Inside MGOI

Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ontario

Welcome to the October edition of the Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc. (MGOI) Newsletter. Our focus is on you, Master Gardeners! This is your vehicle for providing updates, insights and the inside scoop from MGOI Board & Committee members, Directors, and the 31 Master Gardener groups throughout Ontario. The Newsletter features member milestones, new group projects, short member profiles, upcoming events such as regional technical updates – anything about the functioning and activities of our groups and our members. And pictures – please feel free to submit pictures!

Contributions to future editions of 'Inside MGOI' may be sent at any time to the Newsletter Editor, Isabel Belanger, newsletter@mgoi.ca.

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INSIDE MGOI
Newsletter of the
Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc.

October 2017

Editor: Isabel Belanger, Etobicoke

Milestones

Northumberland Master Gardeners

New Master Gardeners in Training
Candace Ballard
Tanya Crowell
Shelly Fredericks
Janet Huehn
Lorraine Naylor

Toronto Master Gardeners

30th Anniversary

Pop the bubbly and join us in celebrating the **30th anniversary of Toronto Master Gardeners**!
A heart felt congratulations was sent by the first TMG Coordinator (1987-1995) and Honorary Member, Anne Marie Van Nest.

Anne Marie Van Nest, Coordinator
1987 to 1995

"Toronto Master Gardeners are giving, caring, curious, and passionate people. Thank you for the opportunity to share a quest for knowledge and the love a garden gives. Congratulations on 30 years of existence, and best wishes to all the Toronto Master Gardeners for many more years of successfully teaching new gardeners to love gardening."

In 1996, a commemorative quilt was presented to Anne Marie that included 60 signatures of Toronto Master Gardeners, many of them original members. The quilt was designed and assembled by retired TMG Charmiene Montgomery.

For the last 21 years, this quilt has been from Niagara to Texas and back, and continues to be a reminder of those who supported and believed in the Toronto Master Gardeners from their inception.

Celebratory Quilt signed by all 60 TMGs

At present we are sitting at 116 members, including 29 Master Gardeners in Training, with more waiting in the wings to join us next year.

New blood brings exciting new initiatives, including an expanded presence in Toronto Public Library branches with *Growing Milkweed for Monarchs* - an interactive demo featuring free Milkweed seed handouts - and our next Technical Update showcasing *Growing Food from Around the World*, an important topic in our diverse catchment area.

Here's to the next 30 years!

Peterborough Master Gardeners

15 Year Anniversary
Dianne Westlake
Gary Westlake

Dianne and Gary with Coordinator Joan Harding

10 Year Anniversary
Etela Vojnic
Anne Milne
Judy Bernard
Cathy Fraser

Etela Vojnic, Anne Milne, Coordinator Joan Harding, Judy Bernard, & Cathy Fraser

5 Year Anniversary
Mary Jane Parker
Annie English
Mary-Jane Pilgrim

Mary Jane Parker, Annie English, Mary-Jane Pilgrim, with Coordinator Joan Harding

New Master Gardeners in Training
Vince Picciello
Brenda Thompson
Lois Scott
Jennifer Guertin

Etobicoke Master Gardeners

5 Year Anniversary
Christine Spence

Suzanne Zacharczyk, right, presents Christine Spence, left, with her 5 year pin

A Moment for Membership

Dear New Members,

Introducing "The Journey Begins – Orientation and Training Guide for Master Gardeners in Training".

The "Journey Begins" was created for you, to provide you with a one stop resource guide covering information for new members about who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

We know joining a new group can be overwhelming at first. You have to get used to new information, new people, new terminology, and a new format.

Sometimes at first you may feel intimidated by our gardening knowledge. We want to assure you we are here to help you on your journey. We did not start out as experts, and as gardening is such a diverse subject one person would never know it all. That's why we refer to joining Master Gardeners as a journey. We are happy to offer this manual as one source for guidance on the first steps of your adventure with us.

Please review "The Journey Begins" and ask your Coordinator or designate if there is something you want to know more about or are unsure of. As we have 31 groups, many of whom may do some things slightly differently, we have taken a generic view. In Appendix A we have left space for your group's specific information.

All groups were given a paper copy of the document at the conference, and you can also view it online. Go to www.MGOI.ca, then sign onto the member area (ask your coordinator for the id and password), and find the Coordinators Conference Tab. Yes, you can look in there – it's not a secret!!

It's new and we would love your feedback.

May this help you on your Master Gardener journey!

Pam Love, Director of Membership

About the Certification Exam

by Kelly Noel, Director of Communications

At the recent Coordinators' Conference, someone mentioned the "high failure rate" on the Certification Exam. Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc. (MGOI) President Claudette Sims said that the failure rate is quite low, but there was no time right then and there to back this up with facts and figures. At its meeting the next day, the board decided we should set this record straight – inform all members of the actual numbers – and make sure that everybody knows that the success rate for exam candidates is high.

History

First some history: There has always been an exam option available in the MG program in Ontario. Early on, volunteers who had previous relevant training or industry experience were able to take the closed-book "Exemption Examination" (pass mark 80%) instead of the correspondence courses from Guelph.

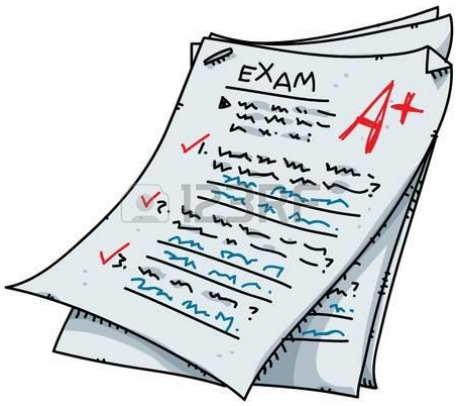
In 2005 Guelph discontinued the correspondence courses and introduced online certificate courses which were considerably more expensive. MGOI explored the possibility of developing courses in partnership with the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture but soon realized that this would be prohibitively expensive, requiring charging a high tuition. Instead MGOI decided to provide a tuition-free option: Master Gardeners in Training (MGiTs) could opt to undertake a program of self-directed study and then write an examination. The Exemption Examination was revised and renamed the "Certification Examination". Candidates could still choose to take 3 online courses from Guelph. In 2007, the option of taking courses from the Nova Scotia College of Agriculture (now Dalhousie) was added.

The Numbers

MGOI has kept a record of every Certification Exam result since it was introduced. Here are the numbers for ALL exams written, including any by those who have since resigned or retired:

- The exam has been written 112 times and there have been 12 failures.
- Five who failed wrote another exam and all passed the second time. So 107 members have written and 100 of them have passed – a 93.5% success rate.
- There are 3 versions of the exam and they appear to be equally discriminating – with 5, 3 and 4 failures.
- Of the 7 people who failed and did not rewrite: 3 resigned, 2 took courses instead, 1 moved away from Ontario two years later, and 1 is still a member.
- 9 to 11 candidates take the exam each year.

The current MGOI Education Committee is pleased with this record. They feel that the committee back in 2005 got it right when they decided that the pass mark would be 70% and the exam should be open book (candidates could bring print (on paper) resources of their own choosing).



The high success rate shows that MGiTs who are choosing this education option are making a choice which has worked well for them. It shows that the great majority of members who attempt this exam are adequately prepared and not suffering from "exam-fright".

These numbers also show that the exam does provide some challenge – it is not a walk-over.

Certification Exam (continued)

Honour System

Exams are sent to coordinators for a specific candidate upon receipt of the $50 fee to MGOI. Coordinators, invigilators and candidates must sign a declaration stating that MGOI rules have been followed in the handling and writing of the exam (writing time was limited to 2.5 hours, only paper resources were used, and the exam was not copied).

Prior training?

Another incorrect notion is that only MGiTS with previous training or industry experience take the exam option.

In 2013, the Education Committee surveyed MGs who had qualified since the self-study option had been available. Candidates who had taken the exam were asked if they had had previous training or industry experience. Only one-third said yes. So the majority of exam candidates to that point did not have prior training. We have not done another survey since but expect that that number has stayed as consistent as the success rate. At the time of the survey, 60 candidates had written and 56 had passed – a 93.3% success rate.
(The complete Education Survey Report 2013 is available on the member's side of mgoi.ca on the Education tab.)

Should you choose this option?

Any MGiT may choose to take this education path but any that do must understand that this really is INDEPENDENT study - they must plan and manage their own preparation including choosing resources.

The MGOI Education Committee has prepared a short document called '*Requirements for Certification Exam (Basic Knowledge)*' which includes an outline of subjects that MGs should know as well as tips on writing the exam and some sample questions. The '*Reference Manual for Ontario Master Gardener* ' is another useful resource but neither of these resources should be considered sufficient.
(Both documents are available on the member's side of http://mgoi.ca on the Education tab).

This route is not as costly as taking courses, but it is NOT necessarily easier.

- Course candidates are expected to put in 10 to 12 hours per week during the course but someone else is telling them what to study and in what level of detail, which resources to use, and they have an instructor and class-mates with whom to interact.

- Self-studiers have to make their own plan, decide on a sequence of topics, decide how much time to spend on each, and decide which resources to use. And they have to decide when they are ready to take the exam. The exam is open book but there is not enough time to look up everything so the candidate must be prepared to answer most questions without needing to check.

But virtually everyone who joins a Master Gardener group is already an experienced home gardener with a good knowledge base. What they then have to decide is whether to build on that base by taking courses or studying on their own.

MGiTs who choose to study on their own likely know that they have the motivation and discipline to manage their own learning. The high success rate on the Certification Exam suggests that the great majority of self-study candidates made a decision that worked well for them!!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Etobicoke Master Gardeners & Humber Arboretum

Name: Eco-Garden Community Workshop Series – Soil Health
Date: Saturday, Nov. 18th, 2017, 10 am - noon
Details: Hosted at the Centre for Urban Ecology, Humber Arboretum

To register please visit humberarb.eventbrite.ca

Toronto Master Gardeners

Name: Technical Update: Growing Food from Around the World
Date: Saturday, January 13, 2018
8:30 am: Registration and Coffee; 12 noon: Lunch, included; 4 pm: Wrap-up
Location: Toronto Botanical Garden, Toronto
Details: Speakers include Dena Jackson, Conrad Richter, Viliam Zvalo, Ken Brown; see poster.
Registration Fees: MGOI members $45.; non-MGOI members $50. On-line registration begins Nov. 15, 2017

Peterborough Master Gardeners

Name: The 2018 (and 18th Incredible) Peterborough Garden Show

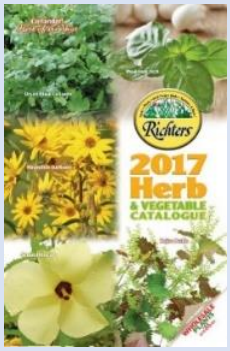
Date: Friday, April 13 (5pm to 9pm); Saturday, April 14 (10am to 5pm); Sunday, April 15 (10am - 4pm)
Location: The Evinrude Centre, 911 Monaghan Road, Peterborough, Ontario
Details: The Peterborough Horticultural Society and the Peterborough and Area Master Gardeners are thinking spring! Pretty excited to announce the dates for the 2018 Peterborough Garden Show!
ADMISSION: Still only $ 8/day
WEEKEND PASS: $12
Children under 12, with adult: Free
Website: http://www.peterboroughgardenshow.com/

For more info email info@peterboroughgardenshow.com or check out our Garden Show webpage or Facebook page!

M.G.O.I. Summer Workshop - 2018

Dates: July 14th & 15th, 2018
Details: No details are available yet - they are still in the planning stage.
Save the date for another great learning weekend!

Richters Herbs

Location: 357 Highway 47, Goodwood, ON L0C 1A0 (north of Toronto to the end of the 404, then east to Goodwood); Tel. 1.905.640.6677 Fax. 1.905.640.6641
Details: Richters Herbs is offering seminars at their greenhouse location throughout the year. For more information visit:
https://www.richters.com/show.cgi?page=Events/events.html
Richters also offer free on-line seminars at:
https://www.richters.com/show.cgi?page=events/events2016.html

The 2017 Richters catalogue is available, and is filled with culinary, medicinal, and aromatic herbs and seeds.