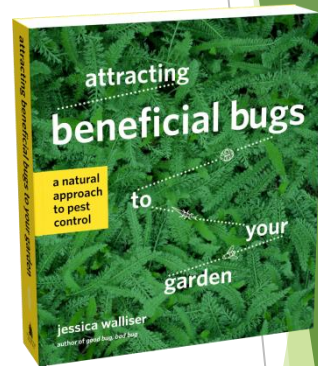


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Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners

February 'Garden To Do' List

- ❑ **Houseplants** - Consult page 4 & 5 of this issue & our [December newsletter](#) 'to do list' for information on houseplant care.
- ❑ **Orchids** - Learn how to care for your phalaenopsis orchid when it finishes blooming. This [video](#) will show you how!
- ❑ **Amaryllis** - Cut off spent flower stems & place in a sunny window, watering only when the soil is nearly dry. Fertilize 1x month with water-soluble organic houseplant food.
- ❑ **Seed Starting** - Read all about seed starting in our [February 2019 newsletter](#) or attend a local Seedy Saturday to exchange seeds with your community.
- ❑ **Planting Dates** - Use this [Seed Starting Date Calculator](#) to determine when to start your seeds. Enter your frost free date as **May 20th, 2020**.
- ❑ **Watch** - [Get Growing](#) - Learn how to start your own seeds by Canada's own Niki Jabbour.
- ❑ **Order plants & Seeds** from this extensive list of suppliers by [Three Dogs in a Garden](#) blogger [Jennifer Connell](#)
- ❑ **Winter Sowing of Hardy Seeds** - Learn an easy way to start native seeds for your pollinator garden outside with this video from [Savvy Gardening](#).
- ❑ **Grow** edible sunflower microgreens. Learn how from [Savvy Gardening](#)-a fun activity to do with budding gardeners!
- ❑ **Read** - [Attracting beneficial bugs to your garden](#) by Jessica Walliser. For more reading suggestions visit our website under "[Learn/Print Resources](#)"
- ❑ **Dahlia, calla, canna etc.** - Check stored bulbs for rot or signs of disease. Spray lightly if bulbs are dry or shriveled.
- ❑ **Blueberries** - Late February/early March, prune out dead, damaged, diseased wood if needed to an open shape to increase air circulation. More info [here](#).
- ❑ **Bird feeders**- Keep bird feeders topped up for our winter residents. ☺



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Spotlight on Native Plants: 10 Natives for Dry Shade

By Halton MG Janet Mackey

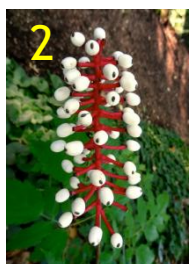
Gardeners can support biodiversity and rich ecosystems by including native plants in their gardens. *Once established, these plants require less care than imports as they are naturally suited to our environment*



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Dry shade is one of the most difficult growing conditions in the landscape but thankfully there are some fantastic native plants can offer a solution.

	Botanical Name	Common Name	Size h=height d=diameter	Features	Notes
1	<i>Acquilegia canadensis</i>	Canada Columbine	60-90cm h 30-45cm d	Spring/early summer wildflower with fern-like foliage	Zone 3-8. Foliage will stay attractive through summer if soil is moist. Provides nectar to butterflies & hummingbirds.
2	<i>Actaea pachypoda</i>	White baneberry	30-90cm h 30-60cm d	Delicate white flower in spring, bold red stems with white berries in fall Known as 'Dolls-Eyes'	Zone 2-7 Poisonous Berries (people) Birds enjoy berries in late winter.
3	<i>Carex pensylvanica</i>	Pennsylvania Sedge	15-30cm h 15-30cm d	Fine arching, pale green foliage in spring, becoming tan in fall	Zone 3-8 Groundcover, use to naturalize, in rain gardens; spreads slowly via rhizomes. Use to underplant shade perennials
4	<i>Carex plantaginea</i>	Seer-sucker Sedge	15-30cm h 25-30cm d	Bold texture, bright lime-green foliage with a puckered texture. Adds winter interest - trim in late winter.	Zone 4-8 Use massed, as a groundcover or along a border; butterfly host plant, seeds are food source for birds; can provide erosion control
5	<i>Eurybia macrophylla</i>	Large-leaved wood aster	30-90cm h 60-90cm d	Begins season as a rosette of basal shaped foliage. Stems emerge displaying rose, disc-shaped flowers late summer	Zone 3-8 Useful as a groundcover, massing or naturalizing. Host to Pearl Crescent & source of nectar.
6	<i>Maianthemum stellatum</i>	Starry False Lily Of The Valley, Star-flowered Solomon's Seal	30-60cm h 20-45cm d	Greenish-white raceme with star-shaped flowers, in late spring. Arching stems with lance-shaped leaves. Globose fruits emerge late in season	Zone 3-7 Rhizomatous perennial, use to naturalize, along raingardens near bold foliage or ferns.
8	<i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>	Smooth Solomon's Seal	30-60cm h 20-45cm d	Bell-shaped greenish-yellow flowers along tall arching stem	Zone 3-8 Graceful stems provide structural interest; plant at the base of trees but not those with low branching, in rain gardens. Plant with ferns for contrast.
9	<i>Solidago caesia</i>	Blue-stemmed Goldenrod	45-90cm h. 30-45cm d.	Blooms from late summer to early fall with short golden racemes	Zone 4-8 Primarily clump-forming, excellent source of late-season nectar. Use in groups or mass planting
10	<i>Solidago flexicaulis</i>	ZigZag Goldenrod			Zone 2-9 (as above)



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The Seeds are Alright

by Bev Wagar - Halton Master Gardener

GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) are inevitably a hot topic with gardeners, arousing strong feelings both for and against the technology. And, with seed catalogue season fast approaching, we likely will hear questions about GMO seeds. Social media, especially, is rife with posts and memes that often spread fear and disinformation about seed suppliers and seed varieties being “owned by Monsanto” or otherwise tainted by technologies perceived to be dangerous. Too often the debate conflates GMOs with “science” and ignores



concerns about the societal and ecological impacts of genetic technologies. But that’s a topic for a much longer (and more difficult) article.

When wearing our professional Master Gardener hats we need to correct errors and misconceptions, especially with beginner gardeners, whose fear of GMOs may become a barrier to the enjoyment of seed starting. We need to make sure that facts don’t get trampled by emotion. Here is the key fact to emphasize: it is simply impossible for a home gardener to buy GMO seeds. None of the seeds or plants available at retail, either mail-order or on seed racks, is genetically modified. No vegetables, no ornamentals. None.

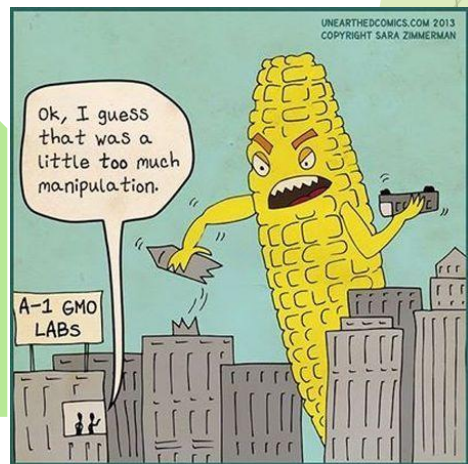
When seed retailers describe their products as “GMO-free” or “non-GMO” they increase the widespread misconception that the contents of a seed packet could actually be GMO. They can’t. Retailers who use this kind of marketing language, whether we consider it unethical or ignorant, are a big part of the problem.

Even if a gardener is full-out determined to grow any of the genetically modified seeds currently legal in Canada—corn, canola, soybean, white sugar beet, and alfalfa—she would need to enter into a contract with a global agribusiness giant, probably Bayer (which purchased Monsanto in 2018).



“NON-GMO” labelling is misleading

“It would be illegal for a farmer to give, trade or sell anyone genetically modified seeds.”



unearthedcomics.com/745Lwub.com

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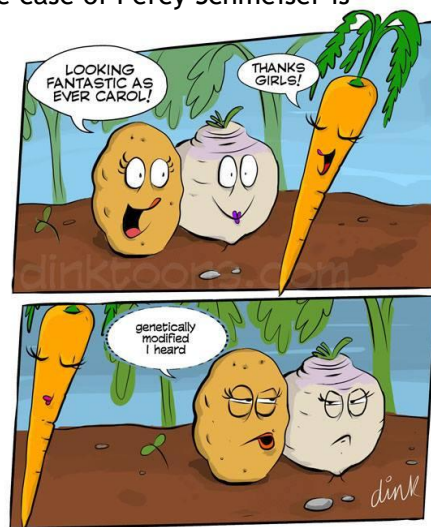
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The Seeds are Alright - continued

She would probably want to be incorporated and have her lawyer review the contract. She'd also need a few hundred acres of land to justify the minimum orders. These seeds are intended for industrial-scale growers, not market gardeners.

Perhaps our strong-willed gardener knows a farmer who uses GMO seeds. It would be illegal for the farmer to give, trade, or sell the seeds to her, or anyone. Because GM varieties are patented—they are the property of Bayer or its subsidiaries—growers' contracts severely restrict how they can be used. And the company's lawyers vigorously defend these patents. The case of Percy Schmeiser is an eye-opener on this topic.

There is likely a teachable moment here. We might need to explain the distinction between "genetically modified" and "hybrid". GM seeds, in general, are engineered to make the resulting plants resistant to a certain virus, pest, or herbicide, usually glyphosate. Hybrids, on the other hand, are created when plant breeders deliberately cross two or more varieties, grow out the resulting plants, and continue selecting and breeding for desired traits, such as flower colour, plant height/shape, fruit size/shape, maturation time/speed etc.



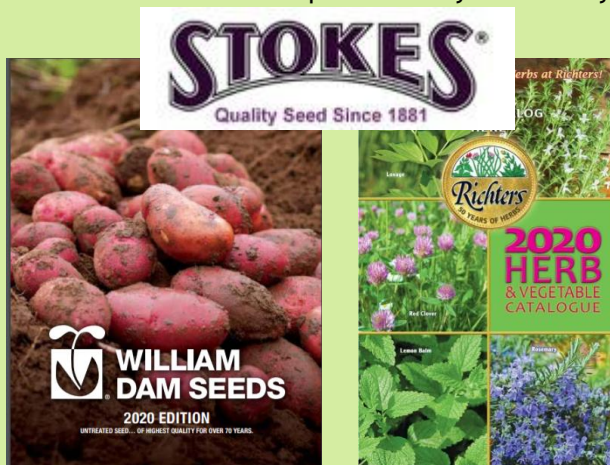
Returning to the issue of GMOs, let's try to respect the feelings but dispel the fear. Since it is virtually

impossible for a gardener or small-scale grower to acquire genetically modified seeds, we can all enjoy our winter evenings curled up with seed catalogues in pleasant anticipation and a clear conscience. The seeds are alright!



Salt has no DNA. It can't be genetically engineered... but it can be more expensive for no good reason!

Click on these seeds companies to buy confidently!



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I Got Troubles Oh Oh!... Houseplant problem solving

By Halton MG Allyn Walsh

As we turn our gardening eyes away from the cold and snowy outdoors, we look at houseplants - and some of the common problems they may develop. This two-part series will start with the basic principles of keeping houseplants healthy.

The winter months are a challenge for the gardener - seed catalogues can only go so far in satisfying our urge to grow and nurture plants. As a result, this is the time of year when our focus may shift to the greenery inside our house - existing houseplants, new acquisitions, and those tender specimens that have been brought indoors after spending the warm months outside. Outdoors, we are unable to have much control over the environment - the weather and the soil for example - while the climate indoors is much more stable, and we provide virtually all the soil and nutrients for houseplants. But indoor gardening has its own challenges, often related to those very same factors. In this two-part series, we will look at some of the common problems that arise for the indoor garden. First up, some basic principles to apply to indoor gardening and next month we will look at some specific and common problems.

Principles for Healthy Houseplants

1. Home Sweet Home

Replicate the plants natural conditions as much as possible.

Is your houseplant a warm and humidity loving tropical? Or is it a succulent preferring dry warmth? Does it like cool evenings (who doesn't)? What are its preferences for light? Most plants commonly grown indoors are selected for that purpose because of their tolerance for indirect light and tolerance of heat and dryness, there is great variability in what is acceptable to different plants. Ensure that each plant has the best possible environment for success. (More on this next month)

2. An Ounce of Prevention

Inspect plants carefully before bringing them indoors. Disease and pests which may be tolerated outdoors may take over indoors. Whether purchased de novo, received as a gift, or coming in from the yard for the winter, every plant needs to be examined thoroughly (that includes BOTH sides of the leaves!). Plants brought in from the yard are readily sprayed with a forceful stream of water (BOTH sides of the leaves, remember!). To prevent soil insects, the entire pot may be immersed in a bucket of water and insecticidal soap. The Laidback Gardener recommends doing this for half an hour, with a brick on top to keep it underwater. Allow to drain well after removing. Many experts recommending isolating those plants coming into your house for a few weeks since it may still contain not yet visible eggs or small pests.

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This fiddle leaf fig (Ficus lyrata) plant was in real trouble in a south facing window. Once it was moved to an eastern exposure, the leaves stopped browning and dropping, and it burst into new growth.



*It wouldn't be hard to miss this infestation. Look carefully!
Image from Savvy Gardening, by Jessica Walliser*



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I Got Troubles....continued

3. Better Sooner than Later

Careful weekly observation may reveal the early signs of a problem which can be dealt with before it gets worse. This should also be done when bringing any new plant into your house. Are there obvious insects? Any stickiness on the plant or its surroundings ([honeydew](#)) indicating an infestation. Is the foliage healthy or are there brown, yellow or dry spots? Leaves dropping off? Getting on top of such problems is much easier in the early stages. And will also prevent spread to other plants. And besides, we want houseplants because we love looking at plants and their development.



Scale is hard to eliminate – our only hope is to catch it early!

Image from Savvy Gardening, by Jessica Walliser

4. Too Much of a Good thing....or Too Little

Every plant is unique and needs individual care. Setting a routine like watering every week is likely to lead to overwatering for some houseplants - and perhaps underwatering for others. Same goes for fertilization. Many houseplants are relatively dormant in winter and fertilization can be harmful. But not all of them. Know the names of your plants, and what care they require. Hang on to those tags so you can look it up! Who can remember it all?



Image by Admiral Leboida from Pixabay

Further Reading:

[House Plant Growing Guide by Gardenista](#)
[Types of Houseplant Bugs from Savvy Gardening](#)
[Watering Houseplants by Empress of Dirt](#)
[Diagnosis Common Houseplant Problems](#)
[Bringing Plants Indoors...without bugs by Laidback Gardener](#)



Stay tuned - next month we will discuss trouble shooting for some specific houseplant problems



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Question of the Month



Question... I am concerned about when to do my winter pruning with this mild weather. Am I still safe to do it now or should I postpone hoping for some colder weather?



Contrary to common belief, research suggests that trees should be pruned April through August (with exception of Oaks mentioned below). When wound healing, cambium dieback and vascular discolouration are monitored over the course of several years, Dr. Dirk Dujesiefken (Senior Scientist at Institute for Arboriculture in Hamburg, Germany) has found that trees in the northern hemisphere heal best if pruned when they are able to actively grow and repair themselves. There are species differences, but this should be the standard practice.

The one exception of this guideline would be Oak (*Quercus*) species. Do NOT prune between April 15th and July 15th due to the presence of the fungus causing Oak Wilt (Do the pruning when the disease carrying beetles are not present & tree is dormant during coldest months).

[Read more HERE: Everything You Need to Know About Oak Wilt](#)

Further Information:

- [General Guide & Video on Pruning/Training Trees - Training Young Trees: Structural Pruning for Home Gardeners - University of California-Davis](#)
- [Video: Three-Part Cut for Pruning Larger Branches: Urban Forestry Information Series](#)
- [Dirk Dujesiefken, The Hamburg Tree Pruning System - A framework for pruning of individual trees](#)

Cathy Kavassalis, Halton Master Gardener

**Sedges have edges;
rushes are round;
grasses are hollow right up from
the ground**

<http://ontariograsses.com/>

**TOMORROW IS NATIONAL
STAY IN BED WITH
SEED CATALOGS DAY.
I JUST MADE IT UP.
TELL THE OTHERS.**

garden therapy



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“What’s Growing On” featuring Halton Master Gardeners

Halton Master Gardener Monthly Meeting

•Wednesday, February at 7:00 pm - 9:30 pm

•Note the change of time & location for February:

• Burlington Seniors' Centre at 2285 New Street

•Members of the public who are considering becoming Master Gardeners are welcome to join us as guests: Please email:

haltonmastergardeners@mail.com prior to attending

•Reminder to bring your own mug for refreshments

RE-IMAGINING YOUR LANDSCAPE Workshop: #GardensForOurFuture

•Dundas Public Library

•Call to Register: 905-627-3507

•Tues. Feb. 25 & Tues. Mar. 3 - 7 - 8pm

- No Mow, Low H2O Gardens.
- This 2 session workshop will present the background & fundamentals to transforming your landscape to support biodiversity, reduce/eliminate the need for watering/fertilizer, & sequester storm water with the inclusion of a rain garden.
- Learn from the experiences of Master Gardeners who've transformed their properties to be more sustainable, beautiful AND less work!
- Presented by Halton MGs Janet, Claudette and Hariette!



Do you have a gardening question?

Email:

HaltonMasterGardeners@Gmail.com



Did you have winter leaves
that kept hanging on?
This is known as
marcescence.

[Read More HERE!](#)



Photo: Rohan Harrison Master Gardeners of Ontario FB group

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“What’s Growing On” in our Community

Seedy Saturday Events 2020



Hamilton Seedy Saturday 2020
New Date: Saturday February 1st, 2020

Time: 10am-3pm

Location: The Boys and Girls Club of Hamilton, 45 Ellis Avenue,
Hamilton, Ontario L8H 4L8

Learn more [here!](#)

HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com

Oakville Seedy Sunday **Learn more** [here!](#)

Seedy Sunday

FREE EVENT - SEED SWAP & SHOP!

Sunday, February 23rd, 2020

10:00am-3pm

**Queen Elizabeth Park Cultural & Community Center
Rehearsal Hall
2302 Bridge Road, Oakville**

Seedy Saturdays and Sundays are fun, inexpensive events where you can exchange veggie and flower seeds, attend workshops, and buy seeds from local seed companies. There is something for everyone: novice to master gardeners, young to young-at-heart!



HALTON
ENVIRONMENTAL
NETWORK

Greening Sacred Spaces



For more information, email
grow@haltonfoodcouncil.ca



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Find a Seedy Saturday event in your community [here.](#)

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“What’s Growing On” in our Community



ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

Back to Nature Hike

Sundays at 2 p.m.

- February 2: [Hendrie Valley](#); meet at the [Cherry Hill Gate parking lot](#).
- February 9: [Princess Point](#); meet at the [Princess Point parking lot](#).
- February 16: [Cootes North Shore](#); meet at the [Nature Interpretive Centre](#).
- February 23: [Cootes South Shore](#); meet at the Aviary parking lot on [Oak Knoll Drive, Hamilton](#).
- More info [here](#)



WILDLIFE RESCUE


Winter Exhibit: Wildlife Rescue

Now until April 13, 2020
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; RBG Centre

- Included in your [General Admission](#) or [Membership](#)
- Learn more [here](#)!

39th Annual
Spring
Orchid
Show & Sale

*Thousands of orchid
blooms to see!*



Orchid Cultural Seminars,
Orchid Sales & Art Displays
Admittance free with admission to RBG.

Royal Botanical Gardens
880 Plains Rd. W., Burlington, ON

Saturday, February 29th, 2020
Noon - 5pm

Sunday, March 1st, 2020
10am - 5pm

Photographers Sunday
8am - 10am

Visit our website for additional information:
www.osrbg.ca

Receive \$4 OFF an adult or
senior admission to the RBG.*

*Not to be used in conjunction with any other offers or discounts. No cash value. Limit one \$4 discount per coupon. Valid ONLY February 29th & March 1st, 2020.

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