



Trowel Talk!

April, 2013

Going wild for orchids

Last April I was awestruck! I always knew orchids were beautiful, but had only seen the ones that the florists use for that special occasion corsage or the common varieties available in the big box stores. Imagine walking into a 24,000 square foot room full of these exotic beauties. Even with so many blooms in one place, they represent just a fraction of the very large orchid family. According to Wikipedia there are nearly 800 orchid genera, around 25,000 species and over 100,000 hybrids or cultivars.

Each spring, the Ottawa Orchid Society hosts the Orchidophilia Show and Sale. Displays are well labeled, experts are on hand to offer information, and there is even a marketplace for anyone wishing to start a new hobby. For those of us not yet ready to try growing the real thing, there are orchid photos and art displays, as well as orchid crafts for sale.

Orchid aficionados and brown-thumbs alike can appreciate the exquisite perfection of these blooms. I'm in the orchid brown-thumb category myself, but that didn't stop me from enjoying the show. The depth of colours, the fine detail of the patterning and the texture of the petals left me questioning if some of the plants were real – but then I reminded

myself that only nature could create something that flawless.



Oncidium orchid

When I saw the displays that these orchid growers had put together, I had to wonder how much of their homes had been taken over by this hobby that has obviously become a passion. Perhaps their hobby has necessitated a hot-house addition to their home. Either way, they obviously had a large selection of plants to be able to assemble such a display. Some of the exhibits staged multiple plants of various species, all arranged to highlight the blooms at their finest. The addition of mosses, driftwood, and ferns made a wonderfully natural, rain-forest-like setting. The only thing missing was the calling of the tropical birds.

If you go to this year's show, I'm sure you'll agree orchids are one of the most fascinating families of plants. The way they adapt to their environment and manage to attract pollinators with their specialized flower structure makes

them truly remarkable. But beyond that, it is their uncommon beauty that makes them so well loved; even a complete novice in botany is inspired by the beauty of orchids.

Don't forget your camera; you'll want to capture these exotic blooms to share with others. But be prepared to wait in line because there are many professional and amateur photographers trying to do the same thing.



Photos: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Top: *Cattleya orchid*

Bottom: *Paphiopedilum orchid*

So if you want to brighten a cool spring day, I highly recommend Orchidophilia at the Nepean Sportsplex – Saturday, April 20th from noon to 5:00 pm. & Sunday, April 21st from 9:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m. This year is the 31st anniversary of the event. It's the next best thing to a trip to the rainforest. For more information, go to the Ottawa Orchid Society website www.ottawaorchidsociety.com

Mary Ann Van Berlo
Master Gardener

Trowel Talk!

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Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Where to find us this month 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:

Rare & Unusual Plant Sale: Sunday, May 12, 9am-1pm,

Tropical Greenhouses on Maple Street, parking lot, Central Experimental Farm

Red Trillium Studio & Garden Tour, May 11-12, 10am-5pm

MGOC advice clinic & plant sale at 112 Terraview Drive, Kinburn.

Byward Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 am - 5 pm)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 am - 1 pm)

Carp Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 am - 1 pm)

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Indoor Plants - Benefits, Best Choices & Bugs - April 16 - 6:15 pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

Manotick Public Library, 5499 South River Road, Manotick

Hosted by the Manotick Branch of the Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Indoor Plants - Benefits, Best Choices & Bugs - April 18 - 6:30 pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

Greely Public Library, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely

Hosted by the Greely Branch of the Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Waterwise Gardening - April 23 - 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Tom Brown Arena, 141 Bayview Road, Ottawa

Hosted by Ottawa Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Container Gardening - April 23 - 7 pm

Catherine Disley Engler, Master Gardener

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Hosted by Friends of the Farm, click [here](#) for admission fees & other details

Easy Care Perennials - April 30 - 7:00 pm

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener

Orleans Branch of the Ottawa Public Library, 1705 Orleans Boulevard, Orleans

Hosted by Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Terrace Gardening - Slopes, Berms & Inclines - April 30 - 7:00 pm

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Ruth E. Dickinson Branch of the Ottawa Public Library, 100 Malvern Drive, Barrhaven

Hosted by Ruth E. Dickinson Branch of the Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Savvy Tips for Spring Gardeners - May 14 - 6:30 pm

Edythe Falconer & Stephanie Sleeth, Master Gardener

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Hosted by Friends of the Farm, click [here](#) for admission fees & other details

Making Daylily Babies in the Backyard - May 14 - 7 pm

Kelly Noel, Master Gardener

Ottawa South Community Centre, 260 Sunnyside Avenue, Ottawa

Hosted by Old Ottawa South Garden Club (guests welcome - fee may apply)

Low Maintenance Gardening - June 5 - 7:00 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely

Hosted by the Greely Gardeners (guests welcome)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca

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

April TO DO List

- Apply dormant oil spray on fruit trees to kill overwintering pests and diseases. Make sure you follow the directions on the package and always apply while the plant is still dormant (i.e., leaf buds have not begun to open).
- Start the spring clean-up of fallen branches and the remains of perennials (if the ground is dry enough).
- 'Frost heave' can cause plants to lift out of the soil over winter. Push any lifted plants back into the soil or mound more soil around them to cover the roots.
- Prune fruit trees and fruiting vines while still dormant as the branching structure is clearly visible without leaves.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month:

This month's tip is courtesy of Master Gardener Edythe Falconer.

Edythe found wire mesh garbage pails at the dollar store that she uses to keep pests from eating or digging up plants. This could be especially useful to deter curious squirrels from digging up recently installed plants or to protect vegetables from hungry rabbits. The mesh allows the sun and rain through but not the pest. Secure it in place with a rock on top or fashion staples/pegs out of wire.



Another deterrent that might help keep pests at bay is to take the pruned branches from roses and lay them around and over the plant needing protection.

Blood meal sprinkled around the plants will deter rodents but some gardeners have found that the blood meal attracts dogs and cats. It has the added benefit of fertilizing the plants as it breaks down.

Commercial repellents are available at the garden centre.

A 'home remedy' of moth balls is not recommended as the white balls resemble candy and could be eaten by children.