

# Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



April  
2019

## April Garden 'To Do List'

- ❑ **Insect Friendly Clean up** - Wait until daytime temperatures are in the 10's C as many beneficial insects are sleeping in the leaf litter. If you're cleaning up perennial beds, consider just shortening stalks, instead of removing them completely. This will help protect any native bees who may have used them for shelter. For detailed info on insect friendly spring clean up read [Spring Clean up done RIGHT](#) from Savvy Gardening.
- ❑ **Houseplants** - Spring is a great time to transplant pot bound plants. Step by step guide to [repotting here!](#)
- ❑ **Lavender**- When new growth starts to appear, use secateurs to prune back dead or overgrown stems to a vigorous bud. More info [here](#).
- ❑ **Prune** shrubs that DON'T flower in spring as needed. Use clean, sharp tools. Cut back branches to just above another branch or a bud. Remove dead, damaged, diseased wood. **Keep a sharp eye out for cocoons and chrysalises when pruning.**
- ❑ **Lawn** -rake leaves or debris only if walking on the lawn leaves NO footprints.
- ❑ **Dahlia, calla, canna etc.** - If tubers start to sprout, you can pot them up and grow them in your sunniest window. Otherwise, continue to check them weekly. Pot up bulbs from late April to May.
- ❑ **Seeds** - Start hardy annuals and vegetables indoors for mid to late May planting. Seed peas, spinach, lettuce, beets, sweetpeas, marigold, pansy and calendula directly in the garden as soon as the ground can be worked.
- ❑ **Apply** dormant oil sprays and/or lime sulphur before bud break and when temperatures permit for control of scale and mites as needed. Follow label directions carefully. Proper sanitation (removing leaves/fruit) can also reduce pests and disease.
- ❑ **Spring bulbs** - Sprinkle blood meal or chicken manure pellets around emerging tulips to help deter deer and squirrel grazing.
- ❑ **Divide** or transplant perennials as growth resumes.
- ❑ **Bird houses** - Put out nesting materials for birds. Never use dryer lint for birds. Info about [nesting materials here](#).

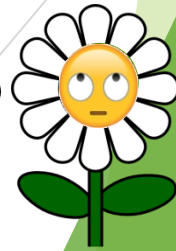


Watch for cocoons when pruning or cleaning up the garden. I think this is a polyphemus moth cocoon on a spruce tree. Hopefully we'll have a photo of the adult in our May newsletter!

If April showers  
bring May  
flowers...  
what do May  
flowers bring?



Pilgrims!



Sigh....

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## From Seeds to Garden Transplants Part 3 of 5 Part Series

*By David Marshall MG*



David's Pond Garden

Last month we talked about sowing your seeds and a bit about transplanting them to space them out for growing on. This month we will go into transplanting in more detail, and talk about preparing them for planting in the garden in May and also about planting some cold tolerant vegetable seeds directly in the garden.

First, a few definitions. A flat is the plastic tray about 21 inches by 10.5 inches which holds the cell packs. The cell packs hold the transplanted seedlings and come in sheets of eight, ten or twelve cell packs to fill a flat and may be divided into four individual cells or may not be divided at all. Retailers usually sell plants in the four cell, twelve packs to a flat configuration because they use less soil, but it tends to crowd the roots. Since I have lots of grow lights, I usually use the eight packs to a flat or the undivided twelve packs to a flat because they hold more soil and allow better root spread.



Plastic tray for cell packs with assorted cell pack sizes & types



Marigolds ready for transplanting



Impatiens 1 week after transplanting

Seeds may take anything from four days to four weeks or more to germinate and grow at different rates so they will not all be ready to transplant at the same time. They are ready when they are about one to one and a half inches high and can be handled by a leaf, not a stem-leaves can regrow, but stems can't. However, if you sowed the seeds too thickly, you may have to transplant earlier to avoid overcrowding.

Fill your cell packs with moist potting soil (I use two thirds soilless mix and one-third sieved home-made compost) and compress it lightly. If you don't have home-made compost, don't worry about it. Just use straight potting soil. Most commercial compost or manures are too lumpy and cannot be sieved finely enough.

Continued ...



The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies. - Gertrude Jekyll



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### Starting seeds - part 3 cont'd

Loosen a small clump of seedlings using your transplanting tool (a tongue depressor sharpened at one end to a quarter of an inch wide, a Popsicle stick, or a teaspoon handle work well.) Use the tool to make a hole in a cell. Pick up a seedling by a leaf. Lower the roots into the hole, press the soil down and repeat ad infinitum! If the plants are a variety which grows in a clump, such as alyssum or lobelia, pick up and plant four or five seedlings together. Fertilize with a balanced soluble fertilizer mixed at half strength and put them back under the lights.

Around the end of April or early May, it is time to acclimatize your plants to the outdoor sun, which is much more intense than grow lights, and can burn the leaves if not done gradually. (This process is also called 'hardening off.')

Put the flats outside in a shady area for a few days, then in an area protected from the sun between about 11 am to 4 pm for a few days, then into full sun. If frost is forecast move the flats indoors overnight. After a couple of weeks you are ready to plant in the garden.

### Cold Hardy Crops

If you grow vegetables, you can plant direct seeded cold hardy crops as soon as the soil has warmed up a bit and can be worked. These include peas, broad beans, beets, carrots, parsnips, lettuce, radish, spinach, swiss chard and kale.



### Warm Season Crops

Warm season crops such as green and pole beans, squash, melons, corn, and cucumbers need the soil and weather to be warmer. Tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower are best started under your lights.



Call me if you have any questions:  
David Marshall  
905 827 2564

Next month we will talk about starting some perennial flowers from seed, dividing large perennials and taking cuttings from perennials and shrubs.





April 2019

### NEW Invasive Plant List Southern Ontario

#### Two **Invasive** - One **Alert**

by Janet Mackey - MG

Invasive plants are always non-native plants, that have been known to escape gardens and can outcompete native species, seriously reducing bio-diversity of both plant and animal species, including pollinators and birds. The issue of invasive plants can be controversial, complex & emotional. All of these have been spotted locally and are invading our natural spaces.

Watch for these invaders in our forests and parks:

#### **INVASIVE** Japanese Barberry - *Barberis thumbergii*

- ❖ Native to Japan & Asia
- ❖ ID- thorns along branches, yellow flowers in spring, followed by red berries which persist
- ❖ Hybridizes with Common Barberry which is on the [noxious weed list](#) of Ontario and our native barberry
- ❖ Barberries are prolific seed producers and have germination rates as high as ninety percent.
- ❖ "I've frequently spotted them in Dundas Valley; capable of thriving in undisturbed forests." (Janet)



#### **INVASIVE** Miscanthus Grasses - *Miscanthus sinensis* M. *sacchariflorus*

- ❖ Native to Asia and Africa
- ❖ Also known as Porcupine Grass, Zebra Grass, Silver Grass, Maiden Grass
- ❖ ID -grows in dense clumps 2 m high; feathery flowers persist in winter as seed heads
- ❖ Spreads by rhizomes and seeds
- ❖ Spotted on Trafalgar Rd between Britannia and Lower Base Line; corner of Guelph Line/Limestone Road; clumps sat for decades until there was a warm winter, then seeds blew and spread



#### **Alert (potentially invasive)** Burning Bush/Winged Euonymus - *Euonymus alatus/alata*

- ❖ Native to China, Japan, Korea
- ❖ ID- striking cork-like strips that form the outer ridge of this plant's branches; green ovate leaves turning bright red in fall; reddish berries
- ❖ Called 'one of the most hated plants in America' because it is both invasive and poisonous
- ❖ "I recently spotted it invading the forest understory in High Park, Toronto". (Janet)



Continued on next page...



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## Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners

Invasive Species Alert cont'd

### How can I help?

- ❖ Say NO to invasive plants & have a plan to remove them from your garden. We know this may be difficult, but it is essential to preserve our environment.
- ❖ Do not dispose of invasive plants in your green bin, brown yard-waste bag or compost. To prevent further spread, put out with city waste.
- ❖ Select great native plant alternatives from the [Grow Me Instead](#) booklet or a native plant supplier.
- ❖ Keep pets on leash in natural areas. They can inadvertently spread invasive plants by transferring seeds that get trapped in their coats, distributing them to new areas
- ❖ More information

- ❖ [Ontario Invasive Species Awareness Program](#)
- ❖ Credit Valley Conservation: [Invasive Plant Priority List](#)
- ❖ Here are some [Native Plant Sources in/around Halton](#)



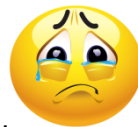
*Gardening Drama*

## Gardening Blunders: We Cry, We Laugh

*Gardening can be dramatic even for the most experienced among us. This month, we have 2 'blunders' to share with you. Lessons lived and learned.*

#1: We had a big new empty property which needed plant material. I was given lots of "vigorous growing" plants that would quickly fill in large areas by friends-e.g. English ivy, periwinkle, goutweed. I didn't know then that

these are all [invasive plants](#) and should never be planted. They may have been "free" but they've cost me a lot in time and effort to remove. Even worse, although I've worked hard to eliminate them from MY garden, the ones that escaped into the neighbour's yard come back to haunt me each year.



#2 Twenty Nine years ago when we moved into our house, we built a pergola over our small, sunny raised patio leading from our family room. A friend had just bought a wisteria plant for her patio. It looked so small as it was growing (in a very shady area) so I liked it but figured I would need more than one to cover our area. I bought 4, one for each corner! Needless to say, they all loved the spots and it took a huge amount of pruning every year until I finally deliberately killed off two of them and the third one probably just died of fright. I now only have one left and it is enough to keep in control.



*Hmmm, seems these two blunders share some common ground. Look for more blunders from our Master Gardeners next month and share a laugh with us!*



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## All About Groundcovers

By Liza Drozdov MGiT



Wild Ginger

Groundcovers can be useful and time saving plantings to incorporate into your garden design. Whether you plant them as a substitute for a lawn or to create an area of textural and visual interest in your garden, you will find they can be as valuable as they are varied. Any mass planting can qualify as a ground cover but by the term, we usually are referring to very low growing, even mat forming plants.

Often people think of growing a ground cover as a lawn substitute in a problem area where grass won't grow. That's not necessarily a great idea. If grass doesn't grow, it might be a clue that nothing else will either. Don't have unrealistic expectations. If the area is too difficult to grow a lawn -- because it's too dry, too shady, too wet or the trees have dense shallow roots -- it's very likely groundcovers won't grow happily there either.

However, if you are able to amend the soil and enrich it, you may be able to start some groundcovers. You can help them thrive by ensuring you water and weed well until they get established and top dress annually with compost. Also, if you can prune the tree to allow for more light to penetrate to the ground, it will help your groundcovers establish.



Moss phlox *Phlox subulata*

A dense, healthy carpet of groundcover is not only attractive, it will suppress weed growth and help preserve underlying soil from erosion and run-off. You don't need to mass plant the same species: a mixed tapestry of several different ground covers can be exceptionally beautiful. Whether it's a mass planting of hostas, a carpet of moss phlox or wild strawberries, there is a ground cover suitable for most gardens.

### **Are groundcovers 'invasive'?**

Indeed a number of commonly planted groundcovers are now on the invasive plant list. Periwinkle, goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*) and English ivy should never be planted in your garden. Lily-of-the-valley is also now listed as an 'Alert Species' due to their potential for being invasive. And because even non-invasive groundcovers can be very aggressive in the garden, avoid planting them near a fence line where they can 'escape' into your neighbour's garden or adjoining a ravine or other natural area.

Continued ...

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Groundcovers cont'd

Luckily, there are a number of excellent native plant alternatives such as Wild Ginger, Running Euonymus, Foamflower, Wild Geranium, Creeping phlox (*P. stolonifera*).

### **Right Plant, Right Place**

Be sure you select the right ground cover for your needs. Is the site shady or sunny? Is it dry or moist? Do you want an evergreen groundcover or will a perennial one that dies down every year do? Will you ever need to walk on the groundcover? There are several groundcovers marketed as being resistant to foot traffic and unfortunately some have been oversold. They really do not bear up very well so buyer beware!



Mixed Groundcovers



Mixed sedum



Creeping phlox (*P. stolonifera*) growing under a walnut tree in MG Patty King's garden



First celebrated in 1970, **Earth Day** now includes events in more than 193 countries, which are now coordinated globally by the **Earth Day Network**.

To focus attention on critical issues, recent Earth Days have chosen a theme. The 2019 theme "**Protect our Species**" hopes to raise awareness about the increasing rate of extinction of millions of species.

### **Saving the World One Garden at a Time!**

- ❖ Reduce your lawn area in favour of native plants
- ❖ Plant native flowers to nourish pollinators
- ❖ Plant native trees to clean the air
- ❖ Plant butterfly host plants
- ❖ Plant native shrubs for birds
- ❖ Use water wisely
- ❖ Respect the Ontario cosmetic pesticide ban
- ❖ Keep housecats indoors
- ❖ Say NO to single use plastics which are killing our oceans and lakes



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### Magnificent Monarchs

*"Peaceful, uplifting, awe inspiring, unbelievable and a beautiful sight to see."*

Those are the words, Karen, a local reader of Cross Pollination used to describe her trip of a lifetime to see millions of migrating monarch butterflies as she stood "among [them] quietly and listened to them fluttering for hours."



The [El Rosario Butterfly Sanctuary](#) in the Michoacan area of Mexico is one of the winter nesting grounds for millions of monarch butterflies that migrate from the U.S. and Canada each year.



Following an easy trail to walk with normal running or hiking shoes, everyone is advised not to touch any butterfly even if it lands on you. "On a sunny day, the butterflies open their wings and gather everywhere so the trees look like dead leaves but there are really thousands of butterflies covering them." Pictures are encouraged and the protection of the species is emphasized.



Photos by Karen  
Text as told to  
Paula E.



As Karen says, it makes you really realize how important it is to plant the right plants in Canada to encourage growth of the monarch population.

"I advocate for this everywhere I go."

#### More information about Butterflies

- ❖ [Native Butterfly Host and Nectar Plants](#)
- ❖ [Planning your Butterfly Garden](#)
- ❖ [A Guide to Starting Milkweed From Seed](#)
- ❖ [Pollinator Plants of the Great Lakes Region - Dec. 2017 - Xerces Society](#)
- ❖ [Flutter, flutter, here come the butterflies of spring and summer!](#)



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"What's Growing On" featuring Halton Master Gardeners

Answering your  
**Gardening**  
Questions!



Who you  
calling a  
slug?

April 2019

**Oakville Lifestyle Home Show**  
weekend of April 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>

HMGs will be at the [Oakville Lifestyle Home](#) show answering garden questions. Stop by and say hello!

Glen Abbey Recreation Centre  
1415 Third Line, Oakville ON, L6M 3G2

**Halton Master Gardeners Meeting**  
Wednesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:15 p.m.

Stacey Hickman speaks on "Bugs, Slugs & other Critters"

- **Royal Botanical Gardens - Plains Road**
- Interested in joining? You are welcome to attend one of our meetings. Just let us know before hand at [haltonmastergardeners@gmail.com](mailto:haltonmastergardeners@gmail.com)



**Garden Hacks! Nifty Ideas to Make Your Gardening Easier & More Fun**

Have you ever wondered how to keep squirrels from eating your newly planted bulbs? Or how to store that crazy assortment of pots? How about growing potatoes so you can harvest as they grow? Learn this and more in this fun gardening presentation!

- Friday, May 17, 2019 at 2 PM - 3 PM
- Red Hill Library, 695 Queenston Rd, Hamilton
- Presenter: Claudette Sims



**Build it and They Will Come-Creating a Butterfly Haven in Your Garden**

Attracting butterflies is all about having the plants they need and no, that isn't only flowers. Find out which plants are best and how to choose them for your garden.

- Wednesday, June 12, 2019 at 1 PM - 2 PM
- Red Hill Library, 695 Queenston Rd, Hamilton
- Presenter: Claudette Sims

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“What’s Growing On” in Our Community



ROYAL  
BOTANICAL  
GARDENS



## Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society's Annual Dahlia Tuber Auction

- Monday April 15th
- [RBG Centre](#)

Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and auction begins at 7 p.m. Open to the public

If you're interested in adding dahlias to your garden, consider buying the 'single' petalled varieties (see photo above). They are preferred by our pollinators!



## Last Chance to See the Spiders!

- Closes after April 14<sup>th</sup>
- 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- [RBG Centre](#)

We've invited spiders and their arthropod friends to crawl on over for a visit this winter. Explore amazing adaptations and behaviours in our interactive exhibit, and join us for daily programs for all ages.



## Plant Faire!

Saturday April 27 2019, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; [RBG Centre](#)  
Start off the gardening season right with our third annual [Plant Faire](#)! Shop local vendors, hear from gardening experts, and more!

Halton Region Master Gardeners



Check our Facebook page AND website to find even more gardening events and information!



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## “What’s Growing On” in Our Community

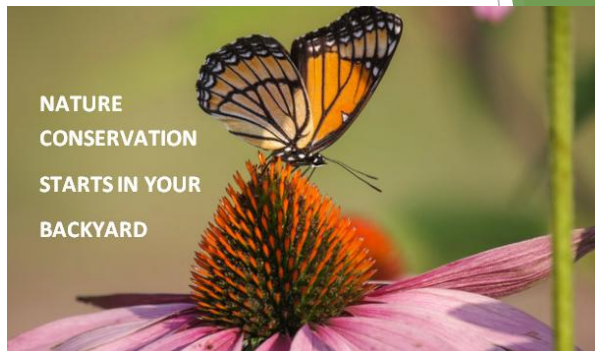
### Native planting and 4 season interest

**Wednesday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:30**

Shaun Booth of In Our Nature Landscaping

Hosted by [Burlington Horticultural Society](#)

Burlington Seniors' Centre 2285 New Street



### Mushrooms & Other Fungi

#### Nature Walk

**Saturday, April 6, 2019 at 8:30 AM - 10:30 AM**

Presented by [Hamilton Naturalists Club](#)

Free to all. What's behind the hidden and secret world of fungi? Learn to identify common fungi and see how fungus interact with trees on a daily basis. This is a gentle walk. Bring binoculars in case there are other interesting sights! Meet at the RBG Rock Chapel parking lot. Contact Rob for more information [rob@inpictures.ca](mailto:rob@inpictures.ca)

Hike leader: Kyle McLoughlin

### Spring Clean Up (All welcome)

**Saturday, April 27, 2019 at 9 AM - 11 AM**

Hosted by [Oakvillegreen Conservation Association](#)

[Arbourview Park, Oakville](#)

Upper Middle Road West & Reeves Gate, Oakville  
Think global, act local! Take action and make a difference your own community, help us clean Arbourview Park.

We will provide gloves and garbage bags, just bring your enthusiasm, refillable water bottle and closed-toed shoes.

We are meeting just before 9 am at the parking lot (in front of the soccer fields).



APRIL 27TH 9AM -11:00AM

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