



OTTAWA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2019

Welcome! The OHS Newsletter is back.

In its new incarnation, it will be an electronic-only publication, distributed by email and available on the OHS website. It will be published on a quarterly basis – in March, June, September and December. An exciting and dynamic design has been created by new OHS member and graphic designer, Kat Bauer.

The newsletter is intended to be a source of information about issues of interest to gardeners. It will be a forum for exchanging views and experiences, as well as a place where OHS members can find out more about the Society and other members. The format allows the publication of longer articles and photographs.

The newsletter depends on the OHS membership for content and for feedback. We want to

know what your interests are, and whether the newsletter is of interest to you. Please send us your comments and criticisms.

We need articles, photographs, and other submissions from you.

Have you visited a garden lately that you would recommend? Have you encountered a garden problem, and have a solution, or want to ask other members for advice? Have you read a book recently that you want to recommend? Is there a horticultural issue that you are concerned about?

This is your newsletter!

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Trillium Award 2019

The Trillium Award was established by the OHS in 1967 to recognize efforts by citizens to beautify Ottawa neighbourhoods through their gardens. Every year a different specific postal code area is selected and is visited by the Trillium Award committee

who view the front gardens once during each of the three gardening seasons: spring, summer and autumn. The creators of the front yard judged most outstanding over the three seasons are awarded the George C. Myles Trophy.

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Janet and John Bell's garden

**This year's winners are
JANET AND JOHN BELL,
who live at 598 Westview Avenue.**

The Award was announced at the November OHS meeting. The winners, who could not be present, sent a letter, which was read out at the meeting:

"Members of the OHS:

We were surprised and delighted to receive the Myles Trophy.

When we moved into our home two decades ago, it was surrounded by patchy grass. With a back yard that is only four feet deep, our garden would be on the street and not hidden behind the house. Over the years, flowers and bushes have slowly overtaken the grass. Some of our plants have travelled with us from Halifax to Victoria and, finally, to Ottawa. Others have moved from nearby gardens before they were destroyed to make way for new houses.

Most are those we spotted at garden centres sometimes with a clear idea of what we wanted but often as not it just seemed like a good idea at the time. In the past, we never lived in a home longer than five years and so never paid any attention to the spacing instructions for new plants. We have learned that lesson.

It has been a good adventure. We have been lucky, and our neighbours and passers-by enjoy the results which makes all the work worthwhile. We love it that more and more people are turning their front lawns into gardens for all to enjoy. The fact that it is a positive act for the environment should also be remembered.

We thank you again for the Award and look forward to participating in OHS activities in the new year."

Janet and John Bell's award-winning garden



Julianne Labreche

Beyond Bee City

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLLINATORS

BY JULIANNE LABRECHE *OHS Member*

When Ottawa's mayor and councillors decided last year to reject a bid that Ottawa become officially a Bee City, it came as a bitter sting to some of us.

Gardeners and others concerned with a diminishing number of insect species in many parts of North America hoped that the city would get onboard to support bees and other pollinators.

By taking the pledge, the city would have agreed to move forward to educate the public about the importance of pollinators by creating and maintaining more pollinator-friendly habitat – including encouraging home owners to transform their front yards into welcoming spaces for bees, birds and butterflies. Hopefully

too, an action plan would have included corridors of pollinator-friendly habitat planted around the city.

The Ottawa Horticultural Society displayed strong leadership at the time, writing a letter of support favoring the Bee City proposal.

Even though Ottawa city council rejected the idea – citing paperwork, time and costs, plus other reasons – the positive news is that since that time 12 other Canadian cities have joined Bee City Canada. Together, they are sharing resources and ideas to support pollinators in different parts of the country.

When the proposal was first made to Ottawa officials, 23 Canadian cities already had signed the pollinator pledge. Since then, that number has grown to 35.

• **Toronto was the first to sign on by pledging to be a Bee City. Among its activities these days is a Community Stewardship program that engages volunteers to plant native species, as well as the creation of a Toronto Garden awards program to recognize citizens who demonstrate environmentally responsible garden practices.**

• **Saint-Laurent, a borough of Montreal, has created biodiversity awareness programs and is giving nectar plants priority in public green spaces.**

• **In June 2019, the city of Mississauga signed on, planning pollinator-themed planting events with schools and local community groups. The city is encouraging residents to**

create and maintain pollinator habitats on their properties.

• **Calgary just signed on too, with a large pollinator corridor created with municipal support.**

The number of bee campuses, bee businesses and bee schools through Bee City Canada also has grown across the country. They too are creating innovative programs and activities to support pollinators, including new green spaces with native plants that provide pollinators with much-needed nectar and pollen sources.

Bee City Canada is literally buzzing, according to Shelly Candel who coordinates its activities. A Bee City ambassador program for young people is in the works, she says, as well as a simple home garden on-line registration program to encourage people to plant for pollinators across the country.

So here's one idea: Perhaps if the good folks in Ottawa's city hall refuse to budge on an action plan for pollinators that would see local gardeners getting their knees dirty to create more pollinator habitat, then maybe it's time for a few local businesses, schools, campuses, churches or hospitals in Ottawa to take the pledge instead.

At least that way, a little progress would be made locally despite a city council that seems more focused on high-density condos these days than green spaces where nature can thrive.



"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments."

– JANET KILBURN PHILLIPS

Check It Out!

POLLINATOR-FRIENDLY GARDENING

There are lots of resources on-line about creating a garden that will attract and benefit bees and other pollinators.

Here are a few that you might want to check out:

Roadsides: Guide to Creating a Pollinator Patch

<https://gardenontario.org/wp-content/uploads/roadsides-guide.pdf>

Pollinator Gardens

<https://seeds.ca/sw8/web/pollination/pollinator-gardens>

Pollinator Garden: A Toronto Master Gardener's Guide

<http://www.torontomaster-gardeners.ca/gardeningguides/pollinator-garden-a-toronto-master-gardeners-guide/>

The BUZZ on Bees & Other Wild Pollinators

<http://lanarkstewardshipcouncil.ca/#!/pollinators>

Tips to Make Your Garden More Pollinator Friendly

<https://landscapeontario.com/pollinator-friendly-garden>

Pollinator Health

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/pollinator-health>



Thick patch of invasive dog-strangling vine
Image at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vincetoxicum_rossicum_5452385.jpg

Native and Invasive Plants

AN OVERVIEW OF A MASTER GARDENER'S SEMINAR

BY TUULA TALVILA *OHS Member*

On Saturday, October 26th 2019 I had the pleasure of attending a Technical Update put on jointly by the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton (MGOC) and the Lanark County Master Gardeners (LCMG), entitled "Ontario Native and Invasive Plants: Friends and Foes". These biennial seminars on different topics are intended to help members of the Master Gardeners keep their knowledge and skills growing and up to date, but there are also a small number of non-MG registrants permitted and I was very pleased I was able to attend this terrific educational event.

Kitchissippi United Church in Ottawa provided a very

good venue for the group of 75 attendees. The day started with registrations and coffee from 8:30 to 9:00 am, followed by a welcome address from Dale Odorizzi of the LCMG. The workshop consisted of three one-hour talks interspersed with three 15-minute talks, with a morning coffee break and a lunch break in the middle of the day.

The morning session started off with a talk by Dr. Naomi Cappuccino, associate professor in biology at Carleton University. "Biological Control of Weeds and Insect Pests" outlined the concepts and varieties of biological control (using natural enemies to try to control a pest species).

Naomi's work has focussed on programs of "classical" biological control strategies, i.e. those that use a control agent from the same origin as the invasive species, and one that can eventually reproduce and perpetuate its population after being introduced. Prior to being used as a biocontrol agent, a species has to undergo rigorous testing in quarantine and a large number of other plants have to be tested to be sure the introduced insect will not spread to non-target species. Approval for release is a long process.

Naomi described some of her lab's research into the possibility of controlling pale swallow-wort, also known as dog-strangling vine (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*), a tremendously invasive species in Ontario and Quebec, using an introduced moth species,

Hypena opulenta, whose caterpillars eat the plant, severely weakening them.

Hypena caterpillars were brought from their native habitat in Ukraine and reared in several labs in Canada and the United States. Following releases in 2013-2014 in Ottawa, small populations of *Hypena* have established themselves and continue to be studied to observe persistence, dispersal, and evidence of damage to dog strangling vine plants.

ThesecondsystemNaomi described involved attempts to control the red lily beetle. Many people are familiar with this non-native beetle which feeds on cultivated oriental lily varieties. Unfortunately it has now been found to also feed on our native lily species so control has become very important.

The biocontrol agent used is a tiny European parasitic wasp, *Tetrastichus setifer*, which lays its eggs inside the larvae of its host. The parasitoids were released in Ottawa in 2010 and they have shown evidence

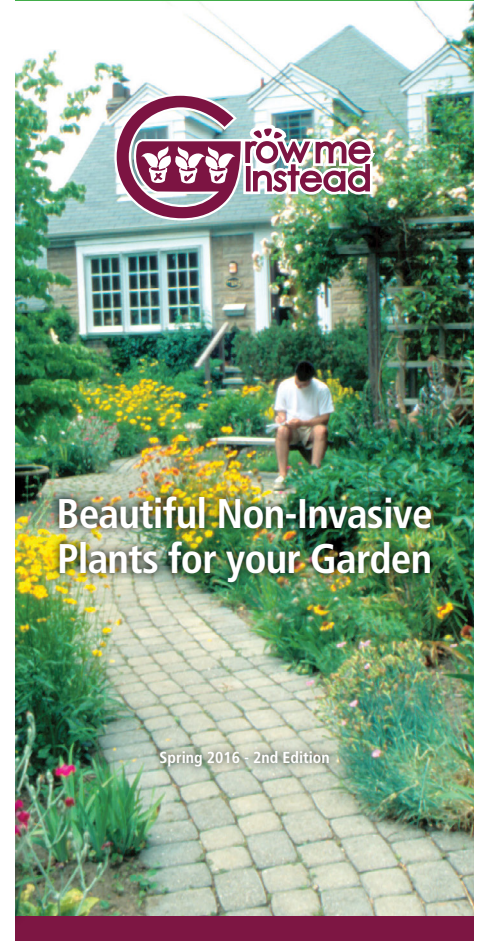
of being able to survive the winter here. However, Naomi cited a need for more post-release evaluation of spread and evidence of a population decline in red lily beetles, all of which requires more research funding.

You can read more on Naomi's Lily Leaf Beetle Tracker webpage at <https://lilybeetletracker.weebly.com/> which includes a link to her dog-strangling vine information.

To conclude, some of the challenges of biocontrol were outlined. Naomi finished by encouraging gardeners to provide a variety of native plants in our gardens. In the context of biological control, this can help provide valuable nectar sources to our local, native populations of parasitoids and enhance populations of natural enemies of garden pests – we can help put biocontrol into action in our own yards.

The second main talk of the morning was called "Impact of Invasives", presented by Dr. lola Price, President of the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC). Despite suffering from a terrible cold and cough, lola was there and persevered.

lola began by telling us that invasive plants are the second most common cause of plant species loss (habitat loss is first). She described some of the initiatives of the OIPC to help educate the public about invasive plants and to arm landowners with Best Management Practices (BMP) to combat invasive species. BMP



guides have been developed for 17 species so far and a "Grow Me Instead" booklet was written to help people first identify invasive species and then choose non-invasive alternatives to plant. lola went on to outline some invasive species and good native plant alternatives in categories such as grasses, groundcovers, and ornamentals. These excellent resources are available on the OIPC website: <https://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/>.

The OIPC is one member of a national organization, the Canadian Council on Invasive Species. This group has written a code of conduct for the ornamental horticulture industry. lola also mentioned the Early Detection & Distribution Mapping System, or EDDMapS,



Red lily beetle, image at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Scarlet_lily_beetle.JPG

an online tool used for early detection and monitoring of invasive plant species.

You can check it out here if you're interested and can get the cell phone app for reporting sightings: <https://www.eddmaps.org/>.

The two short presentations during the morning session were: "Tribute to a Pioneer", which honoured Gillian Boyd for her years of service with the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton; and "Lanark County Controversy", about the concerns that the Friends of Lanark County have about the County's program of spraying herbicide to control wild parsnip along roadsides.

At midday, a long break allowed attendees to have a fabulous buffet lunch of food prepared by the MGs. It provided a chance to talk with each other and also survey the array of items available to be bid on in a "Chinese auction". Items ranged from live plants to garden décor to gardening books and more. Money raised from raffle tickets will go towards future MG events.

Because it was a beautiful fall day, I took advantage of the long break to get outside for a walk in the autumn leaves on display in nearby Hampton Park, returning refreshed and ready for the afternoon session (with a plate loaded up with delectable desserts from the buffet!).

After lunch we were instructed to get up out of our seats and exercise! Lesley Peace led the group in some stretches and strengthening exercises, which were useful and fun and applicable specifically to gardeners.

Next up, Julianne Labreche gave a short presentation, complete with props, about her recent experiences trying to get the City of Ottawa to sign on to being a Bee City. The Board of the OHS had written a letter of support for Julianne's initiative in 2019 to encourage City Council to join the 23 other Bee Cities already declared in Canada. Disappointingly, the City ended up voting against the proposal but please see Julianne's related article on page 1 to see where we can go from here.

The final hour-long talk of the day was "Native Plants" by Trish Murphy of Beaux-

Arbres native plant nursery (<https://beauxarbres.ca/>) in nearby Bristol, Québec. Trish began by discussing what is meant by "native plant" and what level of "nativeness" is acceptable for gardens. She outlined some of the benefits and advantages of growing native species and mused on the idea of a new gardening aesthetic we could adopt, based on drawing inspiration for our gardens from the local landscapes, landforms, and their native plant communities.

Trish stressed the importance of the relationship between native insects, especially bees, and the plants they co-evolved with. While many native insect adults may be able to eat nectar from nearly any flowering plant, their young – whether they are bee larvae in a nest or caterpillars on plants – may be restricted to one or a small number of suitable plant



White baneberry or Doll's Eyes, *Actaea pachypoda*, a plant native to our area with outstanding fall interest. Image at https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fichier:Actaea_pachypoda_fruits01.jpg

species for food (pollen, in the case of bee larvae, or leaves for caterpillars).

So, while we may be focussed on providing flowers for pollinators, we also have to remember to provide critical food sources for their larvae. Trish also presented slides of native plants for different habitats and names of host plants that specific insects rely upon. I came away with a list of plants I'd like to try adding to my native plant garden!

The final activity of the day was reading out the winning ticket numbers for the 62 auction goodies, and things wrapped up around 3:30 pm.

All in all, it was an excellent seminar, both in terms of organization by the two Master Gardener groups, and the interest and quality of all the presentations. It was a fun and energetic learning environment and I'm very appreciative of the work that went into the event and grateful that the MGs allow a few of us non-MGs to attend their technical updates. I look forward to seeing what they will put together in two years' time.■

**"Gardens are
not made by
singing 'Oh, how
beautiful' and
sitting in the
shade."**

- RUDYARD KIPLING

Did you know . . . Poinsettias and Christmas

- Poinsettias (*Euphorbia pulcherrima*) are native to Central America, where they grow wild from Mexico to southern Guatemala in mid-elevation dry forests. The plant was used by the Aztec people to produce a red dye and an antipyretic medication.
- Because of unregulated deforestation, the natural habitat of poinsettias has been eroded, and wild populations tend to be small and threatened. Little is known about the pollination of poinsettias in the wild.
- The plant's association with Christmas began in 16th century Mexico, where legend tells of a girl – commonly known as Pepita or Maria – who was too poor to provide a gift for the celebration of Jesus' birthday and who was inspired by an angel to gather weeds from the roadside and place them in front of the altar. Crimson blooms sprouted from the weeds and became poinsettias. From the 17th century, Franciscan friars in Mexico included the plants in their Christmas celebrations. The star-shaped leaf pattern is said to symbolize the Star of Bethlehem, and the red colour represents the blood sacrifice of the crucifixion of Christ.
- The poinsettia is the world's most economically important potted plant.
- *Euphorbia pulcherrima* is a shrub or small tree, typically reaching a height of 2-13 feet, with a somewhat weedy appearance in nature. The coloured bracts are actually leaves. The colour is created through photoperiodism, meaning that plants require at least 12 hours of complete darkness for at least five days in a row. At the same time, the plants require abundant light during the day for the brightest colour. While the sap and latex of many plants of the spurge genus are toxic, the poinsettia's toxicity is actually relatively mild, contrary to the urban myth.
- In the 1820s Joel Roberts Poinsett, a botanist and the first US Minister to Mexico – whose name was later given to the plant – brought specimens back to the United States, where he grew them in greenhouses in South Carolina. A poinsettia was exhibited at the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in 1829 by Col. Robert Carr. Commercial cultivation, however, really began in the twentieth century when a German immigrant, Albert Ecke, and his family developed grafting and growing techniques and promoted the plant's association with Christmas. The Ecke family had a virtual monopoly on poinsettias until the 1990s, and still control much of the American and worldwide market.

The Book Nook

GARDENING BOOKS
PUBLISHED IN 2019 TO GET
YOU THROUGH WINTER

The Fruitful City: The Enduring Power of the Urban Food Forest

By Helena Moncrieff (ECW Press)

- Toronto-based writer Moncrieff explores and celebrates the overlooked bounty of fruit growing in urban centres. Nominated for the 2019 Heritage Toronto Book Award.

Planting the Natural Garden

By Piet Oudolf + Henk Gerritsen

- Inspiring a perennial movement, Piet designs with hardy grasses and perennials to create a dreamy landscape. His most notable works are the High Line in NYC, Millennium Park in Chicago and Potters Fields in London.

COMING SOON:

The Complete Gardener: A Practical, Imaginative Guide to Every Aspect of Gardening

By Monty Don

- Beautiful and educational book by celebrity English gardener Monty Don.

*Monty hosts several Netflix shows including "Big Dreams, Small Spaces," "Monty Don's French Gardens"; and "Love your Garden."



Carmen, Al and Martha

Community Garden Update:

40 ARTHUR STREET

BY GILLIAN MACDONNELL *Former co-convenor of the OHS Community Planting Committee*

It is not often that we have updates of OHS Community Garden projects, but here is one with an interesting story.

The 2015 OHS Yearbook had this to report concerning activity in 2014:

"A small condo at 40 Arthur Street has a garden committee which plans, plants and watches over the grounds around the building. Across the street was a concrete city planter with a dead tree and several overgrown

bushes in it that the gardeners at number 40 found an eyesore. After persuading the city to replace the tree with a living serviceberry they contacted us to see whether the OHS might undertake planting something around the tree. The Garden Committee prepared the soil and helped the OHS volunteers plant a variety of hardy and salt-tolerant plants which seem to have thrived under the watchful eyes of the Arthur St. Gardeners."

The initial planting occurred on a very rainy day, and the garden



Gillian Macdonnell

progressed over time, new plants replacing less successful ones, and the container livened up the corner of Somerset and Arthur Streets. One of the residents at 40 Arthur, Bob Jennings, and his wife, Martha Scott, took on the project of maintaining the planter. In 2016, however, Bob became ill, and as time went on he was confined to watching the garden from his condo: he had a good view of the big, bright yellow marigolds planted right where he could easily see them.

Bob died in 2017 and the residents put a sign in the garden in his memory. To the indignation of everyone, the sign disappeared shortly after, taken by a thief unaware of its significance.

At that time, city councillor Catherine McKenney said "Let's see if we can get something more permanent." This summer, through a partnership of 40 Arthur residents and city officials, a metal bilingual sign was installed in Bob's garden. Photos show the sign in the garden and Martha along with one of the 40 Arthur residents, Carmen Vincent, with Al Robinson, the city worker who installed the sign.

Since Bob's passing, the garden has become very much a part of the neighbourhood. Over the last two years, neighbours on Arthur Street have added plants in memory of Bob: irises, nepeta, and a coneflower. ■



A Butterfly Garden for General Burns

BY JULIANNE LABRECHE Master Gardener, OHS Member, and volunteer with the General Burns pollinator project

It was a happy day for pollinators and some west Ottawa volunteers who care about them when the good news broke last spring.

The Ontario Horticultural Association's award committee had made their final decision. The Ottawa Horticultural Society was one of five chosen to receive up to two hundred dollars for a pollination project at General Burns, a popular city park located not far from the downtown core in Nepean.

The encouraging news delivered last March spread quickly among local volunteers who live near the park.

Project leader Margaret Sambol – a mother with three children who visits General Burns almost daily with her family during the summer – would spend the monies wisely. The grant would be used to purchase perennials and shrubs to attract butterflies and other pollinators.

It was a perfect ending to a project that had taken several months of planning, including finding local volunteers to ensure the ongoing maintenance of this little garden.

Through her community association, Margaret made

the pitch over a year ago for the city officials to approve the construction of a butterfly garden at General Burns.

Although city staff and elected representatives were supportive, the project was not without its stresses. Planning involved lots of hard work, paperwork, licensing and a few tough decisions along the way, especially as the spring deadline for planting approached.

But the job got done. On Sunday June 2, volunteers of all ages gathered on a rainy day to plant perennials for butterflies. Many of the plants came from a native plant sale organized by the Fletcher Wildlife Garden. Others were purchased at local gardening stores or donated.

In addition to these and other plants, local school children arrived later in spring to plant flats of bright, sunny annuals. To maintain these and other plants, volunteers are using free online software to maintain a regular watering and weeding schedule. So far, the butterfly plants are growing well, healthy and flowering.

A bilingual metal sign with names and photos of the plants was installed for the garden's official opening.



Here are just a few of the plants growing in the General Burns community butterfly garden:

Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)

This lovely, easy-to-grow native plant produces attractive orange flowers that are a butterfly and bee magnet. The perennial is drought-tolerant, prefers dry soil and likes full sun. They look best when planted en masse and are a welcome addition to any butterfly garden.

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia*)

This is not a native plant to North America but does attract butterflies that seek it out for nectar. Despite its name, it is not a host plant for adult butterflies but it is a beautiful addition to any butterfly garden. It is a fast growing deciduous shrub with masses of blossoms, hardy to Zone 5.

Yarrow (*Achillea*)

This plant is easy-to-grow and can spread rapidly. It is a plant that grows tall, best planted at the back of a border, and produces flat clusters of small flowers. It thrives in a sunny location. Yarrow is a food source for many species of butterflies and moths.

Blazingstar (*Liatris*)

This is a native plant with tall, purple-spiked flowers that blooms in mid-summer. It provides plant food for the larvae of a variety of butterfly species, including painted ladies, skippers, swallowtails, fritillaries and monarchs. Like so many butterfly plants, it also requires full sun.

Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

Butterflies are attracted to the yellow and orange colored petals of this North American flowering perennial. They are easy to grow, tolerate drought and heat and usually self-seed.

Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)

This is a native plant in eastern Canada. It's a lovely addition to any garden because it attracts the monarch butterfly that lays her eggs on the plant. Emerging caterpillars eat its leaves. It is a tall, upright plant that grows in damp to wet soils. It is not invasive.

Bee Balm (*Monarda*)

With its tubular petals of red, pink, white or purple, this native North American plant attracts butterflies, bees and hummingbirds. It prefers moist soil and a sunny location.

Like many plants that attract butterflies, it's easy to grow and flowers in mid-summer.

New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

A butterfly garden needs plants that also bloom late into the gardening season. This hardy perennial with its long bushy stems and purple flowers comes into bloom from August through

October. It attracts many butterflies and bees at a time when other flowering plants are turning to seed.

The pollinator project was a good way to meet neighbours. Significantly, it also will help to improve biodiversity and support pollinators. The hope is that these plants not only will flourish but encourage local homeowners to plant for pollinators too.

Volunteers are very grateful to the Ottawa Horticultural Society for their support and to the Ontario Horticultural Association for this grant. ■

Congratulations!

To Margaret Sambol, the Winner of the Ward 9 Recognition award, presented by Councillor Keith Eglli, for her volunteer work on the bee garden.

The award reads as follows:

Ottawa
Ward 9 Recognition Award
This certificate is awarded to
Margaret Sambol
Dated this November 28, 2019
Thank you for all you do in the
community.

Councillor Keith Eglli
Ward 9 Knoxdale-Merivale



Margaret Sambol with Councillor Keith Eglli



Farmer's Almanacs

PREDICTING WINTER WEATHER

Getting the weather forecast right for the next 24 or 48 hours often seems to be a challenge, despite the plethora of radar, satellites, and other tools. By contrast, the idea of developing an annual or seasonal forecast for an entire region seems fantastical or preposterous. Yet, for hundreds of years farmers and gardeners have been reaching for almanacs to help them plan and prepare for the months ahead. Each August or September, these old-fashioned looking publications start appearing on newsstands.

The *Old Farmer's Almanac* has been published since 1792, making it the oldest continuously published periodical in North America. A general reference work, it contains weather forecasts, planting charts, astronomical data, recipes, and articles on topics such as gardening, sports, astronomy, and folklore.

Its weather forecasts are said to be based on solar science, climatology, and meteorology. The 2020 edition summarizes its winter forecast for Ontario as follows: "Winter temperatures, precipitation,

and snowfall will be above normal. The coldest periods will be in mid- to late November, January, early and mid- to late February, and early March. The snowiest periods will be in early and mid-December, mid- to late January, mid-February and early March."

A competing publication, the *Farmer's Almanac* began publishing in 1818, and, in addition to weather predictions, it includes articles on topics such as full moon dates and lore, natural remedies, and outdoor activities.

It provides 16 months of weather predictions, broken down into seven zones for the continental US, as well as Canadian regions. Its predictions are arrived at on the basis of a formula that considers sunspot activity, the tidal action of the moon, the position of the planets, and various other factors. The publishers deny using computer satellite-tracking equipment, weather lore, or groundhogs. The formula is a closely guarded secret, which is known only to the Almanac's weather prognosticator.

It's 2020 Canadian edition states: "Our long-range forecast is calling for yet another freezing, frigid and frosty winter for two-thirds of the country. Areas east of the Rockies, to Quebec and the Maritimes, may get the worst of the bitterly cold conditions. . . . Above-normal winter precipitation is expected over most of the country."

A third U.S. publication, the *Harris Farmer's Almanac*, claims that it is "published in the tradition of the respected almanac of the same name first published in 1692." It does not break out Canadian regions, but based on the forecast for the Great Lakes Region, Ontario can expect that December will have near normal tempera-

ture and precipitation; January will have near normal temperatures and slightly above normal precipitation; February will see temperatures and precipitation near normal; while March will have slightly above normal temperatures and near normal precipitation.

How accurate are the almanacs in forecasting the weather? They claim an accuracy rate of 80% or higher, but most objective observers feel that the rate is closer to 50% for their day-to-day forecasts, not significantly different that any randomly generated forecast. Their seasonal forecasts are slightly more accurate, but, in general, the accuracy of the U.S. National Weather Service is higher for both short and long term forecasts.

For several years now, Canada has had its own home-grown farmer's almanac, *Harrowsmith's Almanac*. The 2020 edition predicts that winter 2019-20 in Ontario will see frequent arctic waves, colder than normal average precipitation, and a stormy late winter: "Not unlike the previous winter, the entire province gets locked into colder-than-normal temperatures once again. A persistent northwesterly flow will bring several arctic air masses that will lead to high levels of lake-effect snow over the eastern shores of the Great Lakes."

Not to be outdone, most other weather organizations offer seasonal predictions as well. The Weather Network, for instance, issued a forecast from southern Ontario to southern Quebec, suggesting that people prepare for a winter that will be colder than usual and have much more precipitation than normal. It is expected to be stormy, with a mix of precipitation – this means rain could often wash out snow after large storms,

and there could be the potential for icy conditions. Once winter settles in, it does not look like an early spring – rather, a prolonged winter season for all areas east of Manitoba. AccuWeather predicts that Ontario will bear the brunt of stormy weather, at least in the early part of the winter, with several significant snowfall events expected in Toronto and the Ottawa Valley.

Whether an almanac or a modern weather service is involved, forecasting the weather is a tricky business. It is fairly well understood that accuracy diminishes the further out you go. A five-day forecast can accurately predict the weather 90% of the time, but predictions for 10 days out or more will only be right half of the time. In addition, climate change has meant that historical records are no longer as useful in helping to predict future trends.

Given that the almanacs are prepared as much as 18 months in advance, and predictions are for wide swaths of geography – the whole of the Province of Ontario, or all of southern Ontario and Quebec – it is perhaps easy to be dubious about the likelihood that their predictions will come true.

These almanacs harken back to a simpler time, when these annual publications presented the family with a wealth of information, statistics and entertainment. (Some of them still have a hole in the upper left corner so that they can be hung up in the home, barn or outhouse, and dipped into when you had a free moment.) The weather predictions in farmer's almanacs – or the equivalents issued by modern weather services – create the illusion that farmers – and gardeners – can try to stay one step ahead of Mother Nature.

We live in hope. ■

The OHS Shows Corner

A NOTE FOR EXHIBITORS & POTENTIAL NEW EXHIBITORS

BY MAUREEN MARK *Shows Committee Officer*

The OHS flower shows have been a mainstay for the society for decades. These shows provide an opportunity for exhibitors to display prize specimens from their gardens and to educate members on the plants that are grown in our area.

For the next three years, the OHS will continue to hold two flower shows that will be held in conjunction with the June meeting and the September meeting.

As with the many activities of the society, shows require volunteers to keep them going. New members are particularly welcome to join the

committee which meets once a year. However, you do not need to be a member of the committee to volunteer for any of the tasks required to put on a show. Many hands are required on the day of the show and a few are required in advance.

Contact:

Maureen Mark
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613-521-4597
to find out if there is a task that will suit you.

CALLING ALL EXHIBITORS AND POTENTIAL NEW EXHIBITORS.

A new Ontario Judging and Exhibiting Standards for Horticulture and Floral Design is now available from the Shows Committee for \$10. This is an invaluable resource to reference the requirements for your exhibits and how they are judged.

Did you know that tulips must be displayed with at least two leaves? And that rhubarb leaves must be cut in a fan shape?

Stay tuned – we will be providing more guidance through future newsletters and the Grapevine. If you don't get the guide, a copy will be available for you to consult at the shows.

Show rules and schedules will continue to be published in the Yearbook. I encourage you to consult the show schedules early and often. For example, you may want to purchase some annuals earlier to prepare a small planter for the June flower show. Or you may want to make your hypertufa container now for the trough garden.

Why should you consider exhibiting? One plant buck is awarded for each exhibit that will help you finance your purchases at OHS plant sales. Also there are cash prizes for big winners. Check out the Yearbook for the 2019 winners.

Creating Your Own Christmas Arrangements

TIPS FOR OUTDOOR PLANTERS, WREATHS & CENTERPIECES

BY JUDY FINE *Floral Art Group Member*

Many stores sell Christmas greenery and also sets of mixed decorations to use for outdoor designs. When making arrangements, include some smooth greens like bergenia, European ginger, boxwood or smooth decorations, as Christmas greens are very textured. This will give a better visual impact. If gathering greenery yourself from local sources, keep in mind that cedar turns brownish when the snow falls, so gather the cedar early, dampen it, and then store in a cool place like a garage. If late, cut branches from the inner and lower branches of trees for a nice green colour. Other greens, like yew, white pine, hemlock, fir and juniper, can be cut later and stored in garbage bags until needed. The greenery can be rinsed with water to get rid of dirt and to give it a more vibrant colour – except bluish type greens (such as blue spruce); the blue tends to wash off.

For nice line material, grape vines, Engleman's ivy, kiwi vine, or equisetum can be coiled and laid down first, and then the greens built around the lines. This also gives an interesting visual impact. Fun things to try include cinnamon sticks, sugared fruit, leftover gourds from fall, innards of wild cucumber,

grass heads still in the garden, dried hydrangea flowers, and any seed pods or fungus available.

Remember that table centrepieces should be no higher than your forearm as a general rule of thumb, and should come down lower if they are being viewed up close. Pine cones with sap can be baked for 1/2 hour on the lowest temperature: this will melt the sap and give a shiny finish to the cone – make sure that the cones are completely on aluminum foil when baking. Instead of candles, use battery-powered tea-lights and candles as they are safer. Plus, there are all kinds of battery string lights available to create line material.

I often look for something fun and unusual at dollar stores to feature in a design – like a large velvet ball, a light-up icicle, or acrylic snowflake – and try to use it in a different way, like upside down or at an angle or in or on something else. This gives added interest to a design.

Have fun creating!





In Memoriam

MEMORIES OF HEIDI GERAETS

Heidi Geraets, who died in late October, was a member of the OHS for 45 years. In appreciation of her life and her contributions to the OHS, several of her friends were asked to share memories:

Heidi's greatest accolade for a plant, flower or tree was "stunning." Or else "It's a stunner." And you knew, when you looked over to see what she was talking about, that you were going to see something that was absolutely beautiful.

SHEILA BURVILL

Only Heidi could see a golden opportunity in a dying cedar hedge. With the characteristic giggle and twinkle in her eye, she set about carving out a tearoom between the sparse lower branches of the hedge bordering the street side of her back garden. Out came the requisite number of branches and in went a small table and two chairs. It was ostensibly a tea party hide-

a-way for her grandchildren and I am sure they all had wonderful times there, but her allegedly adult friends were also treated to tea or lemonade in the hedge as well. I shared lemonade with her one very hot summer afternoon and witnessed her utter delight in what she had created. It was pure Heidi.

MARGARET SCRATCH

Heidi's front garden had next to no grass because it was full of well chosen, well maintained plants, many of them unusual, some stretching the limits of their hardiness zone, and some quite ordinary flowering plants but grown well and placed just so. In fact, now I come to think about it, there was little there grown solely for the value of its foliage. I begged a division from a *Bergenia* she had. It grew facing south in the shelter of a larch tree and bloomed for a very long period in the Spring. So I planted mine next to a tall juniper but also facing south. Alas, while my plant bloomed over a longish period, its blossoms never attained the same intensity of colour as the mother plant. I just didn't have the "Heidi touch".

SHEILA BURVILL

Ah, Heidi, I have always loved, admired, and perhaps also feared (a bit) Heidi's crusading nature. Heidi never sat still when faced with problems or issues she felt strongly about. She was not afraid to commit her energies, her talents, and her intelligence in support of social causes, nor was she shy in making her opinions heard and considered, or in attempting to convince her opponents of the rightness of her views. She had many moments of despair, mostly about politics, but where she was personally involved, she refused to give up and was constantly thinking of new ways to achieve her goals, of how to chip away at resistance, of new passages to follow to arrive at the goal.

As a tiny, local example, in her neighbourhood of Old Ottawa South, she witnessed a classic bit of developer subterfuge. An elderly neighbour, determined not to sell her valuable Rideau River home to an eager developer, eventually sold the property to a 'lovely young couple from Toronto,' who within 24 hours, had sold it on to the same rebuffed developer, who promptly destroyed the home. Heidi was aghast, outraged, and she took action. She held a neighbourhood meeting at her home to see what could be done about the situation. She invited the ward councillor to attend and then nailed him to her sofa with questions, suggestions, directives. (I am sure he still quakes at the memory.) Though outfoxed by the developer, Heidi's advocacy drew attention to how that property was to be developed, put pressure on the developer to improve the design, and, consequently, the resulting building, if not exactly welcome, was held to stricter criteria for its design and execution. Most of us would have ignored the situation or reacted with a shrug – too bad – but our beautiful friend went to war, in the most passionate and caring way. We are at a loss indeed.

JENNIFER MIX

We all share the understanding that Heidi was a remarkable person – kind, generous, intelligent, practical, funny, energetic – a creator of beauty in her gardens, her pottery and in her ability to enjoy so many experiences with many different people. At her memorial service, I sat beside people who knew her from pottery, a book club and a European film group. At the same service, I learned for the first time of how her determination and persistence were instrumental in her church starting and supporting a school in Liberia. She could be direct and pointed when circumstances demanded a firm approach. She had a wide reach. It didn't exceed her grasp.

...continued

I met Heidi through the Old Ottawa South Garden Club when she won the award for best front yard in Old Ottawa South – no surprise. A friend of mine and Heidi's neighbour up the street on Sunnyside showed me that amazing garden. Heidi was lovely to meet. It turned out that Heidi's daughters knew Pat's daughters. There was babysitting involved. Heidi was a good neighbour – no surprise.

Years later I met Heidi again when I became more active as an OHS member. In 2016 my garden was part of the September OHS tour. I was really anxious and felt out of my depth. When Heidi came to see our garden and said she liked what we had done I was over the moon. But it wasn't just what she said. It was how carefully she looked, and the questions she asked. After the tour she sent me a photograph of a hosta blossom from my garden, not even one I had particularly noticed, and a note. I still have the photo and the note. I have two cultivars of that hosta now.

Even when Heidi was ill and housebound, she would call friends just to ask how they were. She would send her friends hugs by proxy. That was Heidi.

Whenever I spoke to her or saw her, even if only for a moment or two, or for a few words, I always felt recognized and connected. I think that was her gift. For lack of a better word, it's connectedness. She had a gift for seeing other people properly, and recognizing what mattered about them. She created beauty in gardens and pottery and in her home. But she also had a gift for finding and recognizing beauty in the lives and abilities of people around her. That's an important part of what she shared with people who were lucky enough to have known her.

KRISTIN KENDALL

Heidi had survived an encounter with breast cancer. She knew what it was like to face surgery and treatment. When she learned I had been diagnosed with stage III breast cancer she had given me words of encouragement. Then, on a cold and dreary day in early winter, when I was about two-thirds into my chemotherapy treatment and feeling worse than lousy, she

appeared at my door with a plant arrangement planted in a pot of her own creation. It is a dark brown square pot on four little "feet" with a design etched into the sides. It sits on my kitchen window sill above the sink, with some dried hydrangeas in it – an everyday reminder of my very compassionate friend.

GLORIA SOLA

I AM THERE

– for Heidi

The earth was your medium,
your fingers kneading the small lump
of clay that you would pinch or coil,
draw the fine grains to texture,
the form and shape held
in your imagining
and then score with hatch marks,
brush, sponge or spatter
before firing, the vessel transformed,
like you, strong and resilient.

The earth was your medium,
your fingers tender to the soil,
nestling *sanguinaria Canadensis*
into the rich humus.

Double bloodroot, petals iridescent
as fine china, your delight each spring
as bees delved deep for nectar
while the gardens around remained reluctant
to shake off winter's harsh grip.

The earth, your medium, now embraces you
after all those years when your fingers
first found the small swelling
and you resolved to stand your ground.
Composed, like your final note to friends:
"Winter is coming. I am resting.
In the Spring, in the corner of my garden,
when the Bloodroot comes up,
the delicate little white flowers
piercing through the dark earth,
I am there again."

BLAINE MARCHAND



<https://www.agac.gen.tr/palamut-agaci.html>

Did you know . . . **The Mighty Oak**

Oak trees do not produce a single acorn for the first 20 years of their lives. Many oaks wait until they are around 50 years old before producing their first large crop.

White oaks produce mature acorns in a single season, but black and red oaks produce acorns that take two full years to mature.

A 100-year old oak tree will produce over 2,000 acorns per season. However, because only one acorn in 10,000 will become a tree, it required all the acorns from

five massive oak trees to produce a single offspring. The other acorns are eaten by animals, end up in landfill or compost, or fail to find the right conditions to germinate and grow.

The life expectancy of an oak tree varies according to conditions and species. The normal lifespan is between 200 and 400 years, but some trees only live 80 years, while others live much longer. ■



ABOUT US

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

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