

# CROSS POLLINATION

Halton Master Gardeners Monthly Newsletter  
OCTOBER 2023 | VOL. 16 ISSUE 9

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Halton Region  
Master Gardeners



## Pearly Everlasting–Symbol of Immortality

By Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

Pearly everlasting (*Anaphalis margaritacea*) certainly lives up to its name! Pearly everlasting (PE) starts flowering early in July and can still have flowers into late November. This extended bloom period and its suitability as a dried flower have made it a symbol of immortality.

Early in the season, you may find that your PE looks quite tattered and that flowers and leaves are sadly folded over. Don't despair as this is likely the work of the caterpillars of the American lady or painted lady butterflies. They will of course eat the leaves, then can fold over the foliage or flowers, creating a safe space to pupate. Your PE will spring back to life once the caterpillar season is over.

The nectar-rich flowers attract a nonstop flurry of tiny and colourful native bees, beneficial wasps and pollinators. In the summer you can hear it buzzing with life! This symbol of immortality will undeniably nurture life in any garden.

### Growing Conditions and Range

PE has an extensive native range in Canada and is a member of the aster (*Asteraceae*) family, making it a [keystone plant](#). These native plants support higher numbers of insects, which in turn enables many birds to reproduce. PE loves to grow in sunny locations and is very drought and salt tolerant, making it a perfect plant along a sidewalk, driveway or boulevard. It can be quite 'successful' in your garden, so some may prefer to plant it in an enclosed garden space to limit spread. I find it fairly easy to pull out when it does spread and am happy to share seedlings with friends.

*Continued on next page*



**PEARLY EVERLASTING—SYMBOL OF IMMORTALITY (CONT'D)**

Stems topped with fluffy flowers grow much taller in mid-July, eventually reaching 20-70 cm. Giving PE a '[Chelsea chop](#)' in early July can keep it shorter and tidier, stopping it from flopping over.



Seen from above, the flowers look like a tiny bouquet and make delicate cut or dried flowers for your home.



PE's downy grey foliage pairs well with other plants. Consider butterfly milkweed, asters, [harebells](#), [nodding onion](#) or this stunning drought tolerant combo of PE and little bluestem grass.



Photo: Sean James

Grey foliage is often an indicator of a drought tolerant plant and I plan to grow PE in containers next year, to make watering easier and more sustainable. Placing colourful annuals in the centre and the PE around the edge may allow it to cascade down the sides of my taller pots.

While there are many reasons to grow PE, I love it because it sustains life. The buzzing of fascinating insects attracts my attention. I derive joy from the kaleidoscope of butterflies and bees it attracts. I value the work the wasps do to keep my garden in balance. I welcome the many birds that visit my garden looking for food. Diversity supports diversity and a diverse garden is a resilient one.



Tiny colourful sweat bee on pearly everlasting is a joy to behold. Photo J. Mackey



An [American Lady](#) laying her eggs on pearly everlasting. What can be better than growing butterflies in your garden!

Photo: Bob Noble, Brampton, ON

Photo credits are C. Sims unless otherwise noted





## OCTOBER GARDEN 'TO DO' LIST

By Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

- ☐ **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.
- ☐ **Feed the Soil** – Bare soil is subject to erosion and loss of moisture which destroy habitat for soil microorganisms. Empty your compost bin into gardens and cover bare soil with organic matter such as compost, leaves, straw, mulch or manure.
- ☐ **Trees** – Mulch young trees with wood chips. To reduce rodent & rabbit damage, use spiral tree guards & trim grass around the tree. Continue to water until freeze up.
- ☐ **Houseplants** – Move houseplants indoors or take cuttings and restart them. Decrease watering as the days become shorter. Increase humidity by misting plants. Check for pests weekly.
- ☐ **Tender [bulb overwintering](#)** – (e.g., caladium, calla lily, canna, dahlia, elephant ears, gladiolus) When the foliage dries or after first frost, dig up plants being careful not to damage the bulb. Clean off soil and dry bulbs for 1-3 days. Inspect for insects or disease. Store dried bulbs in a breathable container such as a cardboard box, leaf/paper bag. Arrange bulbs so they are not touching adding 3-6 cm (2-3") of sand, vermiculite, sawdust, or wood shavings between layers. Label and store in a dark location at 4-7°C.
- ☐ **Amaryllis** – place in a cool dark place to allow the plant to complete a required 8-10 week dormancy cycle.
- ☐ **Seeds** – Continue to collect seed for next year's garden. Prepare containers for [winter sowing](#) of perennials. Grow your own butterflies by sowing seeds of their [larval host plants](#)!

“Mystery object! Can you identify this fascinating & bizarre looking life form found in my garden? Feel free to [email](#) us with your answer. All will be revealed in our November issue!”



- Size: 7 cm across the top
- Mass: 102 g - feels quite heavy and solid
- Bottom looks like a potato!
- “Horns” are red-purple
- Found sunken in garden, ‘horn side up’

- ☐ **Garlic** – Plant from the end of October to mid-November, up until the ground freezes. More details on page 8!
- ☐ **Lawn & 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 the soil is workable. When mowing is done for the season, clean the mower and sharpen blades.
- ☐ **General Clean up** – shed, garage, patio, garden, etc. Donate unused tools & repair, recycle or throw away broken items. Drain & store hoses & turn off the 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.



## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE BOXWOOD BLUES

by Pam MacDonald, Halton Master Gardener

In the [September issue of Cross Pollination](#), the use and decline of boxwoods was discussed. Gardeners not ready to give up on their boxwoods were offered guidance and pointed to other sources of information on dealing with one of the issues afflicting boxwoods—the box tree moth.

As Master Gardeners, we focus on sustainable, environmentally-friendly gardening practices. With this in mind, we encourage using native species. To bridge the gap between what gardeners want and what wildlife needs, let's look at native evergreen and deciduous shrubs that make excellent boxwood replacements.

Our deciduous recommendations lose their foliage in winter but they make up for it with other aesthetic and ecological contributions to the landscape.

We also include some shrub-like herbaceous native plants. Dying back in the winter eliminates not only the challenge of clearing snow from driveways or sidewalks hemmed in by woody shrubs but also, for two of our plant picks, damage from de-icing salt.

Part of boxwood's appeal is its adaptability to a broad range of conditions. Substitutes may be more specific in their requirements. For example, plants that call for full sun will not have dense foliage if situated in shade. Plants that need consistently moist soil, if located on dry sites, may exhibit discoloured leaves and defoliation. When choosing a boxwood replacement, remember that putting the right plant in the right place is vital to a happy solution to the Boxwood Blues.

All of our suggested native plants are available at native plant nurseries and some are also available at garden centres. Please read the companion article, **Be an Informed Consumer & Gardener -p.10** before deciding what plants to buy and where to buy them.

### *Ilex glabra* (inkberry holly)

*Ilex glabra* is an evergreen holly native to eastern North America. In its natural habitat, it grows to three meters in height and is usually found in swamps and bogs. These adaptable, sun-loving plants prefer moist soil but will do well in average garden soil if well watered while they are getting established.

Like most other hollies, inkberry is dioecious. Unlike the holly we associate with Christmas, the leaves of inkberry do not have sharp thorn-like spines.

There are several selections of a cold-hardy inkberry (native to the maritime provinces and eastern United States) suited to the climate of southern Ontario. These selections are more compact than the species. There are also two dwarf cultivars that have been bred to mimic the appearance of boxwood.

[Read MORE information on PLANTS to replace Boxwood @HaltonMGs 'NEWS'](#)



Graphic: [Healthy Yards](#)

Continued on next page



**SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE BOXWOOD BLUES (CONT'D)**



*Ilex glabra* - inkberry holly



*Ilex verticillata* - winterberry holly



Image: [Proven Winners](#)



*Ceanothus americanus* - New Jersey tea



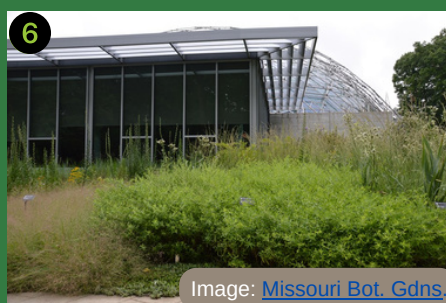
*Symphoricarpos albus* - snowberry



Image: [Oregon State](#)



*Hypericum kalmianum* -  
St. John's wort



*Symphytotrichum oblongifolium* -  
aromatic aster



*Baptisia australis* -  
blue false indigo



*Thuja occidentalis* - white cedar  
(dwarf cultivar)



*Taxus cupidata* - Japanese yew



*Itea virginica*  
Virginia sweetspire  
(dwarf cultivar)

Need more ideas? Check: [ALTERNATIVES GALLERY - LESS THAN 4'](#)

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## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE BOXWOOD BLUES (CONT'D)

## BOXWOOD ALTERNATIVES

| Botanical Name<br>Common Name<br>'Cultivar'                                                                                                                     | Evergreen<br>Deciduous<br>Herbaceous<br>Perennial | Native<br>Near native<br>Exotic<br>(N, Nn, E) | Mature Size                                                    | Growing<br>Conditions<br> 6+ Hrs.<br> 3-6 hrs<br> 3 or less hrs.<br> moisture Low- High | Features                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Habit/Care                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Uses                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. <i>Ilex glabra</i></b><br>Inkberry Holly<br>'Shamrock' or 'Gem Box'<br>'Strongbox' or 'Compacta'                                                          | E                                                 | Nn                                            | 80-100 cm h.<br>80-100 cm w.<br>*dependent on cultivar         | <br> → <br>acidic, adaptable                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evergreen</li> <li>Salt tolerant</li> <li>Dense, dark green foliage</li> <li>Black berries add winter interest</li> <li>Cover and nesting for birds</li> <li>Birds eat berries is present</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water well until established</li> <li>Pruning recommended.</li> </ul>                                                                                                     | Foundation, hedge                                   |
| <b>2. <i>Ilex verticillata</i></b><br>Winterberry Holly<br>'Berry Poppins' ('Mr. Poppins')<br>'Little Goblin'<br>'Little Goblin Guy'<br>wide range of cultivars | D                                                 | N, C                                          | 80cm - 200 cm h.<br>80cm - 200 cm w.<br>*dependent on cultivar | <br> → <br>adaptable to most soil                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attractive foliage turns yellow, sometimes maroon, in fall</li> <li>Bright red berries add winter interest</li> <li>Erosion control, food and shelter for birds</li> <li>Poorly drained soil, clay, air pollution</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Winterberry is dioecious</li> <li>Be sure to plant 1 male shrub for every 5 females from the same 'group' within 15 m of the female shrubs (i.e. Mr. Poppins).</li> </ul> | Rain gardens, hedges, foundation plantings          |
| <b>3. <i>Ceanothus americanus</i></b><br>New Jersey Tea                                                                                                         | D                                                 | N                                             | 1 m h.<br>1 m w.                                               | <br><br>adaptable to most soil conditions, but avoid poorly drained sites                                                                                                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bright green leaves, dense mounding form</li> <li>Fragrant clusters of small white flowers in summer</li> <li>Erosion control</li> <li>Nitrogen fixing</li> <li>Larval host to butterflies</li> <li>Nectar sources for bees</li> <li>Tolerant of drought, salt &amp; wind</li> </ul>                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect for first few years from browsing by rabbits with hardware cloth cylinder</li> <li>Prune early spring to shape and remove dead branches</li> </ul>                | Butterfly host plant<br>massing<br>low Hedge        |
| <b>4. <i>Symphycarpos albus</i></b><br>Common Snowberry                                                                                                         | D                                                 | N                                             | 125-150 cm h.<br>100-150 cm w.                                 | <br> → <br>adaptable to various soil conditions                                                                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grows quickly in some sites</li> <li>Blue-green, smooth oval leaves</li> <li>Summer flowering</li> <li>Clusters of tiny pinkish white flowers in summer followed by bright white berries</li> <li>Winter food for birds</li> <li>Nectar for bees and hummingbirds</li> <li>Larval host plant</li> <li>Tolerant of: drought, pollution, salt and poor quality soil</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grows best in a sheltered location</li> <li>Light pruning to shape in late winter/ early spring.</li> </ul>                                                               | Hedge, mass planting, mixed shrub border            |
| <b>5. <i>Hypericum kalmianum</i></b><br>Kalm's St Johns wort<br>(Pot -o-Gold, Aaron's Beard)                                                                    | D                                                 | N, C                                          | 60 - 100 cm h.<br>60-100 cm w.                                 | <br> → <br>well drained, sandy soils                                                                                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pollen is a source of protein for mature bumble bees and their larvae</li> <li>Drought tolerant and moderately salt tolerant</li> <li>Attracts butterflies</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prune to promote next year's flowers, maintain shape</li> <li>May need a clean-up of die-back in early spring</li> </ul>                                                  | Low hedge, mixed shrub borders, foundation planting |

Continued on next page



## SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO THE BOXWOOD BLUES (CONT'D)

## BOXWOOD ALTERNATIVES (Cont'd)

| Botanical Name<br><br>Common Name<br><br>'Cultivar'                                                                              | Evergreen<br>Deciduous<br>Herbaceous<br>Perennial | Native<br>Near native<br>Cultivar, Exotic<br>(N, Nn, C, E) | Mature Size                                                             | Growing Conditions<br><br>6 + Hrs.<br>3-6 hrs<br>3 or less hrs.<br>moisture                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Features                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Habit/Care                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Uses                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>6. <i>Symphytotrichum oblongifolium</i></b><br>Aromatic Aster<br>'October Skies'                                              | HP                                                | Nn, C                                                      | 30-100 cm h.<br>60-80 cm w.<br>dependent on<br>cultivar<br>fast growing |  <br> → <br>well-drained                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fragrant</li> <li>Delicate mounded shape</li> <li>Bursts with blue/purple blooms early fall in zone 6</li> <li>Attractive to bees and butterflies</li> <li>Tolerant of drought and poor soil, deer and rabbit</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cut/Pinch back 1/3 of the foliage <b>twice</b> before early summer, to maintain shape and foliage vigour</li> </ul>                                                                                                                              | Ground cover<br>mass planting<br>mixed shrub border                                       |
| <b>7. <i>Baptisia australis</i></b><br>Wild Blue Indigo                                                                          | HP                                                | Nn                                                         | 1.2 m h.<br>1.2 m w.                                                    |  <br> → <br>well-drained                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fast, reaches mature size and flowering in 2-3 years</li> <li>Fine textured blue-green foliage, showy flowers</li> <li>Nitrogen fixing</li> <li>Tolerant of drought &amp; salt</li> </ul>                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water to establish</li> <li>Prune to maintain size and shape after flowering</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          | Low hedge,<br>mixed shrub borders,<br>foundation planting                                 |
| <b>8. <i>Thuja Occidentalis</i></b><br>White Cedar<br>'Danica', 'Little Teddy',<br>'Mr. Bowling Ball',<br>'Little Giant'         | E                                                 | C                                                          | 0.5-1 m h.<br>0.5-1 m w.                                                |   <br> →  <br>well-drained                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dependent on cultivar foliage varies: blue, green or gold</li> <li>Threadlike, lacy, feathery or scale-like foliage</li> <li>Some cultivars change to a bronze colour in autumn</li> <li>Intolerant of salt, dry/drought conditions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prune to shape after new growth emerges (mid-spring)</li> <li>Many cultivars prefer afternoon shade</li> <li>If in exposed location, protect with burlap screen</li> </ul>                                                                       | Hedges,<br>foundation planting,<br>specimen,<br>formal garden                             |
| <b>9. <i>Taxus cuspidata</i></b><br>'Aurescens', 'Nana'<br>Japanese Yew<br><b><i>Taxus x Media</i></b><br>'HILLII'<br>Hills' Yew | E                                                 | E, C                                                       | 100-125 cm h.<br>125-175 cm w.                                          |   <br> →  <br>well-drained                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female plants have a fleshy, red aril</li> <li>New growth on 'Aurescens' cultivar are golden, contrasting with older green foliage</li> <li>Slow-growing</li> </ul>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prune to shape if desired</li> <li>Protect from drying winds in exposed locations</li> <li>All plant parts (except fleshy part of the fruit) are poisonous (including the seed in the fruit)</li> <li>Root rot can occur on wet sites</li> </ul> | Border,<br>hedge,<br>foundation planting,<br>topiary                                      |
| <b>10. <i>Itea virginica</i></b><br>Sweetspire<br>'Little Henry'<br>'Saturnalia'<br>'Merlot'                                     | D                                                 | Nn, C                                                      | 1-2 m & w. for species<br>50-125 cm h & w for cultivars                 |   <br> →  <br>well-drained<br>adaptable, acidic, clay, loam, sandy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fragrant narrow panicles in spring</li> <li>Flowers provide nectar for bees</li> <li>Beautiful fall colour</li> <li>Narrow arching branches</li> <li>Deer resistant and drought tolerant once established</li> </ul>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May need to remove suckers to obtain desired shape</li> <li>Water to establish</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        | Specimen,<br>hedge,<br>foundation,<br>mass plantings,<br>rain gardens,<br>erosion control |

Table: Janet Mackey

[Connect to the Halton MG 'NEWS' to read the entire article.](#)


## Growing Garlic (*Allium*)

by Olga Marranca, Halton Master Gardener

When I think about garlic, I think oven-roasted in olive oil, with warm brie on a crisp baguette! It takes a bit more to get to that point. In fact, garlic bulbs take almost a year growing underground, through snow cover, to become beautiful fat cloves in late summer or autumn.



Baked brie with fried garlic  
image: Steve Cavers CC BY

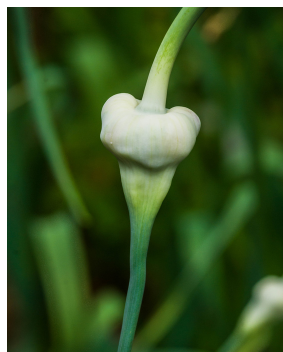
'Music' is a variety of hardneck garlic  
adapted for colder climates  
Image: Zach Dowell CC BY-NC-SA

Garlic grows best in well-drained, fertile soil. Twigs, stems and rocks will mar a bulb during its growth and could deform the bulb as it will grow slightly around the rock. Adding compost to the soil surface a few weeks prior to planting is a good idea and, used over the long term, will build soil [friability](#). A soil pH between six or seven is ideal.

In cold climates hardneck garlic (*Allium sativum*) varieties such as German Red and Music are cold hardy. Garlic is planted before the ground freezes. Here in zone 6a that's close to October 31st.

Save the largest cloves for planting. Individual cloves are taken apart carefully but not peeled. Place each clove, point up, at a depth of four times the length of the clove. Space them six inches apart to ensure that each stalk will have adequate airflow and sunlight.

Garlic does not do well in wet soil. Last season's leaf debris and any weeds should be removed from around the garlic stems to allow circulation.



Garlic scape producing seeds

In late spring or early summer, garlic produces a scape that grows up from the center of the bulb. When the scapes curl, pull them out or cut them off. If not removed, scapes will straighten out, become flowers, and form seed heads.

With the scape removed, the plant will focus on growing the bulb, not flowers and seeds.



[Everything you wanted to know about garlic scapes](#)



[Scape ready for removal](#)

The scapes are also delicious chopped up and fried in olive oil.

After the scapes are removed, bend the stalk over to keep the nutrients going to the bulbs.

When the stalks are dried out, it is time to dig the garlic out of the ground.

Take care when digging so that the cloves are not accidentally scarred with your spade. Dig deep and give a wide berth around each bulb.

Hang your cloves in a shady, well ventilated area for the bulbs to dry. For storing, keep them in a mesh bag in a cool, dark place, preferably whole until ready to use.





## Happy Fall, from the Cucurbit family

By Kirsten McCarthy, Halton Master Gardener

Gourds, pumpkins and squash adorn local farmer's markets and grocery stores in mid-September. Their muted beige and yellowish earth tones, weird bumps and scars with blasts of bright orange signal the start of sweater weather, and a sudden change in garden decor. I am often struck with wonder at all the variations of shapes, sizes and textures of these fruits. Just like apples, pear and tomatoes, the fruit of gourds develops from the flowering part of the plant and contains seeds. But, how can they all look so fantastically different from each other but belong to the same family?



The *Cucurbitaceae* family is a large group of 95 different genera and 965 species including squash, gourds, pumpkins, cucumbers, melons, luffa and zucchini. The edible fall plants that we are most familiar with—pumpkins and squash—belong to the *Cucurbita* (Latin for “gourd”) genus. But some decorative gourds are also found here. Gourds, pumpkins and squash are often grown for different purposes and this use may be the easiest way to differentiate them.

### Gourds vs. Squash

Both pumpkins and squash are gourds, but the term “gourd” is used to describe both specific varieties of ornamental gourds for decoration, as well as the parent category of the cucumber family. One way we distinguish between the two is that gourds are usually grown for decoration or crafts ([birdhouse gourds](#)), while squash are cultivated primarily for fall favourite foods such as [Butternut Squash Soup](#).

### Squash vs. Pumpkins

All pumpkins are squash, but not all squash are pumpkins. A pumpkin is a winter squash that has unique characteristics. The most crucial distinction between pumpkins and squashes is the size.



Pumpkins often weigh 50 pounds or more, (with farmers frequently entering contests to win the coveted prize of largest pumpkin) while squashes usually weigh between one to three pounds.



Pumpkins also have a thicker skin and orange flesh (although there are pumpkins with white flesh too - called Ghost Pumpkins) while squashes' flesh is often yellow or green. The term “pumpkin” is really a word people use to describe a round orange squash that is carved at Halloween or pureed to make pumpkin pie.

Regardless of how you use your gourds this October, enjoy the bounty of the textures, colours and flavours that these fruit from the *Cucurbitaceae* family have to offer.



## On being an informed and satisfied consumer – and gardener

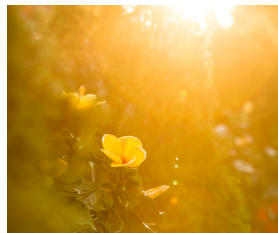
Pam MacDonald - Halton Master Gardener

Following the gardening adage, *the right plant in the right place* (coined by British gardener [Beth Chatto](#) in the 1960s) goes a long way to being a happy gardener with a beautiful healthy garden. There has never been a better time than now, faced with the loss of boxwoods as a gardening staple, to embrace this tried-and-true principle.

For plants to perform as advertised, it is important to locate them where their requirements can be met. To do this, assess your garden or areas of your garden against these commonly used terms that describe growing conditions and plant requirements.

### Light

- Full sun: 6 to 8 hours of direct sun
- Part sun/ part shade: 4 to 6 hours of direct sun



- Dappled shade: diffuse light through a fairly open tree canopy such as a birch tree
- Full shade: less than 4 hours of direct sun, but receiving some direct sun
- Deep/dense shade: no direct sunlight

### Soil Texture and Moisture

- Light soil is easily worked because of its high sand content. Water drainage is fast.
- Typically, this soil is on the dry side and relatively low on nutrients.
- Heavy soil is difficult to work with because of its high clay content that holds onto water, but it is generally high in nutrients.



- In between is loamy soil that is ideal for gardening. It is loose, drains well but not so quickly that nutrients are leached.

- Soil moisture depends on soil texture, topography and rainfall. Moisture levels are described as dry, medium/average, moist or wet.
- Here is an excellent [article describing simple at-home tests](#) to perform to understand the soil texture and moisture you have to work with.



*Lions and Tigers and Bears, oh my—species, selections, clones and cultivars are potential problems*

### Species, Selection, Clones, and Cultivars

Equally important is knowing what you are buying. Good gardeners are like good physicians—they do no harm. At the very least, avoid invasive plant species. If it seems too good to be true, that is, spreads quickly in tough locations in your garden, it may be invasive. English ivy and periwinkle, Japanese honeysuckle, barberry, and phragmites are notable examples of invasive exotic landscape plants that have escaped gardens and are doing great harm to our forests and wetlands.

The following terms will help you understand the exact nature of what you are purchasing and planting in your garden

### Native, near native, exotic

- **Native:** plants that are indigenous to a given region that have developed, occur naturally or existed in a region since pre-colonial times
- **Near native:** native plants of one region that have been introduced (by humans) into an adjacent region

*Continued on next page*



## ON BEING INFORMED (CONT'D)

- **Non native/exotic:** plants introduced from distant regions. Boxwood, for example, is an exotic species imported from another continent. It is not invasive but it has become ubiquitous. It does no harm but, frankly, does not contribute to healthy ecosystems.
- **Species:** Naturally occurring form of a plant (More Info: [Plant Taxonomy](#))
- **Selections:** In horticultural terms, a selection is the offspring of a wild plant chosen for specific desirable characteristics such as a smaller size or denser foliage. These selected plants are then mass produced vegetatively and as such are genetically identical. They retain the ecologically valuable characteristics of the species but they lack biological diversity that occurs when plants reproduce in the wild.
- **Cultivars and Nativars:** Plants, whether exotic or native, can be modified by humans to create cultivars ("cultivated varieties") that promote characteristics not found in the naturally occurring plant. In native plants these are sometimes called "nativars". Traits such as different coloured foliage and/or flowers are commonly altered. They may be altered to suppress other characteristics such as seed production. These genetically engineered plants DO NOT interact with ecosystems in the same way as the species they are based on. The impact on their ecological value is not fully understood but in many cases the changes are known to disrupt the plant's relationships with other organisms.

- **Clones:** Growing new plants from plant parts such as the stems, roots or leaves is called vegetative reproduction. These plants are clones of the parent plant with identical genetic make up. A lot of plants can be produced this way quickly. Some native species have already become so mainstream that they are being offered by garden centres and big box stores. Be aware that if being produced in large numbers for high volume plant retailers, these plants are likely clones.



*Some plants can be cloned by taking cuttings*

- **Ecological attributes of native plants:** Many species of butterflies and moths have special relationships with specific plants. The monarch and milkweed is the best known example. When a plant is essentially the nursery for a species of butterfly, moth or other insect it is a **larval host plant**.
- **Habitat:** The critical elements of habitat for birds, bees and other wildlife are food, water, nesting sites, and cover from weather and predators. Native plants evolved over thousands of years to support native wildlife in a complex web of interdependent relationships.
- **Nitrogen fixing:** Such plants are valued for their ability, through a symbiotic relationship with a specific soil bacterium, to convert essential nitrogen from the atmosphere into a form that plants can absorb.



***Physocarpus opulifolius** (common ninebark) leaves on left, were genetically altered to create the purple-leaved **Physocarpus opulifolius 'Diablo'** on right. Changing leaf colour has been found to negatively affect their value to insects. For details read: [Are native cultivars as valuable to pollinators as native species?](#)*

[Watch "Blue Jays Plant More Trees Than Squirrels"](#)





By Hariette Henry, Halton Master Gardener

Judging by the stickiness and dark colour of the leaf in your photo, it is most likely [sooty mould](#).

This fungal disease's name comes from the dark, threadlike growth (mycelium) that resembles a layer of soot. Sooty mould is unsightly but it does little harm to the leaves at the end of the season, when leaf drop will occur naturally. In the summer, however, it can damage the plant by coating the leaves and stems to the point where sunlight can't reach the leaf surface. Without adequate sunlight, the plant's ability to carry out photosynthesis is reduced, which can stunt its growth. It should be noted that sooty mold doesn't infect plants but rather it grows *on* plants, especially leaves and other surfaces that are covered in honeydew.

Honeydew is a sweet, sticky liquid excreted by sap-feeding insects such as aphids, mealybugs, soft scales and leafhoppers, and it is produced while the insects are feeding on the tree's sap. Because these insects can't completely digest all the nutrients they take in, they assimilate what they need and excrete the rest as waste (honeydew). Wherever honeydew lands—leaves, twigs, fruit, yard furniture, concrete, sidewalks, parking lots or cars—sooty mold can grow. Your goal should be to manage sooty mold by reducing the populations of sucking insects present on your plant.

New, tender growth is preferred by these insects so this is usually a good place to confirm their presence and identity. Once colonies are found [numbers can increase quickly if no action is taken](#).

“Our catalpa tree has a blight of some kind. It's dropping its leaves and they are sticky. Any idea what this is?”

Avoid using pesticides which will kill non-target beneficial insects. The following [cultural practices](#) can be used to manage insect pest populations.

- Keep plants healthy. Plants with adequate supplies of nutrients, water, and light can fend off troublesome insects more easily. Most plants will tolerate a small insect population and light amounts of sooty mould.
- Avoid over-fertilizing, particularly with nitrogen. New growth attracts sucking insects, especially aphids.
- Prune off badly damaged foliage
- In some situations, a good stream of water can be used to dislodge problem insects.
- Grow native plants and trees. They are naturally suited for the conditions in your garden and can better resist pest insects.
- Encourage natural pest predators such as ladybugs, lacewings, parasitic wasps, and syrphid flies.
- Grow plants that attract and foster beneficial insects, such as native plants or yarrow, sweet alyssum and herbs in the carrot family.
- Tall, heavily infested trees may be hard to treat without special equipment. For infestations bad enough to threaten the health of a tree, you may want to hire a licensed arborist.

Finally, consider *ants* in the effort to manage honeydew-producing insects. Ants are attracted to and use honeydew as food. They will therefore protect honeydew-producing insects from predators. It is also true that ants are profoundly important insects and they [play an important role in the ecosystem](#).



Image: Susan Taylor





# Garden Information

## OAK WILT

### WHAT IS IT?

- Oak wilt is a disease caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum*
- Red oaks are particularly susceptible, resulting in tree death within a single season
- Oak wilt is spread naturally through root grafts or beetles carrying fungal spores
- Oak wilt does not affect human or animal health

### WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

- Dull green, brown or yellow leaves
- Cracks in the trunk
- White, grey or black fungus
- Early and sudden leaf drop



[Oak Wilt](#)

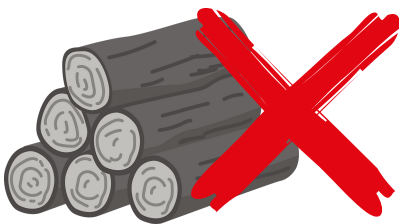
### HOW IS IT SPREAD

- Above-ground: Nitidulid beetles or bark beetles carry spores of the fungus from spore mats on infected trees to wounds on healthy trees during feeding or breeding
- Below-ground: The fungus travels through the interconnected roots of infected and healthy trees growing in close proximity

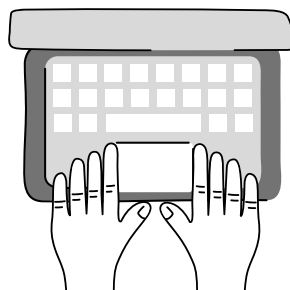
OAK WILT has been found in Niagara and Simcoe County in 2023

If a tree MUST be pruned due to storm damage in spring, summer or fall, latex paint can be applied to wounds to minimize the chance of the fungus spreading (must be done within 15 minutes of cuts or damage).

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?



**DO NOT** transport firewood!



**REPORT** to the [Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#)

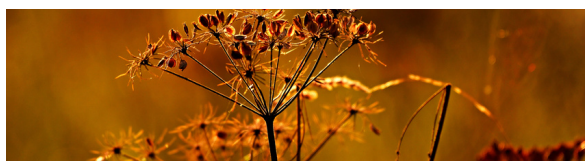


**DO NOT** prune oak trees from Apr. 1st- Nov. 30th (bud break to leaf drop).

# What's Growing On?



## Plant Walk and Seed Collection



Thursday, October 12, 2023

10 AM to 11:30 AM

[Learn more here.](#)

## Forest Walk at Bronte Creek Park



Tuesday, October 17, 2023

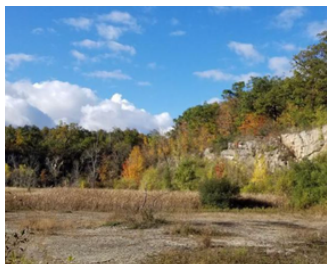
12:30 PM to 3:00 PM

[Learn more here](#)

## Nature Parks and Hiking Places in Halton Region



Mount Nemo



Kerncliff Park

[Learn more here](#)



## Self-Guided Tour of Rain Gardens on Barton Street, Hamilton



[Learn more here](#)

## Pumpkins After Dark



Country Heritage Park, Milton  
On until October 31, 2023

[Learn more here](#)



Featuring 10,000 +  
hand-carved pumpkins.



# What's Growing On?



Royal  
Botanical  
Gardens



[The Great Pumpkin Trail](#)



[After Dark: Boos & Brews](#)

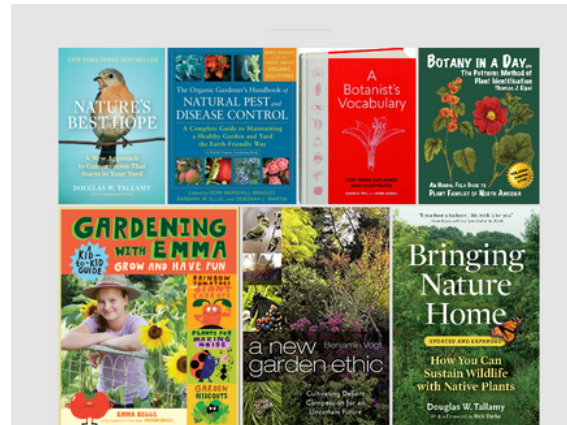


[What's In Bloom?](#)



[Tea in Hendrie Park](#)

Some great resources appreciated and enjoyed  
by Halton Master Gardeners



[Learn more here](#)



Check our [calendar](#) for events

Come Grow With Us



Halton Region Master Gardeners

*Come Grow with Us*

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[Learn more here](#)

## About Our Newsletter

Cross Pollination is published monthly from February to December and is written and prepared by our dedicated volunteers. Halton Master Gardeners are experienced gardeners who have studied horticulture extensively and continue to upgrade their skills through technical training. We strive to provide science-based, sustainable gardening information to the general public. The information in our newsletter has been verified by our volunteers to the best of our abilities, but given the scope of horticulture and science some concepts may not reflect current knowledge. The content displayed in our newsletter is the intellectual property of Halton Region Master Gardeners and their authors. It can be shared in its entirety, but specific content should not be reused, republished or reprinted without the author's consent.

Copy Editor: Isabel Belanger

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