



Trowel Talk!

January 2020

The sweet smells of floral success



Rose

Photo: Kelly Noel

The fragrant blossoms of many plants make a walk through a garden a treat for the nose as well as the eyes. A botanist will tell you that the real purpose of these scents is to attract pollinators, and not all of them are pleasing to the human nose. More than one plant has the common name "stinkweed"! We put the ones we like in our gardens, then breathe deeply and enjoy.

For centuries, man has extracted the oils from select blossoms and used them to make perfumes and

scented products. Aromatherapy and many folkloric medical treatments are based on the premise that smells can have physiological, even healing, effects on the body.

The sense of smell operates on the subconscious level so is always "on", even when we are asleep. We can distinguish and remember several thousand scents. On a visit to my garden, a non-gardening friend exclaimed that she could smell something that reminded her of her grandmother. We tracked the scent down to some nearby phlox. She later showed me a 50 year old picture of herself in her grandmother's garden. Until then, she had not known the name of the plants in the picture - they were clearly phlox.

Fragrance is just one of the genetic traits of a plant. Many plants have been hybridized to select other desirable features such as colour or disease resistance and, in some cases, fragrance has diminished. Not every rose cultivar is fragrant! And even when it is, individual plants do not always have the same level of scent. If fragrance is an important feature to you, select the plant when it is in bloom so you can give it the nose test to make sure it has the intensity that you are looking for.

The sense of smell is very subjective. I can't resist stopping to savour the smell of my 'Carol Mackie' Daphne when it is in bloom - but my sister holds her nose when she passes it! Some people find the smell of lilacs too overpowering to bring a bouquet into the house or even to

have the shrub located by the patio. Before you plant a fragrant specimen beside your outdoor sitting area, test it on the noses of family members.

Some fragrances are subtle and can only be detected by putting your nose close to the blossom. Other flowers are so intensely fragrant that the air is permeated with the scent. Plants pollinated by moths often become more strongly fragrant at dusk. When planning a garden, consider these features. Put subtle fragrances within reach at the front of the border. Keep strongly fragrant plants apart unless they bloom at different times. Put night bloomers near where you sit to have your after dinner coffee.



Daphne

Photo: Kelly Noel

It isn't only blossoms that can be fragrant - many trees, shrubs, perennials and annuals are noted for their aromatic foliage

Kelly Noel,
Master Gardener

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January To Do

- Check on bulbs and tubers in storage; adjust conditions if they are too wet, desiccating, or getting mouldy.
- Monitor houseplants for pests and disease.
- Plan seed and plant orders for the spring
- Look up stratification requirements for any seeds you saved last season.
- Ask an MG if you have any gardening or plant ID questions

Tip of the Month

Now the holiday rush is over, and we can settle down to peruse the seed catalogues that have been arriving. Here's a quick glossary of some of the terms you might come across, and what they mean.

Bare-root: Plants are shipped without soil. The roots need to be kept moist and planted as soon as possible.

Bolt-resistant: Bolting refers to flowering and producing seed. In edibles like lettuce, bolting often harms taste or texture of the leaves.

Brix: Term expressing the % of soluble sugars in a plant, related to sweetness, and also potential alcohol content if fermented.

Cross-pollination: Pollination of a plant of one variety by another variety (of the same species or a closely related one). Cross-pollination is required in some fruits for good production, and can improve fruit set in self-fertile varieties as well.

Cultivar: Short for cultivated variety; a version of a plant selected and propagated for desired characteristics.

Determinate/indeterminate: Used for tomatoes and sometimes squash. An indeterminate plant keeps growing and producing over the season, and will require more staking and pruning than a determinate plant, which stops growing taller when fruit set begins.

Days to harvest (n days): Average number of days required from planting to harvest, actual time can vary due to temperature, water, etc. Ottawa has a

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton



Where to find us for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca - monitored daily
Send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID.

CLINICS:

Closed for the season

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Thursday, January 16th - 7:30 pm

Plant Guilds: Taking Companion Planting to the Next Level

Rebecca Last - Master Gardener

City View United Hall, 6 Epworth Ave, Nepean,

Nepean Horticultural Society, \$4 for non-members

Tuesday, January 21st - 7:30 pm

Cheap and Easy Gardening Techniques (bring your questions)

Lee Boltwood - Master Gardener

2 Pretty Street, Stittsville

Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society, no guest fee

Monday, February 10th - 7:00 pm

Clamouring for Clematis

Mary Shearman Reid - Master Gardener

Old Ottawa South Community Centre, 260 Sunnyside Avenue

Ottawa South Garden Club, guest fee \$7

Wednesday, February 12th - 7:30 pm

Culinary Delights with Herbs and Edible Flowers

Nancy McDonald - Master Gardener

Larkin House, 76 Larkin Drive

Barrhaven Garden Club, non-members - \$5.00 fee

Wednesday, February 19th - 7:00 pm

Culinary Delights with Herbs and Edible Flowers

Nancy McDonald - Master Gardener

Queenswood Heights Community Centre, 1485 Duford Drive

Gloucester Horticultural Society

Tuesday, March 3rd - 7:30 pm

Organic Gardening 101

Rebecca Last - Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road

Kanata-March Horticultural Society, guest fee \$5

Monday, March 9th - 7:00 pm

Grow Natives

Edythe Falconer - Master Gardener

Old Ottawa South Community Centre, 260 Sunnyside Ave

Old Ottawa South Garden Club, guest fee \$7

Saturday, March 14th - 3:00 pm

Gardening with Wildlife

Rebecca Last - Master Gardener

Harrowsmith Stage, Canada Blooms

Toronto, ON

Free with price of admission to show.

Continued

frost-free growing season of 152 days on average. Vegetables that take longer to reach harvest, or that dislike cold spring and fall weather (decreasing their effective growing season) should be started indoors.

Di-, tri-, tetra-ploid: Refers to the number of chromosome sets in a plant. Most plants are naturally diploid (1 set of 2 chromosomes). Some daylilies have been bred as tetraploid (2 sets of 2 chromosomes), which often results in sturdier plants and fancier flowers.

Gynoecious: Producing mostly or only female flowers (which make fruit). May need a male pollinator, or may be Parthenocarpic, capable of producing fruit (usually seedless) without pollination.

Heirloom/heritage: Older variety (usually at least 50 years old), open-pollinated, often seeds have been saved and replanted for generations.

Hybrid/F-1: A variety created by a specific cross between 2 species or cultivars. Often bred for specific characteristics such as disease resistance. Plants grown from saved seed will be

Tuesday, March 17th -7:30 pm

Kitchen Gardens through the ages

Judith Cox – Master Gardener

2 Pretty Street, Stittsville

Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society, No guest fee



For more information on Master Gardeners, visit us at: <http://mgottawa.ca>

significantly different from their parents and from each other, due to genetic diversity.

Open-pollinated: Open-pollinated variety: is one that comes true from seed when pollination is allowed to happen naturally within the population. You can expect the plant to show very little diversity year after year from saved seed.

Organic: Produced without chemicals such as manufactured fertilizers and pesticides.

Pelleted seed: Seeds are clay-coated to

make handling easier. In some cases, pellets contain multiple seeds.

Self-fertile: Plant is capable of setting fruit after pollination by itself or another plant of the same variety.

Untreated seed: Some seeds may be treated with fungicide or insecticide to improve their survival and growth. Untreated seed has not had extra chemical treatments, so is more suitable for people who prefer organic techniques.

*Amanda Carrigan
Master Gardener*