frost threatens. As the temperature rises during the day, you can remove the covers, and when it drops at night, it is a simple matter to shelter the seedlings. A cold frame needn't be fancy — old windows or Plexiglas® mounted with hinges to a wooden box or frame will do.

For successful hardening off of seedlings, continue to fertilize them regularly with an all-purpose fertilizer or compost tea. This will give them the nutrients they need for healthy and strong stem and leaf growth, flower buds and roots.

## Dormant Spraying

*Reprinted with permission from Richmond Nursery. Edited to conform with the OHS newsletter format.*

Nobody really enjoys to spray plants for insects or diseases. But if there is one and only one spray to apply in a year, it's a dormant spray. How and when, and what does it do?

So what is dormant spraying? Dormant spraying is the process of applying a preventive spray early in the spring while the plant is still dormant. A plant's dormancy is simply the rest period it takes in the winter. A plant "beaks" dormancy in the spring when the buds swell up and then leaves start to emerge. Dormant spraying should not be done once the buds have broken on a plant.

Dormant spray is typically comprised of two ingredients that can be applied together or separately. One is Horticultural Oil and the other is Lime Sulfur. Horticultural Oil is used to prevent insect damage. Essentially, the oil smothers overwintering insects and/or their eggs. Lime Sulfur is a natural fungicide and it kills dormant fungus spores on the plant. All in all, dormant oil tries to get rid of garden problems before they start.

Unfortunately, the conditions around applying the dormant spray are a little more complex and hard to time. Frost causes a large problem when applying any liquid-based sprays. Since the oil part of the spray needs time to smother insects or their eggs, night time cold will break down the oil before it has a chance to be effective. It is important that there are 24 hours of above-freezing temperatures. Watching the weather religiously is required to get your timing just right. If the forecast was incorrect and it does freeze before the 24-hour mark, the oil portion of the spray may need a second application. If it happens to freeze after the 24-hour period, there's no harm done.

When applying dormant sprays, it's important to remember that it is a very messy job. Suit up in a complete rainsuit or cover yourself in garbage bags. When applying the spray, it should be to the point the plant is dripping so you will probably get some on you. Sulfur is also a rather smelly substance and the oil makes it stick quite well so make sure you're prepared. It can also be beneficial to spray the ground or flower beds around your plants with any leftover spray from your tank. This kills those occasional other critters that hide in the soil or on the mulch around your garden.

Last but not least, what plants should it be applied on? Typically, fruit plants or anything in the rose family should be sprayed. Apples, cherries, roses, plums, pears, and even raspberries are members of the rose family and benefit from dormant spraying. Quite a few other plants can also benefit from the spraying, but be sure to read the directions carefully. Maples and evergreens do not like, and sometimes cannot tolerate, dormant spraying.

As with all sprays, be sure to take safety precautions. Always wear gloves when handling any sort of insecticide or fungicide. It is also best to wear eye protection. Although horticultural oil and lime sulfur are considered organic, they should not be treated differently than any product that is used to kill insects or fungus.

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"Nowhere is the gardener's tendency towards excess more apparent than in the case of ordering seed."

Roger B. Swain, *The Victory Garden*

## Perennials That Bloom in the First Year

You can always find useful information in Judith Adams's blog entries; these are available online through http://gardenmaking.com/making-a-garden/. One of her entries is especially pertinent in April; it deals with perennials that you can grow from seed and that will flower in the same year. There's more detailed information on the website but in case you can't get easy access to it, we thought it worthwhile to reprint a list of them. (All are hardy to zone 5 and some to zone 3 or 4.)

'Blue Pearl' Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium* 'Blue Pearl')
'Blue Bouquet' veronica (*Veronica spicata* 'Blue Bouquet')
'Dasante Blue' delphinium (*Delphinium elatum* 'Dasante Blue'
Any of the Summer Series or Benary's Pacific Blue Giants Series delphiniums (D. hybrid)
'PowWow White', 'PowWow Wild Berry', 'Cheyenne Spirit', and 'Prairie Splendor Purple' coneflowers (*Echinacea*)
'Mesa Peach', 'Mesa Yellow', Mesa Bicolor', 'Arizona Sun' and 'Arizona Apricot' blanketflowers (*Gaillardia*)
'Sparkle White' butterfly gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri* 'Sparkle White')
Robinson's Giant Mix painted daisy (*Tanacetum coccineum* Robinson's Giant Mix)

You might also want to try these biennials:

'Mon Amie Blue' forget-me-not (*Myosotis* 'Mon Amie Blue')
Wonderland Mix Iceland poppy (*Papaver nudicaule* Wonderland Mix)


Image: Biodiversity Library

## President's Message

by Jayne Huntley

It's a pleasure for me to be writing this as I take on the role of President for the second time. After being behind the scenes a bit more in recent years through managing the website, retirement has given me more time to get involved (although not as much as I'd expected!) and I've enjoyed being back on the Board this year.

The OHS is a great community for gardeners, whether experienced or just beginning, with large gardens, small plots, or balconies. It provides an opportunity to share interests and learn from each other. We have many new members join each year, and I'd like to thank Tuula Talvila for taking an active role in welcoming new members at our meetings. If you are new to the OHS, I encourage you to come to one of our meetings and take time for the new members' get together.

Like so many organizations, the OHS thrives on the commitment of its volunteers. Volunteering is a great way to meet other members as well as to learn about the OHS and about gardening. There is scope for a wide range of skills to be applied within the Society. So, if there is something you enjoy doing, please give some thought to how it might help the OHS. The plant sales in May and September in particular offer opportunities to get involved and spend a few hours working alongside other members, whether potting up plants or serving customers. Look out for these and other opportunities as they are advertised in the Grapevine in the coming weeks. If you are not receiving Grapevine on a regular basis and would like to, please email ohsgrapevine@gmail.com.

In addition to retirement, this was a year of change for us on the gardening front. After 19 years we left behind our well-established garden in Westboro and moved to Barrhaven. Our first priority was to rebuild Rob's winter-hardy cactus bed, and we were pleased to see cacti that had spent the winter packed in boxes come back to life. The rest of our first year efforts went to replacing a stone patio with a deck, trying to win a war against thistles and mint, and adjusting to a heavy clay soil. Winter will be a planning time for new beds to be built in the Spring, and looking forward to the adventure of starting from scratch again.

I look forward to working with everyone in the coming year.

## City Hall and the OHS

by Jennifer Mix and Sheila Burvill

Sheila
For many decades now, the Ottawa Horticultural Society has invited every incoming Mayor of Ottawa to be our Honorary President and, for many decades, the new Mayor has accepted the invitation. On occasion, such as the events in 1992 described elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter, the Mayor has graciously presided over special OHS events.

I had no idea, though, that there was another connection with City Hall. One November, quite a few years ago now, Jennifer and I went to the old Wallack's store on Bank Street in order to buy frames for OHS awards to be presented at the forthcoming AGM. After we paid for the frames, I told Jennifer I wanted to go for a coffee and she suggested we go to Ada's Diner which was almost across the road. (Currently, Ada's site is occupied by Wilf and Ada's - a newer, dare I say hipper restaurant, but named to honour the old diner, such is the esteem in which Ada's is held.) And up on the wall at Ada's was a large, handsome colour photo of the old City Hall on Green Island, 111 Sussex Drive. That building was later expanded and, even later, was taken over by the federal government and named the John G. Diefenbaker Building. I pointed the photo out to Jennifer and here's what she told me…

Jennifer
I had heard from an OHS member (but I don't remember who) that our society had helped plant the gardens that surrounded the third Ottawa City Hall, which was built in 1958. That building received the prestigious Massey Medal for Design in 1959 but eventually was deemed too small for the growing city. The Israeli-Canadian architect Moshe Safdie designed a spectacular but highly controversial expansion to the building, constructed in 1991 and 1992.

Being curious about the fate of the garden, which no longer exists, I dipped into the OHS archives at the Ottawa City archives building near Algonquin College, and at Library and Archives Canada on Wellington St. After a great deal of sifting through files, reading hand-written minutes of Board meetings, and squinting at LAC microfiche, I found an October 1973 reference to our Board voting for an expenditure:
"*for trees and shrubs of Canadian origin for a final planting in Centennial Garden at City Hall up to $300.*".
The second, rather sad, reference was found in OHS minutes, March, 1991:
"*In 1967, the society sponsored the garden at City Hall. It was paid for from general funds (membership largely). As much material as possible has been preserved from the garden for use after construction is completed. The new garden is being planned by a landscape designer. The society probably will not be involved in the short term.*"

And this is where we run out of information. What did those original plantings look like? What happened to the plants after construction began? Did any of our members take in and continue to grow those banished plantings? We really don't know and alas, city records as well as OHS records seem to be mute on the subject. If any of our members know more about this topic, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Email us at saburvill@sympatico.ca or j.mix@sympatico.ca.

## Update on Control of Dog-strangling Vine

by Lynn Ovenden (Fletcher Wildlife Garden member)

The following notes cover research presented at the October 2017 conference of the Ontario Invasive Plants Council that was held in Ottawa.

"Mechanisms of invasion by dog-strangling vine" by Richard Dickinson, PhD, Forestry, University of Toronto

Dog-strangling vine makes soil inimical to other plants by producing a biochemical called antofine. Seeds and small dog-strangling vines produce more antofine than mature vines. For healthy growth, native plants depend on a network of diverse soil fungi of many types, called the common mycorrhizal network. Richard Dickinson's four-year research included a survey of 56 dog-strangling vine populations across Ontario (including at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden), an "invasion-in-progress" field study, and greenhouse experiments. Results suggest that, just as with native plants, growing dog-strangling roots connect to the common mycorrhizal network. Their presence completely alters the composition of the common mycorrhizal network, probably by the action of antofine, so that it no longer supports native vegetation. To restore a site dominated by dog-strangling vine, Richard suggests focusing first on removing the small dog-strangling vines, then rehabilitating the soil fungal community by inoculating it with "healthy" soil from a non-dog-strangling vine site, and then adding native plants with as much soil from the transplant source as possible. He offers the example of soil inoculation experiments in the Netherlands as evidence that this approach might benefit restoration efforts.

"Biological control for invasive plants" by Robert Bourchier, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

It will take years to learn if larvae of a Ukrainian moth can be a good biocontrol agent for dog-strangling vine in North America. From 2006 to 2011, many researchers worked to prepare a petition to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, who reviewed it from 2011 to 2013 and granted the release permit. The first open-field release of larvae was in 2015 on the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa and two locations north of Toronto. Work since then includes monitoring, more releases, and trials to improve protocols for rearing and release of the caterpillars. Results: initial releases have survived and slowly expanded. In Ottawa the moths have spread 700 m to the Hogsback area. If you find dog-strangling vine with picture-window damage to leaves as pictured below, send a photo and location description to Robert.bourchier@agr.gc.ca

*Hypena opulenta* moth caterpillar, early instar on a DSV leaf. Copyright free image provided by Agriculture and Agrifood Canada.

*Hypena opulenta* moth caterpillar, is voarciously eating DSV leaves in test plots. Photo by Christine Hanrahan.

## Did You Know

The Ottawa Food Bank has its own farm in Stittsville to grow fruits and vegetables for donation to food bank clients across Ottawa. Here is some news about a recent development there, taken from the Food Bank website:

"Vegetables like tomatoes and squash are abundant, and sometimes, the yield from these crops is more than some of our agencies can handle. To avoid waste and meet the need for simple and nutritious meals that are easy to prepare and consume, the Ottawa Food Bank is beginning a three-year pilot project. We will determine the feasibility of partnering with a food processing enterprise to produce a healthy, low-sodium, stew and/or soup using crops grown (e.g., carrots, squash, potatoes, etc.) on additional acreage at the farm."

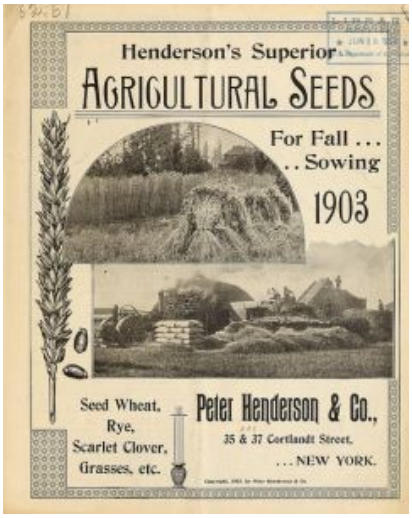


Image: Biodiversity Library

# Member to Member

## Plants I Grow From Seed

by Patti Allen

As soon as I've put away the Christmas decorations, I am super-excited to set up my plant light tables. The tables take up a lot of room in our dining room but I find I don't pay enough attention to them if they are not right under my nose.

I love starting plants from seed, but I didn't have a great deal of consistent success until I bought two light tables from a White Rose closing-out sale. I have two tables which are on castors, and each table has 3 shelve. Each shelf has two 48" fluorescent tubes above it. Sounds like a lot of space but it isn't once you start to transplant seedlings into larger containers after germination.

Every year, I try several different mesclun mixes, arugulas and basil varieties, and then 4 or 5 different decorative plants (mostly annuals) that look interesting and that I haven't tried before, from seeds that I've picked up on my travels. I seem to be drawn to vines and climbing varieties, partly due to the lack of space in our little bungalow garden. So, I do try and maximize space by growing vertically. I am also very fond of Red Russian Kale and Purple Artichokes for the colour and texture they add to the late summer and fall garden. They are super-easy to start from seed, not even needing light tables until pricked out, and I plant a package of each every year. I think you can see that the six shelves of the light tables get filled up quite quickly with the little transplants.

Last year, I think my biggest success was two vines *Basella rubra* (Malabar Climbing Spinach) and *Coba scandens (*Cup and Saucer Vine*);* I grew them in combination on tall obelisks in two 2-foot-square grey resin planters, each of which has a decent water-holding capacity at the base. The water storage is essential for me, as we are mostly away on the weekends. The two vines worked quite well together. Combining an edible with a decorative vine seemed like a good idea, and I found that the shiny purple twining stems and small purple-white flowers of the spinach were a great complement to the very ornamental purple flowers of the Cup and Saucer Vine.

A complete 'no show' this past year was *Punica alhambra* (Dwarf Pomegranate) that I tried to grow from an expensive package of 5 seeds from Sutton Seeds. I had fallen in love with the species when I saw a specimen in the Cloisters garden at the Metropolitan Museum in NewYork—a lovely little tree with three fruits on it. So far, not to be duplicated in Ottawa. I have grown shrubs from seed in the past, aided by great advice from Kristl Walek of Gardens North, a nursery and seed house situated about an hour away from Ottawa originally, but now relocated.

This past year, I also grew a package of *Digitalis purpurea* (Foxglove), which had an excellent germination rate. This is a biennial plant. Even after giving away loads of plants to friends, I still have probably 25 plants with basal rosettes of grey-green leaves in my garden that I'm hopeful will flower next spring. They are hunkered down under a protective mulch of compost and oak leaves collected in nearby Brantwood Park. Growing biennial and perennial plants from seed is a very economical way to get a lot of plants.

The final package I used was Speckled Swan Gourd seed. I started these outside in a large metal tub and let them clamber up my stair railings, which face due north. Showy pure white flowers were plentiful early in the season, but there was not quite enough sun for the young gourds, which developed mildew as they grew. The fruit that did develop resembled swans with long curved narrow bent down necks. The gourds are green with cream coloured speckles, and are very popular with kids. The dried, inedible fruit can be used for crafts or for making birdhouses. I will try them again next year in a sunnier spot, and will leave just one fruit per vine to encourage them to mature into a large gourd.

I think my penchant for purple is evident from some of the choices which I have already accumulated for sowing in Spring 2018:

McKenzie Seeds: Asian Pole Bean Red Noodle. A long, 16"-20" burgundy-coloured bean. It does lose its colour, however, when cooked.
Hawthorn Farm Organic Seeds: Pokey Joe Cilantro. Reputed to be slow-to-bolt and a good tasting cilantro.
Urban Harvest Organic Seeds: Blauwschokkers Blue Podded Pea. A climbing blue-podded pea that can be eaten small as a snow pea but is best as a shelling pea. The bicoloured purple flowers are also edible. Peas can be dried for winter soups. I plant these seeds directly into the soil. Can grow to 6 feet. An heirloom from Holland.
Also from Urban Harvest Organic Seeds, I am trying Really Red Deer Tongue Lettuce. The seed packet says "a leaf lettuce with exceptional flavour, with really, really dark red colour. It is an attractive compact butter lettuce".
Looking at these seed packets, I can't wait to get started. They all sound as though they will make for some interesting salads and stir-fries. Perhaps I will see you at Seedy Saturday? I think I need a few more packets…...

**Ottawa Seedy Saturday 2018**
This annual event is an organic seed exchange which is definitely worth a trip. You can buy seeds even if you have no seed to exchange. Lots of heirloom varieties with provenance in this area are available.

Saturday 3 March 2018 from 10 am to 3 pm
Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, Ottawa

**Seeds of Diversity Canada**
(www.seeds.ca)
Seeds of Diversity Canada is a wonderful non-profit organization whose mission is to preserve heirloom and endangered varieties of food crops.

An annual membership fee of $35 buys a year of their on-line seed directory (3,000 varieties), 4 issues of Seeds of Diversity magazine, and a monthly e-bulletin.

# Member to Member

## Some Seed Sources

by Patti Allen

**Canada**

Annapolis Seeds.
www.annapolisseeds.com (heirloom and open-pollinated seeds hand grown in Nova Scotia)

Urban Harvest Organic Seeds.
www.uharvest.ca (organic, open-pollinated untreated seeds, Ontario)

McKenzie Seeds.
www.mckenzieseeds.com (established in 1896 and now Canada's foremost seed supplier, Manitoba)

Hawthorn Farm.
www.hawthornfarm.ca (organic seed producer located in Palmerston, Ontario)

Gardens North.
www.gardensnorth.com (Catalogue online only, with great seed starting advice. Mostly perennials, and both native and exotic seeds, Ontario) (closing after this season)

OSC Seeds. www.oscseeds.com (Waterloo, Ontario)

Richter's Herbs
www.richters.com (1000+ varieties of culinary, medicinal and aromatic herbs, Ontario)

**United States**

Hudson Valley Seed Library hudsonvalleyseed.com

Johnny's Selected Seeds
www.johnnysseeds.com

**Great Britain**

Thompson and Morgan
www.thompsonmorgan.ca

## Success with Swamp Milkweed using Cool-Moist Stratification Technique

by Trish Murphy

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) is a fine native plant to grow in gardens. Not only is it a host plant for Monarch butterfly caterpillars, as are all native milkweeds, it is strongly clump-forming and has lovely pink flowers which are attractively fragrant. Despite the common name, it does not need to grow in a swamp, but it thrives where it can get its strong roots down into moist soil.

Swamp Milkweed is a rewarding plant to grow from seed, using the cool-moist stratification method. Learning how to stratify seeds opens the door to growing an enormous variety of perennial plants, including a vast number of natives and some very choice hardy non-natives.

Essentially, cool-moist stratification methods allow you to use your refrigerator to mimic the seeds' experience of winter. Many cold-hardy perennials use germination-inhibiting chemicals in their seeds to prevent them from germinating on, say, a warm afternoon in November. The germination-inhibiting chemicals break down at cool temperatures over the course of the winter, and then the seed is ready to germinate when warming soils indicate spring has well and truly arrived.

Of course, you could sow the seeds in place in the fall and allow them to experience a real winter. That works. However, you may have only a few seeds and want to keep an eye on them. Or you may have acquired the seeds in winter, perhaps through a seed exchange, when it is too late to prepare a place in your garden.

Native wildflowers have seeds that, in ease of germinating, vary from the truly fool-proof — broadcast Black-eyed Susan seeds by tossing them about — to the dauntingly challenging. Not even the experts know how to germinate the pretty evergreen carpet called Pipsissewa. Once you have learned the cool-moist stratification method, and swamp milkweed seed is the ideal seed with which to begin, then you will have an easy pre-treatment tool which really works well for many species. Germination guides in wildflower gardening reference books will list which species need a winter, and for how long.

Swamp Milkweed seeds are easy prospects for cool-moist stratification because they are relatively large and smooth, thus easy to see and to work with. They require a quite doable and quite common period - 60 days - in the refrigerator, and they do not require any other pre-treatments or special handling that could complicate your results.

**The Method:**

**Count back 60 days from when you want to sow your seeds**. There is little point in trying to push wild plants to germinate ahead of their natural season. So, say May 1st more or less. Chances are, you might be ready to plant your milkweed seeds about then. So, 60 days prior to that is about March 1st. Conveniently, that means if you acquire your seeds at Seedy Saturday, Ottawa on 3 March, you'll be right on schedule.

**Label a zip-lock freezer baggie "Swamp Milkweed".** I add the code C (60) and the words "In cold: March 6, Out May 6", for example. The germination code I use comes from Prairie Moon Nursery** in the US, which I find clearer and more versatile than the

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code used by either the Rock Garden Societies or the New England Wildflower Society's otherwise superb reference books. In cold for 60 days: C (60). Got it. Remember, this is not an exact science. If you don't get around to sowing your seed until a week later, things will be fine. As far as the seed is concerned, spring is just a little late this year. Any plant which has evolved with Canadian climate will be able to cope.

**Refrigerate.** Place the seeds in a folded paper towel and put them in the baggie. Moisten the paper towel, with a spritzer or a teaspoon, until it is evenly moist but the seeds are not swimming in liquid water. Place in the refrigerator, NOT IN THE FREEZER. The germination-inhibiting chemicals break down at about 0º to 3º C. Heat-loving milkweeds will not sprout in the refrigerator, which is not true of some wildflowers which grow at cool temperatures. For those species, checking on the seeds at intervals for signs of sprouting is a good idea. But milkweeds? Easy. Stick them in the refrigerator and forget about them for two months. (This is why you use freezer baggies instead of the thinner lunch baggies - you don't want them to inadvertently dry up in the fridge.)

**Sow.** Take out on schedule and sow as you would for any other garden plant. I use commercial seed-starting mix, and pots and trays in a variety of sizes. Milkweeds are deep-rooted from the start so trays with deep cells are better than shallow trays. The large seeds are easy to sow, one seed per cell. Germination rates are usually very good with this species - I have often gotten 100% or close. I have sown multiple milkweed seed in 4" pots and carefully transplanted them at about the second true leaf stage, because I am always short of bench space and because I know I am good at transplanting seedlings. (Hint: Using deep-cell trays is much easier.) You could sow directly in place in the garden if that suits your purposes better.

Swamp Milkweed seeds like to be covered with a thin layer of soil or seed-starting mix, which is probably how you have learned to handle seeds. Certain other native plants, especially those with very tiny seeds, need to be surface sown, as they need light to germinate. Milkweeds are warm-season plants so the seeds will not germinate until the soil warms. However, because Swamp Milkweed is a plant of moist situations, they are more temperature-tolerant than those of their heat-demanding relative, Butterfly Milkweed. After 10 days to 2 weeks of reasonably warm weather, you should see the sprouts of your Swamp Milkweed emerging.

Note: *Trish will be bringing Beaux Arbres Swamp Milkweed seeds (and many others) to Seedy Saturday, Ottawa at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre in Britannia Park. Usually the first Saturday in March - stay posted at http://www.beauxarbres.ca/

## A Growing-from-Seed Tip

by Patti Allen

TO PREVENT DAMPING OFF

Try misting seeds and soil with a chamomile tea drench.

Ingredients:
1 tsp chamomile flowers (or a chamomile tea bag)

Method:
Add flowers or tea bag to boiling water. Allow to cool.
Strain into a mister.
Note: The mixture only keeps for a week in the fridge.

See also https://www.thespruce.com/prevent-damping-off-with-chamomile-tea-2539523 for other instructions.

## My Garden Record

by Sheila Burvill

I am now in my eightieth decade and have been working my back and front yards for over 35 years. Nonetheless, the element that best characterizes my gardening is that of surprise.

Every spring, I'm surprised that plant shoots appear right after the snow clears and sometimes even before. I'm surprised that there are little green plants where I don't remember planting them. I'm surprised at how many of them look similar – are they daylily shoots? Could they be scillas? Or maybe they're just weeds? Who knows?

Come to think of it, I'm surprised too at where there are no signs of a plant - surely there was an *Athyrium japonicum* (Japanese painted fern) there last year. When the tulips start to appear, I wonder what colour and height they could be.

In other words, I'm just not as knowledgable about my garden as I should be.

Luckily, I long ago started to keep a garden record, the place where I try to write down what plants I've bought, where they are in the garden, and how they've done.

I started my record back in the late 1980's. I use some small three-ringed binders, 9 inches tall. They weren't a great choice, however, since that size is apparently obsolete now. On the other hand, the binders do fit more easily into the bookcase and are comfortable in the hand while strolling around the garden. About fifteen years ago, when I found the binders were getting scarce, along with the paper that fits into them, I bought a couple of extra ones and also enough blank paper to last me and probably several generations of my descendants.

Here's how my system works:

When I buy a new plant, I put a new page for it in the binders. In the upper right hand corner is the genus name, usually in Latin but sometimes not. Lower on the page is the species name and/or variety, and somewhere

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there's a photo. Sometimes, I just paste in the plant label. I try to say where I got the plant and where in the garden I planted it. From then on, I more or less regularly check on the plant and say how it's doing. If I later move it, I record that too.


Now why do I bother with all this? Why don't I just stick in a plant label and call it a day? Well, for one thing, plant labels regularly disappear - sometimes because the dog might have dug them up, sometimes they move due to frost heave, sometimes because someone (likely me) kicked the label and never bothered to put it back into the soil. Until I bought a labeling machine, the inscription in ink almost always faded out, leaving a blank where once there was a plant name. In any case, I count myself lucky if a label lasts a year where I put it. But if I can figure out the genus and maybe the species name, the odds are that I can correctly identify a plant by checking my garden record.

When I have a number of the same kind of plants (tulips and hostas being the main examples of that in my garden), I really have trouble keeping track of the variety names. But since I've grouped them all together in my record and made sure I have a photo of each, I have a fighting chance of figuring out which one is which.


I have also saved myself money by checking the record while trolling through plant catalogues. Many times, I am attracted by a photo or description but my records show that I already have the plant or else I'd previously bought one and it did not prosper in my garden.

Oh yes, when a plant dies or is discarded, its page in the record books gets moved to the "No longer in the garden" binders (currently two in number and bulging).

This all sounds quite organized and controlled, doesn't it? Actually, I end up scribbling notes to myself and shoving them into the back of the binders for the time being. But come January or so, I make an effort to transcribe the notes on pages as I've described above, search out photos online, and move pages from the current binders into the "No longer in the garden" ones. A nice gardeney job for a cold winter day.

## Travels With My Plant (with apologies to Graham Greene)

by Tuula Talvila

A long time ago, before my memory started to fail me, my father (at least, I *think* it was my father) gave me a plant as a present. I think I may have been in high school. We were a plant-heavy household, indoors and out, but I didn't really have my *own* plants and was very pleased to become the proud owner of this Madagascar Palm, *Pachypodium lamerei.* I've always been attracted to spiny things and also have a fascination with Madagascar, so I was smitten. "Sticky" and I have been together now for about thirty years.

The Madagascar Palm is not a palm. The genus *Pachypodium* ("thick foot") comprises roughly twenty-five species, native to Madagascar and mainland Africa. They are succulents with thickened stems that store moisture and have long, thick spines in groups of two or three, depending on the species. A leaf grows with each spine cluster but they eventually fall off, leaving a tuft of the long narrow leaves in only the top portion of the plant. Hence the superficial resemblance to palm trees.

*Pachypodium lamerei var. ramosum*

The species I share my house with, *P. lamerei*, does come from Madagascar and has become the most widely cultivated *Pachypodium* due to its relative ease of propagation. When growing outdoors or in a large greenhouse (there is a fine specimen in the Centennial Park Conservatory in Etobicoke, west–end Toronto), it can reach heights of up to six metres.

# Member to Member

The indoor height is more like 1.5 metres for a potted plant. Currently mine stands about 1.1 metre (or 3'8"). Until a couple of years ago, Sticky was taller than my son but less cuddly (that may change when my son's a teenager and becomes prickly himself).

I'm not sure when my plant was christened with his name – yes, I'm anthropomorphizing and calling it a 'he' – but "Sticky" is short for "Stick of Death", a reflection of his general appearance of a dangerous stick covered in sharp spines.

Sticky, up close and personal

Since Sticky and I first became acquainted in Toronto all those years ago, I have also lived in Edmonton, Israel, Vancouver, Lindsay, and now Ottawa, plus shorter stints in various, more remote places for seasonal work. Sticky came along to my two university apartments in Toronto, watching silently from the windowsill as I worked all night on my assignments and tried to ignore the mice. He drove to Edmonton with me in a rental truck when I moved there for grad school. (He did not help with the driving. He's generally not very helpful in vehicles. More on that later.) I don't know if he was supportive when I decided to quit my Master's program, but at least he was there. When I spent a year in Israel, he wasn't allowed to come but he doesn't seem to hold it against me, although I'm sure he would've loved the desert.

We later had a couple of damp years in Vancouver. Sticky was polite and didn't chime in with the rest of my family telling me it was a mistake to have moved there. He kindly let me discover that for myself and when it came time to leave again – I would be spending the summer in Saskatchewan before returning to Toronto – I found a small company that specialized in shipping plants by airplane. I was sure the man carrying the extra tall and wide box full of my house plants was going to fall down the steep flight of stairs in my apartment on his way out to his truck. Fortunately I was wrong and Sticky was soon safely *en route* to the airport to spend some more quality time back in Toronto with my lucky parents.

Sometime later came a year at college in Lindsay as a so-called mature student, with Sticky again sticking close by my side. I remember moving out at the end of my diploma program, heading back to Toronto yet again with a car crammed full of my belongings, Sticky on the floor on the front passenger side. It was the end of summer, I was wearing shorts, we went around a corner and some things tipped over... It's somewhat challenging to drive carefully with a large spiny plant suddenly embedding itself in one's bare leg!

For the past fourteen years Sticky has had a stable home here in Ottawa. He's not fond of the winters but sometimes spends summers outdoors and recently began putting out little spiny branches all around the top. He could probably use some re-potting – not a fun task! These days he's settling into middle age on an end table in the living room, nearby when I'm on the sofa with my book and a mug of tea, standing tall in the afternoon sunshine. I hope we have many more years together and maybe I'll one day even be rewarded with some flowers – kind of like waiting patiently for grandchildren, I guess.

Photo credits:
*Pachypodium lamerei* var. *ramosum:* By Daderot (Own work) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons, retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File%3APachypodium_lamerei_var._ramosum_-_Koko_Crater_Botanical_Garden_-_IMG_2273.JPG

Flowers of *P. lamerei* by Gürkan Sengün [CC BY-SA 3.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0) or GFDL (http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html)], via Wikimedia Commons, retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pachypodium_lamerei_flower.jpg

## Did You Know

Tu B'Shevat (Arbour Day) is January 31 in Canada, the 15th day of the Jewish month of Shevat. This Jewish festival is known as the "New Year for Trees", and is celebrated by eating a new fruit or planting new trees. The festival was first referred to in 515 BCE (before Christian Era) to 20 CE, when it was the cut-off date for levying the tithe on the produce of fruit trees.

https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/canada/tu-bshevat

"If you stop just for a moment and look closely at a single seed, you will find that it is amazing, exciting, miraculous, precious, and irreplaceable."

Jekka McVicar, *McVicar Herb Farm*

# Member to Member

## The OHS Seed Library

by Karen Moore

The Ottawa Horticultural Society Seed Library was launched on February 27, 2016, inspired by the growing seed swap movement. Many of our ancestors practised seed selection, saving and sharing with family and neighbours, as a matter of course. These practices, and related skills and knowledge, fell away, however, with growing urbanization, industrialization of our food systems, and the widespread availability of affordable hybrid seeds and starter plants. Gradually, as Josie Jeffery observes in her 2013 book *Seedswap: the gardener's guide to saving and swapping seeds*, "seed sowing, let alone seed saving and storing" came to be seen as "black arts" (p. 6). A diversity of reasons motivates current practitioners of these arts. For me, seeds are a source both of scientific and spiritual wonder – first sparked long ago as a very young child lucky enough to plant a bean in a little bit of soil in a Styrofoam cup, and to eagerly check the weekly progress of this unfurling miracle in the window. Jeffery notes that seed-saving and swapping can lead to greater self- (and community-) sufficiency in the garden, financial savings, protection and conservation of biodiversity (including heritage varieties), maintaining food security, and cross-cultural sharing.

Seed savers generally focus on open-pollinated varieties, unless perhaps they are hoping to backcross a hybrid. Seeds collected from hybrids cannot be counted on to yield offspring with characteristics that are the same as those of the parent plants. Established open-pollinated varieties can be counted on to produce offspring with the same characteristics. Sometimes a spontaneous mutation will lead to offspring with a new characteristic, which a breeder might find favourable and therefore will seek to preserve. "Advanced" seed savers can also enjoy dabbling in breeding, for example with tomatoes and lilies, both of which are relatively easy to cross-fertilize.

So back to the Seed Library – what is a seed library, exactly?! A seed library is akin to a book library – but instead of returning the seeds you have chosen from the library, you grow the seeds, and then save some of the offsprings' seeds to return to the library the following season. Spreading this practice throughout a community is a great way to cut down on the labour required to preserve and maintain heritage varieties, especially for species that cross-pollinate very easily and so require isolation from other varieties to avoid unwanted hybridization. In addition, it is now thought that, over time, such varieties will become better adapted to local growing conditions through epigenetics.

At our monthly February OHS meeting in 2016, we held our first seed swap, encouraging members (and their friends and neighbours) to bring seeds they had collected in their gardens, as well as any leftover seeds they were unable to use (whether hybrid or open-pollinated), to share with others. This was a very popular and well-attended event. It was repeated again in 2017, and we are looking forward to our third annual OHS Seed Swap as part of our February 27, 2018 meeting. The Seed Library itself was showcased at the seed swap, and many participants welcomed the chance to try growing out heritage varieties of vegetable, herb and flower seed. The Library was also featured as part of the Ottawa Jane's Walk in 2016 and 2017 at the Ottawa Tool Library (http://www.janeswalkottawa.ca/), and generated a lot of positive interest.

While we encourage gardeners who take seeds from the library to collect and save some of the offspring seeds to return to the library, we also understand that things happen (bad growing seasons, unexpected life events) – so don't hesitate to explore even if you aren't sure you will be able to return seeds. If you do have seed to donate (whether offspring from varieties in the Seed Library, or other varieties you'd like to contribute) please bring them to the February 27, 2018 meeting, and complete a form for each variety.

We'll have seed donation forms on hand at the meeting as well. You can also bring seed donations to the Ottawa Tool Library, which kindly hosts the Seed Library when it isn't at our seed swap event.

In 2017, the OHS Seed Library and Just Food joined forces in order to spread the word even further about seed saving and sharing, and we now use the Ottawa Seed Library logo on our seed envelopes:


Just Food is also maintaining a seed library at the Centrepointe branch of the Ottawa Public Library (http://justfood.ca/seed-saving-projects-and-events/the-ottawa-seed-library/). We hope you'll be able to attend our February meeting to share and receive some tiny seed treasures!

**What: OHS Seed Library**: a collection of community-donated and -maintained open-pollinated flower, vegetable and herb seeds, including a number of rare heritage varieties.

**Where: At the annual OHS February Seed Swap** or in other months at **The Ottawa Tool Library** (http://ottawatoollibrary.com/contact-us/ 250 City Centre, Bay#216, inside Makerspace North; Mondays 6-9pm, Wednesday 6-9pm, and Saturdays, 10am – 1pm).

# Member to Member

**Interested in volunteering to support the OHS Seed Library?:** please contact Karen Moore, bronwyn-elora@rogers.com.

# Did You Know

There is a posting on the Garden Making website by Dugald Cameron, former owner of GardenImport, in which he warns of a canna lily virus. Apparently "virtually all the big cannas grown in France, Israel, the Netherlands, Australia, and the U.S." can be affected. It has now spread worldwide.

"It's known as yellow streak virus, and the name says it all. It first appears as faint yellow streaks in the foliage, increasingly spreading, eventually leading to distorted foliage and death. Like many plant viruses, it's spread by sucking insects like aphids. There is no cure. Dispose of infected plants and surrounding soil in the garbage, not in your compost. The tragedy is you can't see any evidence on the root or even early-season foliage. But the mature foliage in fall will show if the plant is infected."

Cannas we already have in our gardens are not likely to be affected but it's best to examine all canna leaves in the fall and to discard any showing signs of the virus. And, of course, to be super cautious in ordering new canna stock.

## Losing a Tree: part 1

by Sheila Burvill

How nice it was to find a tree in the front yard of the house we bought back in 1982. It was a City tree on the municipal easement next to the sidewalk; it was kind of small and had a fairly long vertical crack up the trunk on the side facing south. Also it had a funny looking branch that started horizontally but then bent 90 degrees upwards, sort of like the arm of a crossing guard holding up a sign.

My husband identified it as a Sugar Maple and commented that it was a curious choice for an urban street since these usually grow on hillsides in the company of other trees and here it was on flat ground all by its lonesome.

Still we loved it. In the fall, the leaves turned an intense red and lasted on the tree long after the other trees in the neighbourhood were bare. In fact, one year in November, I was out batting away at the remaining leaves on our maple, trying to get them down before the last leaf pick-up of the year. After it got a little taller, the sun shining through the new leaves gave a soft, fresh green glow into our second floor bedroom. Over time, too, the long crack healed over. That crooked branch wasn't so evident once it had grown up into higher regions; in any case, it gave the maple character.

Eventually our tree was big enough and cast so much shade that the grass under it began to die. We dealt with that problem by taking out most of the grass (OHS member and neighbor Lyn Taylor helped me with that chore), and I started to collect hostas to plant in place of the grass. There's twenty-odd of them out there now.

As time went on, though – maybe a couple of decades – we noticed a decline in the vigour of our tree. Its leaves were still red in the autumn but fell earlier and earlier every year. Some of the small branches, particularly at the top, were dying. Finally, we saw woodpeckers busy tapping away at the bark, a sure sign of disease and insect infestation. My husband also noticed that big roots seemed to be girdling the trunk so it's quite possible the tree might be strangling itself.

We called the City. The City arrived and trimmed off the dead branches. A few years later, we called them again. More branch trimming. Then another crack appeared. More branch trimming. Finally, large slabs of bark began falling off but we knew there was no point in notifying the City this time; they had enough on their hands dealing with the ash borer crisis. But last summer, we called them again, and this time, the City agreed that the maple was so sick it could not survive. They agreed with the root girdling theory. It now has a great big red "X" on its south side. The plan is to take it down, most likely in January. It's so sad but also a relief that the poor thing will be put out of its misery.

# Member to Member

## What's in a Name? *Weigela*

by Robin Woods

Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828), a Swedish botanist and physician, named the genus *Weigela* in honor of Christian Ehrenfried Weigel (1748-1831), a Professor of Chemistry and Botany at the University of Greifswald, Prussia. The description of *Weigela* by Thunberg, specifically *Weigela japonica* collected in Japan, was published in a Swedish journal in 1780. The genus comprises at least 10 species of deciduous shrubs, all native to Eastern Asia. *Weigela* is assigned to the family Caprifoliaceae, which also includes *Lonicera*, the honeysuckle. The British National Collection of *Weigela* is held at the Sheffield Botanical Gardens.

Thunberg studied under Linnaeus at Uppsala University. He graduated in 1767, and in 1770 travelled to Paris and Amsterdam to broaden his knowledge. In Amsterdam he met Johannes Burman (1707-1780), who had also studied with Linnaeus. Burman suggested that Thunberg travel to South Africa and the East Indies to collect plants and animals for the botanic garden at Leiden. Thunberg was agreeable and joined the Dutch East India Company as a surgeon. He arrived at Cape Town in 1772 and spent three years in South Africa collecting plant and animal specimens.

In 1775 Thunberg travelled with the Dutch East India Company to their factory at Dejima in the Bay of Nagasaki, Japan. At that time, there were severe restrictions on the movement of foreigners in Japan. However, Thunberg gained the trust of Japanese officials through his skills as a surgeon, in particular the mercury treatment of syphilis - the "Dutch Disease" - and was allowed to make several trips to the mainland to collect plants and animals.

In 1778 Thunberg returned to Sweden and was appointed Professor of Medicine and Natural Philosophy at the University of Uppsala in 1781. He wrote two major works on his studies in Japan, *Flora Japonica* (1784) and *Fauna Japonica* (1833). The *Fauna* was completed after Thunberg's death by Philipp Franz von Siebold, a German traveler. Thunberg is credited with naming 254 species, mostly plants.

The spelling of *Weigela* is variable. The horticulturally accepted version, according to Pollock and Griffiths, is *Weigela*. However, many gardeners spell the name *Weigelia*. It appears that Thunberg named the genus *Weigela* but that Christiaan Hendrik Persoon (1761–1836), a contemporary botanist living in France, spelt it as *Weigelia*. The alternative spellings can be pronounced with either a soft "g" or a hard "g" viz.: *Weigela* as wy-jee-lah or wy-gi-lah, and *Weigelia* as wy-jee-lee-ah or wy-gi-lee-ah.

Although *Weigela* is botanically and horticulturally correct, if one uses *Weigelia,* gardeners will know the shrub in question!

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Collins Dictionary, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/weigela.

## And now for a few words about horticulture

by Tuula Talvila

Over the past few years while reading about horticulture both for fun and for course work, and also in my role as proof-reader for the OHS newsletter, I've noticed that *horticulturist* and *horticulturalist* are both widely used to denote a person who practises horticulture. Which is correct and does it matter?


Let's start with the root word (no pun intended). According to Wikipedia, the noun *horticulture* was modelled after *agriculture*, and comes from the Greek *χόρτος*, which in Latin became *hortus* (garden plant) and *cultūra* (cultivation). Usage of the word *horticulture* first appeared in the 1670's, according to the Online Etymological Dictionary.

The word *horticultural* – meaning something that is of, like, related to, or pertaining to horticulture – is derived from the noun *horticulture* with the Latin suffix *-al.* The adjective *horticultural* was first seen in use in 1768.

So far so good. Now things start to get a bit *tomentose*, *i.e.* fuzzy.

To make a word meaning "one who does *x*", often the Greek suffix *-ist* is added to the noun and so we get *horticulturist* to mean someone who practises horticulture. According to the Online Etymological Dictionary, this was first in use in 1818. Apparently,

# Member to Member

though, there is an even older form that predates *horticulturist* and that is *horticultist*, which was in use as early as 1754.

So we have three different words in use over the past 250-odd years to denote 'one who practises horticulture': *horticultist*, *horticulturist* (the only one of the three that my spell-checker is telling me is correct), and *horticulturalist*. While *horticultist* seems to no longer be in use (maybe because it sounds vaguely sinister), the other two words most certainly are. To me, it doesn't make sense to add the *-ist* suffix onto the adjective *horticultural,* so I'll stick with *horticulturist* and continue to give *horticulturalist* the red pen treatment while proof-reading. My dear friend, Chambers Dictionary,also says it should be *horticulturist*, and I never argue with Chambers.

Sources:
"Horticulture" comic by Mickey Bach used with permission; retrieved from English Word Information, http://wordinfo.info/results?searchString=horticulture
Online Etymological Dictionary, https://www.etymonline.com

# Did You Know

"The inaugural meeting of the Ottawa Horticultural Society was held 100 years ago, on January 17, 1893 in the City Hall Committee Room. According to the January 19, 1893 Ottawa Press "there were some thirty gentlemen present" (no mention of any ladies)."

Source: Fred Pain's unpublished manuscript on the history of the Ottawa Horticultural Society

## Film review: Tulip Fever

Directed by Justin Chadwick
Written by Tom Stoppard from the novel by Deborah Moggach
Starring Alicia Vikander, Dane DeHaan, Christopher Waltz, and Judi Dench

by Margaret Scratch

Don't bother with this movie if you are hoping to learn something about tulips, or even to see a few. The tulips in question are just commodities on the overheated Dutch stock market of the 17th century. The fever of the title is also commodity-based but the commodity is of the romantic kind.

Sophia, a pauper, agrees to an arranged marriage with a rich widower who then finances her siblings' emigration to New York. Rather than feel grateful to him, she seems to loathe him. He wants an heir but no pregnancy ensues despite their dutiful sex life. Then he decides to have her portrait painted and, of course, she falls in love with the artist. It's all downhill from there.

In typical bodice-ripper fashion, the plot thickens so much that it can barely move. It involves the pregnant kitchen maid, Sophia's faked pregnancy and death, her repentance for duping her poor long-suffering husband, and her final return to the nunnery, presided over by the Abbess - Judi Dench in a lovely cameo.

There are a few worthwhile moments in an otherwise dreadful film. A drunkard sent by the artist to collect some tulips from the Abbess (yes, he too is speculating in tulips) gets hungry, and eats them thinking they are onions. The costumes are beautiful, and the indoor scenes worthy of Vermeer, but I found the outdoor scenes too crowded and dirty to be my idea of Amsterdam in the 17th century.

I can't believe this film made 7 million dollars. 2 stars out of 5.

## Some Fiction to Read This Winter

by Sheila Burvill

For this winter, I recommend a mystery series by Naomi Hiraharo. We first learn that Mas Arai is a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and is a gardener. Born in the United States of Japanese parents, he had the misfortune of living in Japan during the Second World War, and survived the bombing more or less intact only because he was in a cellar at the time. Later he returned to live in the Los Angeles area where, like so many men of Japanese descent, he took up gardening as a way to earn money.

Life was kind to him in some respects; for instance, he saved enough from day jobs and truck farming to buy his own truck and house, he accumulated a number of regular customers, and he married and had a child. But life was also cruel, so that when we meet him in the first novel of this mystery series, in 1999 at the age of 69 years, his wife has died of stomach cancer, his daughter has decamped to the east coast, his regular customers have more or less vanished, and he ekes out a somewhat precarious living doing mainly "mow and blow" lawn care. Mas has soured on life and his fellow man. Then two things happen – his last regular customer (with whom he tried out a series of fruit tree grafting experiments) decides to sell her house, and a stranger from Japan shows up at one of the regular gatherings at Tanaka Lawn-mowers, asking questions about Joji Haneda.

Mas has a number of Japanese-American friends (Haruo Mukai, Stinky Yoshimoto, Tug Yamada, and Wishbone Tanaka among them) but Joji Haneda is no longer a friend due to a falling-out over some business deal in the past. What unites all these men, other than being connected to the gardening business one way or the other, is their love of gambling. Needless to say, this causes quite a few problems in their lives. In fact, Haruo (Mas' best

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friend) has been threatened with the loss of his family over the issue and has sought out therapy for his gambling problem.

Well, as the book says, "The thing about gardening was that you had plenty of time to think. Mas figured that's why so many gardeners turned out to be gamblers, philosophers, or just plain crazy." So Mas starts thinking about why this stranger, Shuji Nakane, has come all the way from Japan in search of Joji Haneda and why he seems unusually interested in Mas himself. In no time at all, it's Mas who turns investigator.

You learn a lot about different things in reading this mystery series: attitudes of Japanese-Americans living in southern California, their circumstances of life from the 1960's on; how people in Hiroshima coped in the aftermath of the bombing, and how their health concerns are monitored from then on; the changing state of gardening economics and practices; how some old Japanese curios and customs have migrated to California; different methods of growing plants both commercially and in home gardens; and the list goes on. There's a rich list of characters who come and go through the books, but it must be said that probably the most cherished and problematic character is Mas' old Ford truck, bought so proudly back in the 1960's, and still somehow being held together and working in 1999.

I have one small quibble with author Naomi Hiraharo's style – much of the dialogue amongst the Japanese-Americans is written as pidgin English. It seemed kind of condescending in the first book, but I gradually came to realize it was a useful technique because it shows how different this small society is from the larger one in which they must live.

I recommend the books to you as excellent winter reading. Here is the list of the books in the series.

Summer of the Big Bachi (2004) – Mas tracks down the killer of someone he knew in Hiroshima and finally reveals the secret of what happened that day the atomic bomb exploded.

Gasa-gasa Girl (2005) – Mas' daughter Mari is the restless, always on-the-go girl of the title. Now, in the early 2000's, she lives in New York City along with her hakujin (white) husband and new baby. Long estranged from his daughter, Mas is surprised when she calls him to come help her and her husband out of trouble. The mystery revolves around a garden's koi pond where the body of a rich Japanese-American is found.

Snakeskin Shamisen (2006) – One of Mas's friends has a big win gambling, but the good fortune ends when the winner is murdered. Somehow a traditional Okinawan stringed instrument (the shamisen of the title) is involved, and Mas meets an intriguing half-Japanese woman while he tries to figure out who killed his friend. Winner of the Edgar Allen Poe Award in 2007.

Blood Hira (2010) – Mas' best friend, Haruo Mukai, is getting married and he wants Mas to act as Best Man. Haruo's love life has never run very smoothly, and this second marriage appears to be doomed when his intended bride loses an ancient Japanese doll. She blames Haruo and the wedding is cancelled. Mas finds himself searching for the doll, and his search takes him through antique shops and the flower markets of Los Angeles.

Strawberry Yellow (2013) – When Mas first came back from Japan, he worked in the strawberry fields near Watsonville, CA. Now his cousin who remained there has died, and Mas returns for the funeral. However, someone else also dies, spurring Mas into poking and prying not just into this murder but also into his cousin's death. There are fascinating details about growing strawberries commercially.

Sayonara Slam (2016) – I haven't yet read this one but I gather it's about a baseball game at Dodger Stadium (Japan vs Korea) that presents a mystery about a pitcher even before the game begins. Can't wait to lay my hands on this one. Also, there's a new one, Hiroshima Boy, due to come out in March 2018.

All, except Gasa-gasa Girl and Snakeskin Shamisen are available at the Ottawa Public Library, but ask library staff if they can borrow the missing two titles for you from another library. All are available from the online book dealers.

## The OHS Logo

*Reprinted from a 2001 article by Stuart Herbert*

In the late 1970's a flower symbol was chosen as the logo for the Ottawa Horticultural Society. At that time, the sumac was chosen because the plant was prolific in this area and because it had a beautiful colour. In 2001 graphic designer Yvonne Pike created a new logo. Here is how Yvonne describes the image:

"Life is a cycle. The 'O' in the logo symbolizes this cycle. As we all know, one of the life forces of a plant is found in the green pigment, chlorophyll, which is embedded in the cells of the leaf. This life force is transported throughout the body of the plant as symbolized by the smooth curve of the stem, which climaxes in the blooming of the potential for new life – the flower. Thus the cycle continues.

The members of the Ottawa Horticultural Society are custodians of this life force. As custodians, their primary responsibilities are: the preservation, nurturing, and protection of plant life. This aspect is portrayed by the 'sheltered' position of the flower within the centre of the circle."

# OHS Matters

## Shows Corner

by Gillian Macdonnell

Our Autumn Show, held on September 26th, had more entries than ever. We had more members entering and more entries in total this year, which is encouraging. It was a good Show in many ways. Ann Frederking and Elaine Hoskins tied for the highest aggregate in the Open Horticulture classes, Nancy McDonald obtained the highest aggregate in the Novice Horticulture classes, and Emilie Henkelman received the highest aggregate in Design. As well as receiving a virtual trophy, these winners were awarded small cash prizes and a Plant Buck for each entry at the AGM in December.

A little review of Shows protocol may be in order to remind us all of what a Show comprises. Entries are received between 6:30 pm and 7:30 pm, with their entries registered with the Statistician and the exhibit tags in place. Named cultivars are judged higher than unnamed; that is, you have a greater chance of winning a ribbon with a named cultivar. Entries should be in peak condition and well-groomed; for example: hosta leaves without earth in their centres, blooms without insects, and no ragged or chewed leaves. Exhibitors should ensure their entries are properly named and placed in the right classes.

It is the task of the Show Convenor to ensure the exhibits are in the correct class, to enforce the deadline for entries, to sub-divide a class if there are too many entries to judge easily, and, where necessary, to remove an entry that does not qualify for judging-for example, if foliage is diseased.

It takes a number of players to make a Show. For every Show, there is a Convenor who manages the Show, a Statistician to count the entries and record the winners' points, a qualified Judge appointed from outside the society, clerks (usually two) to assist the judge by attaching ribbons and recording winners on the Show cards, and a team of volunteers to help set up and take down the Show furniture. For a good show, it is essential that all these posts are filled. If you would like to participate in a Show as a clerk or volunteer, please contact the following in person or by email:

Gillian Macdonnell at gmak3@bell.net,
Maureen Mark at mmark@rogers.com,
Nancy McDonald at nancyemcdonald@hotmail.com,
or Josie Pazdzior at josie.pazdzior@outlook.com.

We'd appreciate your help.

## New Members September to December 2017

Margaret Back
Roxanne Bassett Pye
Jeffrey Bedford
Ellen Boynton
Nicolas Brennan
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Drina Wethey
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## Getting to Know Margaret Scratch

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

I was one of the many people lured to the OHS by Pat Russell - in 1998, I think.

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

I started gardening in 1982 - in self-defence. We moved into a house with a dreadful garden full of sick fruit trees and not much else. I spent two summers preparing the soil, although at the time I didn't know that was what I was doing.

*How would you describe your garden?*

I would describe my garden as a work in progress always. The removal of a tree, four years ago, turned a shady

# Getting to Know Margaret Scratch

garden into a very sunny one. I still haven't quite figured out how to deal with this. It is what Marjorie Harris would call a "pocket garden", so I don't have much room for error.

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

I aim for an overall view which pleases me. While there are always things that could be better, on the whole, I get satisfaction from sitting on our deck and taking as much of a long view as is possible in my little triangle. I love epimediums and am starting to put in some interesting sedums.

*Are you the main gardener or do you have help?*

I do the dirty work, while my husband calls suggestions from the deck.

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

I often feel that I would like to rip everything out and start over, but I never do it. I can't abandon all those green friends.

*Are there gardening web sites that you look at regularly?*

Generally I do no consult web sites. If someone draws my attention to one, I take a look.

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

I love the English herbaceous border style which I first saw during a trip to Cambridge in 1991. I drool when I visit Nathalie Chaly's garden.

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

I read a lot - novels and history mostly. I knit compulsively. My children have asked me not to knit for them anymore. I have recently discovered streaming on the TV and that is taking up far too much of my time.

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