



WHAT'S GROWING ON?

Fall/Winter 2001-2002

What's Growing On? is a publication of **MASTER GARDENERS OF ONTARIO INC.**

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Welcome, New Master Gardeners in Training!



FROM THE PRESIDENT

The two-hour teleconference on October 16 left Board members somewhat frustrated as many felt that the discussions would have been more satisfying on a face-to-face basis. All zones were represented except Zone 3 (SW Ontario) whose Director has not yet been replaced. Any nominations or suggestions? With a few exceptions, the local groups were reported to be progressing well with a healthy infusion of younger, energetic members. A major weakness was communication in general as well as group/MGOI interactions and relationships. Some groups were still uncertain about the role of the MGOI Board and organization. The Board agreed to funding to allow the newsletter to be mailed to Coordinators and Board members. A need was expressed for a Communications Committee to advise the Board. The Board was gratified about the vote on the fee increase which passed by 23 to 9.

Six very successful zone/technical update meetings have been held under the auspices of the Landscape Ontario donation. Only zones 2 and 6 have yet to have their meetings. Brief descriptive reports of the meetings should be forwarded to Wendy and statements of expenses, supported with receipts, should be sent to the Treasurer, Stewart McCombie. The reports are necessary to once again approach Landscape Ontario.

The 2002 Annual General Meeting will be held at Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington, on April 27 and it is hoped that this early notification will encourage better attendance than at the past AGM. A two-day meeting had been suggested but RBG was booked through all alternative dates and arrangements. Now is the time to tell us about any speakers and other suggestions to improve the AGM.

Other activities are still being processed and will be reported on when completed.

Errol Falconer
President, MGOI

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Submit *What's Growing On ?*

Spring/Summer 2002 contributions by April 15, 2002, to hamlin@ebtech.net or A. Hamlin, 299 Tawny Rd., Sarnia, ON N7S 5K1

NORTH, SOUTH, EAST AND WEST AND PLACES IN BETWEEN

Algoma, Brantford, Brooklin, Burlington, Dundas, Dunnville-Haldimand, Elgin County, Essex-Windsor, Rideau-Thousand Islands (previously Gananoque), Geraldton, Grey, Guelph-Wellington, Huron, Kitchener, Lake Simcoe South, Lanark County, Lindsay, London-Middlesex, Mississauga, Muskoka-Parry Sound, Niagara, North Bay, North Bruce, Ottawa-Carleton, Oxford, Peterborough, Prince Edward County, Quinte-Tweed, Rainy River District, Renfrew County, Sarnia-Lambton, Simcoe County, South Bruce, Stratford, Sudbury, Temiskaming, Thunder Bay, and Toronto

Grey (Zone 4)*
by Valerie Neal

Zone 4's Technical Update, September 29, 2001
With the sun shining and the autumn leaves in Grey County at their peak, vans and carloads of MG's from all over Zone 4 and beyond arrived at the old stone school house in Lamlash to participate in a technical update that had been organized by the members of the Grey County Master Gardeners.

After a brief time to register and socialize we were ready to hear a timely and balanced presentation about new developments in biotechnology. Dr. Judy Strommer, currently teaching in the field of biology and genetics at the University of Guelph, provided a clear and thought provoking analysis of the role and direction of genetic modifications in our world today.

The first speaker of the afternoon, also from the U. of G., was Dr. Praveen Saxena. Dr. Saxena is involved in an international collaboration to develop new technologies for plant based medicines. His presentation helped us understand how technology is being used to produce plants for the garden and medicines using the latest advances in cloning. During his presentation, he said that with advanced notice he welcomes visitors to his lab. Our group is talking about an outing there in the future.

Our final activity was a search of the fields and ditches around the hall to locate bugs.

Dr. Steven Marshall, who had already shared a fascinating slide collection with us, helped in the identification of our finds.

During the day, time was found to hear from all the Master Gardener groups in attendance. It is always helpful to hear about activities with which our groups are involved.

The hosts wish to thank all the Master Gardeners who were able to attend and make the day a success.

Lanark (Zone 8)
by Amy Pokorny

Zone 8's Technical Update, April 21, 2001
Ken Farr, dendrologist with Canadian Forest Services explained advantages of using native species instead of exotic materials and cultivars. Local species are hardier and shaped for our region. Too many imports become invasive; e.g., Buckthorn and common Black Locust, and take over clear cuts, discouraging indigenous regrowth. Manitoba Maple grows straight and attractively on the prairies but in our region the trunk is often twisted and leaning.

There are several sizes of native maples more suited for small properties than the huge Silver Maple or even the beloved Sugar Maple. One of the smallest, the Mountain Maple, is shrub-like to a maximum of 25 feet. It is happy on the edge of woods, likes moisture and has upright clusters of tiny greenish flowers. The Red Maple, usually much smaller than the Sugar Maple, is preferable for urban sites. Its fall colours are more scarlet.

A nice sized tree, which seldom grows higher than 60 feet, is happy in an urban environment and is a good replacement for our vanished White Elms is the Hackberry *Celtis occidentalis*. It has reddish purple berries which hang on all winter. Its shape and leaves are somewhat similar to those of the White Elm.

Many wonderful native shrubs include Witch Hazel, Viburnum, Snowberry and Service-

berry. For more detailed information consult *Shrubs and Trees for the Urban Landscape*.

Kristl Walek of Gardens North, spoke about storage and germination of seeds, explaining which need scarification and which are intolerant of dry storage. Gardens North is a source for seeds of native plants suitable for the American north-east. Their catalogue explains the habitat requirements, rates the ease of germination, and provides helpful advice. Seeds which require a period of cold temperatures; i.e., in the refrigerator, but NEVER IN THE FREEZER, should be placed in a transparent container with moist vermiculite, peat moss or artificial soil. Her emphasis was on treating the seeds of each species in terms of their individual requirements; e.g., some Linums and Poppies require two years of alternating hot and cold temperatures. Although some columbines self-seed easily, some of the hybrids germinate only in the presence of a plant hormone, gibberelin. Most composites need warm temperatures for germination which may take several months; if warmth does not work, try cold. Many seeds need a drying period before they will germinate; this is true of all the common vegetable seeds and also seeds of Dame's Rocket and Draba.

Dr. N. Deno's books on seed germination were recommended; available from the author, 139 Lenor Drive, State College, PA, 16801. The Gardens North catalogue is available by calling (613) 489-0065.

Niagara (Zone 5)
by Wendy Chrystian

Zone 5's Technical Update, October 13, 2001
About 100 Master Gardeners and avid local gardeners attended the day-long fall event at Niagara College in St. Catharines. The day began with keynote speaker Jennifer Reynolds, gardening editor for Gardening Life magazine, inspiring the group with the coming top trends for 2002, including the popularity of vertical plants in the garden, specialty collections and thematic containers. Participants were able to

choose from several morning workshops: Perennials with John Valleau, Valleybrook Nurseries; Healthy Ponds with Henry Reimer of Waterscapes; and Garrett Pittinger of Seeds of Diversity, speaking about heritage seeds. A tour of Niagara College to learn about their unique living campus philosophy with horticultural and environmental division, viticulture and greenhouse facilities finished the morning's program. Over a lovely buffet luncheon, many participants won door prizes, including rose and rhododendron bushes, books, etc. The afternoon began with a zone meeting chaired by Errol Falconer, Zone Rep. and MGOI President. An interesting discussion followed, led by Graeme Murphy of the Vineland Research Station. He spoke about the very topical subject of integrated pest management for the home gardener. Everyone then drove to Vineland and the new Niagara Under Glass tourist attraction, a huge commercial greenhouse with public interpretation/discovery centre. Over 80 people took the tour of the greenhouses, learning about the state of the art environmental approach to this floral operation.

By the end of the day, a group of twenty MG's traveled to the quaint town of Jordan for a tour of Cave Springs Winery and a tasting!! Our special thanks to the Lake Simcoe South group who drove down by bus to attend! Also to John Tripp and his wife who attended from the North Bay group. It was a great day and wonderful opportunity to meet Master Gardeners from throughout our zone.

Toronto (Zone 5)
by Lorraine Flanigan

Toronto Master Gardeners launch Q & A Forum on Civic Garden Centre Website
Earlier this year, the Civic Garden Centre launched a website full of horticultural goodies, including a section supported by the Toronto Master Gardeners. The website features an interactive gardening Question & Answer Forum where gardeners looking for information about growing in the Greater

Toronto Area log in to post questions which are answered by a team of twelve Master Gardeners. Along with the Q & A Forum, there are over 40 Factsheets written by the Toronto Master Gardeners as well as by the Civic Garden Centre, providing information on 13 gardening topics. The Q & A Forum: www.civiggardencentre.org/mastergardenerboard.htm. Gardening Factsheets: http://www.civiggardencentre.org/mastergardener_factsheets.htm.

*Zones are regions in which certain groups are located; e.g., Zone 1 consists of Geraldton, Rainy River District, and Thunder Bay. The number does not imply the Hardiness Zone.

+ In Memoriam

Audrey Stovel (Stratford) 2001



Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc. gratefully acknowledges a donation of \$200 from the Thornhill Horticultural and Garden Society.

FROM THE MG-LIST

***Heliopsis helianthoides*, Perennial Sunflower versus *Helianthus tuberosus*, Jerusalem Artichoke**

Postings by Joan Tobin, Peterborough, Nancy Brown, formerly of Grey, and Elma Vanags, Rideau-Thousand Islands (formerly Gananoque)

As I experienced a similar confusion over the two plants, I thought these postings on the MG-List might help others to distinguish between the two and in the process learn about the Jerusalem Artichoke in particular. Editor

I was given some 'perennial sunflowers' which I assumed were *Helianthus tuberosus*, Jerusalem Artichokes. I dug up some roots last weekend, dutifully waiting for the first hard frost, as suggested. What I found were very fibrous, sinewy roots, and not what looked like the edible roots which you see pictured in reference books. What

is it that I have growing in my garden? The stems are tough like the sunflower, and the stems are very definitely four sided, with very distinct ridges marking each side. The plants grow five to six feet tall, and have yellow flowers, not unlike the spider texture of some asters. But the roots were not what I was expecting. Where do I get tubers of Jerusalem Artichoke to plant next year, or is this something I can start from seed, and where do I source this? Has anyone harvested these plants, and how do you store them for the winter, and is growing them for a edible crop recommended or are they just a 'blah' kind of vegetable? *Joan Tobin, Peterborough*

Joan, from your description you may have the False Sunflower, *Heliopsis helianthoides*, which is known for its very long flowering season and its ability to survive just about any growing condition.

Helianthus tuberosus, Jerusalem Artichoke, (I prefer "Sunchoke".) is a very invasive plant considered to be a weed by most farmers. It spreads by underground stems which bear the tubers. The flowers are yellow and resemble small sunflowers. If you know anybody who grows these or who would like to get rid of them, they will gladly give you the tubers. Some nurseries even sell them. They can be planted any time from early spring till fall and are extremely easy to grow and generally pest and disease-free. Unlike potato tubers, they do not store well. You may keep them in the refrigerator for a couple of weeks in a plastic bag. They dry out very readily. When I grew them, I mulched them with straw and depending on the weather could harvest them as long as the soil was not frozen along with leeks, celeriac, parsnips and carrots. They are a low-calorie substitute for potatoes. Cooked and then marinated they make a tasty salad alone or with other vegetables or stir-fry them. *Elma Vanags, Rideau-Thousand Islands*

Joan, Jerusalem Artichoke can be friend or foe in the garden. To learn how to eradicate it in case it tries to take over your lot (and the farmer's field next door) refer to

OMAFRA FACTSHEET #94-077 AGDEX 642. If you want to give it a try, check with Richter's Herbs as they sell tubers. You could more economically keep asking around this winter for someone who has it in their garden awaiting the spring arousal as I'm sure they will share. Myself, I plant a well-delineated plot of this beautiful and tasty vegetable then await the frost to turn the tops yellow before harvesting. They dig up easily. I admire their abundant, knobby, spherical tubers. Some, I leave to dry on the ground for a few hours before they can be taken to the house for our pleasure (many recipes available on the net). Some, I pop back into the ground for next year's crop. Some can go into wet sand and be stored in a cold room for 4-5 months for eating over the winter or spring planting. But I must admit the bulk of mine head straight for the barn where the horses look forward to their treat of crunchy artichoke. They enjoy this as much as a sugar cube due to the fructose artichokes contain. (Fructose is 1.5 times as sweet as sucrose!) So if anyone has an Artichoke surplus this year you now know that Joan is looking for some and your neighborhood horses will love you forever if you show up with a tuber in your pocket.
Nancy Brown, Grey

MG-LIST

The MG-List is a very important means of communication between members of MG0I, with communication such as the above. On October 31, 2001, there were 81 subscribers to the MG-List, and 1 to the MG-List-Digest. To subscribe to the List, send an email to majordomo@eagle.ca with the word "subscribe mg-list" in the body of the email. (Leave off the quotes.) For more information, contact your group Coordinator.

A MASTER GARDENER HOTLINE

by A Master Gardener of Sarnia-Lambton

Question: Please tell me what to do for winter preparation of peonies. These were new plants put in this year and have some

growth on them. They did not bloom this year. Nancy G.

Answer: Hi Nancy. The peonies should have been planted 1 m (3 ft.) apart in a deep bed of enriched soil (avoiding manure). Each division should have at least three eyes or buds (Five is better.) so that it will not take so long to start blooming again. The eyes should be covered with only 2.5 to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches) of soil--a greater depth may prevent them from blooming at all in subsequent years. Peonies do poorly where winters are warm. Although plants are extremely hardy, mulching is advisable the first winter after planting. When the ground freezes solid, in November and December, apply a mulch of light material such as straw, evergreen branches, or even oak leaves, but not maple leaves...the former curl and do not mat. The purpose of the mulch is to keep the temperature in the soil even and this helps prevent thawing and heaving due to temperature changes.

INTERNATIONAL MG CONFERENCE

by Ralph Bullough, MG0I International Rep.

In May, 2001, the International Master Gardener Conference took place in Orlando, Florida. The Conference was a joint presentation of the University of Florida, Florida Master Gardeners and the Disney Corporation. As you might guess with such sponsors the event was well organized and staged worthy of network television.

The setting was the Hilton Hotel on the grounds of Disney and the facilities were excellent. An abundance of resources were provided from large projection screens to enhance keynote speakers to any type of audiovisual equipment needed for a presentation. This depth of resource of course comes with a price, as this was the most expensive Conference to date. Hopefully this will be the peak of cost especially because of the depreciated dollar of the Canadian Master Gardeners.

A great variety of topics were covered with a tendency towards the upper zones, but did

not exclude the northern gardener. We examined with a range of experts such topics as genetically modified plants. The discussion was at times heated.

Entertainment included evening receptions, wonderful speakers, and an entrancing portrayal of flower arranging as used by the Renaissance masters. This was complemented with a great trade show. Disney not only provided speakers, but they closed off part of Epcot for Friday morning and the Master Gardeners were private guests at the flower exposition, a dessert reception and private viewing of the fire works.

I was very pleased to see a greater showing of Master Gardeners from Ontario. I think it is important that we attend conferences and meet other people and learn about their organizations. The next Conference takes place in Covington, Kentucky near Cincinnati. It will showcase the Ohio Valley. The dates are June 19 to 22, 2003.

While at the Conference, I also conducted a great deal of business as Chair of the International MG Committee. The Committee discussed the current Conference and also items concerning future locations. New proposed rules for the organization were presented. Elections and ratification of changes will be dealt with through conference calls.

A CD with a complete outline of presentations, abstracts of organizational papers, an extensive photo collection, and a list of other resources was available. I would be pleased to answer any questions about this CD. ralph@tbtel.net

MG FEATURES

A follow-up to *Looks Can Be Deceiving*, the Poisonous Plant article, Spring/Summer 2001
by Anne Morgan, Kitchener-Waterloo

I had an interesting experience with my neighbour, a beginner gardener. I had advised her to cut back her *Euphorbia myrsinites* when it finished flowering to prevent the seeds dispersing everywhere

and I also advised her to wear gloves to protect her skin from the sap. The following morning I was woken very early by this same neighbour who could barely speak and was covered in a rash. She had not worn gloves and had spread the sap all over her arms and face including her lips, so some had even got inside her mouth. As I talked to her, her voice was getting fainter, so I wrote the full common and botanical name of the plant on a piece of paper and got her to the hospital immediately where she received the medical treatment needed.

INTERNET SITES

For Northern Gardeners developed by a Minnesota Master Gardener
<http://www.northerngardening.com>

Jerusalem Artichoke Recipes
<http://www.epicurious.com>

Some Tree Sites

OMAFRA's agroforestry web site
<http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/crops/hort/agrofore.html>

International Society of Arboriculture
www2.champaign.isa-arbor.com/consumer/consumer.html

If your group doesn't already have an email address, check out the free providers; e.g., www.netscape.com, or www.hotmail.com. You could have a catchy name, such as greenthumbs@netscape.com, if it's available. The public could then have two ways to contact you!

The New Plant Hardiness Zones

The new Plant Hardiness Zone Map , 2000, is available on the internet at <http://sis.agr.gc.ca/cansis/nsdb/climate/hardiness/intro.html>.

For a hard copy, contact Kathy Campbell, Great Lakes Forestry Centre, Canadian Forest Service, 1219 Queen St. E., Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 2E5 705-759-5740 (2307); kcampbel@nrcan.gc.ca

BOOK REVIEWS

Orchid Fever, Eric Hansen; Vintage Books, ISBN: 0-679-77183-2
reviewed by Ralph Bullough, Thunder Bay

Orchid Fever is an apt description as this is an investigation into the mania we all suffer to some degree when dealing with plants. The difference is that these people, including the author, are to say the least right out in left field. The story shows a world of intrigue, smuggling, corruption and insanity perhaps. It is hard to believe anything as beautiful and delicate as an orchid could cause such extreme behaviour. Mickey Spillane couldn't have done better.

The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Tim Smit; Indigo Press; ISBN: 0-575-40245-8
reviewed by Ralph Bullough, Thunder Bay

This book chronicles the recovery of an estate garden in England. As incredible as it seems it truly was a "lost garden" and required literally finding. The garden archeology and renewal is a fascinating story. As well as the restoration, one learns the workings of a Victorian garden. Such apparatus as the "Pineapple pit" completely boggles the mind with the care and expertise obviously displayed by the journeymen gardeners. If you enjoyed the Victorian Kitchen Garden, this will enthrall you.

Rodale's Organic Gardening Solutions, Cheryl Long, Rodale Press
reviewed by Ronald Caston, Niagara

A very practical and useful book using the principles of organic gardening, it is a compilation of solutions published in *Organic Gardening* over the years. The following is paraphrased from this book.

Creeping Charlie Eradication: Borax, or more specifically its active ingredient, boron, can be toxic to plants: ground ivy has a very low tolerance for boron; dandelions and quack grass can survive greater amounts. Don't treat vegetable gardens or perennial beds with boron. (Effects are unknown.) Don't use borax solution more than once a year or more than 2 years total to prevent an excess of boron from accumulating in the soil. Solution: mix 10 ml (2 tsp.) borax with 1 L (1 qt.) hot water and stir. Spray exactly 2.3 sq. m (25 sq. ft.) of ground ivy-

infested lawn. More borax could damage your lawn. This will get rid of 90% of ground ivy; pull out or hoe out any survivors.

The Seed Search, Karen Platt
submitted by Wendy Chrystian, Niagara

40,000 seeds from around the world listed. \$23.95 plus \$8.00 shipping. (U.S.\$) Credit card at (217) 586-7645, or certified cheque to Mourning Dove Farms, 1204 E. Oak Mahomet IL 61853. info@mourningdovefarms.com

Soil Sterilization, from ***The Complete Gardener's Almanac***, Marjorie Willison, Nimbus Publishing

If soil is to be used indoors, and the time for solarizing is past, the other method is to heat the soil in an oven--stinky but effective. Bake in a foil covered pan until a meat thermometer in the soil reaches the temperature needed to eliminate a particular problem: nematodes, 50 C (120 F); damping off disease, 55 C (130 F); most disease causing bacteria and fungi, 65 C (150 F); soil insects, most plant viruses, 70 C (160 F); most weed seeds, 80 C (175 F); stubborn weeds and viruses, 100 C (212 F). A 1% solution of acetic acid (vinegar), 2.5 L/1000 cm (1/2 gallon per square foot) will kill various fungi. Pots used must be clean. Soaking them in a 10% bleach solution for a few minutes will kill troublesome disease organisms.

PLANT IDENTIFICATION

by Brenda Jones, Sarnia-Lambton

Each fall the Sarnia-Lambton group participates in Sarnia's Seed Days. Our members come to 2 city parks and while the public comes and take seeds and cuttings, we help to assist and identify plants.

One plant we came across was a beautiful blue colour, about 18 inches tall and the flower buds appeared closed. No one could identify it. Looking through my books later, I found it! It's the wildflower, Bottle Gentian, *Gentian andrewsii*. Its inch-long, bottle-shaped closed flowers appear in rich blue clusters atop 18 to 24 inch stems. It blooms late summer to fall. Just thought I'd share this with you!

FUNDRAISING VENTURES

The RBG and MG 2002 Calendar

A fundraiser for MGOI, these beautiful calendars would make a great gift. They are loaded with helpful MG tips for each month. Many MG groups are participating in their sale. \$13.00. Contact Bruce MacNeil, bpmacnei@retirees.uwaterloo.ca.

South Wind Travel & Tours

Presents **Garden Tours of Eastern Cuba**

February 8 - 15, and March 22- 29, 2002

\$1650. 00 Cdn. - Land Only

As a fund raising venture Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc. is working with South Wind Travel and Tours to promote the following Cuban Holiday. If you are interested in taking the tour, please contact the Travel Agent directly and clearly identify that you are a Master Gardener and you and MGOI will benefit.

Fully escorted tours of Eastern Cuba's fascinating botanical gardens. Between the Caribbean Sea and the forbidding Sierra Maestra are micro-climates supporting exotic species and ancient plants. Based in Santiago de Cuba the throbbing heart of Caribbean Cuba you'll enjoy luxury accommodations and the culture of the oldest colonial city in the Americas.

Our guides are Cuban specialists, of international reputation, whose gardens have been their life-work. Amid a cloud forest of giant ferns and orchids, we'll explore high altitude gardens. Our cactus expert will lead us through his multinational collection and in search of indigenous rarities. Casa de los Helechos is the 25-year labour of love of its director who created this unique tropical fern garden in his family's home yard. Our travels will take us to orchid laboratories, medicinal plant gardens and a Bird of Paradise nursery.

Info: <http://www.realcubaonline.com>. Kate Daley at the agency, 416-921-4012 or Bruce MacNeil, bpmacnei@retirees.uwaterloo.ca.

CROSSWORD

by Sandy Ellenor, Essex-Windsor

Crossword Solution Spring/Summer 2001

ACROSS

1 BUTTERNUT
5 HICKORY
6 IRONWOOD
8 GINGKO
9 ELM

DOWN

2 TULIP
3 SYCAMORE
4 REDBUD
7 OAK

PESTS



Across

- 1 Newly hatched nymphs suck sap from plants. (8)
- 6 Have euonymous? You probably have these. (5)
- 7 Collars around tomato plants deter these. (7)
- 8 Soft bodied tiny insect causes leaves to pucker. (5)
- 9 devastating insect to cucumber and squash vines (5)

Down

- 2 pale green sap suckers (10)
- 3 This insect tunnels the leaves and hollows them out. (9)
- 4 type of fruit moth whose larvae are the worms in peaches and nectarines (8)
- 5 weevil with long snout that lays eggs on apple, pear and plum trees (8)

Happy Holidays!

