



*Master Gardeners of Ontario Newsletter*

# Inside

# MGOI

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Director of North Region:	Gail Cocker, Simcoe County
Director of South & West Region:	Lynne Goulet-Smith, Grand Erie
Advisor to the Board:	Rhonda Grein, Waterloo Region

## **Committee Members**

Webmaster: Sabine Behnk, Waterloo [sabine.behnk@icloud.com](mailto:sabine.behnk@icloud.com)  
Newsletter Editor: Isabel Belanger, Halton [newsletter@mgoi.ca](mailto:newsletter@mgoi.ca)  
Membership Database, Exams & Certificates: MJ Pilgrim, Peterborough [database@mgoi.ca](mailto:database@mgoi.ca)  
Badges & Pins: Lois Johnson, Niagara [supplies@mgoi.ca](mailto:supplies@mgoi.ca)  
MGOI Wear: Lynn Goulet-Smith, Grand Erie  
Twitter: Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County  
Facebook: Claudette Sims, Halton & Cathy Kavassalis, Halton  
Manager, MG Participation in the CNE & RWF: Kate Sault, Halton

**February 2026**

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

**Editor: Isabel Belanger, Halton**

## **Inside This Issue**

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- Call for Newsletter Working Group
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- Upcoming Events
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### **MGOI**

- Board Vacancy: VP

### **Of Interest**

- Check out Terrestrial Invasives on YouTube – from the recent conference [https://www.youtube.com/live/1rUKu\\_HBTgU?t=1145s](https://www.youtube.com/live/1rUKu_HBTgU?t=1145s)

*Welcome to the February edition of Inside MGOI, the Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc. (MGOI) newsletter. Our goal is to be a voice for Master Gardeners. As a venue for providing insights and the inside scoop from MGOI Board & Committee members, it also features updates from the 28 Master Gardener groups throughout Ontario, including member milestones, group projects and activities, short member profiles, and upcoming events such as webinars/conferences/technical updates—essentially anything about the functioning and happenings of our groups and our members. Please feel free to submit pictures—they are most welcome!*

*This newsletter has been in its current iteration for over a decade and is looking for fresh ideas and inspiration for meaningful change. Contributions may be made at any time to these coordinates:*

*Isabel Belanger, Newsletter Editor, [newsletter@mgoi.ca](mailto:newsletter@mgoi.ca).*

## Milestones

### London Middlesex Master Gardeners

#### Swearing-in of the New Executive, 2026



*The 2026 Executive being sworn in by our longest-serving member Eva Norman-Vestergaard (left). From left to right, past Coordinator Sandra Elfman, Treasurer Lynne Campbell, new Coordinator Pat Girard, Secretary Heather Kamps*

Sandra Elfman was our steadfast Coordinator for the last four years, from 2022-2025. Sandra had this to say:

This is my fourth and final year as Coordinator and I must say it's been a privilege to work with everyone during these past four years. So much has gone on since 2022! The best part of this position is meeting all the members, not only from this group but from our groups across Ontario. I'm so proud of our group as we continue to lead the way on many aspects of how the group is managed and the work we do in the community. We all should be proud too.

Our new Coordinator is Pat Girard. When asked what motivated him to take this role, he said:

"I was offered the opportunity to step up and take over the coordinator reigns from Sandra Elfman, who has done an amazing job for the past four years. With the support of Sandra and the rest of the team, we will work through our Mission Statement, educating home gardeners with practical, ecological, science-based gardening and plant advice. I hope to increase inclusivity and participation within our local group by promoting a greater sense of belonging through mentorship and community events."



### Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

#### New Master Gardener in Training

Matt Morin

Welcome Matt to the class of 2026!



### Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners

#### Master Gardener Status Achieved

Frances Leung



Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners' congratulate our Frances Leung on achieving MG status! Frances joined us in 2023 and has been an active and inspiring member since that time. She currently serves on our coordinating committee, has contributed to our catalogue of presentations and has an amazing hidden talent related to pipe cleaner plants and animals!



## CCIPR (Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation)—A MGOI Partner



### Innovation Award

Congratulations to MGs Claudette Sims and Cathy Kavassilis!

The CCIPR initiative, championed by Claudette and Cathy, has been recognized with an Innovation Award at the 2026 Annual **Invasive Species Centre** Forum. In Cathy's words, "The *Innovation Award* recognizes efforts that have moved a creative idea to a practical reality, transforming invasive species prevention and management in Canada through substantive and enduring outcomes.

We hope this recognition brings greater attention to the fact that the horticultural trade remains the primary pathway for the introduction and spread of invasive plants in Canada — and to the urgent need for better screening, stronger regulation, clear labelling, and responsible plant choices across the nursery and garden sectors.

Most of all, we hope this moment encourages continued collaboration — because real progress happens when we work together."

Check out Cathy's speech at the forum, 'Gardens That Give Back':

[https://www.youtube.com/live/1rUKu\\_HBTgU?t=1145s](https://www.youtube.com/live/1rUKu_HBTgU?t=1145s)

Link to the 2026 Invasive Species Forum, February 17-19:  
<https://www.invasivespeciescentre.ca/events/invasive-species-forum/>

Link to the CCIPR website:  
<https://ccipr.ca/>

The CCIPR Facebook page is here:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1503444570040194>



## We Need Your Help!

MGOI is run for and by Master Gardeners. If you would like to contribute, in a big way, by joining the board in the future or in a smaller way by helping with a special project, please let us know. You can reach out to your group coordinator or directly to me at [President@MGOI.ca](mailto:President@MGOI.ca).

Thank you.

*Anne Craig (Peterborough & Area)  
President, MGOI*

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### Board Vacancy—Vice President (VP)

*The VP Position is currently vacant. MGOI is looking for 1 or 2 VPs to support the President.*



<https://www.etsv.com/mar ket/funny vice president>

### The position entails:

- *Supporting and working closely with the President*
- *Monitoring the progress of the organization's goals and objectives*
- *Reviewing information submitted in Annual Reviews and in the Annual Report to recognize achievements, share best practices, and identify potential areas of concern*
- *Assisting Directors in resolving potential areas of concern, potentially bringing them to the attention of the Board of Directors*
- *Working with the Director of Membership and others to fill vacant Board positions*
- *Assuming the duties of the President in her absence; succeeds the President*



## Newsletter Working Group

We are still looking to expand the newsletter working group. If you are interested in joining a brainstorming session, or even just auditing a first meeting, please let me know and I will add your name to the meeting list. Here are some questions / ideas to ponder:

- What do you see as the function of the NL?
- Can it be made more relevant? How?
- Where do you see the NL going?
- What are the changes you would like to see?
- What should the look and feel be?
- What should the format be?
- How often do you want to read the NL?
- How long should it be?
- How often should it go out?
- Content – what should it include?
  - Annual TOCs?
- Name change –is there a better name?

Structure / content / delivery are all up for review. Sections of the newsletter – what headings s/b included? Anything else? One interested party has suggested updates re: the work of CCIPR—check out the announcement, above.

We are looking for any and all ideas, all the way down to logistics such as how often to publish, content, focus, layout, TOCs, length, etc.

Other ideas:

- Annual content list, i.e. what to expect vis-à-vis topics a year in advance.
- A move to article-based.
- A vehicle for: exchange of best practices.

If you are interested, please contact me at:  
[newsletter@mgoi.ca](mailto:newsletter@mgoi.ca).

Thankyou. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Isabel Belanger, Editor*



## Oak Wilt Disease / Spotted Lanternfly

Although the prime season for **Oak Wilt Disease** is over for another year, you can learn more about oak wilt at: [ontario.ca/page/oak-wilt](http://ontario.ca/page/oak-wilt).

Visit Facebook at:

[#ScienceON](#) [#InvasiveSpecies](#) [#ForestResearch](#)  
[#ForestHealth](#).

Canada's oak wilt response framework is available through the CFIA:

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/plant-health/invasive-species/plant-diseases/oak-wilt/response-framework>

For information on **Spotted Lanternfly** please visit:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/spotted-lanternfly-prevention-practices-producers>

<https://inspection.canada.ca/en/plant-health/invasive-pests-and-plants/insects/spotted-lanternfly>



# Master Gardeners Out & About

## Projects & Events

### Halton Master Gardeners

**Name: Seedy Saturday, February 7<sup>th</sup>**

*by MG Carol Tucks-Riggs*

**Details:** It was a wonderfully successful day for the start of the gardening season when MGs of Halton Region volunteered at the Hamilton Central Library for Seedy Saturday hosted by Green Venture. Halton MGs peopled 9 tables in all: the 7-table seed swap for the event, the MG Advice table, as well as the gardening book sale table.

Thousands of seed packs prepared in advance were supplemented by the repackaging team within the seed swap tables, labelling and packing thousands more envelopes. The event included 30+ vendors, a children's play area, and the main seed swap area. **The Halton Master Gardener team at the event (pictures follow):** Not pictured: Carol Tuck-Riggs, Isabel Belanger, Lynn Courtney, and Denise Cousson

**A big thank you to MGs Carol Tuck-Riggs and Janet Padiak** for organizing a great day marking the start of spring!



*Left to right: MGs Jenny Blake, Allyn Walsh, Jenn Dittrich from the Advice table*



*MG Diane Best at the seed swap area; Kate in the background, right*



*L to R: Green Venture's Kattie, MG Judith Desembrana, and Green Venture's Abi, (re)packaging the patrons' dropped seeds. Kate Sault with Janet Padiak in the background.*



*Halton Coordinator Kate Sault (middle); MG Seedy organizer Janet Padiak (right) helping a patron (left) in the seed swap area*



*Kirsten McCarthy at the book sale table: MG salesperson extraordinaire*



*Seed swap area. In and around the interior of the tables from the left: MG Judith Desembrana, Kattie (Green Ventures), MG Diane Best, and MG Seedy organizer - Janet Padiak.*



## Niagara Master Gardeners

### Name: Seedy Saturday

**Details:** The Niagara MGs hosted another fun Seedy Saturday event on Feb. 14 at the Meridian Community Centre in Fonthill. The weather cooperated and we had over 600 eager attendees. There was lots of excitement about seed starting and the season ahead.



Mariève Sabourin was looking after the display for Gaia Organic Seeds, who offered a fantastic seed selection.

Gaia Organic Seeds has been in business for six years and is based in Ottawa. They are at [gaiaorganics.ca](http://gaiaorganics.ca).



The seed-sale tables were very busy. They were manned by MGs and some volunteers from the Pelham Garden Club.



Joanna Paul, Xerces Society ambassador, answered questions at the group's very interesting booth.

The Xerces Society is an international, nonprofit organization that works at protecting invertebrates and their habitats. It is a science-based organization, with programs that include pollinator conservation and reducing pesticide use.



Lois LaCroix, past president of the Pelham Garden Club, was there to answer questions about the group, which has 175 members, and is holding a Plant Sale on May 16 at Fonthill United Church. For info: [pelhamgardenclub.ca](http://pelhamgardenclub.ca)



Lora Rode, member of Friends of Malcolmson Eco-Park, helped out at their booth.



Malcomson Eco-Park borders the Welland Canal at Lake Ontario. It is an oasis of green space dedicated to nature and community. They are holding their big native plant sale on May 23<sup>rd</sup> from 9-1. Here is their poster with info.



**Name: Children’s Garden at Niagara Parks,  
February MG Meet**

**Details:** Last month MGs of Niagara had a sneak peek at the Children’s Garden that is being developed at Niagara Parks. “The garden is scheduled to open in summer of 2028 and will be located on four acres next to the Butterfly Conservatory,” said Deborah Whitehouse, Niagara Parks Foundation\* chair, who presented at our February meeting.

In this era of addictive screens and mental health challenges affecting so many children and their families, Deborah said the Children’s Garden will aim to encourage physical health, curiosity and exploration, creativity, focus, teamwork and problem solving among other worthy goals. Fundraising is ongoing, and shovels should hit the ground later this year.

*\*The Niagara Parks Foundation is a registered charity that supports Niagara Parks in its stewardship initiatives through funding, research and public education*



Rendering, Tree Top Walk

Rendering shows the proposed Tree Top Walk, an accessible causeway that will offer an elevated view of the tree canopy and the species it supports.



Rendering, The Gorge

This rendering shows The Gorge, which will showcase geological features of the Niagara Gorge and Escarpment and invite children to climb and explore.



**Legend**

- |                 |                |                     |                   |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. The Entrance | 4. Little Lake | 7. Tree Top Walk    | 10. The Labyrinth |
| 2. The Cabin    | 5. Big Bridge  | 8. The Rapids       | 11. The Gorge     |
| 3. Top Rock     | 6. Root Zone   | 9. Learning Commons | 12. The Hive      |

This map shows other features, which will include a bridge over ‘Little Lake’ that will allow kids to see plant and animal life in watery eco systems; a Learning Commons for educational programming year-round; a Labyrinth; and The Hive, a whimsical play space where children will learn about insects and pollinators.



**Lanark County Master Gardeners**

**Name: 2026 series of Advice Clinics Prep**

**Details:** Lanark County Master Gardeners have been in full preparation mode for our 2026 series of Advice Clinics, presentations and summer training events.



In January, we produced new brochures to hand out at our advice clinics at 3 local Seedy events, our Plant Sale in May, and at our 3 Farmers Markets that we attend on a biweekly basis.

In February, we produced banners to be used at these events. While we have many visitors at these events, we hope to attract even more with our increased presence.



Lanark's banner

At our February meeting, we had Ottawa Master Gardener, Host of CBC's Ontario wide Gardening Show and Owner of Green Thumb Gardening Centre in Ottawa, Mary Shearman Reid present to us on Growing Fruits. Mary is full of information and is an interesting and informative speaker. She seems to remember every plant ever sold to a member of our group and I believe the public.

## Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

### Name: Talks

**Details:** MGOC delivered reciprocal presentations with Halton Region Master Gardeners. Halton's Cathy Kavassalis spoke on "Gardening by Nature's Clock: Phenology in a Changing Climate" to Ottawa-Carleton gardeners on September 25, 2025, via Zoom, and MGOCs Lee Ann Smith delivered "Wildscaping: Wild Planting in a Strong Design" to Halton MGs via Zoom on February 4, 2026. A very informative and enjoyable exchange.

In addition, MG Mary Reid presented on "Containers and Small Gardens" at the Montgomery Legion in downtown Ottawa on February 10. That same day, MG Judith Cox spoke about "Gardens in Smaller Spaces" to the West Carleton Garden Club and Horticultural Society. And on February 19, MG Rebecca Last presented on "The Edible Garden" to the Nepean Horticultural Society.

## Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners

### Name: Winter Activities

**Details:** LSS can be found at three different Seedy Saturday events in March: Richmond Hill Central Library; Pefferlaw; and Bradford. Big thanks to our committed volunteers who keep us able to connect with our community so consistently!

Our spring schedule continues to expand with houseplant and spring planter workshops, seed starting demonstrations, the Town of Aurora's annual Easterpalooza event, and many other presentations to both new and long-time community partners.

The Lake Simcoe South heirloom tomato team is prepping to start our seeds for our annual sale. Over sixty varieties of plants are available this year, and we are offering a presale to allow customers to choose exactly which varieties they desire. Plants will also be offered at select local markets in spring, just in time to get them in the ground.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

#### Name: 2026 Friends of the Farm and MGOC Lecture Series

#### Dates:

March 3	April 14
March 17	April 28
March 31	

**Details & Topics:** Based on last year's feedback, the five lectures in 2026 (March-April) will explore Edibles. Topics include Integrated Pest Management, Nurturing a Food Forest, Cold Frames and Cold Crops, Growing Unusual Edibles and Tiny Gardens, and Tiny Gardens, Big Harvest.

**Cost:** Members: \$10 per lecture or \$45 entire series  
Non-members: \$12 per lecture or \$55 entire series

**Registration:** <https://friendsofthefarm.ca/fcef-annual-events/master-gardener-lectures/2026-master-gardener-lectures/>



REGISTER TODAY!  
www.friendsofthefarm.ca

**What's Bugging You? Integrated Pest Management for your Garden**  
With Master Gardener EP Power  
March 3rd, 2026

**Nurturing Your Own Food Forest**  
With Master Gardeners  
Andrea Knight & Angelina Singon  
March 17th, 2026

**Cold Frames & Cold Crops: Extending the Season**  
With Master Gardener  
Odetta McIntyre  
March 31st, 2026

**Growing Unusual Edibles: Successes, Failures & Learnings**  
With Master Gardener  
Claire McCaughey  
April 14th, 2026

**Tiny Gardens Big Harvest**  
With Master Gardener Judith Cox  
April 28th, 2026

2026 FRIENDS OF THE FARM LECTURE SERIES:  
Members: \$10 per lecture or \$45 entire Series  
Non-members: \$12 per lecture or \$55 Entire series

Presented by:  
Friends of the Central Experimental Farm & Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

## Grey County Master Gardeners



**Name: "Practical climate resilience for gardeners"**

**Details:** March 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:00am: our final webinar.

Join Master Gardeners Jennifer Deeks and Jenna Vandermeij as they provide the home gardener with practical techniques for growing more resilient plants in the face of changes in precipitation patterns, increased probability of drought and extreme weather events, and incoming pests & diseases.

**Registration:** Register here under "Events":

<https://www.greycountymastergardeners.ca/events>. We look forward to you joining us!

## Peterborough Master Gardeners



**Saturday April 25, 2026**



Westdale United Church  
1509 Sherbrooke St, Peterborough, ON  
9:30am to 3pm (estimate)

**Date & Time:** Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup>; 9:30am to 3:00pm

**Location:** Westdale United Church, 1509 Sherbrooke St., Peterborough ON

**Details:** Join us for the day—includes a choice of 4 seminars, lunch and door prizes

**Cost:** early bird \$60.; after April 1<sup>st</sup> \$75.

**Registration & Further Details:**

<https://peterboroughmastergardeners.com/a-day-for-gardeners-2026/>

<p>Four Seminars, lunch &amp; door prizes</p> <p>Cost: \$60 early bird \$75 after Apr 1</p> <p>Come join us for a fun day of learning, lunch and friendship!</p>	<p><b>Session 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Healthy Parks, Healthy People with Anne Craig OR</li> <li>❖ Gardens that BUZZ: Designing with Native Plants for Beauty and Life by Silvia Strobl</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 2:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Seasonal Gardening for Birds with Thom Luloff OR</li> <li>❖ Rose Care: A Beginner Guide with Jennifer Guertin</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Session 3:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Resilient Landscaping for Community, Humans, and Food Webs with Deanna Hergert OR</li> <li>❖ 2 Mini sessions: <b>Unusual Culinary Herbs</b> with Carol Ireland AND <b>Seeds: Heritage vs Heirloom vs GMO</b> with Jillian Bishop</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Plenary:</b> Growing Well: How Gardening supports Longevity, Health and Happiness with Mary-Jane Pilgrim</p>

## Etobicoke Master Gardeners

**Date & Time of 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Lecture:** Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 7pm-9pm. Main glass doors open at 6:40pm.

**Topic:** The Wonder of Trees – Pruning, an Exercise in Thought and Consideration with Todd Irvine.

**Date & Time of 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Lecture:** Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>

**Topic:** Gardening on the Edge – Adapting You and Your Garden to Climate Change with Frank Kershaw.

**Location:** Kingsway Lambton United Church, 85 The Kingsway, Toronto, Main Door. Street parking available.

**Admission:** by donation/pwyc

2026 **ETOBICOKE** WINTER LECTURE SERIES

KINGSWAY LAMBTON UNITED CHURCH  
85 The Kingsway, Etobicoke, MBX 2T6  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm (doors open 6:40pm)

ROMANTIC GARDENS FOR THE DREAMER  
Wednesday February 18  
THE WONDER OF TREES - PRUNING, AN EXERCISE IN THOUGHT & CONSIDERATION

Tuesday March 17  
GARDENING ON THE EDGE - ADAPTING YOU AND YOUR GARDEN TO CLIMATE WARMING

Tuesday April 14



## Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)

### CFIA Digital Toolkit

The CFIA is looking for help and expertise to engage Canadians on how we can successfully keep Canada's natural landscape, bountiful plants, and beautiful gardens healthy and protected against the threat of invasive species. The CFIA has developed a user-friendly [digital toolkit](#) full of outreach materials in both English and French, including posters, social media messaging and images, and more! Please use these and share freely.

This toolkit includes extensive material on invasive species. Feel free to bug us if you have any questions or would like to discuss opportunities to work together! Please contact Maria Kubacki at the following coordinates:

#### ***Maria Kubacki, Manager / Gestionnaire***

Marketing and partnerships / Marketing et partenariats  
Communications and Public Affairs Branch / Direction générale des communications et affaires publiques  
Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments  
Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada  
**343-542-3856 / [Maria.kubacki@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:Maria.kubacki@inspection.gc.ca)**

### CFIA Seeds Alert

#### **Canadians are urged to connect with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) before sending seeds abroad.**

As Canada's plant health regulator, the CFIA plays an important role in making sure seeds from Canada meet internationally agreed upon regulations. There have been notifications of non-compliance from foreign countries about seeds exported from Canada without proper phytosanitary (plant health) certification.

Seeds can potentially be invasive in some countries or spread plant diseases or other pests. Not meeting requirements has consequences such as the destination country destroying the seeds and issuing Canada a notice of non-compliance. All seeds, including those in small packets for gardeners, must comply with the import requirements of the destination country.

Please share this information with the Canadian public to increase awareness of the important steps to take when shipping or exporting seeds to protect international plant resources, our economy and the environment.

The CFIA has spokespeople available for interviews, people who are experts in plant health imports and exports. CFIA experts are also willing to write and submit a piece if that is of interest. Please contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to hearing from you. Media Relations, Canadian Food Inspection Agency / Government of Canada: [cfia.media.acia@inspection.gc.ca](mailto:cfia.media.acia@inspection.gc.ca)  
Tel: 613-773-6600

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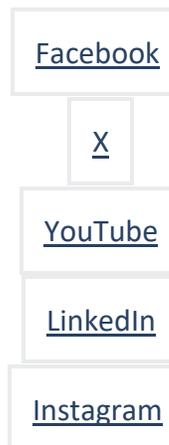


Photo: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/plant-health/seeds/shipping-and-exporting-seeds-canada>

