



Trowel Talk!

July 2018

Hardy geraniums bounce right back

Name a plant you can trim with your lawnmower and that still continues to bloom. As I learned from watching an interview with Phoebe Noble, the answer is hardy geraniums. Ms. Noble grew geraniums under the trees in her B.C. orchard. Not only did the plants act as a ground cover, they offered the additional benefit of attracting pollinators to the orchard. A mass planting of this scale would be a "dead-heading nightmare" so Ms. Noble used her riding mower to cut them back. Within weeks, these tough garden sprawlers came back looking refreshed and ready to put on a second show of blooms.

This hardy geranium, *Geranium* spp., also called "cranesbill" because its seed head resembles the bill of a crane, is very different from the annual plant that has the common name geranium. The latter, with its lollipop-shaped cluster of flowers, is found in many patio planters and is actually a *Pelargonium* spp.

With over 300 species and many more cultivars, the Geranium family is very large. There are annual, biennial and perennial forms with many of the perennial species being hardy to our region. There is a geranium for nearly every location. They tolerate most types of soil and will take sun or part shade.

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G. 'Purple Wave'

Photos: Mary Ann Van Berlo



G. 'Rozanne'



G. sanguineum



G. 'Blokovo'

The 1-5cm flowers come in the white, pink, mauve and blue hues and are often streaked. Some are continuous bloomers and some are repeat bloomers if cut back after the first bloom. The leaves are also of interest with varying textures, shapes, and colourations. Sometimes the foliage is aromatic.

Geraniums can be propagated from division or seed. They can spread quickly to form a large patch and are easily transplanted to other areas of the garden.

One of my favourite geraniums is G. 'Anne Folkard' whose new foliage is tinged with gold - the perfect backdrop for its deep magenta flowers with an even darker eye-zone.

The 2008 Perennial of the Year, G. 'Rozanne' is a continuous bloomer with 5cm blue blossoms. Rozanne tends to lounge; by September she is well over a foot into my lawn. Since the plant grows from a central crown, I simply roll the stems back onto the flowerbed, pass the lawnmower over the lawn and unroll the plant back into its sprawling position.

For interesting foliage, try G. *wlassovianum*, G. *thunbergii* 'Jester's Jacket' or G. *oxonianum* 'Katherine Adele'.

These offer variegated foliage, some green and white, some mottled with purple.

G. *cinereum* 'Ballerina' or G. 'Tanya Rendall' are two dwarf cultivars. These dainty plants excel in an alpine bed or at the front of a border where they can be viewed up close. Both form a perfect mound with purple-red flowers held above the foliage.

My final recommendation is a particularly dark pink cultivar of G. *oxonianum* that was discovered in Phoebe Noble's garden. It is a continuous bloomer and was appropriately named G. *oxonianum* 'Phoebe Noble'.

Just remember, while you can trim mass plantings with your lawnmower, the garden shears will do the job in smaller spaces.

Mary Ann Van Berlo
Master Gardener

July To Do

- Take pictures of the garden to help remember positives and negatives when planning changes.
- Take note of plants you want to split or move later.
- Start collecting seeds from things as they finish flowering.
- Monitor for pests and diseases.
- Make time to go tour other gardens, public or private.
- Ask an MG if you have any gardening or plant ID questions X

Tip of the Month

Ah, summer. The season of high heat, vacations, and water restrictions. So how do you keep your plants happy and well-watered under difficult conditions? Hopefully you've done the best you can about planting things in the right area for the plant's preferences, and mulching to conserve moisture. If you have an irrigation system, it makes life easier. For garden areas and plants that don't have that option, here's a selection of tips that can help.

Hot weather: Go against the advice commonly given, and water at night / late evening. That gives plants all night to absorb the water, and less of it will evaporate. Provide shade - new transplants, young seedlings, and plants sensitive to water loss will appreciate something like reemay cloth, a board, or a freshly pruned branch placed to shade them, especially from afternoon sun.

Vacation: If someone who's not a gardener is watering your plants while you're away, make sure you leave instructions as specific and easy as possible. Can you group pots that need about the same amount of watering? How long should they water an area or pot? Can you label each pot or area with instructions or a code number for ease of reference? If no-one's watering for you, move any pots you can into a shadier area to slow water loss. For both pots or for plants in the ground, there are DIY automatic watering options, ranging from an inverted soda bottle with a spout poked in the ground beside the plant, to using a pail of water with fabric 'wicks' to draw the water from the pail into the soil near the

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 GARLIC FESTIVAL: (Carp fairgrounds) August 11th, 8:00 am-3:00 pm and August 12th, 10:00 am-3:00 pm

CARP MARKET: Saturdays,
September 1st to September 15th, September 29th, 8:00 am-1:00pm.

CUMBERLAND MARKET (1115 Dunning Rd):
August 11th, September 8th, 9:00 am-1:00 pm

MAIN MARKET: July 21st, August 11th, August 25th, September 8th,
September 22nd, 9:00am-1:00 pm

NORTH GOWER FARMER'S MARKET: 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

RICHMOND FAIR: September 14th, 9:00 am-6:00 pm,-September 15th, 9:00 am—5:00 pm, September 16th, 10:00 am -5:00 pm

RIVERSIDE SOUTH MARKET (Riverview Park & Ride):
July 22nd, August 12th, August 26th, September 9th, September 23rd, October 14th,
10:00 am-2:00 pm

WESTBORO FARMERS' MARKET (Byron Linear Park):
August 11th, September 8th, 9:30 am-1:00 pm

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Wednesday, September 5th—7:30 pm

Fall, Final Garden Fling

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener
Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely
Greely Garden Club - guests \$3



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

plants.

Water shortage/restriction: The trick here is to use every bit of water effectively, and re-use it if possible. Think of it as if you were camping, and had to haul all your water in buckets. Use grey water from your dishpan (or if you can manage to divert it, your laundry) to water your plants. A little detergent won't hurt the plants on occasion (after all, they are generally fine with insecticidal soap solutions.) Waiting for shower water to heat up? Catch the cold water in a bucket

while you wait. Cooking pasta or corn? Save and cool the cooking water. Any water you can keep from going down the drain is a plus.

*Amanda Carrigan
Master Gardener*



G. macrorrhizum