



Trowel Talk!

March 2018

Respect the roots in changing times

Have you ever been dissatisfied with the way your garden looks? I am sure it has happened to you, as to me and every gardener. Have you ever decided to change something? Again, I am sure you have, so have I, so have we all.

When you decide to change the garden again, please remember one simple fact: all plants have roots. Obviously, everyone knows this. However, it is easy to forget about the impact of garden renovations to the roots of established plants. Hopefully, the existing trees and shrubs can be incorporated into your new design since transplanting mature plants is difficult and often ends with failure.

Serious problems can occur when the new plan includes large grade changes. Particularly, adding an extra layer of soil should always be done with consideration for the existing plants. Why? The roots of all plants have to breathe. Just like us, they take in oxygen and give off carbon dioxide. But unlike us, roots do it at an extremely slow rate. If new soil is added, the amount of oxygen that can percolate down through the soil is reduced. In extreme cases, when the new layer is thick, the

roots are deprived of oxygen and they die and eventually, the tree dies. Other serious damage is done when tree trunks are buried below their original depth. This causes trunk rot that will kill the tree — although it may take several years.

trunk is usually secured with a low retaining wall. The newly created bed is often planted with shade-lovers, such as impatiens, begonias or hostas. As tree roots die slowly over a few years, many gardeners do not associate the death of the tree with their new "bed".

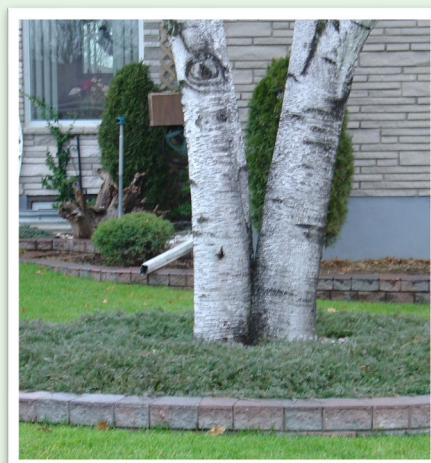
If the grade around existing trees has to be increased, the rise should not be more than 10 - 15 cm. Porous soil is recommended and the addition should be done over two growing seasons. Sloping the soil up away from the tree so the trunk is not buried is crucial too.

It is worth mentioning that different species of trees vary in their tolerance of grade changes. Some trees and shrubs are very sensitive - such as maples, beeches, some oaks, pines, spruces and dogwoods. Birches, cedars and hemlocks are more tolerant, while poplars, willows, pin oaks and locusts are very forgiving.

Preserve your trees and they will thank you in their own way. Some will welcome spring with wonderful fresh foliage; others will blossom with beautiful, fragrant flowers. They all will provide shade in the hot summer days. Some will go dormant in the fall, saying "goodbye" with a rhapsody of colours, while others, like the conifers, will "stay on guard" all winter long.



Tree in trouble



OK

Photos: Gina Dobrodzicka

Unfortunately, this improper "landscaping technique" is common. I am sure you can find some examples in your neighbourhood. A layer of soil added around a tree

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton
- <http://mgottawa.ca>
- Vol 9, number 3
- Editorial team—Josie Pazdzior, Amanda Carrigan, Judith Cox, Kelly Noel, Susan Bicket, Rob Stuart
- newsletter@mgottawa.ca

Gina Dobrodzicka
Master Gardener



March To Do

If you didn't clean and oil your tools last fall, now is the time to do that, before you get into the garden.

Begin planting seeds which need to be started indoors.

This is also the time to think about taking cuttings and starting to pot up bulbs or cannas that were in storage for winter.

Remember to spray dormant oil on any shrubs/trees that need it before buds break.

As the ground thaws, put any frost-heaved plants back in.

Ask an MG if you have any gardening questions.

Tip of the Month

When planning for summer, why not think about sneaking some vegetables into the flower garden?

Edible landscaping is trendy. And sometimes the best area for vegetables is where you already have a perennial bed, or in front of the house, where you (or the neighbours) prefer things to be more ornamental than utilitarian. But you can put a lot of edibles in a bed and still make it pretty. Just start thinking of vegetables as, well, plants, with texture and colour.

Lettuce, kale, and chard can have gorgeous leaf textures and colours. So do dark-leafed beets like Bull's Blood. Carrots have lovely ferny foliage like yarrow, and don't take much space.

Many herbs, such as chives and thyme, have attractive flowers as well as nice leaves. Taller things like cherry tomatoes, hot peppers, or eggplants have interesting flow-

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:

Thursday, March 22nd – Sunday, March 25th

The Ottawa Home and Garden Show,

Advice clinic ongoing throughout the Home Show. Talks at various times during the show. See <https://ottawahomeshow.com/> for admission prices.

EY Centre, Ottawa

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Monday, March 19th - 7:30 pm

Flowers with Vegetables: Beauty and the Eats

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Top Generation Hall, 4373 Generation Court, Gloucester

Gloucester Horticultural Society, Welcomes guests free of charge, only asking that they rsvp in advance to gloucester@gardenontario.org as they have a small venue.

Friday, March 23th - 2:30 pm

Spring has Sprung – tips and tricks to get you started in the garden

Fran Dennett, Master Gardener

The Ottawa Home and Garden Show

Friday, March 23rd - 4:00 pm

Houseplants - introduction, benefits, and care

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

The Ottawa Home and Garden Show

Monday, March 26th – 7:00 pm

Flowers with Vegetables: Beauty and the Eats

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

In the lower hall at: Brockville Wesleyan Church, 33 Central Avenue West, Brockville

On the Corner of Central Avenue and Ferguson Drive

Brockville Horticultural Society

Tuesday, March 27th – 7:30 pm

Going Grassless: Honey I Shrunk the Lawn

Julianne Labreche, Master Gardener

Tom Brown Arena, Second Floor, 141 Bayview Road, Ottawa

Ottawa Horticultural Society

Tuesday, April 3rd – 7:30 pm

Is that a Dandelion or a Dahlia? Gardening for Beginners

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata

Kanata-March Horticultural Society, Guests \$5.00

Tuesday, April 10th – 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Gardening with Wildlife

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Building 72 at the Arboretum at the Central Experimental Farm, east of the Prince of Wales roundabout

Friends of the Farm Lecture Series, \$12 FCEF member, \$15 non-members

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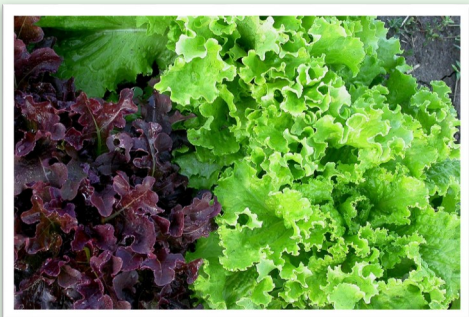


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ers and/or fruit when placed as individual specimens. Scarlet runner beans and some pea varieties can be trellised up and have showy flowers.

Of course, some things, like squash vines and corn, are hard to fit in an ornamental garden, but there are still a lot of things to try mixing into the perennial beds this year.

*Amanda Carrigan
Master Gardener*



Vegetables like lettuce can be pretty mixed in the flower bed

Photo: Monique Paré :

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS: continued



Thursday, April 19th - 7:30 pm

Cut and Come Again Vegetables

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener
City View United Church, 6 Epworth Ave ,
Nepean Horticultural Society, \$4 for non-members

Tuesday, April 24th - 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

Flowers with Vegetables: Beauty and the Eats

Judith Cox, Master Gardener
Building 72 at the Arboretum at the Central Experimental Farm,
east of the Prince of Wales roundabout
Friends of the Farm Lecture Series, \$12 FCEF member, \$15 non-members

Tuesday, May 1st - 7:30 pm

Looking at the Elements and Principles of Design

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener
Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata
Kanata March Horticultural Society, guests \$5

Tuesday, May 8th - 7:30 pm

Purple Carrots, Honeybees and Magic

Judith Cox, Master Gardener
3739 Carp Road
West Carleton Garden Club and Horticultural Society, guests \$5

Tuesday, May 8th - 7:00pm-9:00 pm

Unusual Edibles: Growing the Uncommon

Esther Bryan, Master Gardener
Building 72 at the Arboretum at the Central Experimental Farm,
east of the Prince of Wales roundabout
Friends of the Farm Lecture Series, \$12 FCEF member, \$15 non-members



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