

Master Gardeners reach a big audience online!

The Basics of our London-Middlesex Master Gardeners Website

Our site is written with WordPress and hosted by GoDaddy. We have a Managed Wordpress account which gives us automatic backups. Our Theme is called STACK (Child). We use various add-ons (called plug-ins) such as one for our Contact forms, for the Search line, Subscriber mailing, Search optimization, and Redirection of dead links. Our statistics are gathered via Google Analytics and JetPack.

Our Audience

We get lots of traffic now! Here are our statistics from February 2018 to March 2019

- >12,000 sessions, 10,000 users, 21,000 page views
- Our traffic averages just over 50% mobile, 50% desktop
- 103 articles (blog posts) on the site now. New posts average ~ 50-100 hits/month. Examples of top posts for past year:
 - Seedy Saturday – 2617 hits
 - Contact Us - 1024
 - Canada's National Flower campaign – 800
 - Monthly Garden Checklist – 714
 - Test Your Garden Knowledge – 539
 - Invader of the Month Garlic Mustard – 465
 - Rain Gardens – 468
 - When to Apply Horticultural Oil – 467
- Facebook posts are the top drivers of traffic to our website. It's new so we have only 124 subscribers but our newsletters will generate more traffic too in future. We also benefit from referrals by MGOI, City of London, Ontario Growers Supply and a myriad of local community groups.

It's all about Content

Content is what attracts readers. The key is to write often and do it well. Google ranks content and puts the best at the top of their searches for readers to choose.

2 Main categories of content that regularly need to be updated are:

1. **Gardening Tips.** These are our blog posts. They remain on the site forever. There are a lot of them so they need an organization structure (for readers and for Google SEO). We have chosen to use Subcategories that can be searched by readers: Design, Disease/Pests/Weeds, Gardens for Everyone (accessibility/aging/children), Garden Maintenance, How to Grow, Indoor & Containers, Nature & Environment, Plant Selection, and Myth Busting Resources. These categories are a 'work-in-progress' and will be fine-tuned as we learn.
2. **Community Events** - These are collected from relevant community groups and added/deleted regularly.

Other pages are updated only as needed

- Master Gardener Events & Courses
- About Master Gardeners, Become an MG, Book an MG, Our History, Contact Us

Posts can be scheduled for a future date! So don't worry about submitting something that would appeal more in another season. The most recently published post appears on our site first. All are in order of published date .

How to write a good Post

- Write about what you are passionate about and do it with **good_quality**. Junk content turns off followers.
- Ideally choose **a topic that's current** – something the public has asked us about or is stewing about in the news
- Content must be **unbiased, ecological and supported with good reference** links. e.g. University Extension, OMAFRA or other resources that we trust.
- It should have enough substance to be of value to most home gardeners and be something uniquely and personally written or it may take a fresh look at an old subject, maybe formatting information in a helpful way vs regurgitating same old or completely plagiarizing someone else's work.
- Any length is ok. Shoot for ~300 words but it's ok if more or less. It's all about what do readers really need to know and then **cover the subject well**.
- Choose **an appealing title**.
- **Organize the content** well including some headings, subheadings and paragraphs. Spell-check please.
- If it's a contentious subject, please ask another MG to peer-review it.
- Remember that our **goal is science-based, unbiased, environmentally sound advice** for home gardeners.
- Minimize slang, acronyms and abbreviations.
- Include a **personal comment** or two if possible. It really helps to include some **passion and humour!**
- **Make it colourful** – include at least 1 high quality image. Only use images that aren't under copywrite (your own or free source). When searching images from the internet, click Settings, Advanced Search, Usage rights and choose "Free to Use or Share".
- **Help give your post a good SEO score** by including:
 - Good quality images: enough of them to dress-up or highlight key points of the post and they must be of sufficient resolution to be crisp, appropriately sized and usually include a caption. (Anything bigger than 1500 Kb is unnecessary. Big image files can slow down loading time for the post).
 - Some Links – internal and external links within the post.
 - Good Readability – organization such as headings, paragraphs and sentence length. Appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation, and formatting for easy reading.

What's an SEO Score?

SEO scores (search-engine-optimization scores) are all about getting our posts found by Google and other Search Engines. Our site has a tool (Yoast plug-in) that calculates this automatically as the website editor creates each post so she/he can adjust the post to achieve a higher score (and more hits from searches), e.g.:

- Quality and number of images
- Links – internal and external links within the post
- Readability – organization such as headings, paragraphs, connecting words and sentence length
- Choice of a good focus keyword that appears in the title and throughout the post
- An appropriate meta description



Happy to See Spring!