



Trowel Talk!

March 2019

Sparkling tools will grow on you

At the end of last November I went outside to bring in pots and trays that I would need in March to start seedlings on my growing bench. The unexpectedly balmy weather was so pleasant I decided to stay outside and clean up my tool cupboard and work area. This chore should always be done at season's end, but I often put it off in favour of others that seem more pressing, and then suddenly, I find it is too cold to work outside. This late warm day was a bonus!

My tool maintenance gear includes a scrub brush, abrasive pads (the kind I use on my ceramic stove top), paint thinner, boiled (NOT raw) linseed oil, fine grain sandpaper, 3-in-1 oil, a small round file and a hand-held sharpening stone. All of these can be purchased at hardware stores. Some rags and heavy-duty paper towels complete the kit.

My tools are stored in a closet-sized resin cupboard located beside two potting tables. I started by scrubbing the tables and hosing them down. I emptied all the tools out of the cupboard, swept away the debris and washed down the walls and shelves. There were some tools that I had not used in a while so I put

those aside to be discarded or given away.



Tools (spade and fork are over 30 years old), linseed oil, metal file and abrasives

Photo: Susan Bicket

My transplant spade, edger and garden fork are all good quality stainless steel with moulded plastic handles. I scrubbed them with the abrasive pad and then used paint thinner to wipe off all the gummy residue. These tools are at least 10 years old and much used, but looked almost new by the time I finished.

The same treatment worked wonders with my small hand tools. After I cleaned my pruning saw, I used the file to sharpen the bevelled edges of the teeth. This file can be used to smooth out nicks on the blades of shovels and cultivators too. For unfinished wooden handles, I used the sandpaper to smooth any rough spots and then rubbed them with boiled linseed oil to protect them from drying and weathering.

Cutting tools need sharpening too so I decided to bring them in and do that job during the winter. On a Sunday in February, with the wind chill hovering around -30 ° outside, I spread out my collection of seca-

teurs, shears and loppers and got busy. It is easier to clean these tools if they have been taken apart so I enlisted my husband to help. He dismantled them and I cleaned them as described above. Then I sharpened the cutting edges with several careful strokes of the sharpening stone. We applied some 3-in-1 oil to the hinges and blades as we reassembled them and then adjusted the tension until they moved easily. It was not hard work and the results were very satisfactory. My secateurs will now cut paper again!



Sharpening stone,



Pruning saw and 3 pairs secateurs

Photos: Susan Bicket

It is going to be such a pleasure when I open my tool cupboard this spring and see all the shiny clean tools and neatly arranged shelves.

Kelly Noel
Master Gardener

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- newsletter@mgottawa.ca

March To Do

- Clean, oil, and sharpen tools if needed.
- Start bulbs and cannas indoors.
- Start planting seeds and rooting cuttings indoors.
- Once it's possible as ground thaws, replace any frost-heaved plants.
- Use caution walking on newly thawed lawn and garden to avoid compacting the ground.
- Spray dormant oil as it becomes possible to access trees needing it.
- Unwrap protected shrubs on an overcast day once snow is gone.
- Ask an MG if you have any gardening or plant ID questions

Tip of the Month

Maintaining garden tools can be a task that's easily put off, forgotten, or dismissed. But there are good reasons to invest the time, both during the garden season and over the winter.

Firstly, lifespan. Taking care of tools helps them last longer. If you store tools wet and dirty, metal rusts, and wood can rot or splinter. Result: secateurs that don't open and close easily, and shovels that break when you're trying to dig something out of the garden. Rust can form quickly – it's best to clean and dry tools after use, especially if you've been working in rain and mud.



Using a metal file to sharpen a spade

Photo: Susan Bicket

Next, function. Sharp edges on tools makes the work easier on you. So does having handles that are smooth and secure, and moving parts that move properly. All these aspects should be checked and repaired as needed. Sometimes yearly is enough. But if you

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:

[2019 Ottawa Home & Garden Show](#)

Thursday, March 21st -Noon - 9:00 pm

Friday, March 22nd -Noon - 9:00 pm

Saturday, March 23rd -10:00 am - 7:00 pm

Sunday, March 24th -10:00 am - 5:00 pm

[Friends' Plant Sale](#), the Friends of the Farm annual plant sale

Sunday, May 12th - 9:00 am - 1:00 pm RAIN OR SHINE

Parking lot beside K.W. Neatby Bldg at Carling & Maple Drive

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

[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, April 2nd - **Savvy Choices for Spring 2019**

Mary Shearman Reid and Stephanie Sleeth, Master Gardeners

Tuesday, April 16th—**The Art of Rock Gardening**

Josie Pazdzior and Rob Stuart, Master Gardeners

Tuesday, April 30th -**Trees and Shrubs - the Backbones of your Gardens**

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

Tuesday, May 14th -**Kitchen Gardens**

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

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

Monday, March 18th -7:30 pm

General Care of Perennials

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, 537 Highway 105, Chelsea.

Gatineau Valley Gardeners, guest fee \$7

Thursday, March 21st - 7:30 pm –8:30 pm

Grasses - Whispers in the Wind

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

City View United Hall, 6 Epworth Ave, Nepean

Nepean Horticultural Society, guest fee \$4

Wednesday, April 3rd -7:00 pm

Amazing Annuals

Josie Pazdzior, Master Gardener

Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely

Greely Gardeners Group, guest fee \$3

Wednesday, April 10th - 7:30 pm

Roses are forever

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Larkin House, 76 Larkin Drive, Barrhaven

Barrhaven Garden Club, guest fee \$5

Monday, April 15th– 7:30 pm

Garden Design Basics

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Top Generation Hall, 4373 Generation Court, Ottawa

Hosted by Gloucester Horticultural Society – guests welcome

continued

do a lot of pruning, for example, you might want to do some sharpening during the season, especially if you notice pruning seems to be getting more difficult.

Finally, there's health. Badly-maintained tools have greater potential to injure the gardener – think splinters, cuts, strains, even falls and flying debris if something breaks abruptly. And for plants, pruning or sawing with dull tools causes more damage to plants than a clean cut with sharp tool, and makes it easier for disease to get in. If you don't clean tools after pruning diseased plant material, you can transfer the problem to other plants. In this case, you want to disinfect blades before using again. Alcohol, bleach, and household disinfectants are most often recommended. Bleach can be corrosive to tools, though, and requires longer soaking to work well. I personally find having a tube of disinfecting wipes, such as Lysol, is the easiest way to clean tools on the go.



A selection of disinfectants

Photo: Susan Bicket

So for the sake of your plants, your pocketbook, and yourself, it's important to keep your tools in good shape.

*Amanda Carrigan
Master Gardener*

Monday, April 15th -7:00 pm
A makeover for tired gardens and tired gardeners
Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
Russell Meadows, 475 Church Street, Russell
Russell Horticultural Society



Tuesday, April 16th -7:15 pm
Vines
Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
Smiths Falls Legion (7 Main St. East)
Smiths Falls Horticultural Society, guest fee \$5

Wednesday, April 17th - 7:30 pm
Kitchen Gardens
Judith Cox, Master Gardener
St Andrews United Church, Hwy 29 Pakenham
Pakenham Horticultural Society, guest fee \$10

Thursday, April 18th - 7:30 pm
Plant Guilds – Taking Companion Planting to the Next Level
Rebecca Last, Master Gardener
City View United Church (corner of Merivale and Meadowlands)
Nepean Horticultural Society, guest fee \$4

Tuesday, April 23rd -7:30 pm
Vines and Trailers
Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
Tom Brown Arena 141 Bayview Rd
Ottawa Horticultural Society

Tuesday, May 14th - 7:30 pm
Herbs, What to Grow, How to Grow and Tips on Use
Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener
Carp Memorial Hall. 3739 Carp Rd.
West Carleton Garden Club, guest fee \$5

Wednesday, May 15th -7:00 pm -9:30 pm
Designing your Water Garden: Elements and Principals of Design
Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener
Greenboro Community Centre, 363 Lorry Greenberg Drive
Greater Ottawa Water Garden Horticultural Society,
guest fee free 1st visit, \$5 2nd visit



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



**It's fun digging with gardening buddies!
Clean-up comes later.**

Photos: Josie Pazdzior