



Trowel Talk!

April, 2016

Dahlias just dandy

Would you like a side order of dahlias with that burger? How different meals would be today if Andreas Dahl had successfully replaced potatoes with Dahlia tubers in the 1700's. Diners in France ate dahlias to some extent, but their peculiar flavour did not make them a widespread favourite.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Dahlia 'Duet'

Plant explorers brought Dahlia tubers back to Europe from Mexico and Central America as a potential food source. Instead, they became popular garden flowers. It was quickly discovered that Dahlias were natural hybridizers – meaning that cross-pollination produced seeds that developed into a wide array of colours and forms, which were different from the parent plants.

Today we enjoy many different sizes of Dahlias ranging from dwarf (12-15 cm) to tall (150 cm) plants. However, it is the wide variety of forms that makes them such a garden favourite. Singles have a solitary row of evenly spaced petals around a central disk. Doubles have multiple rows of petals around a smaller central disk that is obscured by the petals. "Dinner plate" dahlias have extremely large and showy double blooms. Cactus dahlias are doubles that have somewhat tubular shaped petals that curve backwards for over one-half of their length. Ball dahlias are sphere shaped or slightly flattened with quilled petals that are blunt or rounded at the tip. Pompons are smaller versions of ball dahlias.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Dahlia 'Art Deco'

Dahlias can be grown from seed (but they won't be identical to the parent plant), from rooted cuttings or from dormant root tubers. Tubers should be planted so that the growing tip is about 5 cm below the soil. Tall varieties should be staked when planted, to avoid damage to the tuber or plant roots. As the plant starts to grow, it can be secured to the stake. Dahlias require at least 6 hours of sun and adequate water to reach their peak display of blooms. They flower non-stop from July until frost.

After the first killing frost, the clump should be lifted, cured (allowed to dry for a few days out of direct sun) and then stored in slightly moist peat moss in a cool (5-10 C), dark place. Check them a few times through the winter to ensure that they have not dried out. In the spring, you can divide the tubers by checking for growth tips or "eyes". Each "division" of the tuber must have a viable growth tip, so divide the clump by cutting off sections of the tuber where an eye is present, treat the cuts with a fungicide and you are ready to plant. Last year's clump may produce many individual tubers. You can pot tubers indoors from mid to the end of April for a head-start on the gardening season.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Dahlia tuber showing spring growth

Unfortunately, Dahlias are not completely pest-free; slugs and earwigs like to dine on their lush leaves and petals. Despite that one shortcoming, these colourful beauties are a great addition to any garden. But don't restrict them to the outdoors; a bouquet of Dahlia blossoms makes a stunning, long-lasting arrangement.

Mary Ann Van Berlo
Master Gardener

I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden.

~Ruth Stout

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- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Volume 7, Number 4
- <http://mgottawa.ca>
- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
- mgottawaeditor@gmail.com



Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

April TO DO List

- Start annual flowers, cucumbers, melons and herbs.
- Start weeding as soon as the soil is dry enough to walk on. The roots pull out easier in the spring. This is especially true for grasses and weeds that are in the crown of shrubs and perennials. You can see and access the weeds without causing much damage to the plants around them.
- Prune any dead, diseased or damaged branches out of trees and shrubs while they are still dormant. It is much easier to do without foliage blocking the view.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Lawns with bare patches or thin spots may benefit from overseeding. This simply means sprinkling grass seed where needed. You don't necessarily have to cover the seed with soil, the most important factor is that the seed should have good contact with the soil, so rake over the area to make sure the seeds aren't clinging to existing blades of grass. Watering will also help to ensure the seed is on the soil.

Since grass is a cool weather germinator, the soil is already moist and April showers are (hopefully) in the forecast, now is the perfect time to overseed. (You will need to water regularly until the grass is established if there is no precipitation.)

If you want to improve the diversity of your lawn, seed some Dutch white clover throughout the lawn. This is a low growing variety of clover that is very drought tolerant and, as with all leguminous plants, has the added benefit of fixing nitrogen in the soil.

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 15 (9 am - 2 pm)

Parking lot beside the Neatby Building, Carling at Maple Drive, Central Experimental Farm <http://friendsofthefarm.ca/events.htm>

Byward Market: Saturdays, May 7-28 (10 am - 2 pm) and June 4-25 (9 am - 12 pm) & Mother's Day, Sunday, May 8 (10 am - 2 pm)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May 7 - June 25 (9 am - 1 pm)

Carleton Place Market: Saturdays, May 7 - June 25 (8 am - 1 pm)

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

FRIENDS OF THE FARM LECTURE SERIES:

Individual Lectures: FCEF members \$12, non-members \$15

Lecture series (4 lectures) FCEF members \$40, non-members \$50

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Register at: 613-230-3276 or [online](#)

Herbs in your garden - easy, nutritious & delicious - April 19 - 7:00pm

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener

Plant guilds - taking companion planting to the next level - May 3 - 7:00pm

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

All the dirt on container gardening - May 17 - 7:00pm

Catherine Disley-Engler, Master Gardener

Pruning Roses and Shrubs - April 18 - 7:30 pm

Lee Boltwood, Master Gardener

Top Generation Hall, 4373 Generation Court, Ramsayville

Hosted by Gloucester Horticultural Society (no guest fee)

Friendly Garden Pest & Weed Control - April 19 - 7:00pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Athens District High School, 21 Church Street, Athens

Hosted by the Athens Garden Club & Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$3)

Amazing 'Must-Have' Annuals - April 19 - 7:30 pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Pretty Street Community Centre, corner of Pretty St & Orville St, Stittsville

Hosted by the Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$4)

Making Scents of your Garden - April 25 - 7:00 pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Brockville Wesleyan Church, 33 Central Avenue, Brockville

Hosted by the Brockville & District Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$2)

Reviving a Tired Garden - May 16 - 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Cornerstone Community Church, 1728 Concession 11, Almonte

Hosted by the Almonte & District Horticultural Society (no guest fee)



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



Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton present:



Garden Design for Evolving Realities

Full day workshop: Saturday April 23, 2016

Location: Rideau Park United Church, Alta Vista

Intended for amateur gardeners of all skill levels, this workshop will help you:

- Appreciate the evolving realities that affect gardening in our urban landscape.
- Assess your property and garden potential with changing conditions in mind.
- Use garden design principles to create a landscape with all-season interest.
- Choose large and small planting material: trees, shrubs, and perennials.
- Organize gardening activities to support a resilient and sustainable ecosystem.
- Make a plan for growing vegetables successfully in your space.



- **Speaker presentations**
- **One-on-one** advice from Master Gardeners
- Handouts
- Poster displays and resources for research
- Sale table of plants and gardening books

Registration fee \$60, includes refreshments and lunch.

Seating is limited and early registration is recommended.

You can register online or by mail.

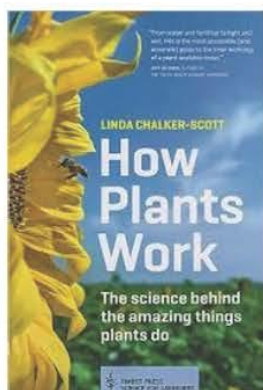
- For program and registration information, see www.mgottawa.ca/Design_Workshop.php.
- To register online and pay using PayPal, see www.mgottawa.ca/forms/designworkshop2016.php





proudly announces a special one-hour lecture on

***How Plants Work: The Science Behind the Amazing
Things Plants Do***



Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott

*Author & Horticultural Professor,
Washington State University.*



Thursday, April 28, 2016

7:00 to 9:00 pm (Doors open at 6:30 pm)

Confederation Education Centre

1645 Woodroffe Ave., Ottawa, ON.
(next to Nepean Sportsplex)

Cost \$5

*Advanced ticket sales seating for 200
At-the-door seating for 80*

Advanced ticket sales available on-line at:

http://justfood.nationbuilder.com/how_plants_work

Larry Hodgson, noted Canadian gardening book author, says:

“Linda Chalker-Scott is passionate about scientifically accurate gardening advice. I’ve learned more useful gardening facts from her than from any other speaker”.

This lecture made possible by financial support from:

Ottawa Valley Rock Garden and Horticultural Society	Nepean Horticultural Society
Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton	Stittsville Horticultural Society
West Carleton Garden Club & Horticultural Society	Kanata-March Horticultural Society

For further information: Phil Reilly 'gphilreilly@gmail.com' or 613-832-2965