

Master Gardeners of Ontario

What's growing on?



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Summer, 2008

www.mastergardener.ca



Alfalfa Tea

The following was summarized from an article by Ted White, Minot, Maine, which appeared in the Canadian Daylily Journal, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2007/2008, and is reprinted with permission from the author. Dan Cooper of Toronto Master Gardeners sent in the article. The full text can be found on our website www.mastergardener.ca.

Alfalfa contains a wealth of nutrients that will be highly beneficial to the growth of your plants. Perhaps its most valuable component is its powerful growth stimulant, Triacontanol. In fact, alfalfa has been used as plant stimulant for more than 50 years, and Triacontanol has been called the most potent growth hormone ever used in the production of flowers and agricultural crops such as corn. This naturally occurring stimulant will significantly boost the growth of your plants, perhaps more so than any other single ingredient that may be added to your garden soil.



In addition to Triacontanol, alfalfa contains a wealth of minerals needed by your hostas, day-lilies, irises, hostas, roses, and peonies. Chemical

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Planting Roots

After a discussion on the MG-list some time ago about how to plant perennials, we wrote a number of folks in various commercial and public organizations to get opinions on whether these people felt it was a good idea to disturb roots while planting. Here are some excerpts from what they had to say (The full text can be found on our website www.mastergardener.ca :



John Valleau, Valleybrook Gardens / Heritage Perennials

I always recommend roughing up the roots for ANY plant that has been in a container and has roots that extend to the outside and bottom. For a lot of plants, the simplest thing is to take your hand, grab the bottom of the rootball and just tug off a chunk of roots. You can also use a knife to cut an X or plus sign about an inch deep, spread this open and shove some soil in there to keep it from closing up. I will sometimes take a pointy paring knife and run it down or across the sides of the rootball to score the fine root hairs about 1/4 deep or so. It damages the roots but they repair themselves and find your "real" garden soil.

I once saw a fellow at a talk just smash the heck out of a Rhododendron rootball. He felt strongly that you need to do this in order to get them growing properly. I've mainly killed Rhodos myself so next time, I will try this for sure.

Hope it helps!

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Roots continued from page 1

Hazel Cook, Blossom Hill Delphiniums and Peonies, Peterborough

I loosen the ends of the roots especially if they are starting to be root bound and distribute them evenly around the hole without disturbing the main root mass very much. I believe that if you pull apart the roots to shake off the soilless mix you will break the small fibrous feeder roots and stress the plant.

It is also necessary to cover the surface of the soilless mix slightly with soil or it will act like a wick and remove the moisture from the ground.

Dawn Tack, Gardens Plus, Peterborough

It is important to spread the roots to get them going in all directions not in a 'root bound circle'. This is when any gardener should add the compost etc. When planting perennials with finer roots, I would gently knock off some but not all of the soil – as this breaks the roots. The health of the plant is dependent upon the roots, not what is up top.

I understand the debate – on TV they often just plunk the plant in the ground. BUT if it is an annual and you get to look at the roots in the fall, you might find that it is still in that little ball!

SM, Montreal Botanical Garden

When our gardeners plant a perennial or a tree, they keep the growing medium in order not to disturb the roots, unless these are circling around the pot.

If your plant is root bound, it is a good idea to make vertical cuts about 2 to 5 cm deep in 4 or 5 spots around the root ball before planting it. The cuts will stop the spiral growth and encourage the new roots to spread out sideways.



Mystery Plant

Do you know this plant? The answer will be revealed next issue.

Last Issue's Mystery - Coming from Newfoundland, it was nice you chose our floral emblem for your 'mystery plant'. It is a carnivorous pitcher plant - *Sarracenia purpurea*. Fifty years ago, we would see great swaths of them on the bog while out trout fishing. My father would not let me pick any as they were "our special flower" and so would appease me by wading into the pond and pick white water lilies instead. Haven't thought of this in years – thanks for the memory.

Janet Trezise, Lake Simcoe South

Pollinator Park

Mary Beverley-Burton - Guelph and Wellington County

Guelph City has approved the conversion of their old Eastview landfill site to a Pollinator Park - claimed to be the first of its kind anywhere. It will be multi-use with guided trails, sports fields and plantings to create pollinator habitat to accommodate all life-cycle stages of a number of pollinators. In the Guelph area over 200 pollinators have been identified so this is going to be a long-term project.

Master Gardener groups can become involved in this type of activity by making contact with Councilor (and MG) Vickie Beard at beard@sympatico.ca. Vickie will speak anywhere in the Province - she only needs travel expenses and is already booked at several locations.

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Master Gardeners in Action

Floating Gardens

The Perth Horticultural Society has a project underway to install 5 Floating Islands in the Tay River in downtown historical Perth. Lanark County Master Gardeners are sponsoring one of these islands. The islands were featured in the recent issue of Canadian Gardening.

International Rock Garden Society

The International Rock Garden Society recently held its annual meeting in Ottawa. Lanark County Master Gardener, Judy Wall, organized the tours to the Purdon Conservation Area where the Showy Orchids opened on the day of the tour. Many of the Lanark County Master Gardeners acted as tour guides to the area.

Butterfly Garden

The Rideau Valley Field Naturalists have created a suitable habitat to support and protect the monarch butterfly. Lanark County Master Gardener, Dale Odorizzi has provided guidance to the group to prepare four large garden plots that contain perennials and herbs.

20th anniversary

Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners celebrated their 20th anniversary with a wine and cheese social on June 19, 2008 at Binions Hall in Aurora. Besides the active members and MGITs, one past Coordinator and all of our emeritus ladies were in attendance for the festivities.

Garden Design Workshop in Oakville.

On April 5th the Oakville Master Gardeners hosted an interactive Garden Design Workshop to a sold out audience of 20 people. Sean James, graduate of the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture and owner of Fern Ridge Landscaping and Design along with fellow Master Gardeners helped our students create their very own garden design.

Master Gardeners at Work in Longlac

Master Gardeners Ed and Deanna Hoffman are busy in the town of Longlac. In conjunction with the local public school parent council, staff and students, they designed an outdoor classroom. Once the design was complete, they applied for funding with the Toyota Evergreen Learning Grounds program and were successful in securing \$1700 in grant money for 2008.

Ottawa Farmers' Market Lansdowne Park

In addition to the gardening clinics that Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton hold every Saturday throughout May and June at the Byward, Parkdale and Carp Markets, we have taken on a new initiative. This year we will provide gardening advice every Sunday from July to the end of September at the Ottawa Farmers' Market in Lansdowne Park.

MGITs Take the New Guelph Courses

Judy Bernard - Peterborough

As I began my studies for my Master Gardener designation, I experienced many of the same kind of things as Cathy Fraser described in the spring issue. My comfort level with the computer was limited to e-mail and Spider Solitaire. I had a lot to learn. The instructions given by Guelph University worked, as long as you followed them to the letter, and understood what they meant. I learned. It has been challenging but fun.

I chose Guelph University because of the way the course material was organized. The anatomy & physiology portion of Cultural Practices has given me a good basis for Plant Identification. There is so much to learn and a variety of ways to do it. In each of the modules for the course, there are activities to do, which are shared with the others in our discussion group. It is through these discussions that research is shared and debated as well as support given for each other. Grading is done in a number of ways: through quizzes, assignments and our contributions to the discussion groups. I was very pleased that the assignment I did on "medicinal weeds" (for the Cultural Practices course) was featured in the Gardening section of the Peterborough Examiner.

I feel I made the right choice by choosing Guelph University. In addition to the MG courses, I have also taken another of their Horticulture courses - Landscape Design 1. Who knows where this may lead?

MGs on the Net

You can now have a photo made available for discussions on the mg-list by sending it to mgspics@gmail.com

Events

- July 5-6, Propagation Workshop, Windsor
- July 16-17, Midwest Regional MG Conference
Milwaukee, WI
- July 19-20, Propagation Workshop, Niagara
- August 7-8 Propagation Workshop, Ridgeway
- August 22, MGOI AGM at OHA Convention, Sheridan
College - Davis Campus, Brampton
- September 13, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., 'To Bee or not To
Bee:' Zone 4 Ed Seminar, Bayfield Community
Center, betsy1@ezlink.on.ca, \$40 inc lunch
- September 20, 9:00a.m. to 4:00 p.m., The Healing
Properties of Gardens, Willow Room,
Colasanti's Greenhouses, Ruthven, ON Juliette
St. Pierre, canadel@cogeco.ca, \$35
- October 4-5 8:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. Design Class for
Gardeners, Oliver Rd Recreation C., Thunderbay
- Eloise 767-1087
- October 25, Coordinators' Conference, L.O.
Headquarters, Milton
- October 25, 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. Norfolk County - In the
Carolinian Zone OMAFRA Office, 1283 Blue
Line Road, Simcoe, Ontario

Alfalfa Tea continued from page 1

analyses of dry alfalfa indicate the presence of 3.75 – 5.5% nitrogen, 0.75 – 3.5% potassium, 0.3 – 0.7% phosphorus, 1 - 2% calcium, 0.30 – 1% magnesium, 0.2 – 0.5% sulfur. Alfalfa also contains these micronutrients: manganese, iron, boron, copper, and zinc. It also contains a high concentration of Vitamin A, and a great number of amino acids, too many to mention here.

To make alfalfa tea, add 24 cups of alfalfa pellets or meal in a 32-gallon (121-litre) garbage pail with a tight fitting lid. Fill with water and stir 3 times a day for the next 3 days. Before use, add 2 cups of Epsom salts, 3 tablespoons of iron chelate, and 1 cup of fish emulsion and stir thoroughly. Apply this once a month during spring and summer to your garden. A large clump of Hosta will need about a gallon. Later in the summer the Epsom salts can be omitted. The only drawback to alfalfa tea is the "barnyard odour," but it's a very minor problem when you consider that your efforts will result in superior plant growth, greater bloom production, and more luxuriant leaves.

Milestones

New MGiTs

Brantford - Vae Hamett, Christa Hunter, Anne Saunders

Completed Educational Requirements

University of Guelph - Toronto - Janet Ahier, Pat Cappelli, Anne Chetwynd, Caroline Greenland, Alessandra Leopardi, Toni Vella

MGOI Certification Exam – Peterborough - Lisa Stefaniak; Toronto - Joseph Delarge, Aldona Satterthwaite

New MG's

Halton - Joyce Killin; LSSMG - Kathleen Gorsline;
Peterborough - Marg Hundt, Sue Lajeunesse

5 Years

Brantford - Lizabeth Smith, Hannah Lawrence, Fern Otawa, Alex Kucharew; Halton - Larry Albert, Marg Catley, Marjorie Latimer, Roberta Roberts, Sheila McCallum, Christine Lee, Sheelagh Rowland-Brown, Donna Parker; LSSMG - Georgie Kennedy, Janet Trezise

10 Years

Brantford - Sharon Blaney, Heather Dutton, Helen Smith; Halton - Walter Anderson, Molly Fuller, Belinda Gallagher, Ray Hipworth, Bill Kertzia, David Marshall, Sharon Paradis; Peterborough - Neil Roberts

15 Years

Brantford - Denzil Sawyer, Kathren Suzuki, Isabelle Pugh, Wilfred Pugh

20 Years

Brantford - Patrice Locker, Len Cole, Nancy Lee Colibaba, Ivy Johnson; Halton - Lorne Sparrow, John Simkins

Emeritus

Essex/Windsor - Evelyn Kogel

2008 Ontario Volunteer Service Awards (from the Province of Ontario)

Essex/Windsor - 20 years Sandy Ellenor, Joyce Ray, Eleanor Sfalcin; 10 years - Barb Morden, Beth Salter, Wayne Dupuis