Master Gardeners of Ontario

What's Growing On

Fall, 2011

www.mgoi.ca

Serving Ontario for 25 Years

Join the email list and have the newsletter sent to you directly. Send an email to editors@mgoi.ca with your name, email and group. 523 Master Gardeners are already on the list. Are you?

Vegetables for Competition at CNE

Growing Prize-Winning Vegetables

Christine Halbot, Lindsay and District

At the 2011 Canadian National Exhibition Horticulture Show, I exhibited thirty-five veggies which won thirty-six awards including "Best in Show" for corn (not recommended for growing in small places) as well as three "Judge's Choice" awards for two pumpkins and watermelon (again these varieties were vining, not for the small space). However, many homeowners with small spaces are using the area against their fences or trellising for this purpose.

Here are some hints and observations:

I do not water. I garden completely organically using only manure, kelp and rock powders. The secret is in the dirt! I buy all my soil amendments at the local farm supply store in 50 lb. bags. This is the cheapest way to obtain safe and organic amendments. The manure of course comes from my two horses (although, horse manure is weedy it is Magic). I put the partially composted manure and soil amendments on my garden in the fall and by spring I have the fluffiest, fertile and healthiest soil for produc-

continued on page 2

In this Issue

- Growing Prize-Winning Vegetables
- Growing Vegetables Vertically
- Small is Bountiful
- Parsley
- MGs in Action

Growing Vegetables Vertically

Isabel Belanger, Etobicoke

Growing vegetables vertically can save valuable real estate while providing a dramatic backdrop to the border by covering a bare fence or trellis. This certainly makes sense in small city gardens where ground-level space is at a premium. A number of vegetables will naturally grow vertically, including: zucchinis/squashes/melons; cucumbers; pole beans; peas; and indeterminate tomatoes. Beans and peas must be the climbing type (i.e. pole beans and tall climbing peas). Tomatoes must be indeterminate. Tall trailing nasturtium is a flowering annual that can be trained vertically on a fence or trellis; both the leaves and flowers add a peppery bite to a summer salad.

Beans and peas have to be trained vertically to ensure they do not twine around each other. Zucchinis/squashes/melons, cucumbers and tomatoes can be trained vertically, then run horizontally or zigzagged along the fence or trellis. The fruit of squashes and melons can be heavy and may need to be supported with a sling that can be tied to the fence or trellis.

A chain link fence will provide an easy support for tying vines. For a wooden fence, you can purchase 1 inch cup hooks to screw into the fence; the hooks can hold plastic netting, or twine can be tied between the hooks. Stakes can also be placed close to

continued on page 3

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Prize-Winning Vegetables from page 1

tion. If you do not have magic manure then use the 50 lb. bag of alfalfa powder. This works well because it substitutes for a blow down crop and at the same time supplies nutrients and feeds the worms.

This summer I grew 400 varieties on one acre; 65 varieties were heirloom potatoes and 23 of those varieties were for the genetic resources Agriculture Canada evaluations. Seed potatoes seem to have been a hit in recent years at our local Master Gardeners' Seedy Saturday. Some people come specifically for the potato offerings.

Here are a few tips for growing in small spaces and productive techniques based on my own experience:

- Grow semi-bush or bush varieties for pumpkin, melons, cucumbers, squash. This saves space as these species tend to grow as vines. If your favourite variety can only be obtained as a vining form then trellis it or perhaps grow it against a fence which is the easiest and is likely in an out of the way space.
- Grow pole varieties of beans instead of bush varieties. This will increase your production and save space in a "vertical" fashion.
- I could go on about "pot growing" but instead I suggest growing the odd hot pepper plant (24" high or less), bush/patio cherry tomato and small herbs in your flowerbeds. These plants seem to thrive in a raised bed sitting in the warmth and full sun and at the same time they make an attractive ornamental.
- If pot growing is your fancy then be sure to water and have great fertile dirt amended with a thoroughly composted soil with added organic matter and rock powders ie: soft rock phosphate, green sand, kelp, alfalfa powder and a very minute pinch of Epsom salts. The trick with pot growing is to have good drainage and at the same time have holding capacity for nutrients and water. Also, the pot must be compatible with the plant, i.e.: a 6-foot tomato plant in a 1-quart pot will have trouble.
- I also recommend growing disease, pest and drought resistant varieties for any situation whether it is a small or large space. With climate change on the way, it only makes sense to choose varieties that grow in a range of conditions. Resistant varieties are generally more productive in the long haul because if the plant can live healthier longer then it has a greater chance of producing successfully.

MG List

If you have not yet signed up for the MG list, contact Kelly Noel. It is a great source of information and lively discussion among MGs.

Mystery Plant

Do you know this plant? The answer will be revealed next issue. Contact editors@mgoi.ca with your guess.

Although we had a couple of unsuccessful guesses on last issue's mystery, no one correctly identified it as Spikenard, *Aralia racemosa*. We guess we will just have to make it easier this time.

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Growing Vertically from page 1

the fence as supports for training vegetables vertically.

Benefits of vertical growing include: taking up very little ground space, allowing more space for other plants; keeping vegetables off the ground, away from insect pests and damp earth which may rot them; potentially allowing for more air circulation which will keep powdery mildew and fungi at bay; and bringing vines closer to the sunlight which will increase yields. Another benefit is less stress on the gardener's back: no stooping required.

MGs in Action

Nova Scotia Hands On

Master Gardeners of Ontario were well represented at the Nova Scotia hands on summer school component this summer. Two students, Anna Sipos from Ottawa (far right back) and Kevin Long from Lanark (far left) completed the Summer School 2 after having completed Summer School 1 two years ago. Vicki Doucette from North Bay (in front of Kevin) completed Summer School 1. These students received their certificates at this summer's Graduation Ceremony. Other Ontario Grads may be in the photo. Congratulations to all! Also in the photo (under the word Association) are Carol Godwin, founder of the programme and Sherry Chaisson (Professor)

Great News!

Master Gardeners of Ontario and Lake Simcoe South will be featured on Rogers TV in a segment of A Greener York. The show will air in October or November, with repeats throughout the season.

Essex-Windsor MGs Out and About

On July 12, ten Essex-Windsor Master Gardeners visited Klomp's Nursery in Stratford and Floral and Hardy Gardens in Moorefield where Master Gardener Betty Fretz provided an educational tour of her daylily gardens, the site of the International Daylily Society meeting the following weekend and the Folmer Botanical Gardens in Walkerton.

Take a Look

Guelph and Wellington's website has been renovated.

Guelph and Wellington Members enjoyed an educational bus trip to Ancaster and the Niagara Peninsula in July.

Special People

Shirley Daniels of Mississauga Master Gardeners single-handedly and tirelessly handled all the administrative issues of the 18-day-long plants clinic at this year's Canadian National Exhibition. Appreciation also goes out to the concerted efforts of Master Gardeners from Mississauga, Toronto, Etobicoke and Lake Simcoe South, who seamlessly managed to run the day-to-day shifts at the clinic with timely advice. The show was a total success with record turnouts of eager gardeners, who asked over 800 questions during the 18 days, another record-breaking result.

Niagara

Thanks go to Barb Large and her committee of Rose and Vince Satosa, Yuki Woolstencroft, Marie Johns and Wendy Fletcher for their outstanding efforts in organizing the September plant sale. A special thanks goes to Alan Large who, as a volunteer, sharpened tools for our benefit.

These days it seems as though everyone is thinking 'vegetable'. At the present time Niagara MGs are involved in giving advice clinics at the Welland Farmer's Market and giving hands-on-help at a community garden managed by Start-Up-Niagara. Because of our involvement in these activities we have been asked by Carla Carlson of Climate Action Now to give presentations as well as hands-on help regarding vegetable and herb growing for three community gardens in the Welland – St. Catharines area. We are excited about this opportunity.

Niagara MGs have been asked by Debbie Whitehouse of Niagara Parks to lead tours of the Botanical Gardens. At this point we have agreed to lead two tours in the fall to work out tour logistics. We expect that we will be leading many more in 2012. What could be more pleasant than walkiing through these lovely gardens while explaining their merits to a group of garden enthusiasts?

continued on page 4

Mgs in action from page 3

Celebration

Guelph and Wellington Master Gardeners are celebrating their 15th Anniversary with the sponsorship of a Woodland Garden at the University of Guelph Arboretum. The Garden will feature native Ontario plants including rare Carolinian species. Master Gardeners will build, design and maintain the Garden.

Parsley

Norma Evans, Peterborough

Flat Parsley

I plan my herb garden so that I have fresh parsley available all year. Each summer, I grow at least one parsley plant in a pot so that I do not have to do any transplanting in the fall. You can transplant parsley, but you need a very deep pot to accommodate the long taproot and it is best to disturb the root as little as possible since the idea is to be able to get snippets of green soon after its relocation.

This past summer, I elected to try flat parsley in place of my usual curly parsley. It supposedly is stronger and certainly easier to wash. The new seed germinated easily and grew with great vigour – two pots in my garden and one pot in my daughter's garden. All three pots set seed (lots and lots of seed stalks) early in August. Parsley is a biennial but the curly parsley I usually grow, does not set seed until the following spring.

I have found one other gardener growing flat parsley in a very sunny location and it had no seed stalks at the end of August. My pots produced masses of parsley, but pots with seed heads are not what is needed for overwintering. Did our pots get insufficient sun? too much water? poor drainage? Any other parsley experiences or ideas would be most welcome. Perhaps the needs of the two parsley varieties are somewhat different.

In the meantime, the herb man at the Peterborough Market had a very petite version of the curly variety and it hopefully will have a goodly growth spurt this fall.

Milestones

New MGiTs

LSSMG – Carole Ditomaso, Ruth Gemmel, Laura McCallum, Daila Webster

Mississauga – Alice Bur, Cristina da Silva

Norfolk – Suzi Hartwick

Prince Edward County – Alexandra Wiens

Ottawa-Carleton – Terry Mueller

Sudbury - Dave Ketchn1e

New MGs

Guelph and Wellington – Diane Marchese, Pam Sheldon

Haliburton County – Heather Chambers, Sue Flinders-Adams, Janice Hardy

Mississauga – Janice Ekeland, Diane Rogers, Michelle Wilson

North Bay and Area – Judy Hendry

Peterborough – Suzanne Seryck, Joanne Windrem

Prince Edward County – Marianne Malachowski

5 year

Guelph and Wellington – Margaret Stewart

Peterborough – Marg Hundt, Sue Lajeunesse

Prince Edward County – Kathleen Bazkur-O'Connell

10 year

Guelph and Wellington – Christine Hamilton

LSSMG – Valerie Liney, Jennifer Walton

15 year

Guelph and Wellington – Betty Fretz, Lynn Gillespie, Iza Lipkowski, Marilyn White

20 year

North Bay and Area – Vickie Wiemer

Retired/Resigned

Guelph and Wellington – Linda Barkovsky

Peterborough – Neil Roberts

Small is Bountiful

Edythe Falconer

A small yard can definitely accommodate great vegetable gardens.

Eaves, walls, poles, fences, ledges, edges, awkward little strips of bare soil, pots, barrels - all are potential sites for planting. Because imagination is all-

continued on page 5

Small is bountiful from page 4

powerful soon every ledge spills over with beauteous bounty, every wall sports trellises festooned with tasty climbers, every fence backs feasts of juicy edibles, and every patio and deck is arrayed with pots of great goodness.

Whether we plant in containers, corners, or up walls, growing requirements are similar. Pots and other planting spaces require Dagwood sandwiches and/or crumbly stews of nutritious amendments. Small rocks and chopped prunings at the bottom of planting holes and/or pots help to provide aeration. The layering continues with soilless mixes of vermiculite, perlite, compost and peat moss or all of these combined with varying percentages of real dirt. Regular feedings of fertilizer, synthetic or organic, are necessary throughout the growing season. At regular intervals every planting space needs to be topped up with compost and/or well-rotted manure or sea kelp mixes. If the potting mix is kept well-fed we can enjoy second crops with succession plantings of beans, beets, shallots, radishes, and greens. Mulching pots with stones, shells or chips is not only attractive but also increases moisture retention. Stones slow down the squirrels.

Our pockets of providence, in ground or in container, require regular watering – the more restricted the growing area the more moisture is required. Hi-tech pots with small reservoirs built into the bottom are now readily available and many include tubing to transport water to the roots. Rows of pots can be hooked up to each other via drip irrigation. Water-retaining granules can be purchased separately or included in potting mixes. Some are not recommended for vegetables so always check the labels.

Plants in containers are vulnerable to the usual predators and diseases. Defensive strategies are much the same as for all plants. Physical barriers, diligent monitoring to correct problems before they get out of control and a working knowledge of enemy *modus operandi* are the best weapons re damage reduction and prevention.

Edibles that grow well in pots and half barrels include regular potatoes, sweet potatoes, mini-squash, carrots, radish, pole beans, herbs and shallots. Scarlet runner beans, for example, are both edible and ornamental and hummingbirds love them.

In the late fall containers can be tidied and covered to prevent leaching and cracking. In spring part of the old mix can be replaced with fresh material. Used mix can be added to compost bins.

For terrific ideas on edibles in containers see “Crops in Pots”, Purnell, 2007. For drought tolerant edibles check out “Dry-Land Gardening”, Bennett, 1998. Beans, broccoli, peas, beets, radishes, Swiss chard and many other leafy greens tolerate partial shade. “Square Foot Gardening” Bartholomew, 1981 emphasizes how much can be grown, even in tiny spaces!

Ultimately there is nothing that compares with the taste of produce freshly picked from our own gardens. This alone makes every strategy worthwhile.

Community gardening Surprise

John Craw, Simcoe

My local barber has 10 four by eight planters in a Community Garden that she offers for free to friends and others. In early June, I decided to plant veggies in two of the planters that had been filled with excellent triple mix. I mixed in two bags of well rotted sheep manure before planting six tomato plants, eight broccoli, four egg plants, four Boston Bibb lettuce, a row of radishes, a row of leaf lettuce, four radicchio, two rows of carrots and two pots of cucumbers. Also I planted a row of Scarlet Runner Beans and morning glories on a trellis that I attached to one side of the planters. During June and July I watered everything every other day. For pest control, I planted a row of marigolds in front of the broccoli and tomatoes.

Most of the results have been phenomenal. We’ve had lots of radishes and probably a bushel or more of lettuce and radicchio. The tomato plants were planted in cages but they grew so well I had to reinforce the plants with two by two stakes inside the cages. They are about four feet tall. I picked a six quart basketful two days ago and another six quarts today. The cucumbers have averaged about six a day and one day I picked a giant. It was 18 inches long. The carrots are still growing. My wife and I have tasted egg plant for the first time and find it quite enjoyable. Boiled Scarlet Runner beans are delicious. The best green beans I’ve ever tasted. Unfortunately, I had some failures too. The broccoli plants bolted because of the heat and some of my seed did not germinate as the seed was not fresh. I’ll know better next time.

Meanwhile, I’ve shared most of the harvest with friends, neighbours and others. It has been a very satisfying and rewarding experience for me.

Montreal Botanical Garden

editors

This past summer the Peterborough Master Gardeners arranged a trip to Montreal. One of the highlights of the visit was the Montreal Botanical Garden. We toured the gardens in small groups, guided by enthusiastic volunteers who help out at the garden. There is more garden than you can possibly see in a day and every bit of it is interesting and well cared for. We highly recommend a visit.

Ontario Horticultural Association and Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc.

Working Together

Here is the latest issue OHA's newsletter the Trillium.

Web sites

Here are ones to share with members of the public (these are easy to navigate / common language sites, as opposed to scientific or academic ones):

Kitchen Gardeners International,

Vegetable Gardener

GrowBlog

Peterborough MG Fact Sheets

Books:

How to Grow More Vegetables: And Fruits, Nuts, Berries, Grains and Other Crops Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine, John Jeavons; Landscaping with Fruit, Lee Reich; Rodale's Ultimate Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening; Square Foot Gardening, Mel Bartholemew; Vegetable Gardening, Bradley Marshall; Incredible Edibles – Firefly Books, Sonia Day

Coordinators Conference

In a few days on October 22, Coordinators and others will be meeting at the LO facility in Milton. If your group does not have representation at the conference yet, please consider joining us.

Events

October 1, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Mississauga Master Gardeners will participate in the opening day of two newly constructed gardens at the Riverwood Conservancy, in the role of adviser at a plants clinic.

October 15 – Zone 8 – Technical Update – Trees in the Urban Landscape at St. James Church (Lower Hall), 225 Edmund Street, Carleton Place. Informative speakers and lunch will be provided $25.00. Deadline for registration is October 8. Registration Fee increases to $30 after that date. The Registration form is available at www.lanark-mastergardeners.mgoi.ca or call Dale at 613 264-8135.

October 15 – The Grey County Master Gardeners presents 'From the Forest to the Garden: Identify, Diagnose, Grow' at the Owen Sound Legion, 1450 2nd Ave. West, Owen Sound. Speakers: Peter Middleton President of Owen Sound Field Naturalists, Dr. Greg Boland, Professor, University of Guelph and Martin Galloway Owner Chalk Lake Greenhouses. No charge for admission, donations to the GCMGs would be appreciated. Lunch: a list of restaurants will be provided or bring your own brown bag lunch. As space is limited, please reserve your spot by contacting Sue Connelly at 519-924-0207 or svc@cablerocket.com or Patricia Draves at 5193763684 or patriciadraves@yahoo.ca

October 18, 7:00 p.m. – Norfolk County presents 'Think Like a Plant' a presentation by Evelyn Wolf of Garden Possibilities at Eising Greenhouse and Garden Centre, 814 Cockshutt Road, Simcoe. Free admission. Contact norfolkmg@yahoo.com for more information.

October 22 – Coordinators Conference at the Landscape Ontario facility in Milton. If you have an item for the Silent Auction, please contact June Streadwick at streadwick@sympatico.ca. The proceeds from the Silent Auction are used to finance the next year's event, making the Conference financially self-sufficient.

January 14, 2012 – Toronto's Technical Update – 'The Practical Gardener'. There will be tree talk, soil sessions and perennial ponderings with Sonia Day, Liz Hood and Darrell Bley. Registration details soon to be announced so stay glued to the mg-list.

Canada Blooms

Can't get enough of Canada Blooms? Well this year there's more to love from March 16 to March 25. More to love means more volunteer opportunities – speaking, advising, touring, and the return of the popular Sit Down Sunday. Stay tuned to the mg-list. Scheduling begins in January.