

CROSS POLLINATION

Halton Master Gardeners Monthly Newsletter
JUNE 2026 | VOL. 19 ISSUE 5

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Halton Region
Master Gardeners



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Prairie Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla nuttalliana*)

By Tinamarie Jones, Halton Master Gardeners

Prairie Pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla nuttalliana* or *Anemone patens*) is one of those rare native beauties that asks for very little yet gives a garden a great deal in return. Easy to grow in a sunny, well-drained spot, it rewards gardeners with silky, cup-shaped blooms that appear exceptionally early in the season, sometimes before the snow has fully disappeared. Although it is not usually classed as a spring ephemeral, its eager flowering makes it one of the first signs that winter is loosening its grip. With its quiet charm, toughness, and value to early pollinators, this is a plant worth welcoming into almost any garden.

A brief note on naming is helpful, because Prairie Pasqueflower has long challenged botanists and gardeners alike. Readers may encounter both *Anemone patens* and *Pulsatilla nuttalliana* used interchangeably. Part of the confusion arose because some treated *Pulsatilla* as part of the larger genus *Anemone*, leading to the widespread use of *Anemone patens*. Later taxonomic work argued that the North American plant is distinct from the typical Eurasian taxon and is better recognized in the genus *Pulsatilla* under the name *Pulsatilla nuttalliana*.

The picture is further complicated for gardeners by the fact that the pasqueflower most often sold in garden centres and seed catalogues is usually the European species *Pulsatilla vulgaris*.

Continued on next page

PRAIRIE PASQUEFLOWER (*PULSATILLA NUTTALLIANA*) CONT'D

Comparing the European *Pulsatilla vulgaris* with our native species, our native is found less often in mainstream horticulture; so many consumers first meet pasqueflowers through the non-native European species rather than the North American one.

This herbaceous perennial also carries a surprisingly rich collection of common names including Prairie Pasqueflower, American Pasqueflower, Easter Flower, Gosling Flower, Sandflower, and Prairie Crocus, along with regional names such as windflower. Of these, Prairie Crocus is especially familiar to gardeners on the Canadian prairies, even though the plant is not a true crocus at all but a member of the buttercup family. The name Pasqueflower connects back to the Old French word for Easter, Pasque, and refers to its Easter-season bloom time, while Prairie Pasqueflower remains perhaps the clearest and most descriptive name for the North American native plant. It is interesting to note that this flower is the provincial flower of Manitoba.



[Floral Emblem of Manitoba](#)

Best grown in full to part sun and in well-drained sandy or even rocky soil, Prairie Pasqueflower is especially well suited to rock gardens, prairie plantings, open slopes, boreal woodlands, and other sites where it can settle undisturbed.

The plant begins the season with softly hairy stems and buds, followed by silky, bell- to cup-shaped flowers in shades of lavender to blue-violet, sometimes so pale as to seem almost white, each centred with a bright cluster of yellow stamens with a light green centre. The flowers are 1-2 inches long and the flower petals are actually sepals with pointed tips and parallel veining. The flowers usually have 5-7 colourful sepals.

A whorl of 3 finely cut leaves emerges just below the flowers. These leaves are palmately compound and divided into fairly narrow segments. Additional basal foliage emerges after the flowers bloom; these leaves are on long stems and are deeply divided, fern-like, and often remain attractive well into the season, with their silvery hairs giving the whole plant a soft sheen.



Image: [Byerley, M. Brooke](#)

As flowering passes, the stems lengthen and the plant develops distinctive feathery seedheads that are every bit as decorative as the blossoms. Each seed carries a long, silky plume that helps it travel on the wind and may also help it twist toward the soil as moisture and drying cause the seed tail to move. This feathery plume, the remainder of the flower style, is typically 1.5 inches long. The seeds themselves are small – only 3-5 millimetres long and spindle-shaped. The seeds are brown in colour and are covered in white hairs.

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PRAIRIE PASQUEFLOWER (*ANEMONE PATENS* OR *PULSATILLA NUTTALLIANA*) CONT'D



Sources do not speak with a single voice regarding propagation of this plant. Some state that propagation is usually most successful from fresh seed. Once established, these plants generally resent disturbance, transplanting, or division, as they develop a deep root system which includes a long taproot. Other sources note that propagation via seed is challenging and encourage gardeners to propagate via clump division or via root cuttings. The plant is drought tolerant.

In ecological terms, Prairie Pasqueflower is important as a very early pollen source for native bees that visit the blooms in cool spring weather. It does not appear to be a plant on which many animals rely exclusively, but in prairie and open woodland habitats it helps fill an important seasonal gap by offering food when little else is flowering. Its low growth may also provide some shelter near the ground for small invertebrates. Like many members of the buttercup family, it is not usually favoured by browsing animals. The sap of the plant is considered irritating to the skin, and the fresh plant should be considered toxic if eaten.

In the garden, Prairie Pasqueflower is generally a healthy, long-lived perennial when grown in an area with full sun or part shade and excellent drainage. Its chief problems tend to arise in wet or heavy soils, where crown rot and root rot can threaten established plants. Occasional foliar issues, such as powdery mildew, may also appear if plants are overcrowded, stressed, or grown with too little air movement. Given the right conditions, however, it is usually a resilient and trouble-free choice.


For gardeners looking to bring more native character into their landscapes, Prairie Pasqueflower is a plant well worth considering. Its luminous early flowers, soft textures, and ornamental seedheads give it a quiet beauty that rewards close attention.


NAME OF PLANT - DETAILS AT A GLANCE

	DAPPLED SUN	FULL SUN
	MEDIUM	DRY

Plant Type, Family: Herbaceous perennial, Buttercup Family *Ranunculaceae*.
Height/Width: (H) 1.25-2.5 cm (.5-1')
 (W) 1.25-2.5 cm (.5-1')
Features: Softly hairy stems and buds, followed by silky, bell, to cup-shaped flowers.
Faunal Value: Early source of pollen and nectar for emerging native bees, honeybees, and hoverflies. Seed-eating birds (American Goldfinch) eat the feathery seeds of the plant during their summer migrations. Ground squirrels and grazing deer and elk are undeterred by the plant's natural toxins.
Companion Plants: Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*), Jacob's Ladder, Dotted Blazing Star (*Liatris punctata*) & Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*). Short prairie grasses for dry settings.
Landscape Uses: Well-draining sandy or rocky soil. Woodlands, shade gardens, groundcover.
Native Range: Yukon, Alberta, Nunavut, BC, Manitoba, NWT, Sask., & Ontario.

Supports





VASCAN

Its toughness and modest size make it easy to place in many sunny settings. Whether tucked into a rock garden, woven through a prairie-style planting, or featured where its first blooms can be enjoyed at the very start of spring, this lovely perennial brings a special kind of charm that lingers long after the flowers have faded.

Resources:

- [Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
- [Missouri Botanical Gardens](#)
- [US Department of Agriculture](#)
- [Plants of the World](#)



JUNE GARDEN 'TO DO' LIST

By Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

- Perennials and Bulbs** – Stake and support tall plants (e.g., peonies, sunflowers, delphiniums). Some perennials such as [ironweed](#), [asters](#), [goldenrods](#), [monarda](#), and [penstemon](#) will benefit from a "[Chelsea chop](#)". Do this before they form buds to produce denser, sturdier plants with more blooms. Divide tulips, [fall crocus](#) and other bulbs once the leaves have died.
- Veggies** – Ensure climbing vegetables are staked, including tomatoes, cucumbers and pole beans. Mound **potatoes** to maximize production and protect tubers from sun exposure. Avoid blossom end rot by watering **tomatoes** regularly. Pinch side shoots (suckers) on indeterminate tomatoes. When soil is consistently warm, direct sow heat-loving crops such as **corn**, **beans**, **squash and cukes**. Harvest mature **peas** to ensure ongoing pod production. Grow **herbs** near the kitchen for easy access. Grow invasive mints and oregano in containers to prevent spread. Add these [native flowers](#) to attract beneficial insects to your vegetable patch.
- Fruit** – Remove the tip of black raspberry canes to increase fruit size. Set out [apple maggot traps](#) to capture small fruit flies that attack apples, plums, pears, and cherries.
- Compost** – Use compost to mulch garden beds and trees. Turn your compost pile and water it if dry. Read more about composting at [this link](#).
- Water** newly planted trees and plants regularly; water lawn and existing trees less frequently but deeply. Potted plants will need more frequent watering. Use soaker hoses for [water wise gardening](#).
- Weeds** – Hand pull or dig weeds to prevent seed formation. An approved herbicide containing iron in the form of [FeHEDTA](#) can be used for problem areas or weeds such as Creeping Charlie or invasive thistles..

“ I build tiny jars from mud and clay,
Then tuck my wriggling prey away.
I'm striped and swift, but not a bee—
A careful mason small as can be.
What am I? ”



- 'Pests'** – Whenever possible, resist the urge to reach for a pesticide so that predatory insects have a chance to feed on insect pests. **Japanese beetles** appear in June. Hand pick, knock into a bucket of soapy water, or use a hand vacuum to suck them up! **Aphids** can be squished or knocked off plants using a strong spray from your garden hose. Make this totally non-toxic [mosquito trap](#) that will attract female mosquitoes and reduce overall numbers without killing the world! Reduce **earwig** numbers with [traps](#); leave them in the garden where earwigs are present, e.g., paper rolled up like 'straws' and secured with masking tape. Each day, tap the paper straw against a bucket of soapy water to empty it. Replace the traps and repeat. **Squash bug** control—all you need is duct tape and this [cool video](#)! **Hydrangeas** may be affected by [leaf rollers](#) and [hydrangea leaf tiers](#). Keep in mind the damage is minor and insects are an important part of our ecosystems. If they are a concern simply cut off the affected parts or squish the caterpillar. Learn how to reduce the numbers of slugs and snails by using [traps](#) and changing [cultural conditions](#) in your garden.

- For more information on dealing with 'pests' in the garden, read [Page 5!](#)



Image: homegroandadjokes on IG



Finding Harmony in the Garden: An Informed Approach to Animal ‘Pests’

Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

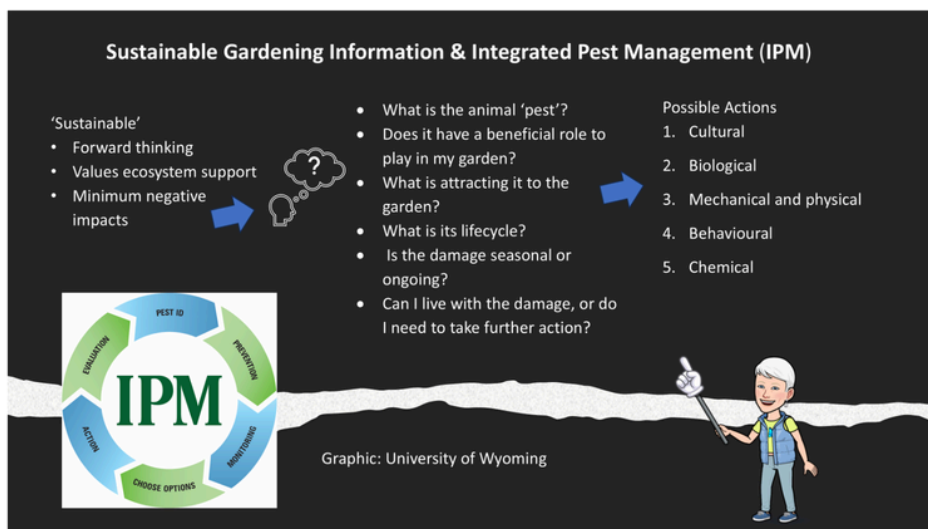
Spring gardening season often brings renewed questions from Ontario gardeners struggling with various animal pests in gardens. We always recommend learning to live with and enjoy nature, however, options are provided for addressing serious infestations.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is the best approach to managing perceived pests in the garden. This is an ecosystem-based strategy that focuses on long-term prevention of all pests (including weeds) or their damage through a combination of techniques. It begins by assessing the risk posed by the pest and determining if any action is really required. A gardener may decide they can live with the problem or they may decide that action is needed. Once the gardener decides the threshold for action is met, an effective pest management program uses the best combination of five basic treatments:

1. Cultural
2. Mechanical and physical
3. Biological
4. Behavioral
5. Chemical

Questions to Ask before Committing to Action:

- What is the animal ‘pest’? Always ensure you have an accurate ID before proceeding.
- Does it play a beneficial role in my garden?
- What is attracting it to the garden?
- What is its lifecycle and is this going to be a transient problem or a perennial issue? E.g., there may be more damage in spring when animals have young to feed or in the fall when animals are building fat reserves for winter.
- What is the nature of the damage, and do I need to take further action?
 - Is it “cosmetic” damage to ornamental plants, e.g., leaves of tulips being eaten, a lawn being dug for grubs? If so, consider changing cultural practices and using deterrents.
 - Is it physical damage to your home/property or is the damage preventing your family from being fed? If so, further action or hiring a professional may be required.



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Finding Harmony in the Garden: An Informed Approach to Animal ‘Pests’ Cont’d

Let’s Take a Closer Look at Individual Animals

Misunderstood, Helpful, and Occasionally Startling!

Snakes are very beneficial in the garden and help to control the population of pests. They are very effective against mice and rats. Gardeners are urged not only to tolerate, but encourage their presence.



Opossum - While quite scary looking, [opossum](#) are very gentle, harmless creatures. They eat small rodents, insects, cockroaches, worms, slugs and snails, frogs and birds. They are very beneficial in the garden as they also eat ticks, which can carry Lyme disease.



Cute, Clever, and Completely Untrustworthy!

Chipmunks, squirrels and raccoons - While they can do some damage in the garden, chipmunks, squirrels and raccoons can consume quantities of invasive LDD/spongy moth pupae. LDD/spongy moth caterpillars are invasive pests which eat the foliage of trees and cause serious damage. Chipmunks even favour the female pupae of LDD moths, reducing potential caterpillar populations. Chipmunks also eat baby mice and may be essential in keeping rodent populations in check.



[Spongy moth](#)
(*Lymantria dispar*)

Hungry and Persistent, but Part of Nature!

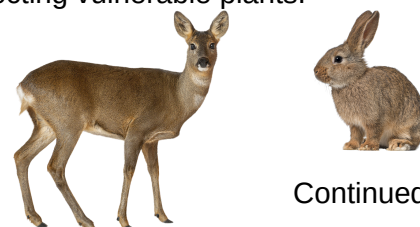
Voles and Moles: Voles are plant-eaters that feed on roots, bulbs, and stems, while moles are insect-eaters that primarily consume grubs, worms, and other small animal matter. Their tunnels and runways may look dramatic, but most of the damage is cosmetic and usually appears in spring. Both animals can help aerate and enrich soil, reducing compaction. They also play an important role in the food web, serving as prey for owls, hawks, foxes, coyotes, snakes, weasels, marten, and other wildlife.



Skunks are shy animals that can actually help gardeners by feeding on mice, white grubs, armyworms, [European hornets](#), Japanese beetle grubs, slugs, and snails. Since they cannot climb, simple barriers along fence lines are often effective. Motion lights, noise (such as a loud radio), and strong smells may also discourage them. Some gardeners place apple cider vinegar-soaked rags in perforated bags near entry points. Patience is important, as it can take several weeks for skunks to move along.



Rabbits and Deer - Deer and rabbits can be a real challenge in the garden, especially when tender new growth appears in spring. However, they are also a natural part of our ecosystems and an important part of local food webs. The good news is that they can’t climb, so fencing, along with smell and taste deterrents, can be very effective at protecting vulnerable plants.



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Finding Harmony in the Garden: An Informed Approach to Animal ‘Pests’ Cont’d

These are a definite NO in the Garden!

Rats - Because they are nocturnal you may not see them in your garden. Look for greasy marks/feces that they leave behind. They are attracted by water and food, including garbage and pet food, so removing food and bird seed can help reduce numbers.



Cats are challenging as they can easily climb over fences. Feral and outdoor cats are carnivores and a major cause of bird deaths. Cat feces can contain parasites or pathogens not present in herbivore manure and are a concern in veggie gardens. Many municipalities now have bylaws that prohibit owners from allowing their cats to roam.



Strategies and Solutions

In most cases, living with wildlife and allowing some minimal damage is the appropriate response. If you can’t live with the damage, then consider the following:

Change Your Cultural Practices

Reduce attractants: Remove food sources that attract the animal pest, e.g., bird feeders, bread left out for birds, compost, pet food left outside, unsecured garbage. Note: bread should never be left out for birds as it causes health issues such as obesity & malnutrition and is more likely to attract rats. Garbage – use containers with lids that lock. Don’t place them outside until garbage day.

Lawns and grubs – Moles, skunks and raccoons may be attracted to your lawn to eat grubs. This happens most often in spring or fall when animals are hungry or need to build up fat reserves for winter. Keep in mind that this damage is often cosmetic and easily repaired when you reseed and feed the lawn. Reduce grubs in the lawn by using [good cultural practices](#), e.g., water deeply but less frequently, mow high (6-8 cm), or even reduce your lawn area. While nematodes may be used to reduce grub populations, keep in mind that they will kill a number of other insects such as beneficial beetles or fireflies whose larvae eat snails and slugs. For that reason, I no longer recommend using them.

Plant selection - Choose plants that are odour repellents (e.g., lavender, garlic) or not attractive to pests. Here are some great native plant suggestions that are resistant to [deer and rabbits](#).



This native nodding onion is a great pollinator plant that is resistant to animal browsing. The pleasant mauve flowers make a great border plant to deter animal pests.

Photo: C. Sims

Seal off foundations and the area under decks with skirting, heavy mesh or bricks to prevent skunks and raccoons from digging and making a den under buildings or porches.

Pull **mulch** away from trees & ornamentals to deter voles from chewing. Use tree guards to protect smaller trees from damage.

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Finding Harmony in the Garden: An Informed Approach to Animal ‘Pests’ Cont’d

Rethink Your Garden Area

Consider what there is for chipmunks, squirrels and other small animals to eat in your garden. Gardens planted exclusively in exotic specimen plants and mulch will certainly suffer from some herbivory.



This garden provides little food for critters and forces them to eat anything they can find.

Add [native groundcovers](#) or plants that could function as alternative food sources that you'd be happy to share. As an example, wild strawberries make a nice ground cover and border.

When you are pruning, use the [chop and drop](#) method to return some plant material to the garden. This provides food in two ways: critters may nibble on the stems instead of your plants; “chop and drop” creates habitat for insects which in turn provides food for those potential problem critters. You can also discard veggie trimmings from the kitchen at the back of your perennial beds to supplement their food sources.

Biological Practices

Invite beneficial predators and parasites into your garden by creating refuges for predators, e.g., snakes and birds to control rodents, coyotes and foxes to keep squirrel & rabbit populations in balance.

Note that shifting species prevalence can have unintended consequences and should be approached cautiously. E.g., removing a predator may cause other animal populations to increase dramatically causing further problems.

Behavioral Practices

- **Scare techniques** can deter mammals from coming to your garden, e.g., scarecrows, noise makers, motion triggered light or water spray.
 - [Jet water sprayers](#) are activated by motion sensors and can deter chipmunks & deer but may not be as effective with other animals such as raccoons. Place these where animals enter the garden area and move them frequently.
 - Borrowing a dog can be effective.
 - Plastic snakes: There is anecdotal evidence that plastic snakes may deter certain animals like squirrels and chipmunks. Move them around often.

Deter Cats

Cats prefer loose soil to bury their feces. Placing “prickly” plant cuttings in the problem area (e.g., prunings from roses or junipers, pine cones) *may* deter cats from using your garden as a litter box or stalking birds under the feeder.

Cats mark their territory by spraying urine, which can attract other cats. Clean affected areas with your garden hose. Eco-friendly castile soap can be used in problem areas.

Give Chipmunks Water

Anecdotal evidence suggests chipmunks may actually be looking for a water source when they nibble on your tomatoes. Try providing a shallow water supply in the garden that chipmunks can access.



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Finding Harmony in the Garden: An Informed Approach to Animal 'Pests' Cont'd

Mechanical or Physical Practices

Barriers can be an effective long-term solution for recurring animal pest problems, e.g., fences, root barriers, screens, or coarse mulches.

Create cylinders around plants such as tomatoes using 1/2" x 1/2" steel hardware mesh. It's quite rigid and holes are small enough to deter **chipmunks**. Secure them to the ground using tent pegs or heavy wire spikes.



Raised vegetable bed with wire fencing.
Photo: C. Sims

Care should be taken to bury some of the fencing and restrict access from the top since chipmunks are able to both burrow and climb. Boards along the perimeter of the garden can be used to secure fencing and block entry.

Cylinders of heavy wire hardware cloth will protect valuable young trees from rabbits. Fencing needs to be 35" high to stop them. Sink fencing down 6" to deter voles.

Rabbits can also be excluded using chicken wire or stiff plastic mesh fencing 35" high with 1/2" square openings. Metal wire baskets are effective in keeping smaller plants safe. Keep baskets in place with a rock at the top or by using a stake through the mesh. Tree wraps are effective in protecting young trees.



Wire basket and tree wrap images:
Amazon



Deer fencing kits are available online or can be home made, e.g., 7-foot mesh, anchor pegs, poles, plastic zip ties.



Deer Fencing
Image: Amazon

Chemical Controls (Repellents and Poisons*)

There are two kinds of repellents: **contact** and **area**.

Area repellents are applied **near** the plants and repel by **smell** alone.



Contact repellents are applied directly **on** the plants and repel by **taste** because they are extremely bitter and unpleasant. They should not be used on food, edible plants, or directly on the fruits or nuts of trees. Do not use them on sugar maple trees if the sap is being used to make syrup, since the taste of the maple syrup may be affected.



Contact repellents will deter voles from chewing, but not moles because they are insectivores and don't eat plants.

*Note that poisons should be avoided at all costs in gardens as they can kill non-target animals such as pets, owls, hawks and foxes.

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Finding Harmony in the Garden: An Informed Approach to Animal ‘Pests’ Cont’d

- Repellents need to be kept fresh for maximum effectiveness.
- There are several brands of animal repellents to choose from that are helpful in deterring animals. Some of the commercially available repellents are:
 - Bonide Rabbit - Deer Repellent™ - It produces a very bad taste. Can be sprayed or brushed onto plants.
 - Hinder™ - A soap-based product that repels by odour. It needs to be reapplied after heavy rain.
 - Ro-Pel™ - This has both odour and taste repellent properties. Spray it on both sides of the leaves of landscape plants.
 - Plantskydd™ - This is effective for up to six months for controlling deer, rabbits, voles and other small animals and does not to be reapplied after watering or rain.
 - Bobbex™ - Deer and rabbit repellent and will also deter other small animals. Can be used as a bulb-dip to prevent underground damage after planting.
- **Pelleted hen manure** may be effective sprinkled on the soil where bulbs are planted. There is also some evidence that eating tulips is a learned behaviour of some squirrels in specific areas. Patience and change in practices are needed in order to reprogram them.
- **Blood meal:** Be aware that blood meal may attract dogs, raccoons, possums and other meat-eating omnivorous animals.

A Note about Homemade Remedies

Be wary of homemade remedies that often appear on the Internet. Well meaning people think that these remedies are better than ‘chemicals’ which are developed and specifically tested and approved. In fact, anything you can touch is a chemical and many of those suggested are either not effective or harmful. Here are some examples:

- Mothballs are carcinogenic and can be mistaken for candy by children.
- Cayenne pepper from your kitchen can cause extreme pain in animals.
- Irish spring soap does not deter animals. Check out this [video of rats](#) eating it!

The Final Word

Our yards should be part of native habitat and ecological healing, shared with the many clever, messy, and fascinating creatures that live among us.

So remember the goal isn’t a perfect garden... but a shared one. Be kind to nature—it’s already living with you.



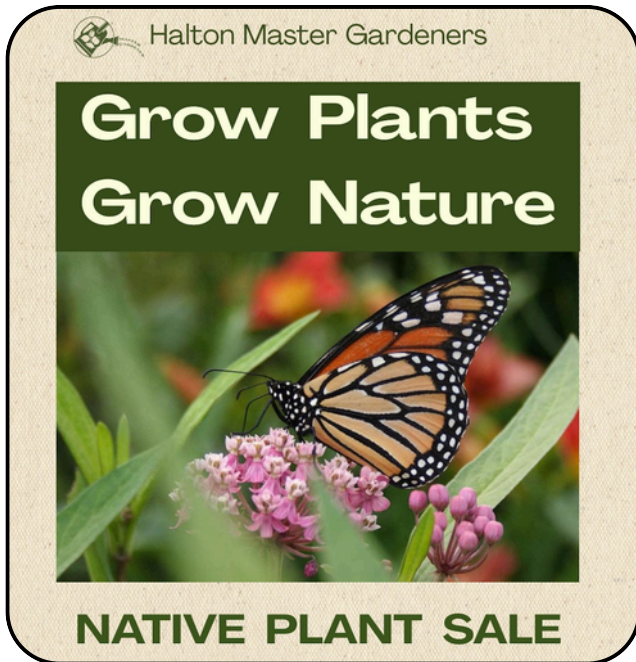
Selected References

- [Why we don't recommend cayenne pepper](#)
- [The Dirt on Soap](#)
- [Striped Skunk](#)
- [Skunks: Notorious—or Not?](#)
- [How to Live with Squirrels in the Garden](#) - Julienne Labreche-Ottawa-Carleton Master Gardeners
- [Why you should brake for opossums.](#)
- [How to keep cats out of the garden](#) - David Suzuki Foundation





Halton Master Gardeners Native Plant Sale!



June 6, 2026

9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Dundurn Castle Pavilion

[610 York Blvd., Hamilton](#)



Trees and Shrubs, from \$16.00

- *Aronia melanocarpa, Black Chokeberry 40-75cm
 - **Betula papyrifera, Paper Birch 100-125cm
 - *Celtis occidentalis, Hackberry 40-75 cm
 - *Cephalanthus occidentalis, Button Bush 40 -75cm
 - *Cornus florida, Flowering Dogwood 100-125cm
 - *Cornus sericea, Red-twig Dogwood 40-75cm
 - *Corylus americana, American Hazelnut 100-125cm
 - **Gymnocladis dioicus, Kentucky Coffee Tree 50-75 cm
 - **Juniper virginiana, Eastern Red Cedar, 60-80cm
 - *Ptelea trifoliata, Common Hoptree 20-40cm
 - *Quercus rubra, Red Oak 100-125 cm
 - *Rosa blanda, Smooth Rose 40-75cm
 - *Rubus odoratus, Purple Flowering Raspberry 40-75cm
 - *Sambucus canadensis, Elderberry 40-75
 - *Viburnum lentago, Nannyberry 40-75 cm
- *1 gallon
**2 gallon

Perennials, Ferns, Grasses \$7.50 each

- Asclepias incarnata, Swamp Milkweed
 - Carex eburnea, Ivory Sedge
 - Chelone glabra, Turtlehead
 - *Dryopteris marginalis, Marginal Shield Fern
 - Echinacea purpurea, Purple Coneflower
 - Eutrochium maculatum, Spotted Joe-pye Weed
 - Fragaria vesca, Woodland Strawberry
 - Gentiana andrewsii, Blue Bottle Gentian
 - Geum triflorum, Prairie Smoke, plug
 - Lobelia syphilitica, Great Blue Lobelia
 - Monarda fistulosa, Wild Bergamont
 - Penstemon hirsutus, Hairy Beardtongue
 - *Polystichum acrostichoides, Christmas Fern
 - Schizachyrium scoparium, Little Bluestem
 - Sisyrinchium montanum, Blue-eyed Grass
 - Solidago caesia, Blue-stemmed Goldenrod
 - Symphyotrichum laeve, Smooth Aster
 - Pycnanthemum virginianum, Virginia Mountain Mint
 - Tiarella Stolonifera, Foamflower
 - Vernonia missurica, Ironweed
- *4" pot

Payment by cash or e-transfer

[Learn more here](#)





Why Delphiniums Are Making a Royal Comeback

By Nikolina Radulovich, Halton Master Gardener

Named the 2026 Flower of the Year by [1-800-Flowers](#), towering spires of blue, violet, pink, and white delphinium are once again stealing the spotlight in early summer gardens. Long associated with classic English borders and romantic cottage-style planting, delphiniums are enjoying a resurgence among gardeners looking to add height and pollinator appeal to their gardens.

Even [King Charles III](#) is known for growing delphiniums at Highgrove, where their dramatic flower spikes help create the layered, overflowing borders now inspiring gardeners around the world. As interest in cottage gardening continues to grow, these stately flowers are finding a whole new generation of admirers.

Few perennials create the same impact in the garden as delphiniums. Their tall flower spikes rise above roses, peonies, foxgloves, salvias, and alliums, bringing structure and movement to early summer borders. While the rich blue shades remain the most iconic, modern cultivars now come in a stunning range of colours including pure white, lavender, deep purple, and soft blush pink.

One reason delphiniums continue to gain popularity is the incredible [diversity of cultivars](#) now available to gardeners. Traditional Pacific Giant and Elatum hybrids remain favourites for dramatic height and classic cottage-garden style, often reaching five to six feet tall with densely packed flower spikes.

White cultivars such as 'Galahad' are especially prized for their luminous blooms that seem to glow in evening light, while deep blue selections continue to be among the most sought-after flowers in ornamental gardening. Soft pink cultivars, once considered unusual, are now becoming increasingly fashionable as gardeners embrace romantic pastel palettes.



Modern breeding has also helped make delphiniums more reliable for home gardeners. According to the [National Garden Bureau Delphinium overview](#), newer series such as New Millennium, Aurora, and Guardian have been bred for improved stem strength, better branching, stronger weather resistance, and longer-lasting blooms. The New Millennium series is especially admired for its massive flower spikes and rich colour range, while the more compact Aurora and Guardian series are often easier to stake and better suited to smaller gardens.

Double-flowered varieties have also become increasingly popular. Their fuller, layered blooms add extra texture and elegance to both borders and cut flower arrangements. In many ways, modern Delphiniums combine the romance of old-fashioned cottage gardens with the improved performance gardeners expect today.

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WHY DELPHINIUMS ARE MAKING A ROYAL COMEBACK (CONT'D)

Scientifically, delphiniums are just as fascinating as they are beautiful. The genus contains approximately [365 species](#) distributed throughout temperate regions of Asia, Europe, and North America. Many naturally occur in cool mountain and alpine environments that helps explain why delphiniums often perform better in Canadian gardens than in regions with extremely hot summers. Researchers note that these plants prefer cool, moist growing conditions.

For Ontario gardeners, this preference for cooler conditions can actually be an advantage. Delphiniums thrive in rich, fertile soil with steady moisture and full sun. During especially hot summers, some afternoon shade can help preserve flower colour and reduce stress on plants. Because the flower spikes become tall and heavy, staking early in the season is essential to prevent wind and rain damage. Mulching around the base also helps keep roots cool and evenly moist during summer heat.

Delphiniums also carry an extraordinary history. They have been cultivated ornamentally in Europe since the 17th century. Historically, various species were used for natural dyes, herbal remedies, and even insect control. Ancient civilizations reportedly used delphinium preparations against scorpions, while during the [Battle of Waterloo](#) powdered seeds of *D. staphisagra* and *D. peregrinum* were used to prevent and kill lice.

Modern science continues to uncover just how chemically complex these plants really are. Researchers studying delphinium species identified more than [450 naturally occurring compounds](#) within the genus, most belonging to a group called diterpenoid alkaloids. Scientists believe many of these compounds evolved as natural defenses against insects and grazing animals, helping protect the plants in the wild.



Today, researchers are studying delphinium compounds for their potential medicinal value. [Laboratory studies](#) have shown antimicrobial, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and insecticidal activity, while some compounds have also demonstrated early activity against lung and breast cancer cells. Other research has focused on how certain delphinium alkaloids interact with nerve receptors, attracting interest in neurological and pharmaceutical studies. One compound, methyllycaconitine, has become particularly important in neuroscience research.



[VAN DER MERE Garden Center](#)

Like many treasured garden plants, delphiniums are not completely carefree. Young shoots can be vulnerable to slugs, powdery mildew may appear during humid weather, and taller varieties usually require staking. Yet, few flowers create the same sense of drama and elegance in early summer. Beyond their beauty, delphiniums continue to fascinate scientists studying their unique compounds and the pigments responsible for some of the truest blue flowers found in nature.

Whether planted in a perennial border or cutting garden, their soaring flower spikes prove that some flowers never truly go out of style.





By Hariette Henry, Halton Master Gardener

The first thing you should consult are the [City's property maintenance bylaws](#). The City of Burlington now encourages the use of "naturalized gardens" on homeowner properties (including the front yard) which they define as native and non-invasive plants. They encourage the use of these plants as they require less water, need less upkeep and improve the City's urban forest. The regulations for "naturalized gardens", which include ornamental plants, shrubs or trees, **cultivated fruits or vegetables**, and plants buffering a natural feature, are as follows:

- No height restrictions apply on private property so long as the plants do not impede sight lines or pedestrian/vehicle flow.
- Height restrictions do apply to city boulevards. Therefore, they require that vegetative growth should not exceed 20 cm in height or length.
- Homeowners must maintain a schedule of regular maintenance, including weeding.

Another consideration before you begin installing your garden might be to engage with your neighbours and reassure them that your garden will be both productive and beautiful. Most neighbours become supportive once the garden is established and they realize that a front yard vegetable garden can be an asset and not a liability. Friendships have been known to develop when gardeners share surplus produce with their neighbours, strengthening social bonds.

Creating a [front yard vegetable garden](#) that is attractive as well as productive is important. Thoughtful planning ensures that the garden will enhance rather than detract from neighbourhood aesthetics.

I live in South Burlington where the part of my property that receives the most sun is in the front yard. I would like to use the space to grow fruits and vegetables. Can you tell me what issues I might run into?

Raised beds with clean lines and strategic plant placement creates a professional-looking installation. You can also grow vegetables in pots which provides the ultimate in flexibility.

This option allows you to completely control soil quality and weed growth while protecting your crops from ground-level pests. You start with fresh, loose potting soil, avoiding the compacted soil and persistent soil-borne diseases sometimes found in standard garden beds. Pots can be moved and relocated to more desirable areas. Container soil is generally weed free. You can lift your pots off the ground and place them on an elevated area reducing the bending associated with an in-ground garden.

[Front yard vegetable gardens](#) are a trend that have gained massive popularity. In Canada 51% of households are now growing some form of produce at home. The movement accelerated during COVID-19 when 17.4 % of current gardeners started their food-growing journey. Rising grocery costs, environmental concerns, and community building opportunities drive this trend. While municipal regulations vary by city, many Canadian communities now actively support front yard food production through policy changes and educational programs.

There are also the financial benefits to consider. A well-planted veggie garden can produce hundreds of dollars worth of fresh produce annually, while eliminating the lawn maintenance costs of fertilizer, pesticides, and other maintenance.



Garden Inspiration!

Gnome is Where the Heart Is

By Morag Johnston, Halton Master Gardener

There's little more inspiring than the greening and growth of plants this past week, so let's go sideways.

According to [The Guardian](#), the Chelsea Garden show lifted the ban on garden gnomes this year. "The gnomes have long been banned as they are deemed tacky and not in keeping with the event."

Tacky is in the eye of the beholder. Don't let the taste police control your garden decor.



Photo: [Natthawut](#), on Etsy

To get in the spirit, watch [Amélie](#), where the title character sends her father photos of his garden gnome travelling to bring him joy.



Photo: [JustWatch.com](#)



Photo: [Canadian Tire](#)



Photo: [Wayfair](#), on sale for \$11,999.99



Photo: [Maya Shalaev](#), on Etsy



The Giant at entrance to Swarovski Crystal Worlds in Wattens. Photo: [Marek Śliwecki](#), via Wikimedia Commons



What's Growing On?

Halton Master Gardeners Present Two FREE Events

Monarch Awards

Garden Journeys

Featuring Gardens in the City of Hamilton (Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Stoney Creek & Waterdown)



Applications Opening May 2026

The [Monarch Awards](#) celebrate and support Hamilton gardeners who are helping create habitat for pollinators. If your front yard garden includes native plants like milkweed and provides food and shelter for butterflies, bees, and other wildlife, this is your chance to be recognized.

Applications open May 15 and close June 27.

Selected gardens will be visited by Monarch Award teams between **July 13 and August 27**, with award recipients announced in **September**.

Every pollinator-friendly garden makes a difference - consider [applying!](#)

Want to know more about the Monarch Awards?

Click the link to the video below and,

[Discover the Monarch Awards](#)



Let's show our city how green – and wildly alive our gardens can be.

Media Contacts: Janet Mackey, Kate Sault,

Co-Chairs of the Halton Region Monarch Awards

Questions? Contact: monarchawards.hmg@gmail.com



Applications Opening May 2026

[Garden Journeys Open Days](#) is an opportunity to visit beautiful gardens across the City of Hamilton. **Free** to the public, gardens will be open for visitors, with the gardeners available to discuss their own journey to eco-friendly gardening, from first steps to fully mature gardens. This event will again take place over two weekends:

August 8 - 9 & 14 - 16

If you are working towards a biodiverse eco-friendly garden, **consider applying to be a host gardener**. It is a wonderful way to inspire members of the public and to meet other like-minded gardeners to exchange ideas.

- Are you curious about gardens that support biodiversity and our ecosystem?
- Are you taking steps to build your own nature-friendly garden?
- Want some garden inspiration and practical ideas for gardens that are both beautiful and sustainable?



Don't miss this exciting event!

Email us at:

gardenjourneysopendays@gmail.com

What's Growing On?

By Trish Moraghan, Halton Master Gardener

The 69th Annual Rose Show

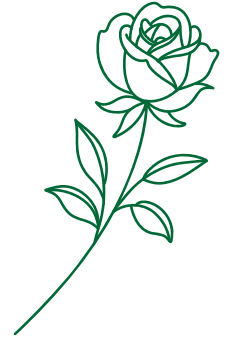
A Juried Exhibiton of Cut Garden
Roses and Floral Design

Saturday and Sunday June 21 and 22
10 AM to 5 PM

Royal Botanical Gardens
Burlington

Rose Care, Make and Take, Mini Roses Sale

[Learn more here](#)



THE GARDEN CLUBS OF ONTARIO PRESENT:

"Discovering Ontario" Triennial Flower Show - 2026

JUNE 19-20, 2026
FRI. 10AM-8PM
SAT. 10AM-4PM

DEMONSTRATIONS at 11:00AM & 1:30PM on both days

ADMISSION: \$10 cash only (children 12 and under free)

AT LANDSCAPE ONTARIO
7856 FIFTH LINE S., MILTON, ON L9T 2X8

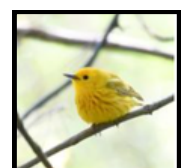
[Learn more here](#)



[Learn more here](#)



[Tours and Walks](#)



[Workshops](#)

What's Growing On?



[Bloom Watch](#)



[Programs](#)



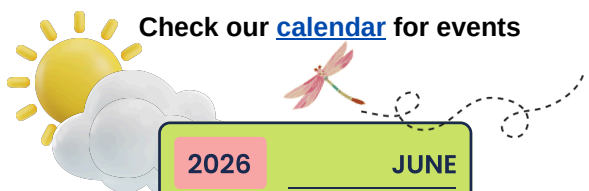
DISCOVER THE MONARCH AWARDS

Your garden's ecological journey
Janet Mackey & Grant Linney
Halton Region Master Gardeners

Learn more about the Monarch Awards, applications, assesment and recognition levels



[Watch the video here](#)

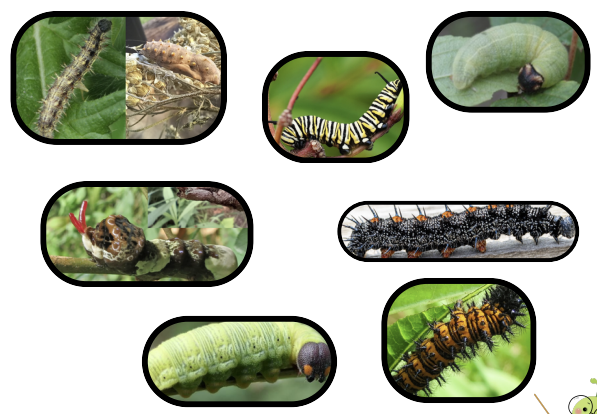


Check our [calendar](#) for events

2026		JUNE					
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30					



7 Charismatic Caterpillars of Ontario Gardens



[Read the article 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.

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