



*Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ontario*

# Inside

# MGOI

Welcome to the April edition of *Inside MGOI*, the Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc. (MGOI) newsletter. We hope your gardens are bringing you solace as the struggle continues and that your loved ones are safe and well.

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 30 Master Gardener groups throughout Ontario. The Newsletter features member milestones, group projects and activities, short member profiles, upcoming events such as regional technical updates – anything about the functioning and happenings of our groups and our members. Please feel free to submit pictures – they are most welcome!

Contributions to future editions of *Inside MGOI* may be sent at any time to the Newsletter Editor, Isabel Belanger, [newsletter@mgoi.ca](mailto:newsletter@mgoi.ca).

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#### **INSIDE MGOI**

**Newsletter of the  
Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc.**

**April 2020**

**Editor: Isabel Belanger, Halton**

# Milestones

## Toronto Master Gardeners

### In Memoriam

The Toronto Master Gardeners were saddened to hear of the death in March of a retired member of the group, Alan Millikin. Alan joined the TMGs in 2002 and retired in 2016 after serving in several roles. He was the group's Executive Coordinator from 2007 – 2008 after having been the Assistant Coordinator the previous year, and he followed up with a year as past Coordinator.

Alan has been described as a 'true gentleman' who was always willing to step up when others were reluctant. Indeed, we understand that he retired from the group in order to rescue his local Horticultural Society from the brink when no-one else would take over as president.

Alan was a stickler for detail, but kind and generous with his talents, both in the realm of gardening and as a master baker, providing stunning cakes for special events such as our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Alan will be missed by many in the Toronto horticultural community.



Alan Millikin in 2016

## Etobicoke Master Gardeners

### 15 Year Anniversary

Lillian Brown

### 10 Year Anniversary

Margie Campbell



## Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

### Fifteen Year Anniversary

Mary Ann Van Berlo

### Five Year Anniversary

Claire McCaughey



## Mississauga Master Gardeners

### 15 Year Anniversary

Phyllis Hall



*Left to Right: Coordinator Michelle Wilson, Phyllis Hall*

### Member Transfer

We welcome Edel Schmidt who transferred from the Etobicoke group.

### 2020 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards



*Left to Right: Coordinator Michelle Wilson, Marie Pearson*

### 25 Year Pin

Marie Pearson

### 20 Year Pin

Diana Pooke

### 15 Year Pin

William Pooke



## ***A Letter to Master Gardeners from Karen Sciuk, Vice President MGOI***

Dear fellow Master Gardeners of Ontario,

The following actions took place in early April to fulfill our mission to support Ontario gardeners, specifically those who rely on Community Gardens:

- An open letter and petition were circulated from Sustain Ontario to help urge the provincial government to [reopen Community Gardens as an Essential Food Service](#). Members were all free to support this initiative or not.
- A letter was sent to Premier Doug Ford on behalf of MGOI requesting that he reconsider the closure of these urban farms so long as safety guidelines could be put in place.

We struggled with these decisions, as Community Gardens have a significant impact on food security, but recognize that physical distancing and shelter in place are vital in the early fight against Covid-19.

As I take my daily walks around my rural community of Wellesley, on the outskirts of Waterloo, where we have ample room to keep a wide berth, where every second house has a dog or two, kids roller blade & bike, adults jog, I see that many more homes have installed raised beds & vegetable garden plots to grow their own food. In contrast, in the urban core of Kitchener-Waterloo, I personally know several highrise dwellers who rely on their community plots to grow their own food. They do not have the luxury of back yards and some not even a light-filled balcony. A significant number of the 600-800 participants at our recent Kitchener MG/HS Seedy Saturday come from the downtown core and grow food in community plots. Similarly, from my former Durham MG Oshawa days, and our involvement with the [Ajax-Whitby Garden Project](#), I became aware that many of these allotment plots are dedicated for donations to food banks and shelters. It seems to be a misguided decision to close down these spaces.

Many of you shared these same concerns and wondered how to address the issue of preventing virus transmission. The Ottawa-Carleton MGs shared these safety protocol ideas with Just Food in support of reopening community gardens/allotments in the Ottawa area:

- Gardens that have tool sheds should keep them locked to avoid potential transmission via locks or shared tools.
- Gardeners should bring their own tools and ensure they are properly sterilized before and after use to avoid transmission of plant pests and diseases from the home garden to the community garden or vice versa. Tool sterilization can be accomplished by washing the soil off tools and rinsing them in a 10% bleach solution for about 5 minutes.
- Gardeners should not share their tools with other gardeners.
- Gardeners should wear gloves in the garden, particularly when handling common elements, such as hoses or watering cans. Gardening gloves should be washed before and after use in the community garden.



- Community gardens should ideally make a spray bottle of sanitizer (could be as simple as a 10% bleach solution) available at watering stations so gardeners can spray hoses before and after touching them. Gardeners should be encouraged to bring their own sanitizer with them to the garden.
- Small and busy gardens may wish to schedule when their members can garden to avoid overcrowding.
- Gardeners should be advised to avoid passing each other along the narrow paths between individual plots.
- Gardeners should be encouraged to follow all other public health advice regarding physical distancing, hand washing, avoiding touching one's face, etc.

Our premier listened to our collective voice! Community Gardens are now reconsidered to be essential as urban farms, and not merely recreational and a luxury. Maintaining a nutritious diet goes a long way in enhancing our ability to fight off infections and disease. Growing our own food is a good way to ensure this. In this time of Covid-19 uncertainty, it is crucial to make responsible decisions without forgetting those in need. Community Gardens are no longer categorized as recreational spaces and with appropriate health and safety protocols will now open in time for spring plantings.

Regards,  
Karen Sciuk,  
Vice President, MGOI

**More information:**

The following is a link to the letter sent to the province from the Ontario Community Growing Network (OnCGN) and the proposed recommendations for safety:

<https://sustainontario.com/2020/04/15/covid-19-updates-recommendations-for-community-gardens/>

A couple of our fellow MGs are already in the paper: <https://theprovince.com/news/local-news/ottawas-community-gardens-are-closed-and-that-could-be-bad-news-for-low-income-residents/wcm/5d852a0c-6b62-412b-9a5a-1a9f218aa5fe>

On April 25<sup>th</sup> the Ontario Government approved the opening of community gardens:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ontario-declares-community-gardens-an-essential-service/>

and

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/4/ontario-allows-the-redeployment-of-staff-to-better-care-for-vulnerable-people-during-covid-19.html> - just before 'Quick Facts'



## A Moment for Membership

by Pam Love, Director

### Welcome Rhonda Grein, MGOI's New Director of Events!

Rhonda has been a member of the Kitchener Master Gardeners for 11 years, is the past Coordinator and the Treasurer. She has also been the Recording Secretary for the MGOI Board since 2015, and the Co-Director for the South & West Region since late 2016.

Rhonda has also been actively involved in Garden Kitchener (600 members) working with teams and holding many roles including that of President. She has been involved in planning successful Seedy Saturdays for nine years and planned the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA) conference in 2017 – she has lots of experience planning events in the gardening world!

Professionally, Rhonda holds an MBA, is a Certified Business Analysis Professional (CBAP) Consultant, Strategic Planning and Initiatives, and has organized thousands of events during her career.

Being with interesting and like-minded people with a large variety of expertise and offering opportunities to learn and teach others were the reasons Rhonda joined Master Gardeners. It provides opportunities to be involved in the community and to help influence choices such as encouraging native plants and pollinators, and lessening the use of invasive plants.

Please join us in welcoming Rhonda as the Director of Events for the Master Gardeners of Ontario.



*Rhonda in the Montreal Botanical Garden, 2019*



## Master Gardeners Out & About: Projects & Events

### Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

#### Name: Collaborating During a Pandemic

**Details:** Several months ago, Master Gardeners in Ottawa-Carleton and Lanark County decided to collaborate to merge our two online newsletters into one. The goal was to design a regional online tool to share our knowledge of plants, pollinators, pests and diseases with the gardening public. So much has changed worldwide since this local project began.

In Ottawa, MGOC talks and lectures have been put on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic. We have cancelled our participation at various farmers' markets around the region. Like other groups of Master Gardeners, we have also cancelled our meetings, our interviews with potential new members, our outings and our social get-togethers. Life within MGOC, in many ways, is on hold.

Fortunately however we can still get outside in our own gardens. With the approach of spring in the Nation's Capital, melting snow and the first signs of crocus, many MGs are venturing out to peek into the garden for signs of new growth.

We can continue to work online too. That means that work on this shared project has continued, despite the challenges. After lots of hard work, we expect to launch the newsletter this month. In some ways the timing couldn't be better.

Like elsewhere in Canada there are fears of spreading this dangerous virus or getting sick ourselves. We are social distancing ourselves from family, friends and the community. We stay at home except for occasional trips to the grocery store or for other essential services.

Consequently, there is a renewed interest in gardening this spring. Suddenly, a little patch of soil in the front or backyard is coveted. People want to learn more about container gardening on a patio or deck. There are more questions than ever from people about seeds, vegetable growing and keeping out the bunnies. Many are gardening for the first time. As Master Gardeners, we're happy to share our knowledge from home.

Our first issue includes some practical stories for readers about growing tomatoes, ways that kids and their families

can grow a pizza garden together, and a lovely profile about *Baptisia australis*, a native plant.

Future issues will include how people can donate food to their local food bank, how to grow herbs, onions and radishes, and how to attract pollinators.

In many ways, there has never been a better time to share gardening knowledge. From our living rooms, decks and gardens, MGs in this region can share that knowledge with others online using social media and tools, including this newsletter. We kept the name from the old newsletter. It's still called **Trowel Talk**. It's a good name, we think, given that there will be lots of trowel talk this summer. Here is the link:

<http://www.mgottawa.ca/media/TT-20-April.pdf>



### Mississauga Master Gardeners

#### Name: Advice Clinic/Kids Garden - GTA Home & Reno Show

**Details:** Volunteers from both Mississauga Master Gardeners and the Chinguacousy Garden Club and Horticultural Society ran an Advice Clinic and a kids' craft area at the show from February 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

#### Name: Brampton Seedy Saturday

**Details:** On February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 Mississauga Master Gardeners sold seed and ran an Advice Clinic at Brampton's Seedy Saturday.



Front, L to R: Edel Schmidt, MJ Kucerak  
Back L to R: Jeanne McRight, Catherine Fleming



## Rideau 1000 Islands Master Gardeners

### Name: Virtual Reality

**Details:** Rideau 1000 Islands Master Gardeners have created a Facebook group and started a weekly Virtual 'Ask a Master Gardener' zoom call to support gardeners during COVID-19. We also have Janette Haase, author of *From Seed to Table* doing a weekly small group coaching session to support novice vegetable gardeners. Here are the details:

- Weekly 'Ask a Virtual Master Gardener' call. Registration is here: [Ask a Virtual Master Gardener: Rideau 1000 Islands Master Gardeners](#).
- Weekly [vegetable garden 101](#) coaching with a very small group led by Janette Haase – limited to 6 people each week to ensure lots of time to discuss each specific situation.
- Join & post questions to our Facebook group [Master Gardeners of Rideau 1000 Islands](#).
- Subscribe to [Rideau 1000 Islands Master Gardeners' website](#); we'll be sending out occasional newsletters.
- On the website we've also posted [sources for plants, seeds, soil and compost](#) during COVID-19. And on the [Contact page](#) people can email us questions.

We have also partnered with two local non-profit organizations: Loving Spoonful and Kingston Area Seed System Initiative (KASSI) to help with a victory garden resurgence called Gardens4Good....

<https://www.thewhig.com/news/local-news/community-groups-ask-locals-to-plant-gardens-for-good>.

And we made it into CBC News... Scary times about seeds. That's why we have to grow open pollinated seeds so that we can collect our own....

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/seed-explosion-ottawa-pandemic-1.5534932>



## Toronto Master Gardeners

### Name: Virtual Advice during the Pandemic

*By Maureen Hulbert, TMG & Director-at-Large, MGOI*

**Details:** Gardeners everywhere are anxious to get going in their gardens this month. Normally, MG Advice Clinics are everywhere, offering sound horticultural advice to the inquiring public. But with physical distancing in place, and botanical gardens and event spaces closed to stop virus transmission, what options are left?

Toronto MGs have teamed up with the staff at the Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG) to offer virtual advice clinics to the public via the Zoom webchat app. TMG Assistant Coordinator Tina Cesaroni, along with TBG Communications Director Jenny Rhodenizer acting as moderator, did a test run with a handful of TMGs last week and it went very smoothly. Tena Van Anandel and Pat de Valence, both longtime TMGs, were on hand on Earth Day – to answer questions from the audience of 30 participants who registered free via Eventbrite.

The audience was audio only and questions were posted via the zoom chat feature. If all goes well, this will be a weekly event. The April 22 clinic was fully subscribed within two days of being advertised, so there is plenty of pent-up demand out there!



In addition, TMGs are very busy with their 'Ask a Master Gardener' online webforum at [www.torontomastergardener.ca](http://www.torontomastergardener.ca). The public can search for answers to over 1,000 carefully researched questions already organized under various headings such as "Pests", "Pruning", and "Perennials". If the answer is not available, the gardener can post a new question, including uploaded photos if possible, and the ASK Team will research the answer and post it back to the forum within a few days. The questioner also receives a personal response email.



## Brantford Master Gardeners

### Name: Monthly Meetings

**Details:** Brantford Master Gardeners are now holding our Monthly Meetings via Zoom video conference calls. Our first attempt was on April 2<sup>nd</sup> and it worked quite well.

In this meeting we cancelled our Plant Sale and decided to donate the plants to MG Christa Hunter who will sell them at her roadside plant table from home.

BMG has deferred our MG Training Sessions at local garden centres and the Open Garden Tour until the fall. We will reassess the situation at that time, based on government and health officials' recommendations.

In the meantime... here are some interesting websites where fellow MGs can continue to learn, find something interesting to do or watch! Hope everyone enjoys these!

Stay home...stay safe.

**Bringing Nature Home-Catskill Nature Nursery**  
<https://www.facebook.com/266259994940/posts/10158103043124941/?sfnsn=mo>

**The Growing Season**  
<https://growingseasoncanada.com/>

**RBG At Home**  
<https://www.rbg.ca/athome>

**Garden Making Magazine-Virtual Tour of Famous Gardens and Interesting Sites**

[https://gardenmaking.com/enjoy-a-virtual-tour-of-famous-gardens/?utm\\_source=mailpoet&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Newsletter+Apr+17+2020](https://gardenmaking.com/enjoy-a-virtual-tour-of-famous-gardens/?utm_source=mailpoet&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Newsletter+Apr+17+2020)

**Bird Song Opera:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMXD4h5w8D8>

**Terra Greenhouses Workshops:**

<https://terragreenhouses.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5b994a7ca609d19fdd95ceeca&id=c22894dec8&e=8ca039d1a6>

<https://terragreenhouses.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5b994a7ca609d19fdd95ceeca&id=18a1d58804&e=8ca039d1a6>

<https://terragreenhouses.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5b994a7ca609d19fdd95ceeca&id=f8d3d0fde6&e=8ca039d1a6>

<https://terragreenhouses.us8.list-manage.com/track/click?u=5b994a7ca609d19fdd95ceeca&id=e2b3c88cd9&e=8ca039d1a6>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton ON HOLD! Lectures – 2020 Series Lineup

#### Stratford Master Gardeners

#### POSTPONED!! Technical Update Information:

We asked you to save the date of October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020 for our Technical Update, *Gardening for the Planet: Creating Biodiverse Habitats in Our Gardens*. As a result of COVID-19 we felt that we should postpone the event rather than leave people uncertain as to whether it would go ahead.

We will re-schedule as soon as the situation becomes clearer. We hope to see you there!

### Northumberland Master Gardeners

#### Name: Bus Trip to Montreal, Quebec

**Dates:** June 23<sup>rd</sup> to June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Details:** Highlights will include: Montreal Botanical Gardens; Les Jardins Michel Corbeil; Machal Gardens; and Chillane Gardens

**Cost:** \$580.00 per person based on double occupancy, \$820.00 per person based on single occupancy.

**Contact:** Christa Bisanz at [bisanz@eagle.ca](mailto:bisanz@eagle.ca) for details.



## Halton Master Gardeners

Request you – SAVE THE DATE!

### Technical Update

**Topic: Refugia: the future of gardening**

**Date:** Saturday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Location:** Waterdown, ON

**Cost:** \$60; Early Bird \$55

**Registration Information:** Details coming soon

### Speakers:

- Dr. Christina Davy, Research Scientist with the Ministry of Natural Resources
- Catherine Kavassalis, Halton Region Master Gardener
- Paul Gellatly, Director of Horticulture, Toronto Botanical Garden
- Claudette Sims, President MGOI
- Other special guests TBA

## 2020 Coordinators' Conference

SAVE THE DATE – October 17, 2020



Pictures of spring by Isabel Belanger

## Name: 2020 Atlantic Master Gardener Conference – Cancelled until Summer 2021

**Topic: Designing Adaptive Gardens in Atlantic Canada**

**Location:** Truro, NS on July 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**Keynote Speaker:** Julie Moir Messervey, award winning landscape designer from Vermont and author of *Landscaping Ideas that Work* and other books, has indicated that she is willing to come next year. Registrants will have their money refunded ASAP.

### Name: MGOI Website

**Details:** If you would like your Master Gardener event posted on the MGOI website under the **News & Events** tab, please send details to our webmaster Jim Cook at [webmaster@mgoi.ca](mailto:webmaster@mgoi.ca). Images need to be in .jpeg or .png format.

