

CROSS POLLINATION

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



2017 Perennial Plant of the Year

With butterfly conservation a current concern, the Perennial Plant Association has named *Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) as 2017's plant of the year.

Its intense orange flowers and more compact habit may make this long-flowering, long-lived perennial more suitable than other milkweeds for urban gardeners.

A. tuberosa was also called **pleurisy root** in the past because of its common use to treat pleurisy and respiratory ailments.



Asclepias tuberosa

February
2017

Seedy Saturday reminder

Green Venture and Environment Hamilton present another edition of **Seedy Saturday**:

- 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
- **Saturday, 4 February 2017**
- McQuesten Urban Farm, 785 Britannia Ave., Hamilton ON (St Helen's Centre @ McQuesten)

Seedy Saturday brings together a community of like-minded vendors, environmental groups, and local organizations. The goal is to host the community seed exchange, promote sustainable and local products and practices, and share knowledge through workshops and presentations.

Workshop Schedule

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|----------|---|
| 10:00 am | Backyard Chickens |
| 11:00 am | Growing Unusual Things & Planning the Seed-Saving Garden |
| 12:00 pm | (a) Farming at McQuesten
(b) RBG – Kids in the Garden |
| 1:00 pm | (a) Sprouts and Microgreens
(b) Medicinal Herb Gardening |
| 2:00 pm | (a) Urban Homesteading
(b) Pruning Fruit Trees |

For the full agenda, see:

greenventure.ca/community/events/seedsaturday/



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Awesome Herbs for Bees, Benevolence, and Beauty

Excerpted from *The Radicle*, January 2017

Most people are aware that bee populations around the world are in drastic decline due to large-scale industrial agriculture practices. By growing some of the perennial herbs that bees love most, you can help maintain healthy populations, encourage biodiversity, and improve the pollination of your crops. **Plus** reap culinary and medicinal rewards for yourself!

Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*) plants make arresting statements in gardens. They are biennials or short-lived perennials, sometimes lasting 3-4 years. Huge ball flowers tower over the plant and are loaded with bees in summer. The stems and seeds are candied for cough drops. Use the aromatic licorice-flavoured leaves in salads, or cooked with fish or chicken, or dried for tea.

Bronze Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) A glorious architectural plant with profuse bronze-coloured foliage. Licorice-flavoured leaves and seeds are great for tea. Short-lived perennial.

Lemon Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) Cherished by bees & butterflies, as well as cats. Hardy perennial, growing to 1m tall. Excellent tea plant with a pleasant lemon/minty flavour. Used fresh or dried for its calming effect and to help soothe sinuses, sinus headaches and colds.

Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) Wonderful greens for soups, salads and sandwiches. The only species of *Allium* native to both New and Old Worlds. Rarely do you see chive flowers without bees on them.

Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) Hardy perennial growing up to 1m. Bright golden yellow flower heads bloom mid to late summer. Infusion of flowering tops used for kidney and bladder disorders.

Greek Oregano (*Origanum vulgare hirtum*) Truly perennial, truly Greek oregano which spreads to form a dense, architectural cluster with delicate flowers. The plant has a very pungent, penetrating smell. Great aromatic flavouring for cooked foods and salads.

Munstead Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) The classic compact variety of English lavender. Extremely fragrant spikes of edible blue flowers. Cold hardy and drought tolerant. Great insect and bee attracter, with extremely fragrant spikes of edible bluish flowers. [Mash them into butter with blueberry preserves and spread on warm scones! –HC]

Wood Germander (*Teucrium scorodonia*) A tea plant, very popular in Scotland, that grows into a 2-3 foot bush, topped with spikes of yellow flowers. Adored by bees. Also known as Wood Sage or Garlic Sage, the tea has been used medicinally as a tonic and to fight colds. An ideal plant for poor soils, hillsides and an orchard companion. Very drought tolerant once established.

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February's List

- Winter pruning for trees such as apple, oak, and conifers.
- Keep bird feeders topped up – build a bird house for the spring.
- Review your 2016 garden pics. They'll remind you of your triumphs & tragedies, and help you plan an even better 2017.
- Check out the seed catalogues – why not try a new supplier this year? And what will you try planting for the first time this year?
- Read. What are you reading now? *[I'm reading **Grow For Flavour** by the Royal Horticultural Society's James Wong, with tips & tricks to supercharge the flavour of homegrown harvests. -HC]*



@HaltonMGs

Donna Parker manages our Twitter account, and wants to remind us of the ways we can put it to good use:



I know that many of you belong to Horticultural Societies, that have events scheduled over the next few months, and many have personal speaking engagements or workshops planned.

I'd be happy to publicize them on the MG Twitter account. Just send me an email with some basic info (date, time, topic, location) and/or a photo or web link if you have them.

The information gets picked up and re-tweeted to a fairly broad audience of people interested in gardening-related topics.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Donna P

You've noticed that Cross Pollination has returned after a lengthy hiatus. A new sign-up sheet will be circulated for members to share with us in future newsletters their wisdom and interests – even if only tangentially related to gardening!

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HaltonMasterGardeners.wordpress.com