



## 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 2015 yearbook for a complete list of events for the year.

### September 22

New York City's High Line, Rob Brandon  
Fall show

### October 27

Edibles in the Garden: Vegetables and Yummy Additions, Paul Zammit

### November 24

Wayward Weeds and Wild Bounty, Amber Westfall

### December 8

Annual General Meeting and Potluck

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

## Fall Newsletter



Image: BioDivLibrary

### Tips on Planting Hardy Bulbs

Bulbs that are planted in the fall can spend the winter in the ground – they are hardy bulbs.

Purchase your bulbs early in the season, as soon as they arrive in stores, because storage conditions in garden centres and superstores are not always ideal. Choose healthy bulbs that are firm, without spots or mechanical damage.

Plant bulbs as soon as possible in the fall, or, if you must wait because of inclement weather, store them in a cool, dry place (8-12°C) in windowed plastic crates, mesh bags, or paper bags. Be sure to label stored bulbs. Small bulbs or bulbs without outer skin are more vulnerable and prone to drying out. They should be placed in sphagnum moss, peat, or sawdust.

Ideally, bulbs should be planted when soil temperature is lower than 15°C and until the first frost, as the bulbs need time to develop their roots before the ground is too cold. This is usually from the end of September, through October to mid-November, as the roots grow as long as soil temperatures are above 9°C.

When bulbs are planted too late in the fall to develop their roots, they bloom late. This is of particular concern for narcissi, which are easily disturbed by late planting. If planted late, the roots must develop in the springtime before the plant itself can develop and flower.

Bulbs cannot tolerate soggy soil with stagnant water; good drainage is essential. If necessary, fertilize soil with well-decomposed organic material and fine gravel at a depth of 30 to 35 cm. If you plan to leave the bulbs in the ground for several years, add bone meal, which decomposes more slowly. The problem of poorly drained soil can be avoided by planting bulbs in an elevated flower bed.

It can be helpful to plant bulbs near perennials that are rarely divided, and near bushes. This reduces the risk of digging them up when transplanting or dividing!

Plan to [camouflage the yellowing leaves](#) of your bulbs by planting them behind annuals or small shrubs. This way, leaves can mature without spoiling the look of your garden.

Naturalizing bulbs in grass gives the lawn a festive look in the springtime.

With time, the grass will grow and the effect will be even lovelier! Many bulbs can be naturalized in your lawn, including crocus, squill, anemone, grape hyacinth, and narcissus.

Avoid planting straight rows, which are boring and unattractive. Instead, plant your bulbs in groups. There are two ways to do this. The first is to dig a hole corresponding to the dimension of the colour you want to add to your flowerbed. After tilling the soil and fertilizing it if necessary, plant bulbs with space between them and fill the hole. The other method consists of placing bulbs on prepared soil and planting them individually to the appropriate depth using a trowel.

The distance and depth needed depend on the diameter of the bulbs. Larger bulbs are planted deeper and spaced further apart than smaller bulbs. Tilled and fertilized soil will become more compacted after planting; bulbs initially covered with 12 cm of earth will end up being 10 cm deep in the ground after levelling. The golden rule is this: the bulb should be covered with soil that is three times the height of the bulb from tip to base.

Bulbs	Spacing
Crocus, grape hyacinth	8-10 cm
Hyacinth	15 cm
Narcissus, tulip	13 cm

Bulbs should be planted with the tip facing upwards, except for fritillaries, which are planted on their side. Once bulbs are covered with soil, they should be watered generously. A 5-cm layer of mulch can be added to avoid unexpected warming over the winter and avoid root breakage from freezing and thawing. Finally, you may want to take measures to avoid rodent [damage](#).

### Care

As soon as they are done blooming, cut the flower stems off at the base. Do not remove the leaves until they have dried out and died back naturally. The leaves play an essential role in the photosynthesis process that these plants use to produce the nutrients

they need to bloom again the following spring.

Based on an article by Francine Joly and Lise Lacouture in *Quatre-Temps* magazine, Vol. 23, No.1. Reprinted with the permission of Montreal Botanical Garden.

See <http://espacepouirlavie.ca/en/hardy-bulbs>. Also available in French at <http://espacepouirlavie.ca/bulbes-rustiques>. Other resources are also available on the site.

## The Peony as Medicinal Plant

by Roberta Woods

So enamoured are we today with the peony's beauty and with its excellence as a garden plant that we tend to forget that, at one time, the peony was highly regarded as a medicinal herb. In fact, it is likely that rather than being grown as horticultural plants, peonies were first cultivated for their healing properties. One reminder of this earlier use is that peonies are named after Paeon, the ancient Greek healer whom Homer depicted as a physician to the gods. Another reminder is the name assigned to the plant known to us, today, as *Paeonia officinalis*. Literally, "*officinalis*" means from the office or, in present day terms, the shop where European herbalists sold their remedies. Practitioners in China and Japan also recognized the peony's medicinal properties. In China these were probably known by 600 B.C. and certainly by the first century A.D. In the early eighth century A.D. the peony was taken, not for its horticultural properties but, rather, for its medicinal value, from China to Japan.

In Europe, the first peony to be utilized as a medicinal plant was *Paeonia mascula* or, the "male" peony, native to the Mediterranean. In the medieval period, *P. mascula* was introduced into Britain, probably by monks. Both John Gerard (1545-1611/12) and Nicholas Culpepper (1616-1654) referred to *P. mascula* in their herbals. However, by the sixteenth century, *P. officinalis*, also native to the Mediterranean, had been introduced into Britain and supplanted *P. mascula* as the peony of choice for medicinal purposes. In China and Japan, both herbaceous and

tree peonies were grown as medicinal plants. In Europe, *P. officinalis* was grown by monks in their herb gardens; by physicians and apothecaries in their physic gardens; and, by private individuals in their town and country gardens. And since in the medieval period, and later, the housewife was held responsible for the care of the sick, women would have been involved in the cultivation of peonies. In wealthy households, the housewife would have had a supervisory role but in more humble establishments, the women would have done the work themselves.

According to Culpepper, not all parts of the peony were equally efficacious as herbal remedies. He ranked the roots and seeds as the most valuable, the petals and leaves less so. The harvesting of the roots, however, was at one time considered dangerous. In ancient Greece, there was a prohibition against digging up the roots in daylight lest the activity be seen by a woodpecker which would peck out the eyes of the digger. Death was another danger associated with the digging of roots. The remedy for this hazard was to tie one end of a piece of string to the plant and the other to the leg of a dog. The dog could then be persuaded to pull up the plant with a lure of "roasted flesh" set at a distance.

Gerard dismissed these ancient myths and said that the roots could be harvested at any time of the year. The harvest of seed was also considered worthy of an advisory note. Until Gerard dismissed the notion, peony seeds were believed to be invisible during daylight but could be collected at night because they shone like candles.



After harvesting, dried peony roots could be fashioned into amulets and beads, or ground into a powder. Powdered root was used both by itself and mixed with other ingredients to form medicinal powders or electuaries. The roots were also the basis of peony water. Culpepper's recipe advised washing the roots, cutting them into small pieces, and then steeping them in sack (white wine) for at least twenty-four hours. Before use, the infusion was strained. A more elaborate recipe for peony water involved the use of eighteen freshly-gathered peony roots, numerous seeds, leaves, and dried lavender flowers, all boiled together in several gallons of wine and water.

Remedies prepared from peonies were used in the treatment of a broad range of afflictions. From ancient Greek times until the nineteenth century, certain problems associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and the care of children could be alleviated with a peony preparation. Hippocrates recommended the ingestion of peony seeds for both "dropsy" and "dislocation" of the womb. Cessation of menstruation could be treated likewise. A seventeenth-century electuary was reputed to relieve what, today, we would describe as the nausea, vomiting, and unsettled stomach of early pregnancy. Expulsion of the placenta was assisted with an infusion of peony roots. To protect the newborn child from fits and the "falling evil", an eighteenth-century German herbalist recommended bathing the infant with peony water made from boiling peony flowers in wine. Children also benefited from the protective powers conferred by peony root beads hung around their necks. In adults, lunacy, melancholy dreams, nightmares, dizziness, hysterical passion, jaundice, and blockage of the liver and kidneys were all amenable to treatment with a peony remedy.

The high regard for peony preparations lasted from ancient classical times until late in the nineteenth century. This longevity of use can be explained, in part, by the necessity of having to rely on one's own medical resources. With the exception of city residents, very few people would have had access either to a physician or an apothecary. With the late nineteenth-century introduction and promotion of

synthetic drugs, the use of herbs, including the peony, declined. Yet the peony's reputation as a medicinal plant has not been entirely obliterated for, today, Chinese medicine continues to utilize the peony in the preparation of medications.

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Canadian Peony Society newsletter.

## President's Message

### The Rhythm of Life by Jamie Robertson

Gardeners are usually well attuned to the rhythm of the seasons. This is especially true in places like Ottawa, where we have distinct seasons. When the snow leaves, there is the gradual greening of nature, with trees coming into bud and spring bulbs breaking through the ground and eventually adding colour. As the days get longer and the temperatures warmer, there is a gathering of momentum, culminating in the profusion of blooms in May and June. The long hot days of summer are followed by the crisper temperatures of autumn, with its bountiful harvest and more subdued colours. By November, most things in the garden are finished and are dying back. Winter is a period of dormancy and provides us with a break from gardening. It also provides us with a chance to plan and dream for next season, when it starts all over again.

By this time of year, the days are shorter and there is a decided coolness in the air. September is traditionally the time for the return to school, and the resumption of other activities that had been on hiatus for the summer. So it is with the OHS. Most of our members are busy gardening during the summer months, although some of them are able to get away to a cottage or for a holiday. After Labour Day, our monthly meetings resume, with inspiring and interesting speakers and topics planned.

The fall is also an opportunity for many

people to get involved with new activities or to join a committee. As a volunteer group, the OHS is dependent on its members. This is a chance for you to consider getting involved with one of our committees or activities, or even join the Board of Directors (our Annual General Meeting is in early December). Whether you are a new member, or a long-standing one, please consider it. There is always a lot to be done, and you will likely find something that you enjoy or want to try. It's a great way to contribute to the Society and meet people, and the time commitment is not necessarily that significant. Please speak to one of the Board members at an upcoming meeting or send us an e-mail, and we will help you find the right committee or activity.

Just as gardens and plants have a certain annual rhythm and pattern, so too do groups. Hopefully, the autumn allows you eventually to slow down outside in the garden, and will give you time to devote to other activities, such as the OHS. Consider becoming part of the team that plans and dreams for our Society's future.

### Growing Together is the Key to the Ottawa Tool Library

by Donna Henhoeffter, OTL



The Ottawa Tool Library is a not-for-profit lending library for gardening tools, kitchen tools, hand tools, and power tools. Tool libraries encourage sustainable urban living through sharing of resources and knowledge. We are excited to be opening at MakerSpace North in September.

The vision of the Ottawa Tool Library is to foster a sustainable community by providing an outlet for creativity,

and by prioritizing access over ownership. The low-cost annual membership fee provides access to unlimited tools throughout the year, saving members space and money. Rather than every household owning its own hedge trimmer or power drill for those once-a-year jobs, tools can be shared.

Eighty-five percent of the tools in the inventory have been donated by the Ottawa community, by people downsizing, clearing basements, garden sheds, or garages. Underused tools are cared for by our volunteer tool doctors to ensure they are in good working order before being made available on the library shelves.

Volunteers are at the heart of the OTL's operations, from desk volunteers to tool doctors, tool drive ambassadors, and tool educators. Perhaps you would love to share your gardening knowledge with others in the community and get involved.

#### 4 Ways You Can Get Involved

1. Become a Member - One of the best ways to get involved is by becoming a member of the Ottawa Tool Library. As it is a community project, you can support the future sustainability of urban living.
2. Donate Your Spare Tools - Do you have any extra tools that are not being used? Reduce clutter and bring your tools to us for a second life with our community. Drop off your tools at our new location.
3. Donate Funds - Help us grow and expand the Ottawa Tool Library. Join our community of supporters by making a donation. Since we are a registered non-profit organization, every dollar we raise goes back into our community spaces and the success of our tool library.
4. Become a Volunteer - We are looking for enthusiastic volunteers with experience in any of our four tool categories: garden, kitchen, hand, and power tools. It would be great to have you share your knowledge and skills with our

members.

Future plans for the tool library include offering a variety of workshops and classes from basic to advanced. Are you thinking about building a storage box for root vegetables, or a new feeder to feed birds in your garden this winter? Or perhaps you want to plan out next year's garden, and get an early start on making your own sign posts and ornaments? Imagine an even better garden than the one you have. We encourage you to join our space of Do-It-Yourselfers.

Visit us at:  
250 City Centre Drive, Bay 208 (inside MakerSpace North)  
[www.ottawatoollibrary.com](http://www.ottawatoollibrary.com)



#### Our Home and Native Land: Significant Agricultural Soils across Canada



#### The "Dirt" on Significant Agricultural Soils by Province/Territory

**Newfoundland and Labrador:** Cochrane Soil is dark reddish brown. When cleared of stones it is good for growing forages and root crops like potatoes, turnips, and cabbages.

**Prince Edward Island:** Charlottetown Soil is vivid red. As a fine, sandy soil it's ideal for growing PEI's famous potatoes.

**Nova Scotia:** Queens Soil is reddish brown with a high clay content that is good for growing forage crops that support the dairy and cattle sectors.

**New Brunswick:** Holmesville Soil is

olive brown. This fertile, low-clay soil helps New Brunswick produce high yields of agricultural crops like potatoes and barley.

**Quebec:** Sainte-Rosalie Soil is grey because its clay content helps it retain water during dry periods. It is good for growing hay, corn, and soybeans.

**Ontario:** Guelph Soil is grey-brown. Covering 40,500 hectares of Ontario's prime agricultural landbase, it is good for growing hay, corn, and soybeans, and is the backbone of the province's agricultural economy.

**Manitoba:** Newdale Soil is almost black. It is a typical grassland soil, rich in organic matter, excellent for growing canola and spring wheat.

**Saskatchewan:** Weyburn Soil is chocolate brown. This loamy soil is typical of the mixed grass plains, and is well suited for growing cereals, pulses, and oilseeds.

**Alberta:** Breton Soil is grey, and is widely used to grow canola, forage, and other crops suited to the cool, moist climate.

**British Columbia:** Branham Soil is yellowish brown. It covers some 7,000 hectares of prime farmland in the Peace River Valley west of Fort St. John. Its floodplain location is ideal for growing spring wheat and canola.

**Yukon:** Champagne Soil is brown and is the most common soil used for agriculture in the territory. It is located in the Takhini Valley west of Whitehorse and is ideal for growing grass, hay, and oats.

**Northwest Territories:** Hay River Soil is brown. It is located along the floodplain of the Hay River, and is suitable for growing hay and cool season vegetables.

**Nunavut:** has no climate suited to agriculture. The most common soil is a type that remains frozen for much of the year while the subsoil remains permanently frozen. This soil is called a Cryosol.

*Article courtesy of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada*

<http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/science-and-innovation/science-publications-and-resources/agriculture-and-agri-food-canada-marks-the-international-year-of-soils/our-home-and-native-land-significant-agricultural-soils-across-canada/?id=1435157592921>



## Member to Member

### Plants We Hate

by Dave Burroughs

I like all plants. Well ... maybe not poison ivy. Goodness knows I've had enough experience with that stuff! Like the time that I accidentally got it on my hands when undoing my shoelaces after running on the hydro line one evening some 30 years ago. Although I never showed any symptoms, I must have unwittingly passed it on to my wife because the next day she had no idea how to explain contact dermatitis lesions in a five-fingered pattern to her doctor. We laugh at that one ... now.

Then there was the time way back when that my neighbour asked me to identify a plant growing under her cedar hedge. I told her it looked like poison ivy but I didn't have any experience with its identification and proper disposal back then, so I didn't have any suggestions for what to do with it. A few days later she came over to confirm my identification and showed me the pustules on her arms and legs to prove it. She had put on gloves and tried to remove the poison ivy with a shovel not knowing, of course, that the corrosive oils stick to all surfaces. She must have made contact with the gloves and shovel after removing the gloves. When the poison ivy plant reappeared, she wisely used the herbicide of the day to get rid of it.

Then, of course, there is also my experience with Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) in my cottage garden. After pulling all the roots out of the ground some eight years ago, I am still pulling out teeny tiny stems of the stuff every few days during the growing season. If not pulled out, they become six-inch stems in just a week. I was recently informed by an experienced person in this particular matter that Roundup is back on the shelf at local hardware stores and that just a little drop on a leaf's surface will kill the root below without the risk of spraying it on my best perennials. I have fears that if I ever got called away for a few weeks my beautiful garden would be overtaken so I think I am ready to try it.

### Did You Know?

The Chicago Botanical Garden publishes a series of plant evaluations online that may be useful to OHS members in choosing particular varieties for purchase. Note, however, that the plant hardiness zone information given is based on USDA data and is different from those in Canada. In general, zone 4 USDA is the same as zone 5 in Canada. Ottawa and its surrounding areas vary between zones 4 and 5, with zone 5 being the norm in the main city core. It's better to double-check the zone indication on plant labels before you make the purchase.

[http://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/ornamental\\_plant\\_research/plant\\_evaluation](http://www.chicagobotanic.org/research/ornamental_plant_research/plant_evaluation)

### Tulip Recommendations

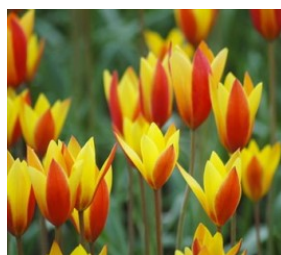
by Sheila Burvill, with contributions from other OHS members

It's been our practice for a few years to ask OHS gardeners who have a special interest in particular groups of plants to recommend their favourites. For the September 2015 issue, we wanted to cover the topic of "bulbs", and so we set out to find someone who was knowledgeable about the topic. Alas, we were unable to locate a "bulbs" expert despite consulting many members who are well acquainted with the talents of other OHS members, but we did come to the realization that "bulbs" was too broad a topic. So what we have for you in the series in this issue are recommendations on tulips, coming from several members but mainly based on the experience of Sheila Burvill.

I'm no expert but I have been growing tulips for over 30 years now, so there's at least experience behind these recommendations on what varieties of tulips to grow. Thanks go out to the other OHS members who offered suggestions and recommendations.

One thing should be made clear. Although the National Capital Commission puts on wonderful displays of tulips every year, the varieties on show are chosen for their abilities to look good in a massed display for a predictable time span, and are, in fact, selected and planted afresh every year. (After flowering, the bulbs are dug up and disposed of.) The kind of tulips we recommend here are ones that may be planted in groups and interspersed among other plants in a home garden. So longevity over several years is one of the main criteria used to select the recommendations.

If you want a long lived tulip, choose an old variety and plant it fairly deeply. The species tulips come to mind, the ones from which most modern tulips have been developed. They are generally short and come out earlier than most other tulips, but they are hardy and often naturalize. *Tulipa chrysantha*



is very cheery with its yellow petals with red exteriors, and *T. pulchella* 'Eastern Star' (bright mauve-purple flowers with yellow throats

edged in white) is absolutely charming with its bell-curved petals. There is also *T. tarda*, often listed as *T.*



*dasystemon*

*tarda*: yellow with white tips, self-seeding, prolific. All of these are about 4" - 6" high. Unusual among species tulips is *T. batalinii* 'Honky Tonk' in that it blooms mid-season, has narrow, undulating greyish leaves and



## Member to Member

pale yellow flowers that stand ten inches tall, terrific all on its own.

Not all long-lived tulips need be as old as species tulips. I have a *T. 'Apeldoorn'* that was in my garden when we moved in and must be about 40 years old now. It's confusing if you look at photos of 'Apeldoorn' online, but it is a fully scarlet Darwin hybrid, with a black interior blotch and a yellow base. It dates from 1951, when it was first introduced.



And then there's *T. 'Bleu Aimable'*, introduced in 1916. A single late tulip, it stands about 24 inches tall and is a lovely lavender blue in colour. The throat is white with blue streaks that set off the yellow stamens beautifully. It's very useful for cooling down the colours of more garish tulips. In my garden, they've lasted over 15 years and one even survived being dug up by a squirrel and 'replanted' in a shady corner.



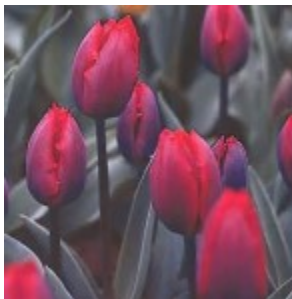
I have two favourite tulips myself. The first is 'Prinses Irene', a Triumph tulip I first saw recommended by the great tulip guru, Anna Pavord. It grows about 35 cm (14 inches) high and is a soft orange, with flames of purple and

green on the petals. The foliage is slightly blue. It needs to be placed towards the front of the border to show to best advantage. You sometimes

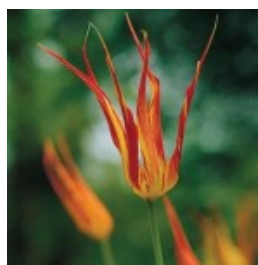
see it listed as *T. 'Princess Irene'*; never mind, it's the same one.

The other is 'Arma'. A short (12 inches tall), single early tulip, 'Arma', has petals of cardinal red lightly tinged with blue when they first come

out but brightening to a true red as the season wears on. Moreover, they're fringed at the edges. Mine have been in the ground for almost twenty years and have withstood trampling by dogs, accidental removal and replanting by humans, and competition from an aggressive hosta.



If I were being totally self-indulgent, I'd try *T. acuminata* again. A species tulip, it is very unusual in appearance – narrow, pointed, widely separated petals in deep red, edged and with a base in cream. It stands about 20 inches tall and its leaves are somewhat wavy. An absolute stunner since it's so different from other tulips, but in my garden at least, not hardy.



As for tulip combinations, it would be hard to beat the dark maroon-black *T. 'Queen of Night'* (a single late) interplanted with *T. 'White Triumphator'*, a lily-flowered variety.

Both are about 24 inches tall and bloom at the same time.

Or if dramatic colour contrast isn't up

your alley, try *T. 'Menton'* and *T. 'Dordogne'* together. Both are single lates, about 26 inches in height and with petals in shades of apricot, soft apricot and rose pink, but in different colour arrangements. The pink flame on 'Dordogne', for



instance, is almost the same shade as the main colour on 'Menton's' petals.

Both Botanus and Vesey's have good selections of tulips in their catalogues and, in Ottawa, Ritchies usually has a good selection of tulip bulbs in the late summer/fall. There may well be other good sources; these are only the ones I'm familiar with.

## Did You Know?

People who attended this year's OHS Plant Auction and Sale on May 26 received tickets for a raffle held at the end of the auction. The prizes were two brimming baskets of items donated by Bloomex.

But who is Bloomex? It turns out that it's the largest florist in Canada, with facilities in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver. In 2012, they served their millionth customer. Although the business began with a small flower shop in downtown Toronto, today its business is mainly online or by phone. In 2011, it expanded into Miami, Florida and Australia.

No wonder it's proud to bill itself as "Canada's Florist".





## Member to Member

### Techniques for Winter and Summer Protection

by Rob Brandon

As I write this article in late July surrounded by our verdant summer garden, I have to drag myself kicking and screaming six to eight months into the future and imagine the white, frozen expanse that is our winter garden. "Have I given our special plants and shrubs the best chance to get their Zone 6 natures through our Zone 4/5/5b's frigid reality?", the winter me has to think.

It's not just temperature that kills off plants but other weather combinations such as wind and low humidity, early spring thaw and freeze cycles, and snow and ice loads on branches. Over the last few years, I have developed some techniques that might apply to your garden and those special plants that appreciate cossetting with some winter protection.

From a strictly practical point of view, the amount of protection you provide is a function of the time and money you want to or can expend, the value of the plants you wish to protect, and the mental fallout that comes from looking next spring at winter damage. When I was in Northern Japan a few years ago, I saw the extent to which Japanese gardeners went to support the extended limbs of aged trees in centuries-old temple gardens. (Figure 1) We are unlikely to go to such lengths.



Figure 1 The Japanese go to significant length to prevent snow breaking tree limbs and use all-natural fibres in their snow cones.

I also note that the winter protection ideas I suggest are best suited for city gardens where wind exposure is generally limited.

### Winter Coverings

#### Built-up Covers

During the first eight years that our *Paeonia rockii* grew from a small seedling into a mature plant, I first used a white snow cone to protect it and then, when the tree outgrew this, I built a post-supported roof with hessian sides stapled to the posts. Tree peonies are certainly hardy in the Ottawa climate but the protection was for two other purposes. First, it prevented heavy snow and ice from breaking its branches. Second, it also reduced the possibility of waterlogged roots. Recently, I have been using the tent-like covers from ShrubCoat (Figure 2).



Figure 2 I have had success with the tepee products from ShrubCoat ([www.shrubcoat.com](http://www.shrubcoat.com))

I did not find the smaller versions worked very well but the larger one, called Big Boy, functioned effectively in our sheltered city garden. An exposed country garden subject to lots of wind might present a challenge, but the fabric appears quite robust and with snow piled up along the edges of the tent to provide anchoring, it might be worth a try.

#### White Styrofoam Snow Cones

I find these work well for smaller shrubs and plants and can be used for several seasons. Use a brick or broken flagstone on the top of the cone to keep it in place.

#### Instant Snow Drifts

I have managed to keep our Austin roses going for 15 years using the following technique of recovery and recycling.

Step 1: Gather dry autumn leaves from your own or neighbours' trees and put them into large, black garbage bags. I find the ones from Glad with the red tie loops work best. Fit a second bag over the first bag so the opening of the first bag is at the bottom of the second bag. Tie the second bag up.

Step 2: Repeat Step 1 until all available leaves are collected. In my case this results in 15-18 double-layered bags.

Step 3: Arrange the bags (second bag opening down) around your roses after the first frosts but before the first heavy snowfall. The timing of this can be tricky to judge. If on or near a road with a good garbage collection service, place a notice that says "Do not remove." So enthusiastic are our garbage collectors that they have been known to tramp over our front beds to collect the bags, oblivious to the fact they have been tied to shrubs and are remarkably light!

Step 4: Create instant snow drifts by shoveling early snow over the roses inside the ring of bags to keep the cold air out.

The bags of leaves will retard the depth of soil freezing in the fall and in the spring and reduce the impact of any freeze/thaw cycle. In the spring, remove the bags and puncture them to drain any water that has got in (it always will). Take care, as the water will stain from the tannins in the leaves. I then take the bags out to our vegetable allotment and the leaf mould goes onto the raspberry patch or is used in the compost pile.

#### Evergreen Shrubs and Small Trees

While covering with hessian is quite common and I have done this in the past, I have had some success just using garden twine, which I use to draw the branches close together. This has been most successful with the two tall and narrow Japanese-Anglo yews we have. I have also used this technique with two Blue Arrow junipers.

## Member to Member

They have recently grown too tall, however, and I did not do my normal twine wrapping in 2014. Last year heavy snow pulled out several branches of one of them, rather spoiling the look of the tree.

### **Rhododendrons**

When I first planted a rhododendron next to a north-facing fence, I used the fence and two posts to support a roof to protect it against snow damage. Once the shrub had grown to have strong branches, I gave up on overhead snow protection and now try only to reduce leaf browning and preserve the flower buds. I have been using Wilt Pruf, which I spray on the leaves to reduce the impact of dehydration and browning over the winter. The other problem for which I have not yet found a foolproof solution is squirrels eating the flower buds. I have been using a spray product, which is reported to contain Bitrex, the bitterest substance known. While I have noticed squirrels with grimaces on their faces, I still lose a lot of flower buds to their appetites. Blood meal is reported to be effective but I don't know how to keep it from washing off. Stainless steel bud protectors clipped on in the fall will be the next step. I will keep you posted.

### **Spring and Summer Protection for Vegetables**

For anyone germinating vegetable or flower seeds in their garden, I have found that a sheet of horticultural fleece spread out over each bed is useful for a number of reasons. It raises the soil temperature in the spring and protects seedlings from modest spring frosts. The fleece also resists the impact of those hot drying days in early spring when the seedlings are small. For the vegetable gardener it can add several weeks of growth at the beginning and end of the growing season. It can also be used in the early summer over a second sowing of seeds (lettuce, carrot etc.), again protecting against hot and dry conditions and retaining soil moisture. During the summer, using steel hoops to raise the fleece protects cabbages and cauliflower flowers from insect damage.



Figure 3 Using fleece flat on the ground to encourage seedling germination and using steel rod hoops and fleece to give room for lettuce development.

Lee Valley sells the fleece in rolls, and I have found pieces can be reused for several seasons. Use bricks or flagstone pieces to hold it down. In four years, I have yet to have a fleece blow away.

Ottawa has the greatest range of weather conditions of any capital city in the world. Whether it is throughout the long, cold winter months, or during the variable temperature and condition cycles that typify our short springs, the right protection might well yield results for you.

### **Horticulture is Coming Home to the Horticulture Building**

by Lynn Armstrong

As part of the creation of the new Lansdowne Park, the area to the east of the relocated and restored Horticulture Building has been designed as an ethnobotanical garden. The area contains 25 raised beds, seven of which are planted with plants of significance to the Aboriginal community, many of which are native plants. The remaining 18 beds are intended to be educational demonstration beds designed to highlight food production, Ottawa's horticultural heritage, and a sampling of other garden experiences that exist in Ottawa, like that offered by the Fletcher Wildlife Garden.

Last winter the City approached the

OHS to see if there was any interest in helping design and install the plants in the 18 non-Aboriginal planting beds. Our President, Jamie Robertson, and I developed a list of themes for the designs in the beds, and I took those themes and, with my gardening buddy Carol Macleod, created detailed designs for each bed. There is a Peter Rabbit bed for the children, a square-foot gardening bed, a sunflower bed, a pumpkin/summer squash bed, a bed of new annual varieties, a dill pickle bed, an Ottawa Festivals bed, and four beds have been combined into one design as a potager. There is a "School Gardening" bed, representative of the school gardening movement in the early 1900's, and a bed of heritage tomatoes and basil, for which our member Karen Moore so generously provided the hard-to-find tomato plants. As a sample of the gardens to be found at the Fletcher Wildlife Gardens, another bed is designed as a pollinator garden; Sandra Garland was a tremendous resource for helping with the selection of these plants from the Fletcher nursery and even came to help plant them.



As the construction of the gardens was not completed until July 10<sup>th</sup>, the focus this year has been more on annual flowers and vegetables. After a scramble to find annuals and seeds that can be planted late in the growing season, it has been a constant surprise to see how quickly the garden has grown.





## Member to Member



After just one month, the beans are in flower and the first crop of radishes has been harvested. A local children's food camp came last week and planted the last four beds with beans, beets, and lettuce, which will be harvested and donated to the local food bank.



### Two Tools I Love

by Sheila Burvill

My neighbours probably think I'm nuts when they see me out in front of the house wielding my broom. Not so much when I'm sweeping the doorsteps, front walk, and driveway, perhaps, but maybe a little bit when I'm out in the gutter using it to gather up plant debris and the like. (That stuff is great for the compost since cars' tires have already shredded and broken the leaves and twigs that collect there, so they break down much faster in the composter.) And they definitely must be scratching their heads when they see me sweeping the grass and hostas out front.

They may not understand that I'm using a special broom, one that I bought at Lee Valley Tools about four or five years ago. The business end of the broom has long bristles that curve towards you as you hold the broom upright.

This makes it pretty useless as a push broom, but dragging it towards you

makes it remarkably efficient at picking up leaves and other small debris that may have landed on your plants and grass. In my case, we have an ailing sugar maple out front awaiting the City of Ottawa's attention. In the meantime, the tree drops leaves all through the summer, right over my main hosta bed.



Rakes damage the hosta leaves and are really not an option for clean up, but this broom works a treat – the bristles grab the leaves efficiently but don't do any damage to the plant itself. By angling the broom, I can even pick off individual leaves.

Of course, there are occasions when the broom just doesn't work. The bristle end is some 17 inches wide, and if you're trying to get between plants, all the manoeuvring in the world won't get that broom into some tight spaces. That's when my second tool comes into play.

It's an eight-tine rake that fits into almost every space. I bought mine also at [Lee Valley Tools](#), where it just became available this year, much to my joy. Now I must tell you I've been looking for just such a rake for at least 15 years now. When I first started gardening over 30 years ago, I was lucky to find a nine-tine rake similar to this one, and very useful for getting between shrubs and other plants without disturbing them it was. I don't remember when I bought it but it must have been very cheap since I hadn't yet learned that good tools are worth the investment. Alas, the nine tines gradually

became fewer and fewer in number as they dropped off through use. When it was down to just four tines, it was time to throw out the rake and get another one.

But by then, they were no longer available it seemed. I looked all over Ottawa, I looked all over the lower B.C. mainland where my parents lived, and all over Vancouver Island where I have a brother and friends. I looked all over Michigan where my in-laws lived, and, in fact, I looked wherever my travels took me. For years and years! My mother and mother-in-law were on permanent assignment to keep an eye out for a similar rake. I also carried out an intermittent but persistent online search – all to no avail. So you can imagine my delight when I spotted this particular rake listed amongst Lee Valley's new items this spring. And my further delight when I went to the store and tried it out.



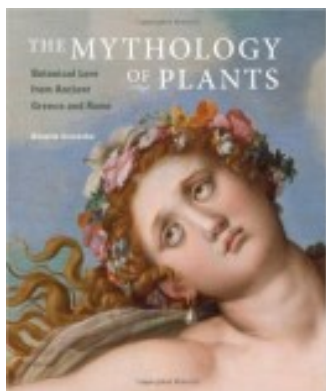
The rake has eight flexible tines and can be used for a vigorous raking of garden beds containing closely spaced plants but it can also be angled for a more delicate removal of debris between plants. In fact, I've been able to pluck off a single spent flower head from the ground under a plant without damaging or dislodging anything else.

As stated above, both broom and rake are available from Lee Valley Tools; they may be available elsewhere but I don't know. The broom is imported from Germany, is known as the Schmutz Haken® Outdoor Broom and costs \$27.50 at Lee Valley (item no. 99W75.45). The rake is manufactured in the U.S.A. and costs \$25.50 at Lee Valley (item no. PH109). Note that both items are available only at their retail stores.

## Member to Member

### Book Review

**The Mythology of Plants: Botanical Lore from Ancient Greece and Rome**, by Annette Giesecke. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2014.  
by Sheila Carey



When this book was released last fall, I knew that it was destined for my bookshelf. It hit several interest check points: mythology, art, and plants. This is an engaging book for anyone with similar interests. It is a slim volume, but beautifully illustrated with images spanning many centuries of art. The topic of plant lore and uses in the classical world is a large one – the author chooses to organize her subject around those featured in the *Metamorphoses*, the epic poem by Ovid, one of Rome's finest poets.

The book is organized so that one can easily dip in and out of sections of interest, or read it from cover to cover. The Introduction leads readers on a tour of the Roman household, describing the Roman house and garden, and the place of mythology in those gardens. This is followed by an introduction to Ovid and his *Metamorphoses*. The next four sections are divided into chapters following the same format. For example, the first chapter in *Gods in Love* is 'Bay Laurel'. The text describes the plant, its origins and its uses, its importance to Apollo, its symbolism in the Roman world, and its appearance in art. This is followed by Ovid's story of Apollo and Daphne and of her transformation into a laurel tree,

translated by the author. The following sections are 'Hubris and Human Excess', 'Piety and Devotion', and 'Mortals in Love', each divided into chapters based on a plant. Some of these thematic sections hold together better than others; I found the *Arachne and Minerva* story in the *Olive* chapter in *Hubris and Human Excess* not quite as tightly connected as some of the other stories to their respective plants, but this is a minor quibble. I also found an interesting contrast between the author's academic description of the plants and Ovid's narratives.

Finally, the author takes us on a guided walk through Ovid's garden, providing descriptions and uses of several plants whose stories may be less well-known but which are tagged here as in a botanical garden. The book also has a reference section, should you find you wish to do further research. If you are looking for an encyclopaedic book on plant usage in antiquity, this may not be the book for you. But if you are looking for a beautifully illustrated book that captures the spirit of Ovid's tales, along with interesting tidbits of historic information on a good selection of plants, then it's well worth a look.

## Did You Know?

According to Ed Lawrence, the petals of daylilies make tasty additions to a salad. On the August 24 edition of the Gardening Phone-in on CBC's 'Ontario Today' show, he also said the various colours of daylilies have different flavours and all are delicious.

## OHS Matters

### Shows Corner – Fall 2015

by Gillian Macdonnell

Our Summer Show in June had a decent number of exhibitors with some outstanding specimens and designs. Iris Waung, accredited both by the Ontario Horticultural Association and the Garden Clubs of Ontario, did the judging honours for us this time. You may have seen some of her vibrant designs at past OHS and District 2 Shows.

As it has been for the past few shows, Emilie Henkelman and Rosie Mikolajewski made a strong showing, joined by Maureen Mark and Anne Johnston, as well as novice Lynne Deachman. Emilie exhibited a very nice *Streptocarpus* 'Joker'.

The Fall Show is coming up on September 22. This will be a pint-sized show with only 27 classes, in order that members who are ordinarily baffled by a larger show might feel encouraged to bring in specimens from their garden or indulge in a floral design. Perhaps the weather will cooperate and give us the kind of lovely late summer days that make blooms proliferate.

Remember you are not limited to what your garden produces for floral design; almost anything goes in order to make your design special.

As I write about floral design, I am reminded of the District 2 Flower and Edibles Show hosted by the Nepean Horticultural Society and the Ottawa Valley Rock Garden Society, held Saturday, August 15 at Cityview United Church. It was a wonderful show with many good floral designs and lots of entries in the horticultural section, including a handsome array of vegetables. Any member in good standing in District 2 could show and 36 did, many in more than one class plus the floral design section. There were some tough classes as well for the OVRGS. I hope some of our members were among those there, as it was well-attended. I, for one, intend to spruce up my little trough garden for our Fall Show. The D2 Show included a plant



## OHS Matters

sale, garden book sale, a silent auction, and a tea that was more like a little lunch. It was encouraging to see the many visitors enjoying the entries, perhaps a good sign for flower shows in general. Hope to see you at ours in September!

### Did You Know?

We at the Ottawa Horticultural Society count the December potluck dinner and AGM as our big bash of the year but things are different in New York City. An item in an April issue of the New York Times says that "The Horticultural Society of New York held a dinner and dance at the Pierre. The tables were decorated with towering, fantastical arrangements, and many of the guests wore floral-print dresses." Accompanying photos show exquisitely groomed women in floor-length dresses. Hmm.

### Looking for Plant Auction & Sales Coordinators

All of you know about the Society's famous annual OHS auction and plant sale. You have reported back that the evening is a fun event and you are proud that this is such a tremendous fundraiser for the Society. This year, it raised \$3,127.00, funds that will help the OHS continue its free monthly meetings, guest speakers, and projects that echo the original impetus for the OHS - the City Beautiful movement.

After years of coordinating the annual event, the key organizers (Sheila Burvill, Nathalie Chaly, Blaine Marchand, and Jennifer Mix) have played their last round. So, the Society is looking for members to come forward to ensure the event continues in the years ahead. The organizers are willing to

mentor anyone willing to take on one of the specific functions – organizing the auction and the plant sale, working with the volunteers on the evening, and putting together the PowerPoint presentation. No need to fret about learning the details. The committee, being former bureaucrats and educators, has copious notes and lists from most years to assist anyone willing to take on these tasks. By volunteering to do this, you will ensure that the systematic approach for planning and running the event will continue to be fun. And just to let you know, Tuula Talvila has already volunteered to help organize the sale part of the evening. Our thanks to Tuula. Hopefully her coming forward will entice others among you to join her in this important work. The current committee has even enjoyed the planning meetings and the post-mortem over gelato and coffee. It has been a great opportunity to mingle business and the pleasure of being up-to-date on our gardens and the latest offerings in the gardening world. It will, no doubt, be the same for the new coordinators.

For more information, please contact Blaine Marchand ([blainemarchand@hotmail.com](mailto:blainemarchand@hotmail.com)).

### 2015 Bus Trip to Kingston by Gloria Solas

A garden tour by bus is a great way to see new gardens and to greet new and old gardening friends. This year was no different as we visited gardens in the Kingston environs. Besides, touring with members of the Ottawa Valley Rock Garden Society gave us a chance to meet gardeners from another society. We were also able to visit with long time OHS members Robin and Roberta Woods, who now call Toronto home but timed a visit back to the Ottawa area to coincide with our tour.

The first stop was at Bellevue House, a heritage site that is run by Parks Canada. It was once the home of Sir John A. Macdonald and has been ren-

ovated to bring it back to that period.



Our guides were volunteers dressed in period costumes and, unlike many other historical houses, this one feels as if a family were still living there. The extensive grounds include a large kitchen garden growing vegetables and herbs that would have been available at that time. The cultivation is all done by hand, using implements that would have been current in the late 1800's.





## OHS Matters



From Bellevue House we stopped for lunch at the Pan Chanco Bakery, which had a fine selection of home-made sandwiches on their own bread and delicious desserts. No one went hungry!

After lunch, we went to the Sisters of Providence Seed Sanctuary. The Sisters have had a garden since the 1930's, but the heritage seeds came more recently from a couple who ran an organic seed farm.



A list of the heritage beans, tomatoes and other vegetables they grow can be found on their website. (See <http://www.providence.ca/our-work/heirloom-seed-sanctuary/meet-the-seeds/>)

### Did You Know?

The weather had been overcast and threatening most of the day, but the rain held off until we reached Rideau Woodland Ramble. However, the drizzle was not enough to dampen the spirits or interest of the members, who once again left the Ramble with many treasures. As on earlier trips, Rob Caron and Dave Dunn were gracious hosts and provided cookies and coffee for us.

We amateur gardeners are mainly concerned with soil as the most important element to successful growing of healthy plants, but there are broader aspects to soil. Earlier in 2015, the CBC broadcast a two-part radio show "The Dirt on Soil" which presents all sorts of information on why the United Nations designated 2015 as the "International Year of Soil".

You can listen to it online at <http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/More+Shows/ID/2662146162/> and <http://www.cbc.ca/player/Kids/Kids/ID/2662146163/>.

When they closed their business, the couple asked the Sisters for some land to be able to carry on collecting organic seeds. The Seed Sanctuary has continued their work. Volunteers keep the collection alive by sowing and growing out the plants, and then collecting fresh seed. They try to turn over the seed every 3 years. Some of the seed is used in the garden at Bellevue House, with the produce donated to the Kingston Food Bank.

The downpour came on our way home, and I for one was glad to be in a bus and not driving. We arrived safe and sound and dry.

All images by Laurie Graham.

## OHS Matters

### From the Archives: The Ottawa Horticultural Society in 1921

by Sheila Burvill

It seems extraordinary today that the Ottawa Horticultural Society in 1921 had 1,527 members. What's more, we know who each of them was, and where each lived, because there is a document titled "List of Officers of Horticultural Society", stamp dated 1922, in our Archives. A fascinating document it is too. It seems to be a standard document that was submitted to the Agricultural Societies section of the Ontario Provincial Government.

The first page lists the officers of the Society, giving names, occupations, and Post Office addresses for each. What we see very quickly is that the OHS was run by men back then. In fact, amongst the five-member Executive (President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer), not one female name can be found. It's only in the list of Directors that a Mrs. J. A. Wilson is listed. Five of the officers list their occupation as "Civil Servant", some four others list specific job titles such as "Exp. Farm Staff" or "Dom. Observatory Staff". There are two "Merchants", two "Managers" and three "Ass't Treasurers". And the lone female? Well, her occupation is a series of four dashes – a blank in other words.

A count of female names in the membership list itself gleams a result of about 760 or just over half the membership. About 480 of the female names have the title "Mrs.", about 260 are "Miss", and a further 20 give no indication of marital status. Intriguingly, there is one – "Lady" (Pope) – but no indication whether this indicates an aristocratic status or simply a woman whose first name is "Lady".

Surnames in the list are resolutely and overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon, although a few French surnames appear (Journeaux, Bourg??reau, and Lavigne for example). But that's about it for indications of ethnic or linguistic background.

There are a few members of the cloth

among the membership. Examples are the Rev. Canon Anderson and Rev. R. C. McConnell. Some military men are listed (Lt.-Col. H.L. Armstrong and Major N. Loving for example). There are medical people in the list (Dr. W. C. Macartney is one), and there are these two listings: Mrs. Dr. J.E. Murphy and Mrs. Dr. Purvis. Are these female doctors, or are they the wives or widows of doctors?

There are a couple of people designated as "Ald." (H. McElroy is an example) – perhaps municipal politicians?

As might be expected, most addresses are for Ottawa, and mainly street addresses for what today are downtown neighbourhoods. However some members lived in neighbouring towns such as Pembroke, Richmond West, and Fitzroy Harbour, all in Ontario; for Quebec, place names include River Desert, Fort Coulonge, and Hudson.

There's a Treasurer's statement too, handwritten on a standard typed form. Membership dues must have been \$1 per year, and there were also donations totalling \$251.50. The other major sources of income were an \$800 legislative grant and a \$500 municipal grant. The major costs were \$1466.50 for purchase of seeds and plants, \$442.40 for advertising and printing, \$250 for the Secretary, \$227 for cash prizes for lawns and gardens, and \$320.50 for cash prizes for flowers, seeds, roots, vegetables, and fruit. Rather surprisingly, "Meetings and Lectures for discussion of Horticultural subjects" plus some sort of supper cost only \$155.21

It's uncertain why the 1921 membership list and no other is in our Archives. From a stamp on the first page, it seems it was received by the "Agricultural Societies" section on Jan. 25, 1922, and a handwritten note says it was "Received on or about 1980 from R. F. Gomme Esq." (Presumably that's Russell Gomme who, with his wife, is an OHS Life Member.) The list seems to have been used for some sort of administrative purpose as there are ballpoint pen notes in red or blue here and there. The entry for "Easson,

McGregor", for instance, has been altered to include "Dr." as an honorific and "Chief Inspector, OSB" added. In another instance, "White, G. A." is identified as "Mrs. A.W. Flecks garden-er".

Rather thrillingly, the name "Preston, Miss I." appears with a note in red confirming that she indeed is the famous Isabella Preston who hybridized so many plants useful to Ottawa and beyond.

### New Members

Angela Bourne  
Lena Brabec  
Claudia Cameron  
Suzanne Carr  
Denise Climenhage  
Katharina Czerny  
Kathryn Davis  
Julia and David Dewar  
Michael Dilts  
Susan and Mike Gallinger  
Guylaine Girouard  
Dawn Harvie  
Diana Hodson and Robert Ware  
Karina Isert  
Mary Martel-Cantelon  
Jeannie Olivier  
Karin Petersen and James Mactavish  
Véronick Préseault  
Tom Ring  
Barbara Robertson  
Judy Shane  
Jenn Siba  
Clark Smith  
Manasi Tirukachi  
Lydia Treadwell and Josh Bizyak  
Janet Wolfe

## Getting to Know Erin Cassidy

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

I joined in 2013, shortly after we purchased a house with a number of flowerbeds and knew I would need help.

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

Very much a novice. As a child, my mother had me plant carrot seeds and the like, but I didn't want to be responsible for killing off seedlings when the time came to thin them, so I didn't go very far. I tried flowers and herbs in planters multiple times, but I wasn't consistent enough about watering them.

**How would you describe your garden?**

A work in progress! It's a series of flowerbeds along the house (a large bungalow) and patio. A Master Gardener optimistically described it as a "very diverse ecology" – I seem to attract every problem bug and small animal possible!

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

Best: A good number of bees and songbirds are attracted to it, and a few butterflies (so far!). Least: Harlequin beetles, Japanese beetles, sunflower moth larvae, and a host of other challenging creatures like it too. Plants: Creeping phlox for the lovely smell if you stick your nose in it, dwarf 'Summer Nights' delphinium, balloon flowers, red cardinal flower – the latter attracts hummingbirds.

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

I'm the gardener – my partner would have only trees and grasses if he had his way.



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

Many plans! I'll move (and possibly remove) some plants to improve the height, colour and seasonal combinations; add more hostas at the back of the property where I'm creating a hosta garden (grass won't grow due to the trees, but the hostas are doing okay). Different: Early on, I put three dwarf weeping crabapples in a long flower bed for structural interest/height along the house which I would NOT do again.

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

It's not a website, but the Master Gardeners' email helpline is a godsend to me. Otherwise I consider information from multiple sites.

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

A neighbour has a beautiful, elaborate, but natural three-season front garden – one day I would like my flower beds to look as diverse, seasonally interesting, and well-tended as hers. I like the OHS garden tours for inspiration and ideas as well.

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

I am studying piano again after 25 years, I regularly practice yoga, and we love our subscription to the NAC orchestra.

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We depend on our members for ideas, articles and information about what is going on in the gardening community. Please send your submissions to:

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