

Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners

October Garden To Do List

Master Gardener Claudette Sims

- ❑ **Perennials** – [Divide or transplant overcrowded or underperforming perennials](#) as the weather cools & water in the new divisions well. For species specific instructions [consult this list](#). Leave perennials uncut for native bees and birds.
- ❑ **Lawn, Leaves & Weeds** - Rake or “mow” leaves and remove to garden beds. Leave some [leaves uncut for beneficial insects](#) and pollinators who overwinter in leaf litter. Keep on weeding as long as soil is workable. When mowing is done for the season, clean mower and sharpen blades.
- ❑ **Bulbs** – Continue to plant spring flowering bulbs such as crocus, tulip, hyacinth & daffodil now, until before freeze up of soil. Water bulbs after planting. Please do NOT plant [Scilla](#) as it spreads quickly, is extremely difficult to control and is in [Category 3](#) on the invasive plant list.
- ❑ **General Clean up** - shed, garage, patio, garden etc. Donate unused tools & repair, recycle or throw away broken items. Drain & store hoses & turn off water supply. Clean & store/cover pots, watering cans etc. to prevent cracking during freeze up. Cover ponds with netting before leaf fall or remove leaves in the pond with a bamboo rake.
- ❑ **Feed the Soil** - Empty your compost bin into gardens and cover bare soil with organic matter such as compost, leaves, straw, mulch or manure.
- ❑ **Garlic** – Plant from end of October to mid November up until ground freezes. Complete [details here!](#)
- ❑ **Young Trees** - Mulch young trees with wood chips. To reduce rodent & rabbit damage, use spiral tree guards & trim grass around tree.
- ❑ **Seeds** – Continue to collect seed for next year’s garden. **Prepare** containers for winter sowing of [vegetables](#) or [perennials](#). Grow butterflies by sowing seeds of their [larval host plants!](#) 😊
- ❑ **Houseplants** - Decrease watering as the days become shorter. Increase humidity by misting plants. Check for pests weekly.
- ❑ See our [September newsletter](#) for any garden jobs that you may have missed.



[New Jersey Tea](#) is a gorgeous shrub & the larval host of the Spring & Summer Azure butterflies.
Photo: [Bagley Pond](#) perennials

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Tree comedians walk into a bar...

How do trees get on Instagram?

They log in!



Why are trees so tall and thin?

They eat light!



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Our Favourite Plants: *Camassia scilloides* Wild Hyacinth

Master Gardener Pam MacDonald

In this occasional series on the favourite plants of Halton Master Gardeners, Pam MacDonald discusses *Camassia scilloides*.

We don't have a lot of native spring bulbs in Ontario. A lovely one we do have is the wild hyacinth. It is one of six species of *Camassia* native to north America and the only one native to Ontario. The others are found on the Great Plains and further west in British Columbia and the northwestern United States. You may know this plant by one of its common names – camas, quamash, Indian hyacinth or camash.



Photo from Canada species at risk public registry

In Ontario, only a few colonies of wild hyacinth remain, located on islands of the Pelee Archipelago in Lake Erie. Habitat has suffered tremendous damage done by cormorants. The good news is that the remaining population has been deemed viable and there is a restoration plan in place. As well, in other parts of its range, such as Illinois, it is not threatened.

In its native range, wild hyacinth can be found in a variety of habitats including prairies, savannas and open woodlands – as long as its requirements for rich soil and moist conditions can be met. The nectar attracts a variety of insects including bees, flies, butterflies and wasps. Bee visitors include honeybees, bumblebees, Cuckoo bees and Halictid bees. Some short-tongued bees also collect pollen.

I have some *Camassia* cultivars. Like the species, the cultivar will grow in less convivial conditions but the flowers are less abundant and high heat or low moisture will cause the leaves to yellow and wither prematurely. The plant has erect stalks, about 2 feet tall supporting a raceme of blue-violet flowers with bright yellow anthers. The obvious characteristics that differentiate it from wild hyacinth are the greater volume of leaves and reproduction by bulb offsets rather than reproduction by seeding, like the wildflower. The leaves on my cultivar wither and disappear by mid June. The flower shape and colour are so true to the form of the species wild hyacinth and so attractive to bees and flies in my garden that this cultivar is a keeper in my books!



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Seed Collection of Native Plants

Brenda Van Ryswyk – Terrestrial Ecologist, Conservation Halton

Last October, we included this article by Brenda Van Ryswyk, an ecologist. It was so useful that we are reprinting it this October and will include the second of the series on cleaning and storage of seeds next month. One of the best ways to begin adding native plants to your garden is to collect your own seeds. Thank you to Brenda for sharing this information.



Fall is the time to collect native seeds – but be sure to leave some to re-seed for next year's growth as well as enough to feed wildlife.

Collecting Native Seeds

- If collecting from a garden then feel free to take all or what you need, however it is great to leave some for birds and other wildlife to eat in the winter.
- Never collect more than 10% from a native wild population.
- If collecting from a planted (restored) site where the seed will be used for further restoration, then more than 10% can be collected, but do not collect more than 50%. Enough seed must be left to re-seed and for the wildlife to eat.

Collection Timing

- Collect seeds only after they are fully ripe.
- Wait for the stem with the seeds to fully go brown and dead.
- For some species you should wait until after a hard frost -many of our native grasses, and mountain mints especially!
- Seeds should fall off or come out of the seed head easily.
- Seeds should have no green (ripe seed is most often dark brown or black, but some species have light brown or white seed) and be fully hard and dry.

Document!

- Always keep track of the species, location and year.
- Write this information directly on the collection bag or on a piece of paper to go into the bucket with the seeds.
- Collect near where the seed will be grown & strive to keep seed as local as possible. Seeds should be shared within their geographic range, e.g. seed from Windsor will not grow as well in Kingston.



Using paper bags for seed collection allows the seed to dry out.



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Seed Collection of Native Plants – Cont'd

Brenda Van Ryswyk – Conservation Halton

Brenda's Collection Methods

- The method used to collect the seed will depend on the seed type/species you are collecting.
- Always try to collect only one species at a time and do not mix species (unless you want that mix for reseeding at the restoration site).
- It is best to collect after things have been dry for a few days to ensure seedheads are dry. Wet seedheads do not yield up their seeds very well at all.
- I typically will use a clean bucket or paper bag. I grab a seed head, tip it into the bucket/bag and give it a good shake.
- A hard sided bucket works best for species like Monarda and mountain mints as they have fairly hard seed heads with small seeds inside small tubes.
- Fluffy seeds like asters and goldenrods, I will shake into a bucket or a bag but often find holding the stems with one hand (with a bag over the inflorescence) and flicking a finger against the portion in the bag works quite well.
- Fluffy seed must be thoroughly dry before picking.
- Sometimes I collect asters by hand; plucking each seedhead off one at a time. This works well as sometimes asters grow in mixed bunches and picking by hand ensures I get only the species I want. I do this for New England Aster especially since it sometimes 'hangs on' to its seed a bit. It also has nice dense flowers so I can pluck quite a few seeds with each pick.



- Careful collection also means there is less chaff in with the seeds.
- For some species such as Echinacea you will have to clip the entire seed head and work to get the seeds out by breaking it apart.
- When possible collect in paper bags, and always transfer bucket collected seed to a paper bag as soon as possible. Paper 'breathes' and allows air flow. This is vital for the seeds to continue to dry after harvest. Seed stored in plastic will often go rotten, or have its viability lowered. For seed that is moist at the time of collection lay it out in a thin layer on a piece of cardboard or newspaper for at least a few days to allow it to dry out.

NEXT MONTH: CLEANING AND STORAGE OF SEEDS

Brenda Van Ryswyk grew up in the rural areas south of Ottawa and has been working with Conservation Halton for over 15 years as a Natural Heritage Ecologist. Her main job responsibilities include plant and wildlife inventories which is a great match for her love of the outdoors. Also an avid gardener, she has begun to promote the concept that our backyard landscaping can be functional (benefit our local wildlife) as well as beautiful. This means you can have a traditional looking home landscape while incorporating native plants. Being a bit of a research junkie, she is happy to share what she's learned and encourage others to do what they can to help local bees and butterflies.



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Question of the Month - Pumpkin Aftermath



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**What can I do with my Hallowe'en pumpkins?
Can I throw them in the woods for wildlife?**



Never dump anything into natural areas, including plants, weeds, prunings, seeds or pumpkins. Dumping plant material can smother delicate native plants or create a disturbed area that is then susceptible to invasion by non-native plants. Feeding wildlife in the woods or any natural areas is not advised and can even be problematic in your yard, especially where rats are an issue. In many areas feeding wildlife may be prohibited by law.

Here are some ideas to make best use of Hallowe'en pumpkins.

- Remove and roast the seeds. There are lots of [delicious recipes](#). Just search "roasting pumpkin seeds".
- Save the seeds to [grow your own pumpkins](#) next year. This is a great learning experience for children.
- If the pumpkin is still in good shape after Hallowe'en, use it in pies, soups, or muffins.
- Donate your pumpkin to an animal sanctuary or local farm as feed for animals. Make sure you contact them first and remove any items used for decoration, e.g. candles, wax, painted areas.
- Add it to your vegetable garden or compost and allow it to break down and enrich your soil.

Learn more:

[Feeding wildlife: dos and don'ts](#)
[61 Best Pumpkin Recipes](#)

[Peanut Butter and Pumpkin Dog Treats](#)



*Cathy Kavassalis & Claudette Sims
Halton Master Gardeners*

Wild pumpkins drained of their spice by illegal poachers. Please demand ethically sourced #PumpkinSpice lattes.



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“What’s Growing On”

Halton Master Gardener Meetings are still **being held virtually** using Zoom.

Fill in our [online contact form](#) if you’re interested in coming to a meeting, joining our group or requesting a speaker for your club or interested group.

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



Hamilton Naturalists' Club
Protecting Nature Since 1919

Hamilton Naturalists' Club calendar [here!](#)

October 2021

WEBINAR: Eco-Goats to the Rescue at HNC's Sheelah Dunn Dooley Nature Sanctuary

Mon, October 18, 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Description: Goats are an increasingly popular invasive plant management strategy. This summer, the HNC started a multi-year, innovative research project to study the effectiveness of goats versus people to manage invasive buckthorn shrubs at the Sheelah Dunn Dooley Nature Sanctuary.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83351442796> Passcode: 199072



Community Tree Planting Events

[Windermere Basin](#) – with Environment Hamilton/Trees Please

- Sat, October 16, 9:30am – 10:30 a.m.
- Register with Rachel Jones at events@hamiltonnature.org

[Sheelah Dunn Dooley Nature Sanctuary](#)

- Sat, 23 October, 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.
 - Register with Jen at land@hamiltonnature.org
- Detailed directions will be sent upon registration.



Bring water/gloves and shovels if possible.



Environment Hamilton is having a free tree giveaway for residents of the city of Hamilton **until October 6th at noon.** For more information visit their [website](#).

Free Tree Giveaway!



Live in Ward 1?
Request your tree here



Click here for tree options



Click here to request your tree