

CROSS POLLINATION

Halton Master Gardeners Monthly Newsletter
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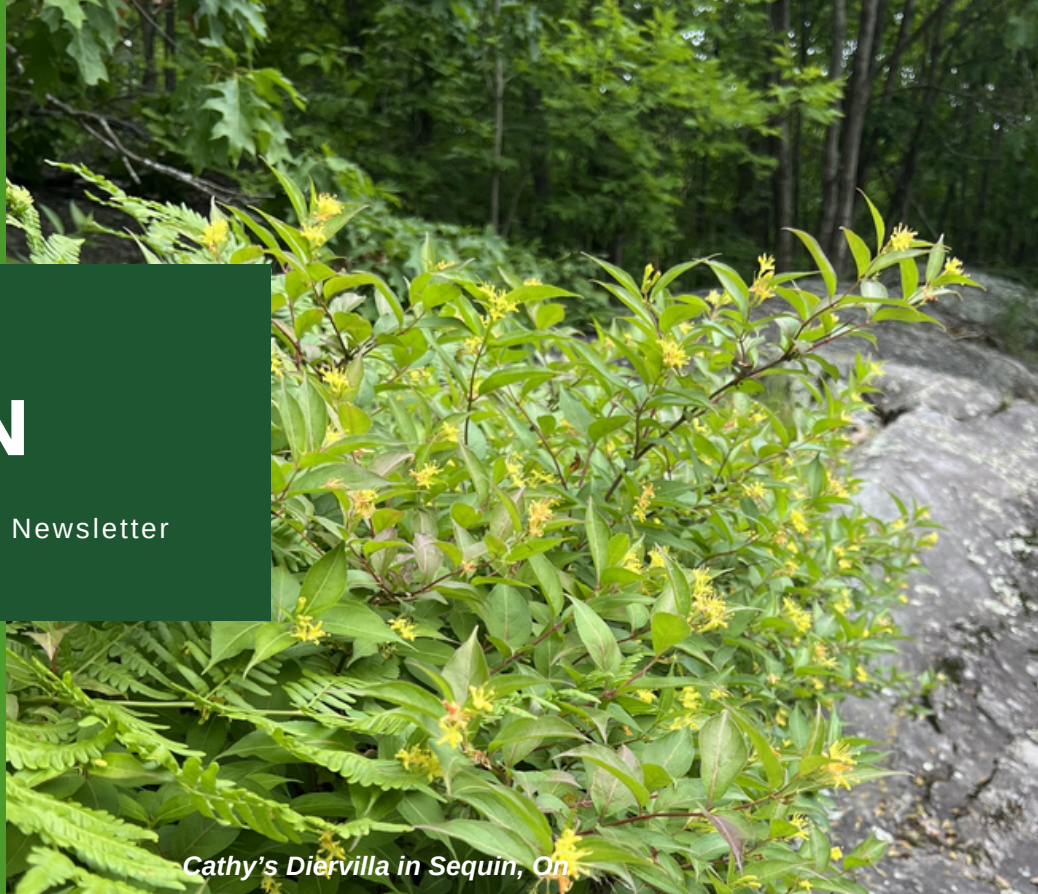
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Halton Region
Master Gardeners



Cathy's *Diervilla* in Sequin, On

Northern Bush Honeysuckle, *Diervilla lonicera*

By Cathy Kavassalis, Halton Master Gardener

The Northern bush-honeysuckle is a small, mound-shaped, deciduous shrub 2 - 4' tall. Its shoots cascade outward from the center of an exfoliating bark that reveals an orange inner bark. The leaves are arranged in opposite pairs along the stem and are pointed at the tip with fine serrations (teeth) along the margin (edge). Dark-green leaves change from yellow to red in autumn. Small, bell-shaped flowers are yellow-green at first, becoming orange or purplish-red. Propagate by seed or cuttings. Both softwood and semi-hardwood cuttings root readily.

Our Northern Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*) is now in full bloom. I spotted my first [hummingbird clearwing moth](#) of the season and rushed off to grab my camera. By the time I returned, the moth had vanished. But what I found instead was even better. For the next hour, I stood beside the shrub and watched an entire world unfold. Two-spotted bumble bees buzzed from flower to flower. Tiny Eastern bumble bee workers joined the feast. [Metallic sweat bees](#) flashed emerald and bronze in the sunlight. [Soldier flies](#) and wasps zipped over leaves, searching for prey, hosts, or perhaps a meal of nectar.

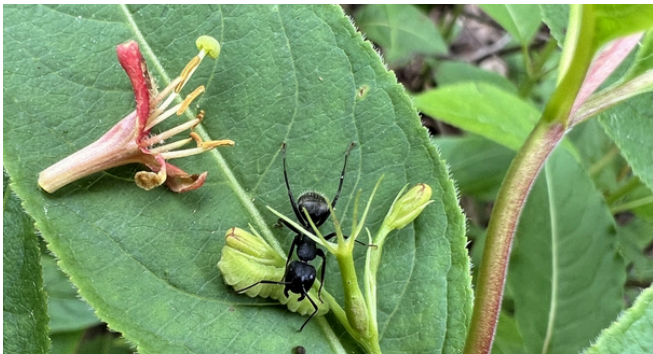
A small black-and-white inchworm rested beneath a leaf, unnoticed for the moment. Elsewhere beneath leaves, little piles of frass (caterpillar poo) hinted at hidden diners above. An assassin bug patrolled the stems. Spiders waited patiently.

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NORTHERN BUSH HONEYSUCKLE, *DIERVILLA LONICERA* (CONT'D)

An [opilionid](#) wandered through the foliage, while a toad moved quietly beneath the hedge. [Leaf miners](#) traced winding tunnels. Scale insects fed discreetly along stems. Spittlebugs hid in their frothy shelters. Leafhoppers sprang away with every movement.

The most remarkable sight was an ant tending what I believe was a Summer Azure caterpillar. Many [lycaenid](#) butterflies form partnerships with ants, providing sugary secretions in exchange for protection. Considering the number of predators hunting nearby, it seemed like a very good arrangement.



OMG this was astonishing. This ant was so attentive to its caterpillar. I was hoping to find a hummingbird clearing caterpillar, but this was so much better! Very few caterpillars.

Butterflies that rely on ants for their survival exhibit myrmecophily (literally “ant-love”). The caterpillar stages of many butterflies in the Lycaenidae family (like our native spring and summer azures, Celastrina species in the family Lycaenid) form mutualistic relationships with ants. Here is a video of an Australian member of Lycaenid that requires ants to survive.

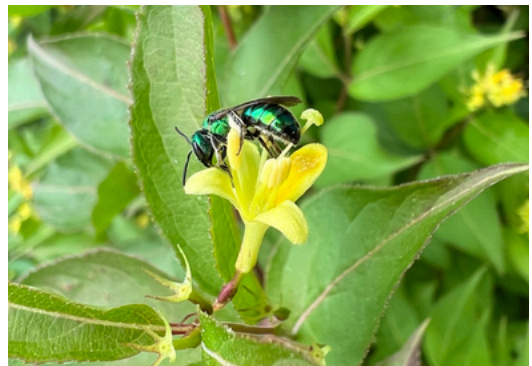
What struck me most was how much life was packed onto a single native shrub. Many gardeners see a hole in a leaf and think something is wrong. Yet those holes are often evidence that a plant is doing exactly what millions of years of evolution prepared it to do: feed life. The caterpillars support birds, predators help keep populations in balance, pollinators visit the flowers, and countless other organisms find food and shelter among the branches.

This hedge is only a few years old, yet it is already humming with activity.

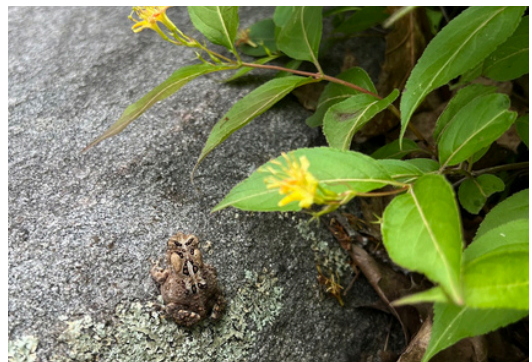
Diervilla lonicera will continue flowering sporadically throughout summer, providing nectar well into August. In autumn, its foliage turns rich shades of copper and red. Native across much of Ontario, it is a beautiful and resilient choice for gardens from Ottawa to the GTA.

Although it belongs to the honeysuckle family (*Caprifoliaceae*), *Diervilla* is more closely related to weigelas than to the true honeysuckles (*Lonicera*). The lineage leading to *Diervilla lonicera* is estimated to be millions of years old, giving it a long evolutionary history with the insects and other organisms that depend upon it today.

Take a few minutes to watch one of the plants in your garden. Not just glance at it, but to really watch it. You too may discover an entire ecosystem in your back yard.



Stunning metallic sweat bee



Toad

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NORTHERN BUSH HONEYSUCKLE, *DIERVILLA LONICERA* (CONT'D)

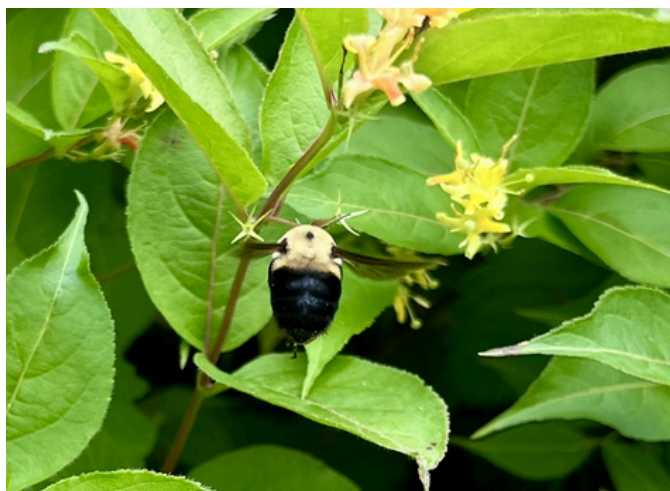
Diervilla supports so much life!



Tiny Looper



Trails left by leaf miners



Bumblebee



One lone scale insect,



Ooo! So many cool spiders



[Assassin Bug](#) waiting for a meal-they act as natural pest control in your garden!

Continued on next page

NORTHERN BUSH HONEYSUCKLE, *DIERVILLA LONICERA* (CONT'D)

Diervilla is a thing of beauty and a host to such great diversity of life.

Some interesting links:



- [Evaluating Landscape Performance of Six Native Shrubs as Alternatives to Invasive Exotics](#)
- [Using integrative taxonomy to clarify species boundaries in *Diervilla*](#) (Bush Honeysuckle, *Caprifoliaceae*)
- [Bumble Bee Field Guide](#)
- [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#)
- [Why are these Butterflies & Ants attracted to each other?! What is Myrmecophily?](#)

Invasive Honeysuckles

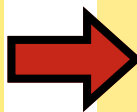
KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!

As early as the 1920s it was noted that invasive honeysuckles were spreading beyond their original planting sites and were reproducing and becoming established in natural areas. By the 1960s they were widely reported as abundant in pastures and forested areas alike.

The most noticeable invasive species are those that can grow under a wide range of conditions and are not particular about soil texture, moisture, light or temperature. Others are more restricted by growing conditions, but in the right area will displace natural species and disrupt ecosystems.

Invasive honeysuckles can look similar to some of our native honeysuckles, particularly when young. They outcompete native honeysuckles and other native shrubs and herbaceous plants, and they impact forest regeneration. These shrubs also reduce the quality of wildlife habitat, particularly for forest dependent song birds. Invasive honeysuckles are not listed on any federal or provincial weed lists.

**Invasive!
DO NOT
PLANT**



NORTHERN BUSH HONEYSUCKLE - DETAILS AT A GLANCE



LIGHT SHADE

DAPPLED SUN

FULL SUN



DRY

Plant Type, Family: Shrub, (*Caprifoliaceae*)

Height/Width: (H) & (W) 60-120 cm (2-4')

Features: Minimal maintenance; cascading shoots with orange-red fall colour.

Faunal value: The flowers turn orange-red once pollinated by bees, butterflies and other pollinators that make use of the plant's nectar and pollen.

Companion Plants: For partial shade, Bigleaf Aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*) & Zigzag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*). In sunny, dry sites, pair with Serviceberry or Paper Birch.

Landscape Uses: Stabilizes soil on slopes with its extensive root system.

Native Range: From Saskatchewan to Newfoundland, and dips into the northeastern, midwestern, and southeastern United States.

Supports



Vascan

Amur Honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*)



Photo courtesy of John M. Randall, The Nature Conservancy, Bugwood.org.

Tatarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*)



Photo courtesy of Patrick Breen, Oregon State University, Bugwood.org.

Morrow Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)



Photo courtesy of Chris Evans, Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Bugwood.org.

Bells Honeysuckle (*Lonicera xbella*)



Photo courtesy of Leslie J. Mehrhoff, www.discoverlife.org.



AUGUST GARDEN 'TO DO' LIST

By Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

- ☐ **Perennials** – Cut back any tired looking perennials, yellowed or dying stems, leaves or flowers, e.g., lavender, penstemon, perennial geranium. Remove seed heads to control the spread of aggressive self-sowing perennials or to save seeds for winter sowing. Where possible, leave seed heads to feed birds in the late summer & fall.
- ☐ **Annuals** – Pinch back old flower heads or lightly shear the tops to keep plants producing flowers.
- ☐ **Potted Plants** and baskets may need more than one watering per day during hot weather. If plants wilt despite watering, gently tip them out to see if they are pot-bound and need a larger container.
- ☐ **Fertilize** plants as needed using a slow release organic product such as hen manure.
- ☐ **Veggies** – Water at ground level during dry or hot weather to reduce plant stress. Remove diseased and damaged leaves/fruit. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers on tomatoes, squash and peppers as it can lead to [blossom end rot](#). Keep cucumbers, zucchini and beans picked regularly to keep plants productive. Harvest garlic and hang in a dry breezy area to cure. Sow bush beans for a late summer/early autumn crop (too late for pole beans). Seed late season greens such as rapini, lettuce, kale, radishes, arugula, and mustard greens for autumn crops and keep well-watered until established. Preserve surplus crops or donate to a food bank.
- ☐ **Trees** – Water deeply during hot, dry periods; reduce soil compaction by using mulch or growing perennials or shrubs at the base, instead of lawn. Check for [magnolia scale](#). Use a strong spray from your hose or a gentler spray from a pressure washer to knock the scale from your trees and allow ladybugs the chance to control them.

“ Did you know that [native plants can help fight climate change](#)? Here's why:



- Carbon Sequestration, flood and erosion control due to deeper roots
- Require fewer inputs like fertilizer, pesticides, mowing
- Layered native plant gardening reduces heat islands

- ☐ **Lawn** – Encourage deep healthy roots by watering less frequently, but more deeply. Follow these cultural practices to have [healthy lawns](#) that use water efficient practices.
- ☐ **Weeds** – Every weed pulled now is thousands of weeds you won't have to deal with later! Removing flowers before they go to seed will greatly reduce the seed bank in the soil. Don't add their flowers or seeds to compost. Watch for these August weeds: [bindweed](#), [purslane](#), [creeping bellflower](#), [thistle](#), [burdock](#), [black medick](#), [dog strangling vine](#), [yellow wood sorrel](#), [buckthorn](#).
- ☐ **Pests** – Before reaching for a pesticide, remember that leaf damage is often cosmetic, and holes in leaves means your garden is alive! Most plants can tolerate some herbivory and many plants can produce [chemical compounds](#) to fight pests if you give them a chance. Leaving the 'pest' for birds to eat supports our dwindling bird population. Welcome robins, crows, sparrows, blue jays, cardinals and animals like raccoons, skunks, moles, and shrews to your garden where possible—they all eat Japanese beetles! Add [wildflowers](#) to attract beneficial spiders, [assassin bugs](#), ants, ground beetles, [predatory stink bugs](#) & [tachinid flies](#) to keep your garden in balance. Earwigs like to hide in small, dark places so trapping is effective in reducing populations. Scatter rolled cardboard traps in problem areas & check daily. Remove trapped earwigs by shaking into a pail of soapy water. Learn more about [earwig management here](#).



Luna Moth caterpillar eating leaves



Leaves with holes means your garden is alive!



Leaf Cutter Bee 'artist'



Lavender's Blue, Lavender's Green

By Jennifer Blake, Halton Master Gardeners

It is high summer and the lavender is in full flower. It grows in a narrow bed between the sidewalk and the red brick of this 180 year-old house. By midsummer the lavender is spilling over the side of the bed, releasing wafts of fragrance for anyone who brushes up against it. I often see passers-by stop to bend down and inhale the perfume, or mothers pause their walk as the toddlers bury their faces in the purple flowers. If I happen to be out gardening, I will always snip a few stalks for them to take on the way.

All lavenders belong to the genus *Lavandula* in the family *Lamiaceae* and there are over 20 different lavender species. The two species most important to gardeners in Ontario are English Lavender, (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and *Lavandula* × *intermedia* (*lavandin*), a naturally occurring hybrid between spp. *L. angustifolia* and *L. latifolia*. Other commonly grown species include French lavender (*L. dentata*) and Spanish lavender (*L. stoechas*), although these are not reliably hardy in our climate. Although *lavandin* is sometimes marketed in the fragrance industry as "French lavender," botanists reserve the name French lavender for the tender species *Lavandula dentata*.



Image: Jennifer Blake



Lavandula angustifolia grows 30-60 cm high and wide in a dense rounded mass. It has fine grey green foliage and the scent is described as sweet, floral soft and complex. English Lavender is prized for its high-quality essential oil and can be used for many household purposes including tea, baking, perfumes, and of course, potpourri sachets for dressers and wardrobes, as well as eye masks.

Lavandin, our other winter hardy option, is widely grown commercially, for its high yield of valuable oil. It is noted for its much larger size, 60-100 cm tall and up to 1.2 m wide. The plants are tolerant of humidity and drought, increasingly important in our climate. *Lavandin* flowers are long stemmed and dry well. It produces an abundant oil that has a stronger, cleaner scent with more camphor than English Lavender. It is preferred for use in soaps and bath products. Sachets made with *lavandin* will retain their scent, and last longer.



In my garden, *L. angustifolia* 'Hidcote' which is the variety I grow, does well in lean, well drained soil, with lots of sunshine. Other cultivars that would be expected to do well in Ontario include Munstead, Jean Davis, Blue Spear and Melissa. I also grow lavender in beds where I know that they will not get 6 hours of sunshine or enjoy perfect soil conditions; they may not flower, but I love the moments when, brushing up against the foliage as I work, I am rewarded by their perfume. It is not a native plant, but it is appreciated by the beneficial insects, birds and bees that it attracts as well as its culinary uses.

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LAVENDER'S BLUE, LAVENDER'S GREEN

Lavender did not grow at my home in Quebec City, which was then Zone 3. I knew about lavender from two sources—the scent of my grandmother's talcum powder and a favourite book.

Lavender's Blue was on the cover of my childhood book of nursery rhymes. The poem, which had puzzling lyrics, was one I knew by heart. To me, growing fresh lavender was from another world—it belonged in fairy tales.



All lavender originated in the Mediterranean and, dubbed “Queen of the Herb Garden”, has had a long and fascinating place in folklore, herbal medicine, mythology and, of course, our gardens. The origin of the name is contested, but the prevailing theory is that it derives from the Roman word lavare, meaning “To Wash”. The Romans brought lavender to the British Isles, and everywhere else that they settled, and built Roman baths. Stories about lavender go back thousands of years. Legend has it that Cleopatra used it to seduce Julius Caesar and Mark Anthony. Adam and Eve are said to have brought lavender with them from the Garden of Eden. Another story tells that Mary dropped her cloak on a lavender bush and the plant ever after grew blue flowers. It was believed to ward off evil spirits, so it was common to hang bunches near doorways, and then, as now, to give lavender as gifts. It has many associations: cleanliness, devotion, purity, luck, and compassion. It also represents constancy, faith, humility, and love.

Lavender plays a valuable part in herb gardens and monastic medicinal gardens. In cottage gardens, its fragrant and woody habit make it a favoured place to hang linens to dry. Lavender was strewn on the floors of houses to deter insects, or burned in sick rooms as a fumigant. During the Middle Ages it was used to ward off the plague.

Lavender has been grown and harvested commercially in England since at least 1301, with fields outside London remaining under cultivation to the present day. My mother grew up in London in the 1920s and remembered the annual arrival of the lavender sellers with their horses and carts. The women dressed in long traditional dresses, singing, “Lavender, Sweet Lavender.” It was the signal that it was time to replenish the household's supply. She would often tell those stories when we brought lavender into the house. Perhaps that is why lavender has remained so beloved for centuries. Fragrance has a unique ability to evoke memory. Unlike our other senses, the olfactory nerve, that perceives smell carries the information to the parts of the brain concerned with emotion and memory, so the scent of lavender can transport us instantly to another place or another time.

Lavender has been long prized for its medicinal value. Pliny the Elder recommended it for a variety of ailments, from scorpion stings to menstrual complaints. Roman soldiers carried it with them to treat their wounds. It was cultivated in apothecary and monastery gardens and valued for its ability to calm, relieve headaches and assist in sleep.

Lavender essential oil is complex, containing many biologically active compounds. These compounds underlie its diverse pharmacological profile and have led to a growing body of research evidence. Many of the traditional uses described in the herbal medicine of past centuries are being investigated, and in some cases validated. The antiseptic and insecticidal value of lavender that were valued in medieval times are of increased interest today, where, in adequate concentrations it has been an effective antimicrobial, with activity against a number of bacteria. There is some evidence to support its potential as an insecticide or repellent, effective against mosquitoes, fleas and ticks—although most of these studies have been under controlled conditions. Extracts and essential oils have been studied for a wide range of ailments. In spite of the Roman soldiers using lavender for their wounds, it has not been shown to accelerate wound healing - and it can be a skin irritant.

Continued on next page

LAVENDER'S BLUE, LAVENDER'S GREEN

There is reasonable evidence for a beneficial effect on anxiety; its help with sleep may be secondary to its ability to this calming effect. Other studies have looked at its value for migraine and pain relief, for gut complaints, and potential cognitive benefits on attention and memory. If you find it helpful to sleep on a pillow of lavender, or to wear a fragrant eye mask, you will be following century old wisdom backed up by modern science. If, on the other hand, it gives you dreams of your (future) husband or loved one - the science is not quite there yet.

Maintenance of English lavender is not complicated, but there are a few things to keep in mind. It is a semi-woody perennial that does best with plenty of sunshine in sandy, gravelly and very well drained soil. Established lavender rarely benefits from additional fertilizer and often performs better in lean soil. It grows in exuberant masses and does not like to be waterlogged.

English lavender is one of the few ornamental plants that moves effortlessly from the garden to the kitchen, where its sweet, complex flavour and aroma are prized in both sweet and savoury dishes. As with other oil-rich herbs, such as rosemary and thyme, a little goes a long way. If you are purchasing lavender for cooking, make sure that it has been grown for this purpose and has not been chemically treated or sprayed with pesticides. If you have your own supply of lavender outside your door, you can be sure of how it was grown.



How to Harvest Your Lavender



A tip from Allyn Walsh:

Pick lavender blooms while they are still in the process of opening, as this will provide the most flavour. Allow them to dry on their stalks for about two weeks. Keeping them covered with something permeable like a paper towel or loosely woven cloth that allows them to dry without collecting dust. The flowers are easily removed while holding the stalks over a bowl to catch them. Extra dried blooms keep well for months in a jar if kept in a dark dry place.

Prune with care as it flowers on woody, sometimes leafless, branches that you may be tempted to remove - but take care to only prune if truly dead. Aggressive pruning can remove the flowering stems and can kill the plant. Lightly prune the healthy green shoots to create a tidier plant. The fresh cuttings can be used to propagate more plants. Harvest the lavender early in the morning to get the maximum oil content and do so when many of the flowers are still tight. Deadheading the spent blooms encourages a second blooming, and at the same time you can gently prune the green shoots to maintain shape. Lavender can be grown from seed, but not easily or reliably. Cuttings and layering are preferred. It is said that lavender prefers to be gifted rather than bought, meaning, the best plants come from a cutting given by a friend. Perhaps that is one reason lavender has remained so enduringly popular: every gardener eventually finds themselves sharing it, and every cutting carries its own story.



Further Reading

- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs - [Growing Lavender in Ontario](#)
- [How to Grow and Care for Lavender Plants](#)
- [Lavender Folklore](#): The Tales Behind The Calming Plant, Icy Sedgewick
- [National Library of Medicine](#) - Medicinal Properties of *Lavandula* Species
- [Discover the Ontario Lavender World](#)



LAVENDER'S BLUE, LAVENDER'S GREEN

Lavender Lemonade

Recipe from
Allyn Walsh

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 ½ cups Water
- 1 cup Sugar
- 1 Tbsp. dried Lavender
- 2 ½ cups Cold Water
- 1 cup Lemon Juice

DIRECTIONS:

1. Combine water and sugar in a pot and bring to a boil. Then remove from heat, add lavender and leave to sit for 2-3 hours.
2. Strain out the lavender flowers and add to a large pitcher along with the additional water and lemon juice. The mixture will be quite sweet, so add additional water to taste and chill. Serve poured over ice cubes.
3. I add more water at the end and you can dilute further with sparkling water.
4. If using freshly picked lavender, you might need to use more than 1 Tbsp of Lavender.

Lavender Jelly

Recipe from
Allyn Walsh

INGREDIENTS:

- 3 1/2 cups Water
- ½ cup dried Lavender flowers
- 1 Lemon - juice only
- 1-1 ¾ oz. box dry Pectin or 3 oz. envelope liquid pectin. I use liquid and double it.

DIRECTIONS:

1. In a large saucepan, bring water just to a boil.
2. Remove from heat and stir in Lavender flowers. Cover and let steep for 20-30 minutes (up to 1 hour).
3. Strain through a fine mesh strainer into a deep pot. Discard the flowers.
4. Stir in lemon juice and pectin, mix thoroughly.
5. Over high heat, bring the mixture to a hard rolling boil.
6. Add sugar. When it returns to a hard rolling boil, let it boil for 4 minutes, stirring occasionally.
7. Test using a cold metal tablespoon to see if it will set.
8. Transfer to hot sterilized jars. Fill to within 1/4" of the top. Wipe the top, seat the lid and tighten the ring.
9. Process in a hot water bath for 10 minutes.

Lavender Shortbread

Recipe from
Tanya Bye

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cups butter, softened
- 2/3 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup sifted confectioners' sugar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh lavender
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint leaves
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

DIRECTIONS:

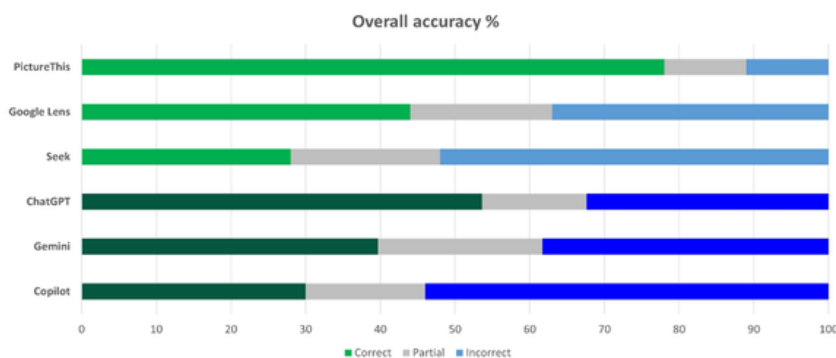
1. In a medium bowl, cream together the butter, white sugar and confectioners' sugar until light and fluffy. Mix in the lavender, mint and lemon zest. Combine the flour, cornstarch and salt; mix into the batter until well blended. Divide dough into two balls, wrap in plastic wrap and flatten to about 1 inch thick. Refrigerate until firm, about 1 hour.
2. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F (165 degrees C). On a lightly floured surface, roll the dough out to 1/4 inch thickness. Cut into shapes with cookie cutters. Cookie stamps will work well on these too. Place on cookie sheets.
3. Bake for 18 to 20 minutes in the preheated oven, just until cookies begin to brown at the edges. Cool for a few minutes on the baking sheets then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.



By Hariette Henry, Halton Master Gardener

Identification apps have improved significantly over the years and you can usually get an accurate response from them within seconds. This transforms mobile phones into useful devices for identifying plants in the field. Joan Jubela, a Penn State Master Gardener reflects on the fact that “when hiking in a meadow, strolling through a public garden, or shopping in a nursery, [I can snap a photo and learn a new plant or be reminded of one I've forgotten](#)”.

These image recognition technologies that access massive datasets are not only a boon to gardeners but effective systems integrated into mobile devices that are learning to identify just about any object that has ever been categorized.



Overall performance of plant identification apps evaluated in fall 2025, smartphone apps on top and AI platforms on the bottom, both in order of decreasing accuracy from top down. Full article + chart above: [Michigan State University Extension, May 4, 2026](#)

Advantages to plant ID Apps are:

- Instant gratification: You get identification results within seconds of snapping a photo.
- Key information provided: Learn scientific names, plant families, and natural histories instantly.
- High Accuracy: Advanced machine learning algorithms correctly identify thousands of species.

“How accurate are plant identification apps such as PictureThis and Pl@ntNet, and are they good or bad for the average gardener?”

- Citizen Science: Help researchers track plant distribution and invasive species movements.
- Portability: Carry a massive global botanical library right in your pocket.
- Users often mention that they like using plant id apps because they are surprisingly accurate, easy to use and often free. It should be noted that these apps can sometimes be quite persistent in promoting the paid versions, which some people find off-putting.

Concerns and limitations to keep in mind with Photo ID apps:

- Lack of photo quality such as: poor lighting, blurry shots, or lack of detail can and do cause errors
- Lookalikes: Some species require microscopic details or physical touch to differentiate
- To confirm a plant's identity in Ontario, start by using accurate citizen science apps like iNaturalist or [Seek](#) by iNaturalist. For a broader regional reference, consider downloading the Ontario Wildflowers app which covers over 3,800 local species. ([Google Play Store](#) and [Apple](#))
- Searching by scientific name (genus + species) will yield the most accurate results as common names can change by region.
- Do not rely on a single snapshot. Photograph leaves and flowers or fruit. Some plants cannot be identified without reproductive parts.
- While these apps can be helpful for general plant identification, it is crucial to cross-reference the ID with other sources, especially for plants that are potentially toxic or intended for consumption.



Garden Inspiration!

By Morag Johnson, Halton Master Gardener

Sedges for Edges

"Sedges have edges, rushes are round, grasses are hollow with joints to the ground."

Now that ornamental gardens have filled out for the summer, the blank spots are visible or have provided room for weeds to take hold. What to do? Plant sedges! Most are shorter than grasses, but with similar texture. Those shown below provide a sampling of the sedge textures and size.

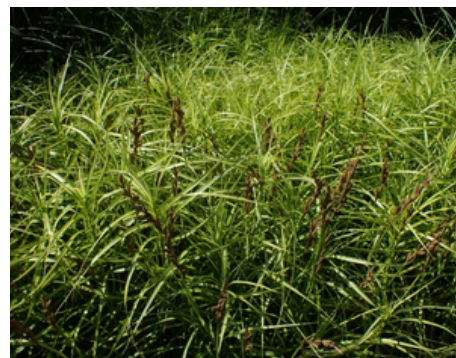
Along with many benefits for pollinators and greening early, they don't seem to be attractive to browsing mammals. Their roots are good at stabilizing slopes. They rarely take over a space without your permission. The weedy sedge to remove is Yellow and Purple Nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus* L.). ([C.A. Wilen, UC IPM](#))



Lawn-like: Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*), a.k.a. Oak Sedge. Photo credit: [Krzysztof Ziarnnek, Kenraiz](#)



Broad-leafed: Plantain sedge (*Carex plantaginea*), a.k.a. seersucker sedge or plantain-leaved sedge. Photo credit: [Jay Sturmer](#)



For structure: Muskigum sedge (*Carex muskingumensis*). Photo credit: [Krzysztof Ziarnnek, Kenraiz](#)



Dramatic: Golden Sedge (*Carex aurea*). Photo credit: [In Our Nature](#)



White-tipped: White-tinge sedge (*Carex albicans*). Photo credit: [Krzysztof Ziarnnek, Kenraiz](#)



Hair-like: Ebony & Ivory sedge (*Carex eburnea*). Photo credit: [Krzysztof Ziarnnek, Kenraiz](#)

For more information:

- [Plants as Mulch](#) by Janet Mackey, Halton Master Gardeners.
- [In Our Nature](#) has a great list of garden-appropriate sedges in its Resources section.
- [Facebook post](#) from Halton Master Gardener Cathy Kavassalis on the value of native sedges.
- [Native Plant Nurseries in Southern Ontario – 2026](#) on our website. Because you never have too many plants!
- [Grasses vs Sedges](#) from Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, 2018.



Garden Journeys Open Days

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

Garden Journeys



Open Days

**August 8 - 9
14 - 16**



The garden tours are a week away. **YES!** For the next two weekends, the excitement is blooming! We are pleased to have close to 60 people on board for the event! Gardens are scattered all over the GHA and we couldn't be happier to have such a great opportunity to showcase "Your Journeys".

This event is FREE, open to everyone, and self-guided, so you can choose the gardens and timing that work best for you.

Some gardens are 'sidewalk showcases' (front garden only), but most gardens will have Hosts available to discuss their own journey to eco-friendly gardening—from first steps to fully mature eco-systems!

If you are looking for a beautiful way to spend time outdoors these next two weekends, join us and spend a few hours chatting with the Hosts and exploring your choice of nearly 60 gardens on the "Journey" to support biodiversity and the environment across Hamilton. Each garden is unique and offers a glimpse into what is possible when creativity, care, and nature come together. Come for the beauty, stay for the inspiration, and leave with practical ways to bring more beauty, biodiversity, and joy into your own "Gardening Journey". No matter where you are – experienced gardener, just getting started, or simply curious about what grows in your neighbourhood – this event is for you. Come wander, learn, ask questions, and simply enjoy these inspiring garden spaces at your own pace.

Mark your calendars for these dates in August now! A list of garden addresses, open times, and descriptions are available on our [website](#). It is a wonderful way to inspire members of the public and to meet other like-minded gardeners.

An event by the Halton Region Master Gardeners, supported by Hamilton's "City Enrichment Fund".



All details on the website: [Garden Journeys' Open Days](#)
Questions? Email us at: gardenjourneysopendays@gmail.com



The Monarch Journey

NEW! Applicant News!

Congratulations to all 60 applicants taking part in the 2026 Monarch Awards! Garden visits began the week of July 13 and will continue until August 27, with Monarch Award Teams visiting front-yard gardens across Hamilton. We look forward to recognizing and celebrating the many gardeners helping to grow communities of biodiversity.



The Monarch Journey

Creating Communities of Biodiversity
Monarch Awards Applicant Newsletter
Vol 1, Issue 1 - July 1, 2026

Journey Notes

Welcome - Thank you for applying to the Monarch Awards. By caring for your front garden with nature in mind, you are part of a growing community of Hamilton gardeners creating habitat for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. Whether your garden is just beginning or well established, every step you take helps support biodiversity where you live.

Updates

Applications will be reviewed shortly, and you will receive an email confirming whether your garden will be included in this year's site visits. Beginning July 13, Monarch Awards Team members will assess front gardens. This is a friendly assessment, not a consultation; you do not need to be present, though feel free to say hello if you are. In September, applicants will receive written **highlights** and **suggestions** for next steps to grow the garden's ecological value.

Resource to Explore

During the garden visit the Monarch Award Team will be looking at eco-friendly gardening practices such as native plants, soil management, layers and more. Here's a quick overview:
Link to [Eco-Friendly Gardening Practices](#).
Contact us if you have any questions at: monarchawards.hmg@gmail.com

Eco-Gardening Tips

Think in Seasons, Not Just Flowers: An ecological garden offers food over a long period - from early spring into fall. Take a look at your garden and ask: What has already bloomed? What is blooming now? What will still be feeding pollinators in August, September and October.

Try this: Make a quick list of your spring, summer and fall bloomers. If one season is thin, that may be a good place to add a few native plants for next year.

One Small Action: Late season flowers are especially helpful because many pollinators are still active and preparing for migration or winter. Consider adding: New England Aster, Smooth Blue Aster, Zigzag Goldenrod, Showy Goldenrod, Anise Hyssop, Black-eyed Susan, Boneset, Joe-Pye weed (if there is room).

Check Out This Resource: [Pollinator Plants of the Great Lakes Region, Xerces Society](#)



2025 Monarch Award Recipient

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The Monarch Journey

Creating Communities of Biodiversity
Monarch Awards Applicant Newsletter
Vol 1, Issue 2 - July 8, 2026

Journey Notes

With changing weather patterns, water management is becoming an important part of ecological gardening. In dry periods, careful watering can help plants stay resilient; in heavy rain, rain gardens can help slow and absorb excess water, protecting freshwater habitats and water supply. In this issue, we look at both sides - watering wisely during drought and making better use of rainfall in the garden.
Garden Visits begin July 13!

In the Garden

During an extreme heat event or periods of drought:

- Water early in the morning if possible.
- Water the soil, not the leaves.
- Check new plants and pots first.
- Water slowly and deeply so moisture reaches the roots.
- Use natural mulch or living plant mulch to help keep moisture in the soil & roots cool.
- Don't forget to water mature trees!

Resource to Explore

Ecological gardening comes with a few terms that may be new or used in different ways. This [Gardening Terms](#) resource offers simple definitions to help make the language of ecological gardening easier to understand.

Eco-Gardening Tips

Water Management: An ecological garden works with the conditions already there. Some areas are dry and sunny. Others may be shady, damp, or slow to drain. Choosing plants that match the light and soil moisture helps them grow stronger with less watering and less stress. Take a look at your garden and ask: Where does water collect after rain? Where does the soil dry out quickly? Are any plants struggling because the spot is too wet, too dry, too sunny, or too shady?

Try this: After a rainfall, notice where water soaks in, runs off, or pools.

One Small Action: Protect bare soil with plants, leaves, or natural mulch. You might also consider a rain barrel, redirecting downspouts toward planted areas, or adding a rain garden. Review [Green Venture - Rain Ready for more info](#).

Check Out This Resource: [A Complete Guide to Building & Maintaining a Rain Garden](#)



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The Monarch Journey

Creating Communities of Biodiversity
Monarch Awards Applicant Newsletter
Vol 1, Issue 3 - July 15, 2026

Journey Notes

When you add native plants, you begin to notice more life in the garden - bees on the flowers, holes from caterpillars feeding on leaves, birds searching for insects, and seeds or berries forming for later.

Some native plants, called **keystone** plants, support many species. In this issue, we look at how even one or two well-chosen plants can help your garden become part of a larger living landscape.

In the Garden

Not every bee in the garden is a honey bee. Honey bees are managed, non-native bees and are not the bees most at risk. Many native bees are small, solitary, and easy to miss.

Some visit many kinds of flowers, while others depend on specific native plants for pollen. A garden with a variety of native flowers helps support a wider range of native bees. Find out more: [A Beginner's Field Guide to Identifying Bees](#).

Resource to Explore

Did you know there are 12 milkweeds (*Asclepias* spp.) native to Ontario? Here are some that do well in gardens in our region:

- Poke Milkweed (*Asclepias exaltata*)
- Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*)
- Purple Milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*)
- Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
- Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
- Whorled Milkweed (*Asclepias verticillata*)

Check out the [Native Plant Nurseries in Ontario](#) - it includes a detailed list and map.

Eco-Gardening Tips

Native Plants and Keystone Plants: An ecological garden does more than look beautiful. It provides food, shelter, and habitat for other living things. Native plants are especially important because many insects and birds depend on them.

Take a look at your garden and ask: Which plants are native to this region? Which ones are feeding pollinators? Are there any plants that also support caterpillars, birds, or other wildlife?

Try this: Choose one area of your garden and notice which plants attract the most activity. Watch for bees, butterflies, beetles, flies, caterpillars, and birds.

One Small Action: Add one native Keystone plant that suits your garden conditions. If you have room for a tree, consider an oak, willow, birch, or native cherry. For smaller spaces, consider dogwood, hazelnuts, viburnums, native roses, goldenrod, aster, native sunflower (*Helianthus* spp.), milkweed, or native grasses.

Check Out This Resource: [Pollinator Partnership Canada](#) to find out which Native & Keystone Plants are in your region.



Without milkweed plants, Monarch butterflies cannot complete their lifecycle.

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The Monarch Journey

Creating Communities of Biodiversity
Monarch Awards Applicant Newsletter
Vol 1, Issue #4 - July 22, 2026

Journey Notes

This week, we're looking at diversity in the garden - the variety of flower shapes, sizes, colours, heights, and bloom times that help support pollinators and other wildlife. Different pollinators need different kinds of flowers. By offering a mix of flower forms through the season, your garden can provide food and habitat for bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, birds, and other native fauna.

In the Garden

Bumble bees are native pollinators, and many species are in decline. They can "buzz pollinate" by vibrating flowers to release tightly held pollen, making them especially important for blueberries, tomatoes, cranberries, lupins, nightshades, and many wildflowers. We can help by planting native flowers because they co-evolved with bumblebees. Also you can provide habitat by leaving leaves and undisturbed spaces for nesting.

Resource to Explore

Many butterflies and moths need specific native plants for their caterpillars to eat. These are called **host plants**. While adult butterflies may visit many flowers for nectar, their young often depend on just one plant family or species. Adding host plants such as milkweed, violets, asters, goldenrods or native trees and shrubs helps support the full life cycle from egg to caterpillar to adult. Click to read about [host plants for our region](#).

Eco-Gardening Tips

Flower Shapes and Biodiversity: An ecological garden offers many kinds of food. Pollinators come in different sizes and shapes, so a mix of flower forms can support more bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, and hummingbirds.

Take a look at your garden and ask: Do I have several flower shapes blooming through the season? Are there tubular flowers, daisy-like flowers, clusters, bells, or flat-topped flowers?

Try this: On a sunny day, watch which insects visit which flowers. Notice whether different flowers attract tiny bees, larger bees, butterflies, flies, or beetles.

One Small Action: Add one flower shape that is missing from your garden. Consider beardtongue or columbine for tubular flowers, asters or coneflowers for daisy-like flowers, goldenrod or milkweed for clusters, harebell for bells, or bonaset and yarrow for flat-topped flowers.

Check Out This Resource: Beginning on Page 12 in [Native Plants for Pollinators](#), Plants are identified by their shape.



Hairy Beardtongue (*Penstemon hirsutus*) blooms are tubular shaped and bumblebees must push into the flower, brushing against the pollen as they feed on the nectar.

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

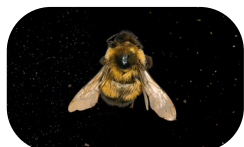
Media Contacts: Janet Mackey, Kate Sault, Co-Chairs of the Halton Region Monarch Awards

Questions? Contact: monarchawards.hmg@gmail.com

What's Growing On?

By Trish Moraghan, Halton Master Gardener

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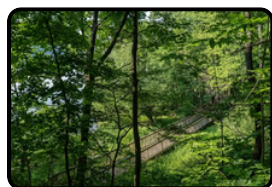
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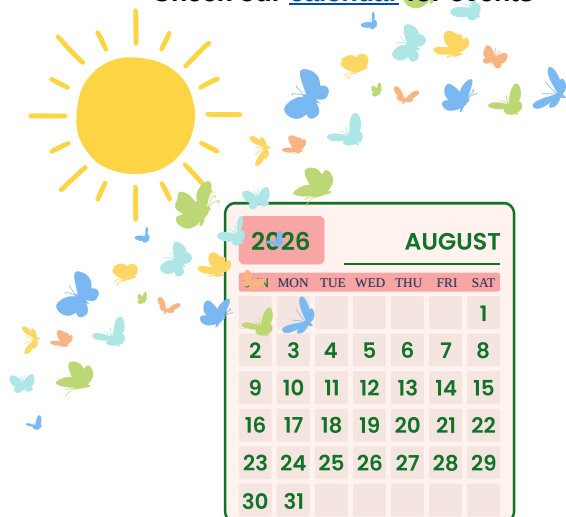


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Cross Pollination is published monthly from February to December and is written and prepared by our dedicated volunteers. Halton Master Gardeners are experienced gardeners who have studied horticulture extensively and continue to upgrade their skills 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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