

October 2017 Newsletter

"It is only here in large portions of Canada that wondrous second wind, the Indian summer, attains its amplitude and heavenly perfection, -- the temperatures; the sunny haze; the mellow, rich delicate, almost flavoured air: Enough to live - enough to merely be." - Walt Whitman, *Diary in Canada*



Upcoming

November 21: Christmas Potluck and AGM - 6:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Krista Mackler, Kelly's Flowers

Where to find free gardening advice from Master Gardeners:
Lanark County Master Gardeners: 613-264-8135
E-mail Help Line:
lanarkmg@gmail.com

Seminar - Designing Resilient Gardens For Our Times.

What is a gardener to do? One year (2016) is a severe drought. The next year, record rainfall brings floods. How do you create a garden that can thrive in all these sessions. The Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton and Lanark County and pleased to present an all-day seminar to help you, the gardener, create a resilient garden for all of these times. This seminar covers three major topics:

- Water and drought management
- Soil Management
- Wash and wear plants (planting for resilience).

When: Saturday October 21
Where: Rideau Park United Church 2203 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa
What is the cost: Only \$40 which includes lunch.
For details: see www.lanarkmg.blogspot.ca or www.mgottawa.ca, call 613-264-8135 or email lanarkmg@gmail.com

Bee Line Certify Your Garden As Bee-Friendly

Julianne Labreche, Master Gardener of Ottawa -Carleton

A few years ago, I took the time to certify my garden as a wildlife habitat, a welcoming home for bees and other pollinators.

It turned out to be a useful way to learn more about environmentally friendly gardening, including pollinating insects. Along the way, I gained knowledge about native and non-native plants to attract pollinators, as well as other ways to make my garden environmentally friendly and sustainable. There are also opportunities to browse through other gardens across the country as photos are often shared on these sites.

Sure, there was some paperwork



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District
Horticultural
Society

P.O. Box 494
Perth, ON, K7H 3G1
www.gardenontario.org

District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association



President: Robin McIntosh • **Newsletter:** Irene Hofmann

and it took a few weeks to hear back that the garden was officially certified, but overall there was that sense of accomplishment that my garden really was heading in the right direction as a refuge for local wildlife, including native and non-native bees.

Even though in Ontario, at least, the number of beekeepers and honeybee hives is on the rise and hopes for the bee populations are more optimistic, many people are concerned about bees these days. Not coincidentally, therefore, there are many ways to certify your garden nowadays as bee-friendly. Here are a few certification sites currently available for Ottawa gardeners:

The Backyard Habitat Certificate is available through the Canadian Wildlife Federation. To become certified, you are required to prove that you garden responsibly, including providing food, water and shelter for wildlife. Their website (<http://www.cwf-fcf.org/en/>) offers suggestions for attracting bees and other pollinators to your garden, including plants to grow.

In addition to educational materials, posters and videos about bees in the garden, packages of small plants are marketed, called Blooms for Busy Bees, and including Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia* sp) and Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*). Certification, albeit for a price, comes with a personalized sign to hang in your garden; a talking point for telling friends and neighbours about ways to sustain the local bee population by providing them with nectar and pollen sources.

Bees Matter is a Canadian coalition whose goal is to promote bees and bring knowledge about bees to Canadians. Their website (www.beesmatter.ca) provides a wealth of information and toolkits to farmers, gardeners and schools. It's a useful online resource to learn more about bees and ways to help them.

Take time to learn more about bees on this site. You can even order a free Buzzing Gardens seed packet with enough seeds for a bee-friendly five foot square garden.

Seeds include Lance-shaped *Coreopsis* (*Coreopsis lanceolata*), New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*), Dense Blazing Star (*Liatris spicata*), Golden Tickseed (*Coreopsis tinctoria*) and Sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*). While no certificate per se is provided, by participating your location will be added to their honeybee coverage map. Each year, nominations are encouraged for their Pollinator-Friendly

Community of the Year award.

The Pollinator Partnership is a North American pollinator protection campaign that originated south of the border a couple of years ago with the goal of reviving the health of bees, butterflies, birds, bats and other pollinators. They hope to register a million public and private gardens to support pollinators. Already, they have established a pollinator garden network that represents 800,000 gardeners, 10,000 school gardens and 250,000 pollinator gardens across the U.S. and parts of Canada.

Their website (www.pollinatorpartnership.ca) includes details on certification, as well as planting guides for different parts of North America. One useful guide to download includes plant lists for the Ottawa River Valley area. Beekeepers, farmers and gardeners are all welcome to apply to register.

Fall In The Perennial Garden

*Dr. Leonard Perry, Horticulture Professor Emeritus
University of Vermont*

Fall is the time to start getting your perennial garden ready for winter and next spring. If you've planned your garden well, there still should still be some plants flowering such as sedums and fall asters. A garden that has been well maintained all summer shouldn't require much work in the fall. However, if your garden has become overgrown and weedy, now is the time to clean it up. I like weeding this time of year, as the weeds won't grow back.

Continue to keep up with dead-heading (cutting off spent flowers), de-leafing (removing dead or diseased leaves), and weeding. If possible, it is best to wait until spring to cut back perennial leaves and stems. Many have a nice fall and winter effect (many ornamental grasses and bee balm), may provide seeds (asters, Joe Pye weed) or habitats (grasses) for wildlife, and will recycle nutrients back into the soil. Since spring is usually very busy, you may want to cut back in late fall just to save time, which is what I often end up doing. Especially cut back any perennials, such as some daylilies, whose foliage has become unattractive.

You may have noticed that some of your spring and summer flowering plants have grown a clump of green leaves at their base (called rosettes) after they were done blooming. Plants of this type include asters, tickseed, perennial sage, and beardtongue. Don't cut those small

rosettes back for the winter as plants will grow from these next spring.

There are certain perennials which are considered evergreen and also should not be cut back in the fall. These include bugleweed, rock cress, sea thrift, wormwood, heart-leaf saxifrage, pinks, barrenwort, spurge, hellebore, coralbells, dead nettle, creeping phlox, some primrose, lungwort, saxifrage, creeping sedum, hens and chicks, and thyme.

In early fall, spring flowering (and maybe some summer flowering) plants can be divided and transplanted. Don't wait too long, though, because plants need to become established and well-rooted before the winter. If you didn't get to it in late summer, you can divide your Oriental poppies, bearded iris, and peonies now.

Now that the heat of summer is over, it is a good time to plant if you didn't get it all done in spring, or if you bought more! Don't forget to plant some spring flowering bulbs now too. Most hardy ones are perennial, except for most tulips. If you want tulips that will last several years, look for ones marked as perennial such as the Darwin hybrids. Daffodils are a good choice if you have deer nearby, as they won't bother these bulbs or flowers.

Take a walk around your gardens and **write down** ideas for next year (you think you will remember but mostly you don't) and plants that will need dividing in the spring. It also might be good to notice what plants worked and which ones didn't do so well, and note what the environment was like for that plant (dry or moist soil, sun or shade, etc.). If a plant really didn't do well and you know you want to get rid of it, throw it out now to allow room for something new in the spring.

If you want to create new beds next year, now is a good time to cut the sod. If the area is small you can probably dig the sod yourself. For larger areas, a sod-cutter might be helpful. Check rental shops for these. Add compost to this new bed and work it in to start preparing the soil for spring planting. Add lime if called for by a soil test.

It is probably best not to fertilize herbaceous plants in the fall as they don't need to get any extra boost in growing (unless they were stressed during the summer), but adding compost may be a good idea. Compost adds organic matter to the soil, helping to create a healthy environment for your plants, as well as adding some nutrition. Perennials going into winter in good health and

vigorous will have a better chance of surviving than those that are weak.

Sometimes stores will have left over mulches or bulk compost and sell it cheaper than they would in the spring. You can buy some and spread it now, or pile it up and save it for spring.

If you like to give your plants extra winter protection, that should be done later in the fall before the snow begins. In areas that get ample snow cover, winter covering probably is not necessary. Snow acts as a natural insulator and will keep the plants near freezing. If you've chosen the right plants for your climate, they should make it through the winter with little or no injury. If you have tender plants that you want to give a little added protection, you can cover with straw (not hay which usually has weed seeds), pine needles, leaves (shredded, or else they may compact), evergreen boughs, or wood chips.

Still have some time? Then you could even edge your beds now to be ready for spring. Finally, clean and store your tools and roll up your hoses (make sure to get all the water out). Sharpen hoes with special files you can find at hardware stores, complete garden stores, or online. Make sure you've cleaned and properly stored power equipment as well. The more you do in the garden in fall, the more ahead and less stressed you'll be in spring.

How To Naturalize Bulbs In A Lawn

By Larry Hodgson, The Laidback Gardener

When I arrived to Quebec City over 40 years ago, I was stunned by the beautiful blue spring lawns seen in some older parts of the city. The blue flowers were Siberian squills (*Scilla siberica*) and they grew there by the thousands, mixed right in with the grasses. This was all the more surprising in that other lawns of the same neighborhoods were still in their dull brown early spring phase, that of a totally dormant lawn. Then, after the squills finish blooming, their flowers and leaves simply fade away, just as the grass begins to turn green. So the blue lawn turns into a regular green lawn and remains so for the rest of the season!

I promised myself that if ever I owned a lawn one day, I was going to stuff it with small spring flowers... and that's exactly what I did. Every spring, when the snow melts, my little

lawn turn into a flowery meadow. And not only in blue, but also yellow, pink and white. Note that not all these early bulbs bloom at the same time, instead there are waves of color: the same location can go from yellow to white to blue over the some 6 to 9 weeks that this early flowering lasts. It's absolutely magical and it is, in fact, the only reason I continue to have a lawn at all.

You see, I feel lawns require a lot more maintenance than a laid-back gardener like myself really wants to put into them. So I eliminated the lawn everywhere on my property, replacing it with more self-maintaining plantations like shrubs and no-care perennials. But I've kept just one section of lawn: my little flowering meadow where the bulbs appear each spring. True enough, it still requires maintenance, but not as much as neighbors' lawns, because I sowed a low maintenance lawn mix. As a result, I only need to mow a few times a year, plus I leave the grass clippings in place, so I never need to fertilizer. Therefore I can therefore consider my flower meadow to be still pretty low maintenance.

Naturalizing bulbs in a lawn is surprisingly easy. Simply cut a cut out a chunk of turf on three sides, then flip it over on the fourth side. This will give you a planting hole just about exactly the right depth for your bulbs. I actually just toss the bulbs into the hole and space them approximately with the tip of my shovel, but if you want to be precise, you're supposed to space them about 3 times the width of the bulb and turn them right side up (with the point facing upwards). You can plant pure patches of bulbs, one sort per planting hole, but I like to mix mine, making sure to include extra-early, early and mid-season bulbs in the same spot for a longer show. When you've finished placing your bulbs, drop the turf back into place, push down on it with your foot and water well. The following spring the bulbs will grow right up through the turf as if it weren't there.

Actually, naturalized bulbs require no maintenance. The term "naturalize" means "recreate a natural state." You plant the bulbs and you let them go through their natural cycle. They emerge in spring with leaves and blooms, then disappear underground as soon as the grass starts to turn green. Most bulbs will in fact multiply in the lawn over time, by self-seeding or division. I'm sure the vast blue squill lawns I still see in old Quebec City neighborhoods probably

all started with only a few dozen bulbs.

My first experience with naturalizing bulbs in a lawn occurred when I was 10 years old. Having read a text on naturalizing bulbs in a one of my father's garden catalogues, I was eager to try it, so with his permission, I planted a bag of 10 *Crocus tommasinianus* corms in a single spot in the vast lawn. I was pleased to death when the bulbs came up and bloomed the following spring and over the years they began to spread. Well, that was more than 50 years ago. My brother, who now owns the house, assures me that there are now thousands of flowers every spring and that almost one third of the lawn now turns purple in the spring! All from 10 original bulbs: isn't nature wonderful?

You can theoretically naturalize any hardy spring or fall flowering bulb in a lawn, but early spring bloomers are best, because they don't interfere with lawn mowing: they are gone or nearly so (they don't mind having the tips of their leaves clipped) by the time you need to mow your lawn.

Mid-season and late-season bulbs, though, cause a problem. If you plant bulbs that bloom just a bit later in the season, such as grape hyacinths (*Muscari* spp.) or most narcissi (*Narcissus* spp.), they will be in full bloom just when the grass needs its first mowing. Okay, the grape hyacinths and narcissi in a lawn are beautiful and you can simply mow around them, but that's an extra effort. I prefer to naturalize later-blooming bulbs like these in a forest or a flowerbed, where the mower never goes, so there is no need to skirt around them and where their foliage can mature without interference.

Here are the best bulbs to naturalize in a lawn:

1. Bulbocodium (*Bulbocodium vernum*) zone 2
2. Crocus* (*Crocus* spp.) Zone 3
3. Glory of the snow (*Chionodoxa* spp.) Zone 3
4. Narcissi (early varieties) (*Narcissus* spp.)
Zone 3
5. Puschkinia (*Puschkinia scilloides*) Zone 3
6. Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*) Zone 3
7. Spring snowflake (*Leucojum vernum*) Zone 4
8. Squill (*Scilla* spp.) Zones 2-7
9. Winter aconite (*Eranthis hyemalis*) Zone 4

**In very heavy soils (dense clay), crocuses are often not very perennial and will disappear over time. You'll have to replenish the planting with new bulbs occasionally. In a well-drained soil, however, the crocuses are just as persistent as any other bulb.*