



Trowel Talk!

June 2019

Get outside this summer (houseplants)



Lots of pots

Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

The sun shines a little warmer and longer each day – you're tired of being stuck indoors. Your houseplants probably feel the same way. Consider giving them a summer holiday, too.

All houseplants originated outdoors and, more often than not, from a hot climate - either tropical or desert. Therefore, logic dictates that they would enjoy our hot summers. With a little planning and a few precautionary measures, many houseplants can make the transition to the outdoors for the summer months.

Houseplants need to acclimatize

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gradually to the outdoors or they will suffer from sun and wind burn. After the risk of frost has passed, bring your pots outside and leave them in a shaded area, sheltered from the wind. Every day, move them into a slightly more exposed area until they are getting direct light for most of the day.

Make sure the pots have good drainage so they can deal with our summer rains. The tropical plants will enjoy the humidity and, if we have another year like 2017, the rainfall. Your cactus and succulents (or the desert plants) won't want as much moisture, so make sure they are under the overhang from your roof or in a gazebo or some such shelter. Locate the pots near a water source for regular watering, just in case we have a dry summer.

These ideal growing conditions mean the plants will start to put on some heavy growth, so regular fertilizing is a must. At each watering, use a balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20, at one-quarter strength.

Wind storms can wreak havoc with plants that don't have firm roots in the ground - so use heavy-weight pots or place the potted plant inside a decorative container with some stones in the bottom for stability.

When September comes, the plants will probably find the night temperature a little chilly and will be happy to move back into their dry, stable winter homes. Cut back on the fertilizing since you don't want lots of new growth this late in the summer. This is also a good time to prune

and repot plants, leaving the mess outdoors. Make sure you check for pests - a spray of insecticidal soap ten days before you want to bring the plants in, followed by a second spraying the day you bring them in should cover the lifecycle of most pests. Just to be sure, you may want to keep these plants separate from other houseplants until you are sure they are pest-free. Don't despair if some plants drop their leaves shortly after coming back indoors, they are acclimatizing to the drier conditions and lower, filtered light levels.



Hibiscus

Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Houseplants that respond really well to being outdoors include *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*, *Epiphyllum* (orchid cactus), *Schlumbergera* (Christmas cactus), Fuchsia, Kalanchoe and Clivia, to name a few. You may be rewarded with continuous blooms on some of these plants and, on others, a burst of bloom when they come back in and the days get shorter. After all, doesn't everyone enjoy a summer vacation?

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

June-To Do

- Deadhead and prune spring flowering shrubs after blooming.
- Set mower blade to 3" for summer mowing as grass growth slows and heat arrives.
- Get stakes and supports placed early, before plants need them.
- Monitor plants for pests and diseases.
- Stay on top of weeds; they're easier to control when they're small.
- Ask an MG if you have any gardening or plant ID questions.

Tip of the Month

If you look up into a tree or large shrub, and see a tent of webbing in the branches, and a mass of hungry caterpillars eating the leaves, it's a worrying sight. In the spring, the culprits are likely to be tent caterpillars, nesting in the crotch of branches. In late summer or fall, blame fall webworms, which nest more at the tips of branches. Most of the time, the damage is cosmetic, and the tree will survive. A heavy infestation can be a problem, though.

In winter or spring, you can check trees for egg masses. Tent caterpillars come from a shiny, varnish-y mass around trunk or branch. Break off the egg mass and dispose of it. Spraying with dormant oil can also smother overwintering eggs.

If you can reach the nest, remove it (prune off branch end or use a stick or gloved hands to rip webbing open). Do it in the evening if possible, as more caterpillars will be in the nest at night. Squash any caterpillars you can, or knock them into a container to dispose of them. Birds such as bluebirds and chickadees like the caterpillars. As well, some beneficial parasitic wasps will lay their eggs in tent caterpillars and fall webworms. They like nectar from plants in the daisy and carrot families, so planting these can encourage these beneficials to stay around.

Any caterpillars you (and the birds and wasps) miss will crawl down the tree to pupate. Putting a barrier (burlap or sticky substance like Tanglefoot) around the trunk of the infested tree and monitoring daily should help to decrease the number of them that become moths, whose offspring you'll have to deal with next year.

Amanda Carrigan, Master Gardener

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton



Where to find us for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034—Wednesday and Thursday 1–3 pm (all year)

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca - monitored daily

Send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID.

CLINICS:

CARP MARKET: Saturdays, May 12th to June 16th, 8:00 am-1:00 pm .

HERB EVENT: June 23rd, 8:00 am-3:00 pm,

June 30th, September 1st to September 15th, September 29th, 8:00 am-1:00pm.

CUMBERLAND MARKET (1115 Dunning Rd):

June 23rd, July 7th, August 11th, September 8th, 9:00 am-1:00 pm .

MAIN MARKET: July 7th, July 21st, August 11th, August 25th, September 8th,

September 22th, 9:00am-1:00 pm

NORTH GOWER FARMERS MARKET: June 16th, September 15th,

8:30 am-1:00 pm

OTTAWA FARMERS' MARKET (Lansdowne Park):

Sundays, June 17th to September 23th, 9:00 am-1:00 pm

PARKDALE MARKET: Saturdays, May 5th to June 16th, 8:00 am-11:00 am

RIVERSIDE SOUTH MARKET (Riverview Park & Ride):

June 24th, July 8th, July 22th, August 12th, August 26th, September 9th, September 23rd, October 14th, 10:00 am-2:00 pm

WESTBORO FARMERS' MARKET (Byron Linear Park):

June 23rd, July 14th, August 11th, September 8th, 9:30 am-1:00 pm

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Tuesday, June 18th-7:30 pm,

Culinary Herbs

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener & Richard Guenette
Stittsville Community Centre, 2 Pretty Street, Stittsville.
Stittsville-Goulbourn Horticultural Society,

Tuesday June 18th-7:15 pm

Small Water Features and Ponds

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener
Royal Canadian Legion, 7 Main St. East, Smith Falls,
Smith Falls Horticultural Society, Guest Fee \$3

Saturday, June 22nd-10:00 am to noon

Plant Guilds – Taking Companion Planting to the Next Level

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener
190 Gore Street East, Perth, Ontario
The Table Community Food Centre,

Friends of the Farm Lecture Series -7:00 pm –9:00 pm

Building 72 just east of the Prince of Wales roundabout. Free parking

Tuesday September 10th - **Cooking with Edible Flowers and Herbs**

Nancy McDonald – Master Gardener

\$12 members and \$15 non-members, per lecture



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