

Master Gardeners of Ontario

What's Growing On
MAY, 2011



Serving Ontario for 25 Years

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Spring, 2011

www.mgoi.ca



Grow Me - I'm a Sweet Potato

Edythe Falconer, Ottawa Carleton

Grow sweet potatoes in Ottawa? "Nonsense" I thought. That was until a fellow Master Gardener noted that he was doing exactly that. I now order cuttings from Mapple Farm in New Brunswick. I pot them soon after they arrive. Early in June they are put out in rows 1 m apart in each direction. Then I water generously until they are well established, after which a weekly soaking is sufficient.

My soil is regularly enriched with compost and manure. I also top dress a couple of times during the growing season. If I did use commercial fertilizer I would use low N, medium P, high K formula for best results. I wouldn't stop adding compost to improve soil structure, aeration, moisture retention and drainage. Compost is also a source of trace elements – absent in standard NPK fertilizers.

Last year I was late ordering from Mapple Farm. My sweet potato mentor stepped in with some tubers that had already leafed out from several eyes. I sectioned them, like a regular potato, and potted them

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Making Sweet Potato Slips

Community Gardens

Ron Rossini, London/Middlesex MGs

Community Gardens are plots donated by the municipality, church groups or private individuals to permit renters, those without large yards, and anyone wanting a more expansive garden, to rent an affordable plot and grow their own. Services to those using the plots could include free tilling, and some infusion of soil and organic based fertilizer. All plots generally have a source of water.

Our London group had two Community Gardens missions last year. One was a satellite project working with the gardeners and the organizers, the city of London. We found working with the municipal government needs more tweaking and organization to work effectively. The other was responding to a request from the London/Middlesex Health Unit who were starting a pilot project to issue a number of plots, in two garden locations, to Colombian refugees. These were allotted on the basis of their economics provided they were renting and did not own a home. The undertaking was partially funded by a Trillium Grant.

I was tagged, due to my strong interest in vegetable growing, to assist this group and delivered a power point presentation on 'Successful Vegetable Gardening.' My limited knowledge of Spanish was restricted to 'Hola' and 'Si'. This could have been awkward to many who had difficulties comprehending English. The problem was eliminated with the Health Unit hiring an interpreter who repeated my every

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What's Growing On is the newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc. It is published 4 times per year in January, April, July, and October.

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in preparation for milder weather.

Having recently moved, I had only had time to improvise a couple of small beds. I soon ran out of space so extra cuttings went into half barrels we had brought with us. Into each I put three well-rooted cuttings with marigolds in the centre. The result was both attractive and tasty. The tubers of both ornamental and agricultural sweet potatoes are edible. So are their leaves. Sweet potatoes are rich in Vitamin A and are an almost complete source of nutrition.



Sweet Potatoes

The barrels were drilled for drainage and then filled with rocks, pruning cuts, surplus sod, dried leaves and surplus soil from the patio excavation, and "iced" with lovely ancient back yard compost. Containers need water more frequently than beds and need more helpings of compost and manure during the growing season.

Last fall a vine was salvaged, potted and parked in the sunroom to over winter. In April I hope to take several cuttings, root and pot them and then put them outside in June - a fine planting-harvesting loop.

Sweet potatoes should be dug right after the first light frost to avoid chill damage. Curing should follow immediately. Properly cured they stay fresh all winter long. Curing involves subjecting tubers to temperatures between 30-32°C with 80-90% humidity for six or seven days. Putting them in paper bags will help preserve moisture. Do you have a

second bathroom? Ours became our curing station. After that they store well in any cool part of the house at around 15-20°C. Never refrigerate them!

Many more gardeners are now discovering how to effectively cure and store sweet potatoes. Whether in beds or containers they make a healthy and attractive addition to our gardens. Mine are almost always problem free and vine canopies provide good weed control. Finally give your "Sweeties" as much sun as possible, provide them with all the basics, toughen up their winter coats and you will be richly rewarded!

*Mystery Plant*

Do you know this plant?

The answer will be revealed next issue.

Contact editors@mgoi.ca with your guess.

Christine Halbot, Lindsay & District and Gillian Boyd, Ottawa-Carleton were first to identify the last mystery as buffalo berry, *Shepherdia canadensis* or it might be *S. argentea*. It is very hard to tell the difference except one is very thorny. Well adapted to dry, moderately alkaline and saline soils. Tolerates infertile soils, in part because of its ability to fix and assimilate atmospheric nitrogen. Berries are used for jellies.

*Ontario Horticultural Association and
Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc.*



**Working
Together**



Here is the [latest issue OHA's newsletter the Trillium.](#)

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Community Gardens from page 1

word to the immigrant families and was present for all of the other sessions. The presentation was followed up with initial planting visits to the two community sites and a final power point presentation to them at an early fall pot luck dinner on 'Putting Your Community Gardens to Bed.'

The program was not without minor setbacks. The gardens were uncultivated and there were very few tools available other than the ones the nurses and I donated. Severe, week long rainstorms washed out many initial seedlings donated by a local grower. A local nursery, Van Horiks's Greenhouse, generously stepped up and donated a huge amount of plant material. The water source dried up at one of the gardens and had to be replenished. It was a tremendous growing success involving all family members, including young children.

Community Gardens are worthwhile projects that respond to a definite community need. There are still many communities without these gardens and this is not only due to lack of available land. Master Gardeners could play a key role in helping develop these plots in their communities and could assist the organizers and gardeners. This is a 'feel good' undertaking that speaks to the very community philosophy of our organization.

I am happy to report that this project was so successful last year that it will be repeated this year with Arab immigrants.

MGs in Action

The Panorama Garden Group, Vena Eaton, Etobicoke

Near the banks of the Humber River in North Etobicoke lies a small community of high-rise residents who are taking action. Through the group named Action for Neighbourhood Change, they are cleaning foyers, repairing stairwells and hold twice-monthly meetings to improve the quality of life in their diverse community.

One small but dynamic subcommittee, led by residents Eleanor and Granville, is planning a community garden. What was once an empty field near the apartment complex is now a 1200 square metre garden bed – tilled, composted and ready for planting. The City of Toronto has also built a garden shed, installed water pipes and erected a fence to keep the deer from nibbling the produce.

The residents are eager to start digging but need guidance, so they asked the Etobicoke Master Gardeners (EMG) to help get things growing. EMG Jim Graham happily helms the contributions from fellow MGs. He and a small band of volunteers assist in planning, as well as securing tools, books and planting material.

Eleanor wants to plant an herb garden with lots of coriander. Granville is itching to plant corn, tomatoes and cucumbers, while another resident dreams of strawberries, pumpkins and watermelons. EMG Shane suggests planting marigold around the perimeter of the garden to deter pests. It's a lot of plants, but fundraising activities are in the works to help offset the cost.

Everyone believes that if you plant a veggie patch, residents will come together. People will gather to weed and water, and as the garden grows, so will community spirit. By summer's end, they will reap the fruits of their labour and Granville can have a corn roast and invite his new gardening friends.

Note: Tool and plant donations are welcome (they need a wheelbarrow, hoses and watering cans). Contact jpbarnet@sympatico.ca.

Thunder Bay and District, Holly Rupert

A revitalized partnership with Confederation College in Thunder Bay has created an exciting opportunity to reach new gardeners and build revenue for our group. We began in March 2010 with a one-day symposium to build interest and continued with monthly sessions at the college. Composting, vegetable gardening, growing herbs, water-conserving techniques, seed starting, and glorious edibles are among the topics proving most popular. Best of all, many have been suggested by the participants themselves as they attend sessions and offer feedback. Our members have committed to high-calibre presentations and the college now highlights our sessions in their community promotions. This educational partnership yields earnings for our group on a per student basis.

While our sessions are generally held in college facilities, this June we are planning a half-day hands-on experience for up to 60 people in a Master Gardener's private garden. Designed as a Look-Listen-and-Learn activity, participants will move through three stations to learn practical approaches to composting, planning a vegetable garden and dividing large perennials. These sessions have encouraged our members to deepen their horticultural knowledge and grow as gardening educators. We look forward to continuing this valuable community partnership.

MGs In Action from page 3

North Bay and Area

Spring Garden Tour and plant sale is scheduled for May 15, 2011 at the home of one of our new MGITs, Lynn Farintosh.

We are expanding our volunteer hours at Dollar's Independent Garden Centre to include Sunday afternoons.

Vicki Doucette is our new secretary. Our previous secretary was Ted Reed, who gave freely of his time for many years. A hearty thank you to Ted.

We participated in the second annual North Bay Seed Exchange on February 26. As well as participating in the seed exchange, the Master Gardeners had about 400 packages of seeds for sale. The event included non profit groups, for profit vendors, workshops and a kids' craft table. Everyone had a great time.

Milestones

New MGITs

Etobicoke – Isabel Belanger, Dixie Szasz-Taylor

Guelph and Wellington County – Margaret Henshall, Donna Lehman, Mary Ellen Pyear

Ottawa-Carleton – Kathy Besharah, Helena Dlab,

Peterborough – Wanda Bennet

New MGs

Etobicoke – Karen Klar, Astrid Muschalla

Guelph and Wellington County – Inger Knudsen, Robert Pavlis

Lanark - Congratulations to Paul Pietsch who is now a full-fledged Master Gardener. Paul, a former professor in Horticulture at Humber College, breezed through his certification exam weeks after joining us and in April has completed his 2 years volunteer service. Well done!

London Middlesex – Mychelle Primeau, Dorothy McGee, Rosemarie Szalich

North Bay and Area – Vicki Doucette

Ottawa-Carleton – Julianne Labreche, Ann McQuillan

Peterborough – Cathy Fraser, Joanne Windrem

Prince Edward County – Kevin Bazkur, Sandy Goranson, Kathy MacPherson

Sudbury – Frank Beer, Jill Beer, Rita Beer, Dan Tobodo

5 Years

Lake Simcoe South – Kathleen Gorsline

North Bay and Area – Pam Hansen, Monica McLaren

Ottawa-Carleton – Diane McClymont-Peace

10 Years

Lake Simcoe South – Valerie Liney



Congratulations to the newest Master Gardeners of the London Middlesex MG group. From left to right, Mychelle Primeau with the Horticulture Course at University of Guelph, Rosemarie Szalich with independent study & MGOI certification exam and Dorothy McGee with the Nova Scotia Agricultural College MG program certificate.

Experiment!

Gary Westlake, Peterborough

Not all techniques that you read about in magazines and on the internet will work in your garden. For example, I read in a magazine article that you could grow vegetables on top of straw bales by putting a layer of compost on top, fertilizing, and letting it simmer for a couple of weeks, then plant. For me at least, the bales did not hold moisture well enough to grow anything well, and when I tried to water, the compost just slid off onto my shoes. I also read that you could grow potatoes in cages above the ground level, gradually adding compost as the tops grew up. I tried this and had good growth and potatoes but not any more than I would have if I just put them in the ground. The point I am making is that it is a good idea to experiment for yourself before advising the public on new methods.

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milestones from page 4

North Bay and Area – Rose Ransom

Ottawa-Carleton – Stephanie Sleeth, Kathleen Teahen

Prince Edward County – Marianne Malachowski, Virginia Mitchell, Joyce Young

Stratford – Don Farwell, Dave Mahood, and Janice Maciver

Sudbury – Cathy Carr

15 Years

North Bay and Area – Sue Greig, Helen Tripp

20 Years

North Bay and Area – Vicki Doucette

Stratford – Dorothy Elliott, Anna Peterson – both charter members

Special Achievement*Ottawa-Carleton*

Tom Marcantonio has been named gardening and food production coordinator for the Woodpark Community Association. Tom is encouraging his neighbours to grow their own vegetables this year as part of the community association's Woodpark Edible Local Landscape (WELL) Project.

Kelly Noel has found a way to save our group hundreds of dollars annually on our telephone help-line. She transferred our existing phone line to a Skype-in service. Not only is this much less expensive, it means that our volunteers can do "help-line duty" (2 days a week) from their home phones by call-forwarding.

Ottawa-Carleton is hosting a rain barrel sale in partnership with rainbarrel.ca and has been blown away by the response - a sellout of 404 rain barrels.

Guelph and Wellington County

Thanks to Chris Hamilton, Denise Jupp and the Day in the Garden team for a successful event;

Linda Barkovsky and Mary Grad for spearheading our website renewal, focusing on website based public education for the next year. Our website is attracting over 300 visitors monthly;

Robert Pavlis for organizing a PowerPoint training day for Members;

Susan Mason for co ordinating new members and MGITs;

Margaret Stewart and the Plant Sale Team for exciting new features at this year's sale.

Local Guelph Cable TV Station will run monthly Garden Talks featuring a local MG in April, May, June, July.

Ask A Master Gardener

A new publication created by the 25th anniversary committee is available for sale by groups through John Crow - zone11@mgoi.ca . Groups may purchase the book for \$8 and sell it for \$10.

Sacro Bosco (Sacred Wood), Bomarzo, Italy

Linda Clay, Guelph



This garden is unlike any other. The garden gently pokes fun at the iconography of the Este and the Medici families yet is a pre-cursor of the English landscape garden. Renaissance duke, Vincino Orsini conceived the garden as a Sacred Wood, creating features not unlike those in a modern theme park. There is an enormous laughing mask, a moss-covered tortoise and giant surreal sculptures all carved from rock as a reminder of the drama of the Baroque period. A leaning house illustrates the corrupt state of the world while a stone dragon sits beside an oversized Etruscan vase. And then there is Temple of Divine Love. This Tuscan garden is a fine example of modern meeting ancient. Take the A1 north from Rome, then east on SS675, and then north on SP20 to Bomarzo.

Events

April 5 at 7:30 pm. – Guelph and Wellington – Going Green in the Garden: Sustainable Strategies for Ontario Home Landscapes at the Guelph Arboretum Centre. No Charge

April 8, 9 and 10 – Peterborough Garden Show at the Evinrude Centre. Vendors, Exhibitors, Speakers, Demonstrations, Judged Flower Show and a new children's activity area called 'Little Green Thumbs'. For more information go to www.peterboroughgardens.ca

April 9 – Spring Gardening Workshops at the Riverwood Conservancy, MacEwan House. "Gardening Basics" (10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.) and "Garden Plants, Shrubs and Trees" (1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.). Cost \$25.00 for one session or \$35.00 for both sessions. Check the Mississauga MG website <http://www.mgmississauga.mgoi.ca/HOME.php> for registration details.

April 16 – 17 – Scugog Spring Garden Show at the Scugog Community Recreation Centre, 1655 Reach Street, Port Perry. Cost \$5.00

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April 20 – at the Burlington Public Library, 2331 New Street – Sean James for the Burlington Sustainable Development Committee on Permaculture. Call 905-639-3611 ex 134.

April 21 at 7:30 p.m. – Muskoka Parry Sound Master Gardeners present Lorraine Johnson "Adventures in Urban Food Gardening" – at Algonquin Theatre in Huntsville. Tickets \$15.00 at the door or online at www.algonquintheatre.ca

Lecture Series – hosted jointly by Friends of the Farm and Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton Tuesdays in April 7:00 p.m. at Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm. Cost is \$15 for one session, \$50 for four sessions. Topics:

April 5 – Designing a Garden – Gaston Tessier;

April 12 – Sustainable Gardening – Gillian Boyd;

April 19 – Organic Gardening – Rebecca Last;

April 26 – Roses – Edythe Falconer

April 13 – London Middlesex Open House and 25th Celebration at the London Civic Garden Complex. Special guest speaker is Denis Flanagan. For more information www.londonmiddlesexmastergardeners.com

May 1 – 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. Hardy Plant Sale at Toronto Botanical Garden, 777 Lawrence Avenue East. Choice shrubs, select perennials, alpines and vendors. For more information visit www.onrockgarden.com/plantsale

May 14 – 9:00 a.m. to Noon – Guelph and Wellington Annual Plant Sale at the Guelph Arboretum

May 21 – 8:30 a.m. – Prince Edward County Master Gardeners' Plant Sale, on Picton's Main Street in the Giant Tiger Parking lot. Contact Virginia Mitchell at vk Mitchell@persona.ca or Kathy MacPherson at kathymacpherson@xplornet.com for more information.

July 9 – 11 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. the Prince Edward County Green Trust Garden Tour of 10 County gardens. Tickets are \$15.00. Contact Kevin Bazkur at theprinceedwardcountygreentrust@yahoo.ca or see Facebook/ThePrinceEdwardCountyGreenTrust for updates.

October 13 – 24 – Italian Garden Tour with author and garden expert, Marjorie Harris designed for garden enthusiasts, gardeners and landscape designers. Limited availability. Discount for MGOI members. Contact Linda 1 888 823 5849 www.travelspecifics.com

October 15 – Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton and Lanark County Master Gardener are pleased to announce their upcoming Zone 8 Technical Update. Our theme for the day is Trees in the Landscape.

MGOI is on Facebook! Follow us, join us, write a message on our Wall, post photos, become our 'friend'. Find us by clicking the Facebook link at the bottom of the mgoi.ca home page, or enter Master Gardeners of Ontario in the facebook.com Search Box.

4th Annual Summer Workshop

Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc.

Saturday July 16 and Sunday July 17
Niagara Parks School of Horticulture

Darrell Bley - Pruning Shrubs and Vines

(Thinning, rejuvenation, coppicing and feather pruning will be covered and the plant's reaction to the various types of pruning)

Bring your own secateurs

Charles Hunter – Water Features in the Garden

(Propagation, maintenance and the cultural requirements for these special plants will be discussed. Soil science will also be introduced, first as applying to aquatic plants and then a general overview for promoting healthy soil in the garden.)

Fee \$250 (this covers all breaks, lunch on both days and aquatic plants)

Please note: we need a minimum of 20 participants to go forward with the workshop

Look for further details at www.mgoi.ca

Details of accommodation have been made available in previous e-mails, but if you would like to receive them again, please contact me. The Master Gardeners of Niagara have also offered to host out-of-town members, and if you would like to take advantage of these offers, again, please let me know and I will connect you with your host. For further information or for registration forms, please contact June Streadwick at streadwick@sympatico.ca. Don't forget, by attending the M.G.O.I. Summer Workshop, you will earn your annual Continuing Education Units. MGOI will rebate \$50 to MGs attending the workshop.