

CROSS POLLINATION

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



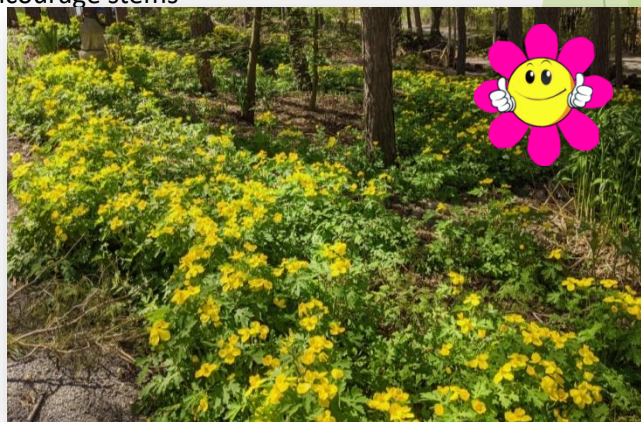
September Garden To Do List

- ❑ **Perennials** – Divide or transplant spring and summer flowering perennials such as iris, peony, phlox, wood poppy, native anemone as the weather cools. Water the new divisions well. Fill gaps in borders with asters, ornamental cabbage, sedum and mums to extend the colour to the end of the season. Leave some goldenrod for pollinators!
- ❑ **Lawn & Weeds**– Choose a rainy day to overseed lawn, then cover seeds with a [top dressing](#) of fine compost or manure-half the height of the blades of grass should still be visible. Fall feeding increases root growth for an early spring green up. Pull, rake or cut off weeds at ground level. Keep pulling bindweed to reduce the seed bank in soil. Tired of your patchy brown lawn? Consider an alternative like ecolawn which requires less water, mowing and feeding. Info including how to convert a traditional lawn [here](#).
- ❑ **Feed the Soil** - [Add compost or manure](#) to garden beds & lawn.
- ❑ **Bulbs** – Plant spring flowering bulbs such as crocus, tulip, hyacinth now, until before freeze up of soil. Water bulbs after planting. Avoid invasive bulbs such as [scilla](#). Consider planting native & endangered [wood poppies](#) instead of daffodils in a shady location-same yellow colour but no dying bulb foliage to deal with!
- ❑ **Leaves** –Attach the grass catcher bag to the mower and collect a ready supply of chopped leaves to layer into the compost pile or use as mulch on the veggie or flower garden.
- ❑ **Roses** - Stop pruning roses to avoid formation of weaker stems which won't survive the winter.
- ❑ **Veggies** – Green tomatoes-harvest to ripen indoors, freeze or use in recipes. Salad Garden - sow seeds to grow lettuce, spinach, arugula and radishes. Mix and sow seed of different varieties into veggie garden, flower bed or pots. Plant [cover crops](#) such as [red clover](#) & [winter rye](#) on bare soil.
- ❑ **Trees** - Plant new trees and shrubs now to allow them at least six weeks before frost to form roots. Water trees until freeze up, especially ones that were planted this year. Stop feeding and fertilizing shrubs and trees to encourage stems to harden off.
- ❑ **Collect** seed to start new plants and herbs for drying.
- ❑ **Houseplants** - Check houseplants for pests, then start to move indoors gradually when nights get cool. Prune tropicals such as hibiscus and move them into some shade to help transition indoors for the winter, where the light levels are lower.
- ❑ See our [August newsletter](#) for any garden jobs that you may have missed!

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[Ironweed](#) is a great native plant that works well with golden fall colours.



The bright yellow of native Wood poppies in spring-all the colour of daffodils without the dying leaves to deal with.

Photo: Gary Westlake, Peterborough MGs

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Spotlight on Beneficial Insects:
Create the right habitat & They Will Come!

Hariette Henry - Halton Master Gardener

Spiders belong to the order **ARANEAE**.

Spiders have eight legs, two main body parts (the abdomen and the cephalothorax), four pairs of eyes (95% of species), no antennae and no wings. They are not insects...even though they are often thought to be. Insects by contrast have six legs, three main body parts (head, thorax and abdomen), two antennae and most species have wings at some point in their lives.



Images: Royal Ontario
Museum, Spiders in Our
Backyard Exhibit

All spiders produce silk but not all spiders use silk to spin webs. Silk is not only used for constructing webs, it is also used for lining burrows, encasing egg sacs and most interestingly to construct safety draglines to prevent themselves from falling off their perches.

All spiders have chelicerae - (mouthparts that include fangs) from which they produce venom. Not all species are harmful to humans and most do not inflict painful or harmful bites.

Five Common Spider Species we can see Inside or Around our Homes in
Ontario, Brad Hubley, ROM



Yellow Garden
Spider,
Argiope
aurantia



Banded
Garden
Spider,
Argiope
trifasciata



Cross
Orbweaver,
Araneus
diadematus



Cobweb Weaver,
Steatoda
triangulosa



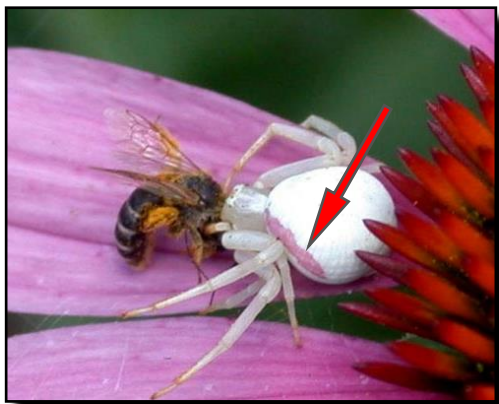
Yellow Sac
Spider/Black
Footed Spider

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Beneficial Insects - continued

Spiders prey on insects and other spiders by trapping them in a web or by pouncing on them. The first group, the web builders have the ability to detect their prey through a combination of visual and vibrational cues. They lie in wait until their prey become ensnared in their webs and then the prey are consumed after liquifaction with digestive enzymes. The second group are known as cursorial spiders, or wandering and hunting spiders and they use the same cues to stalk and spot their prey. This group are very valuable to gardeners and farmers as they are highly mobile and can travel to find prey. Some members of this group though, such as crab spiders lie in wait in a single flower in hopes of capturing an unfortunate pollinator.



This crab spider has been able to catch the unfortunate bee by transforming its colours to match its surroundings.

Image: countylive.ca



The web of a Yellow Garden Spider is circular in shape and up to 2 feet (60 cm) in diameter. Spiders spin many different types of webs, for more info:

[Spiders of Toronto](#),

Image: Wikipedia



Illustration: Owen Curtsinger



A female jumping spider lands on a leaf, still anchored to her point of departure with a dragline.



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Beneficial Insects - Create the Right Habitat & They Will Come!

Spiders are extremely valuable to the farm and garden. Studies have shown that they consume many herbivorous agricultural pests such as insect eggs, beetles, aphids, cutworms, fire ants, spider mites, squash bugs, budworms, caterpillars and asparagus beetles.

In the garden they help to control flies, mosquitoes, moths, beetles, wasps and other pests. Because adult spiders often overwinter in your garden they can start doing their job early in the gardening season.

How to make your property hospitable to spiders and so that they may do their job?

- Number one would be to leave their webs intact as much as possible
- Add tall plants such as sunflowers, cornstalks, and the like, on which to attach their webs, would be useful
- Create spider habitat by adding a loose layer of mulch such as grass clippings and/or dead leaves between the plants and rows in your vegetable garden to shelter these tiny creatures from dry air and sunlight
- Let some native plants grow among the taller plants in the vegetable garden will provide shade and protection
- Leave a planting pot on its side in the garden to create a sheltered micro-habitat for spiders to build webs and trap any unsuspecting meal
- Adopt a no-till approach to the garden to avoid disturbing the hunting ground of spiders
- Provide flowers for crab spiders to trap their prey
- Leave plant stalks standing in winter and not clearing away plant debris until spring
- And finally avoid the use of pesticides and let spiders and other beneficials take care of the pest control for you

Did you Know?

"Hummingbirds use **spider webs** as a source of **spider's** silk in nest construction, being necessary to bind the nest to the tree branch or other substrate and to hold the nest together. Even so, the **hummingbird** must be careful when removing the pieces of webbing, for it may become entangled and be trapped there."



Image © Andy Teucher from [Birdnote](#) podcast

Want to Learn More?

[Spiders of Toronto, A Guide to their Remarkable World](#)

[How to attract Spiders to Your Garden](#), Tom Oder

[Attracting Beneficial Bugs](#), Jessica Walliser (podcast)

[Order Araneae - Spiders](#), bugguide.net

[Spider Silk - Duct Tape for Bird Nests](#) Podcast



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Land of the Silver (White! Yellow! Gray!) Birch

Allyn Walsh – Halton Master Gardener

Who doesn't love seeing a silver birch whether in a cultivated garden or in a wild area? And who remembers wanting to write letters to friends on the lovely bark – and being warned not to! But despite the campfire song, it is quite possible that the tree we are thinking of is one of our native birches (e.g. *Betula papyrifera*) and not the European and Asian birch (*Betula pendula*). There are a number of beautiful native birch trees and they deserve a closer look as they are considered "keystone" plants for wildlife – providing food and shelter for insects, birds and other larger creatures.

Betula papyrifera – white birch

The white birch has a range which covers all of Canada except the far north. Famous for its smooth peeling white bark, it can grow between 20 and 25 metres tall. The leaves are oval or triangular and 5-10 cm long. While white birch is tolerant of a variety of soils, it demands full sun to thrive. Like all birch, both male and female flowers are in the form of catkins, with winged seeds. This relatively short lived tree survives longer in colder climate zones.



White birch images from the [Ontario Tree Atlas](#)

Betula alleghaniensis (yellow birch)

The yellow birch is the largest of Ontario's native birch, slowly growing up to 25 metres tall. Preferring moist rich soil and not too much sun, it does well in wooded areas where it can live 150 years. Its common name comes from the distinctive peeling bark with its definite yellow cast. The relatively long (8-11 cm) leaves are oval with a pointed tip and are finely serrated, alternate on the stem. Male & female catkins appear on the same plant. The fruit in the form of a winged samara is dispersed in fall.



Yellow birch images from [Ontario Tree Atlas](#)

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Land of the Silver (White! Yellow! Gray!) Birch continued



Betula lenta (cherry birch)

The cherry birch is listed as endangered both federally and provincially and in Ontario is now found only in a small area near St. Catharines. With leaves similar to the yellow birch, its bark is red-black in colour and does not peel. The buds and twigs smell of wintergreen when rubbed. If seen, report it to [Ontario Species at Risk](#)



Cherry birch mages from [Ontario Tree Atlas](#)

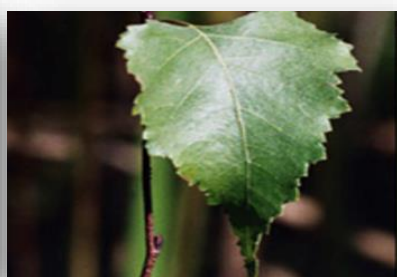
Less common native birches:

Betula populifolia (gray birch) and Betula pumila (bog birch)

The gray birch has been gradually moving from the maritime provinces taking over abandoned land. It is now found at the eastern most reaches of Ontario.

The bog or swamp birch is a shrub with rounded leaves not surprisingly found in wet areas.

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Gray birch images from [Ontario Tree Atlas](#)



[Bog or swamp birch, Maine gov](#)

Learn More!

There are some very useful websites for learning about trees. Great photos and Helpful information - Take a look here:

- [Ontario Tree Atlas](#) an excellent reference for native Ontario trees
- [U of Guelph Arboretum](#) good source for both native and naturalized trees
- [Trees Canada](#) Celebrate or commemorate by planting trees
- [Canadian Tree Tours](#) Self guided tours in Burlington & Toronto & tree info



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Question of the Month - "Urgent Help Needed"

I have many, many bald faced hornets, paper wasps and yellow jackets - not to mention loads more flying insects on the Magnolia tree by my front door. Our dog stepped on one too! What is going on with my tree? See those white bumps? As well, the hostas below the tree covered in a black tar like substance. I'm very worried. Help me. Thanks. "T. M.



Magnolia Scale: Photo T. Keenan

Hose your magnolias down to try and wash away the honeydew that is attracting the wasps. Magnolia scale (*Neolecanium cornuparvum*) are insects with sucking mouthparts. They can remove large quantities of sap from twigs and young branches. It also produces honeydew which attracts ants (that protect it) and [sooty mould](#).

Cultural controls

Scale thrives on stressed plants, so keep your plant watered and provide proper fertilization-over-fertilization encourages scale. Prune out heavily infested branches. Attract natural predators of soft scale such as [predatory beetles](#) (e.g. families Coccinellidae and Anthribidae), and [parasitic wasps](#) primarily in the hymenopteran families Encyrtidae and Eulophidae. Encourage a healthy ecosystem in your yard.

Physical control.

Because of their large size, female scales can be removed by hand. It is best to do this in July before crawlers emerge. Wear rubber gloves and rub off with the use of a scrubbing brush, but do not scrub hard enough to injure the bark.

Chemical control.

Horticultural oils, often called summer oils, kill by suffocation. These can be applied after the crawlers have emerged in late August and can be very effective in reducing the scale population. Be sure to obtain good coverage. Heavier dormant oils can also be applied in late fall before freezing weather and again in early spring before the flower buds swell to kill the overwintering nymphs located on the stems. Do not exceed the label rate, which is usually a 2 percent concentration of oil in the spray that is applied. Always follow label directions.

Insecticidal soaps are long chain fatty acids that kill susceptible insects through direct contact. They are only effective during the crawler stage and require direct coverage to be effective. For a big job - get help. Contact a professional landscaper or arborist, if you have a large tree and heavy infestation.



Bald-faced Hornet -
Image Wikipedia



Honeydew secreted by scale,
attracts ants and sooty mould
Image: The Spruce

For further reading:
[Magnolia Scale is Having a Good Year - Cornell](#)
[Magnolia Scale - MSU](#)
[Neolecanium cornuparvum - \(magnolia scale\)](#)



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Cathy Kavassalis
Halton Master Gardener



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"What's Growing On"

Halton Master Gardener Meetings continue to **be held virtually** until further notice. We are still accepting new members! Interested? Email **us!**

We are still answering your garden questions, so send us an email! It's what we do best! HaltonMasterGardeners@Gmail.com

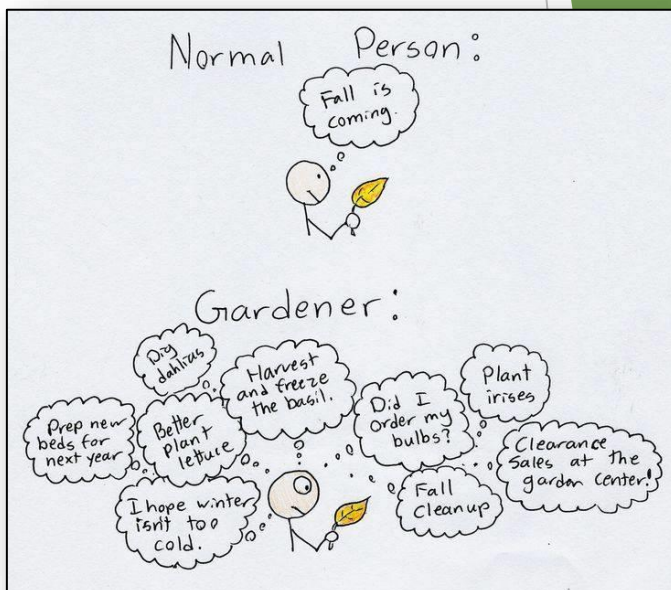


**Catch our Last CBC Radio
Online Chats of the season!**



[Halton Master Gardeners](#) Liza Drozdov, Patty King, Donna Parker and Claudette Sims team up with [Toronto Master Gardeners](#) Tina Cesaroni & Tena van Andel & Royal Botanical Garden experts Jon Peter & Alex Henderson to answer your garden questions. Send your own questions to us by Tweet to [@CBCHamilton](#) or via email to hamilton@cbc.ca

- Tuesday, Sept 8th
- Mondays, Sept 14, 21, 28.
- Grab a cuppa & join us!
- 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.



Webinars & Streaming Videos

[No Dig Gardening Method](#) for increased veggie yields & quality
[Sheet Mulching to Create New Gardens](#) (can be used for invasive plant/lawn removal)
[Smallest Compost Pile the World!](#)
[Mediocre Pizza and Illinois Cacti & Orchids](#) (Crime Pays Botany Doesn't series)
(Warning-contains **mature** language!)
[Top 10 DON'Ts when Growing Orchids](#) - tips for orchid beginners

BBC TV

[Gardeners World episode 19 2020](#)
[Gardeners World episode 22 2020](#)
[Gardeners World episode 23 2020](#)
[Gardeners World episode 24 2020](#)



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