

Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



July
2019

July Garden 'To Do List'

- ❑ **Flowers** - Cut back perennials (e.g. hardy Geraniums, Delphiniums & catmint) after the first flush of flowers to encourage new growth and further blooms. Deadhead annuals to encourage blooming.
- ❑ **Trim** - Shorten stems of fall flowering plants like asters, mums, Joe-Pye weed and goldenrod to keep them sturdy and compact.
- ❑ **Wisteria** - Throughout the summer, remove the whippy side-shoots from the main branch framework to about 20 cm from their base (about five leaves from the main stem). Wisteria not blooming? Read our [wisteria](#) factsheet for help.
- ❑ **Lilacs** - Remove the old flower clusters as soon after flowering as possible. Prune just above the two new shoots that angle out from the stem that ended with the old flowers.
- ❑ **Compost** - Keep adding a mix of ['browns'](#) and ['greens'](#) to your compost pile.
- ❑ **Lawn** - Mow high-3"/7.5 cm to shade out weeds and leave the clippings on the grass to return nutrients & water to the soil. WATER LESS and let lawn go dormant in dry hot spells (turn brown). Water dormant grass when: the blades don't spring back upright when you walk on it and when the blades fold to show their lighter blueish green underside. More info [here](#).
- ❑ **Veggies** - Water during dry or hot weather to avoid stressing plants. Do not over fertilize tomatoes as it can lead to [blossom end rot](#).
- ❑ **Garlic** - Stop watering 2-3 weeks before harvest. Harvest when tops turn brown (about mid-July) For more information go to [Producing Garlic in Michigan](#)
- ❑ **Water** - Avoid watering in the hottest part of the day; water any spring planted trees & plants regularly, & existing trees less frequently, but deeply; water the base of plants, not the foliage, or use soaker hoses.
- ❑ **Birds** - Keep feeders and bird baths filled & clean.
- ❑ **Pests** - Try and [identify the insect](#) before taking action. That 'pest' may be a butterfly caterpillar! For pests that are a problem, something as simple as a strong spray from your garden hose to knock them off will do the trick and does not kill [beneficial insects](#) which will keep your garden in balance.
- ❑ **Japanese Beetles/Gypsy Moth/Aphids/Squash beetles** - Check our [June newsletter](#) for suggestions.
- ❑ **Visit a local garden center** - Many plants are on sale in July! Why not add some [butterfly host plants](#) to your garden this year.
- ❑ **Enjoy and assess**- Take a minute to sit and enjoy your garden. Assess your garden's appearance and function.



The flowers of Ninebark attract a number of native bees and beneficial insects such as this beautiful bee-like hover fly.
Photo: Claudette's garden



July 2019

Berries in the Home Garden: Part 3 of 4 Part Series

By MG Liza Drozdov

In this issue, the third of our 4 part series on berries, Liza focuses on less usual garden berries - currants and gooseberries. In our 4th and final part of the series, she'll cover goji and haskap berries.

See our [May newsletter](#) for strawberries and raspberries and [June newsletter](#) for blueberries and blackberries ... Editor



Less Usual Berries for the Home Garden

There are several berries that the curious home gardener can grow if you want to go beyond the usual blueberries, strawberries and raspberries. They are all hardy and delicious and will reward you with lots of fruit for minimal effort -- generally less effort than for the more commonly-grown berries.

Currants and Gooseberries

Both Currants and Gooseberries are members of the *Ribes* family and have similar leaf shape and cultural requirements. The bushes can become very large, so it's a good idea to look for compact varieties if your garden space is limited.

All of these shrubs are vigorous growers, and they are hungry feeders, so make sure you have enriched the soil very well before you plant them, and be prepared to top-dress annually with a rich compost and manure.

They all require rich, well-drained soil. Like most berries, they will fruit better and their berries will be sweeter the more sun they get. But these berries actually prefer part shade--especially from the hot afternoon summer sun. Currants will grow in average soil, with a pH between 4 and 7 and they dislike saline soils. Make sure to enrich the planting area with lots of organic matter like manure and compost to feed the plants. An annual topdressing with manure and compost will provide both a weed-suppressing mulch and a slow-release fertilizer for your plants.



On this page, from the top, are red, white and black currants.

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Berries in the Home Garden - cont'd

Most are described as "partly self-fertile" which means they do not require another plant for pollination and fruit set. However, they all seem to do better if you are able to provide one anyway. Black currants in particular seem to require another black currant planted nearby for cross-pollination.

These plants are hardy from zones 3 to 7 and will grow between 3 and 6 feet tall, depending on the cultivar. They all flower early with small yellowish-white blossoms, which is helpful in providing nectar to early pollinators. Like all berries, they are very attractive to birds so you will need to net the bushes to protect your crop.

Care

These plants can grow up to 12 years before they need to be replaced, so it is worthwhile making sure to prepare their planting hole very well. Enrich and amend the soil as much as possible when planting, and you should expect to get a good crop of fruit in 1 to 3 years after planting.

Currants and Gooseberries don't require much in the way of ongoing care. Once they are planted, make sure to mulch heavily around the plants, with a thick weed-inhibiting mulch, which will cut down on weeding.



Gooseberries

Gooseberries are very prickly and it's painful to weed around them by hand, so don't let the weeds infiltrate! An annual top dressing of manure and a high-potash fertilizer like chicken manure, kelp or alfalfa meal in spring will help with increased fruiting.

Pruning

Currants and Gooseberries need to be pruned annually to remove dead, weak or damaged material and to keep the shrub open to allow light into its interior. They produce fruit on 2 to 3 year old shoots. After that age very little fruit is produced on the old branches so it is essential to remove the old wood to renew the shrub on an ongoing basis and ensure consistent productivity.

Pruning should be done in early spring. Reduce leading shoots by half and cut back side shoots to about three inches. Head back shoots to the next node to encourage branching. Remove all crossing, dead or overcrowded branches.

Continued ...



*The philosopher who
said work well done
never needs redoing
never weeded a garden!*

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Berries in the Home Garden - cont'd

Black Currants

Black currants have different pruning and planting requirements than red or white currants: The plant should initially be planted slightly lower in the soil than it was growing in the nursery pot. This is to encourage new growth from the base. Then the plants should be cut back hard to allow it to establish vigorous new growth. There will be no fruit the next year but it will help establish the plant. In following years, branches that have borne fruit should be cut down to the base or as low as possible.

They also differ from other currants in that they fruit on young wood, not old. The best annual pruning practice for black currants is to remove one third of all 3-4 year old shoots to the ground every year, to encourage as much young and fruitful wood to sprout from the base. A mature shrub should have around 10 canes from the base once pruning is done.

Black currants love moist, very rich soil -- as rich as you can make it, and they will tolerate heavy wet soils better than other *Ribes*. They prefer a heavy mulch of manure and compost annually. They will tolerate light shade and still fruit well. New varieties have been bred to tolerate heat and cold better and to do better with less moisture.

Gooseberries

There are two types of gooseberries: cookers and eaters. The former are small, very tart, and definitely not suitable for eating fresh. The latter are difficult to find in the nurseries, and many gooseberries sold as 'sweet' or 'dessert' disappoint. The sweet berries are seldom/never found in grocery stores as they neither ship nor store well, so if you want one you'll need to grow it yourself.

Plants that grow larger, sweeter fruits -- often the size of small eggs, are the European gooseberry (*Ribes grossularia*). This variety has been almost wiped out by American mildew disease, so it is difficult if not impossible to find. Most gooseberries now available are crossed with *Ribes divaricatum* which has berries that are smaller and more tart, but they are resistant to the disease.

The berries are generally pale green, maturing to reddish pink. Some cultivars are red or dark purple-ish and these can be quite sweet. It's important to keep the soil consistently moist and do not allow it to dry out. If they are watered after a drought the fruit is liable to split.

Gooseberries should be pruned annually as for red currants. Remember their spines are very thorny and they will quickly become dense thickets if you allow them to run wild as their canes can root from the tips if they touch the ground.

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Berries in the Home Garden - cont'd

Disease and Pests

Both currants and gooseberries can be prone to powdery mildew. Most varieties have now been bred to be resistant to this disease, however in our hot and humid summers it will still appear. Mildew is best controlled by ensuring good air circulation around the plants through proper pruning. If you see it, practicing good plant hygiene, improving air circulation, doing some hard pruning and making sure the roots stay moist are the keys to reducing damage. Remove any affected plant stems or leaves at first sign of mildew, before it spreads. Do not compost this material, as it will contain fungal spores - dispose of it in municipal garbage. Mildew is aggravated by dry roots, so make sure your plants are always well-watered and the soil is kept moist.

Anthracnose also affects black currants causing small brown spots on the leaves and defoliation. Plant hygiene is essential; removed all fallen leaves and destroy them since they will contain fungal spores.

Several pests attack currants including: aphids, scale, and **sawfly**. If you see any of them, deal with them manually by either picking them off or by spraying with an approved insecticide. In the case of **sawfly**, remove them immediately as they will decimate the foliage. Also be careful to remove the mulch from around the base of the plant in fall and cultivate the soil around it to expose any of the cocoons and eggs to frost. That will help prevent the sawfly's return.

White Pine Blister Rust

Many *Ribes* varieties were banned for a time in parts of North America, since they are an alternate host for pine blister rust. Now new disease-resistant varieties have been bred, so the ban has been lifted in many areas. The disease never did much harm to currant crops, but it devastated much of the timber industry in North America.



Black Currants Banned in Canada and U.S.

Did you know that for over half a century black currants were banned in various areas in North America?

See this [Cornell U.'s article](#) to learn why and how they've made a great come back!

Watch this You Tube video on how to prune black currants
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bb-w7twPW2s>



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Gardening Blunders: We Cry. We Laugh.

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

Looking for a vine to cover a newly built fence and arbour, I selected Dutchman's pipe (*Isotrema macrophyllum*). It seemed to have everything - attractive foliage, a native plant attractive to pollinators, rapidly growing, and suitable for a sunny site.

What I didn't realize was that it grew VERY rapidly and just LOVED the site. Heavy pruning was required, but the vine constantly sent up multiple shoots in a 15 foot radius. While an attractive vine on a fence, it wasn't nearly as nice coming up all over the garden. I had to put down landscaping fabric covered by 5 inches of mulch to subdue the beast. Further investigation revealed that in warmer climates, the plant is considered invasive. The mother plant was ripped out this spring. I'll wait to see if it is really gone.

I have learned my lesson
I have learned my lesson
I have learned my lesson
I have learned my lesson
I have learned my lesson
I have learned...

Lesson learned - native plants can also be difficult to control - do your homework!

Kids are SOOOO Smart

When my daughters were 11 and 12, I found some extra yard work for them to do, to earn some pocket money (and I thought they could use a lesson about manual labour). I offered them \$20 if they filled a huge bucket with garlic mustard (an invasive weed in my area). It would take quite a bit to fill the bucket and I had already done quite a bit of weeding myself (so I did not think it would cost me much). They set off together and got to work.



A little later, the girls came back triumphantly with 3 full buckets (\$60)! I had no idea where all those weeds came from! I found out later that they hopped the fence into the neighbouring garden to fill their buckets - and so I paid to get my neighbour's back garden cleaned up!

ONTARIO'S
**INVADING
SPECIES**
AWARENESS PROGRAM

Learn more about Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*) at the website for Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program.



July 2019

Shady Places



Cool & Calming Gardens

By MG Allyn Walsh

You love flowers and colour in your garden! You picture yourself seated amidst a sea of blooms with pollinators whizzing by, the sun warming your face and arms while clutching a glass filled with a delicious cooling drink.

But the reality may be that, instead you're gazing out at a dark, dank patch of soil and straggly greenery. You have dreaded-by-all shade rather than sun. Don't despair!

Shade gardens can be delightful havens filled with movement, texture and, yes, even colour. Shade gardens repay your hard work with respite from the heat and sun, a welcoming spot of beauty and a truly rewarding display.

The key principle of shade gardening is to shift your focus from blooms to foliage. While traditionally we think flowers when it comes to our gardens, we cannot depend on a constant supply of blooms to provide interest and beauty in a shade garden. Instead, consider the tremendous variation of colours, textures, and forms of foliage, stems, and branches of shade-loving plants. With careful planning, you can create a wonderful sense of movement with contrasting colours, shapes and textures.

First, consider your current garden. What do you want to keep or must keep such as trees and buildings and their effect on shade? Different areas likely have different types of shade and which differ at various times of day. While definitions vary, the following is a useful guide:

Deep Shade:	less than two hours of sun per day
Partial Shade:	2 to 4 hours of sun per day
Partial Sun:	4 to 6 hours of sun a day
Full Sun:	More than 6 hours of sun a day

Some plants are even sensitive to the time of day they receive sunlight so also take note of how sunlight changes over the day in your site.



Note the contrasting colours and textures in the foliage of these popular shade loving perennials: a Hosta species and a Heuchera species.

Image by Mary Pahlke from Pixabay.

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Shady Places - cont'd



Blooms are possible in shade and partial shade gardens, particularly in spring before trees leaf out to block the sun.

The purple flowers are a *Nepeta* species; the chartreuse is a *Euphorbia* species (most likely *Euphorbia cyparissias*) with white *Galium odoratum* and the fuchsia coloured flowers of a *Geranium*, likely *Geranium* 'Patricia'.

This garden receives about 3 hours of sun a day in mid-afternoon.

Photo:
author's personal collection.

Next, consider the soil conditions. Is the soil wet or dry? Commonly the soil is very dry under large trees particularly those like *Acer* species with shallow root systems. Moisture also drains very quickly from sandy soil. On the other hand, wet soil could be due to poor drainage, nearby bodies of water or the presence of a heavy clay subsoil. While it's ideal to continually improve the soil in our gardens, we must recognize that we can only go so far in pushing limits imposed by the setting. Gardening is much more successful (and enjoyable) if we work to improve rather than try to change what we have.

Once you have a list of plants that will thrive in the various light and soil conditions of different spots in your garden, it will be possible to make decisions about what plant to site where, and to take into account plant appearance. Factors such as foliage and flower colour, texture, height and shape are considered in composing a garden to fit your preferences. A good resource on the variety of plant textures can be found at this [Your Garden Sanctuary](#) link. For example, you may wish to consider alternating gold/yellow foliage with purple/red plants, interspersed with green leafed plants and using a variety of different leaf textures as well. The changing colour provides a dynamic feel to the garden.

Alternatively, you may enjoy a soothing feel in your shade garden focusing on green leafed plants of a similar texture, perhaps with a single bloom colour (often white!). Consider planting to ensure four season interest by choosing plants with different bloom times, colourful fall foliage, berries or interesting bark. Repeating plant material in different areas of the garden avoids building a garden that has too many different plants and appears busy rather than soothing.

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Shady Places - cont'd

In any case, ensure that your garden has an attractive focal point to draw the eye. Without such intentional planning, the eye may be drawn to an unattractive feature that would be better avoided (e.g. a neighbour's refuse pile). Your garden may already have attractive features that you want to emphasize - a nicely shaped tree, for example, or pretty garden shed. If not, or while waiting for your garden plants to mature, you may wish to add an object to create a focal point *de novo*. A container planted with



Parthenocissis cinquefolia tolerates full shade and turns a striking red colour in autumn. Note the contrast with the adjacent conifer.

Image: Bronisław Drózka from Pixabay

shade tolerant annuals (e.g. *Impatiens walleriana*, *Lobelia erinus*, *Begonia semperflorens*) is a fast, and inexpensive way to draw the eye in the new shade garden. Similarly, objects such as fountains, bird baths, and statues may serve. Visit this [Gardening Know How](#) website for more ideas on creating focal points.



The eye is naturally drawn to the gazebo in this photo. The tree limbs also serve to highlight this focal point. Structures are natural focal points and curvilinear paths and plantings will also emphasize the focal point of a garden view.

Image: marilynhanes from Pixabay

Lists of plants suitable for your zone can be found at the websites of many reliable nurseries. They usually include important details such as height, bloom time and required conditions. Two that I have found helpful for zone 6a and 6b are [Sheridan Nurseries](#) and [Connon Nurseries](#).

Shady places make wonderful gardens that are also comfortable to maintain - the envy of any gardener who has pulled weeds for hours in the hot sun. With careful planning and attention to your shady site, you will soon be sitting back in your cool garden sipping a refreshing drink and rejoicing in your creation.



Native ferns and Wild Ginger in HMG Patty King's garden.

Other Resources for Shady Gardens

- Native Plants for shade [that support bees](#)
- [Sample plan](#) for a native plant shade garden
- [Shade tolerant plant list](#) - native and non-native

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"What's Growing On" featuring Halton Master Gardeners

Farmers' Markets

Visit Halton MGs in person to ask your garden questions!

Burlington Mall Farmers' Market

Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

- July 13th & 27th
- August 10th & 24th

Dundas Farmers' Market

Thursdays from 3 to 7 p.m. on

- July 4 & 18
- August 1st & 15th



Look for our sign at the Farmers' Markets



Online Garden Chats Continue!



radio

HMG's Patty King, Liza Drozdov, Donna Parker and Claudette Sims team up with RBG experts Jon Peter & Alex Henderson to answer your garden questions.

Send your own questions to us by Tweet to [@CBCHamilton](https://twitter.com/CBCHamilton) or via email to hamilton@cbc.ca

Tuesday, July 2nd & all other Mondays in July from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

So grab a coffee, sit back and listen to Ed Lawrence on Ontario Today while we answer your gardening questions!



Halton Region Master Gardeners

Come Grow with Us

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Check our [Facebook](#) page AND Website:

HaltonMasterGardeners.com under the tab [NEWS](#) to find even more gardening events and information!

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"What's Growing On" in Our Community



ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

RBG Back To Nature Hike

FREE Guided Hike Each Sunday
Jule through August: 10 a.m.

- 1st Sunday of every month: Hendrie Valley; meet at Cherry Hill Gate parking lot
- 2nd: Princess Point; meet at the Princess Point parking lot
- 3rd: Cootes North Shore; meet at the Nature Interpretive Centre
- 4th: Cootes South Shore; meet at the Aviary parking lot on Oak Knoll Drive, Hamilton
- 5th: Rock Chapel; meet at the Rock Chapel trailhead parking lot

Container Gardening Tip:

When you plant a puppy,
make sure the container can
comfortably accommodate
the full grown dog.



Upcoming Garden Tours

- July 6th Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society Annual Garden Tour
 - Sunday, July 7 The Secret Gardens of Milton Tour 2019
 - July 12 & 13 Blooms for Africa in Waterdown
 - July 13 Blooming on the Grand - Garden Tour in Caledonia
- For more listings of garden tours visit this Garden Making magazine link.



Hamilton Naturalists' Club
Protecting Nature Since 1919

Dean's Wildflower Walk Every Monday in July 6:30pm - 8:30pm
Every Monday in July, Dean leads walks at various locations. They are always at 6:30 pm. Contact Dean for more information or to be put on his email list dgugler@gmail.com

Hamilton Butterfly Count
Sunday, Jul 7, 2019

Description

Bill Lamond will be coordinating the annual Hamilton Butterfly Count. He can partner beginners with more experienced counters bill-lamond@hotmail.com

More events at [Hamilton Naturalists Calendar](#)

HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com

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