



Trowel Talk!

August, 2010

Rising to great heights!

We gardeners are always looking for plants that are the smallest, the prettiest, the longest blooming, the oddest, the most frost hardy — and the TALLEST!!! Here are five tall perennials to "stretch" your imagination.

We inherited yuccas when we moved to this property, growing in the shade, never higher than 30 cm and any thought of blooms seemed preposterous. I moved them into the sun. That was seven years ago and they have done well ever since. Yuccas can reach a height of 3 metres but mine are only half that. Still that makes them as tall as I am and I'm delighted with their statuesque beauty.



Alcea 'Crème de Cassis'
(photo by Mary Ann Van Berlo)

A perennial favourite for generations, Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*) doesn't always act like a perennial. Often it behaves like a biennial, producing basal leaves in

its first year and magnificent flower-laden spikes the next year. Several years ago I planted eight flourishing first year plants at the back of our property where I wanted some height and colour. Next spring they had disappeared "without a trace". Suspicious hoof prints criss-crossed the soil where I had planted them. The ones I now have near the house have so far been spared. Hollyhocks can stretch to 1.7 metres and appreciate staking to fortify them against high winds.

Delphiniums were my mother's favourite flowers. Hers were short and strong and did not need to be staked. The tallest delphiniums belong to the *Elatum* Group and can grow to almost two metres. Blossoms come in white, pink, violet and many shades of blue. I prefer the colour of my childhood delphiniums - an intense deep dramatic blue. If you deadhead, a second show of blossoms is possible before the end of the season. In the spring, if you wish to encourage higher spikes with more blossoms, break off some of the weaker shoots. If you break them at the base, you can plant them and propagate more giants.

The plume poppy (*Macleya cordata*) was unknown to me until a few years ago when I saw it in a local demonstration garden. I was impressed and when some were offered at our Garden Club plant sale I latched onto them. Plume poppy makes an impressive backdrop for other plants and doesn't mind having its back to the wall. In fact the wall provides the wind protection that this plant needs. In the right location it can grow to nearly 3 metres. Its

greatest feature is its foliage but the small pinkish flowers are attractive too. I should point out that a wall also helps to prevent excessive spread because plume poppy can be invasive in some soils.



Valeriana officinallis
(photo by Mary Ann Van Berlo)

Years ago I brought home Valerian (*Valeriana officinallis*) plants. I've not been without them since. They self-seed freely but are not at all aggressive. If I don't like where they land I simply move them to another location. And they are very, very tall - more than 2 metres high in the right soil. I like them almost anywhere as long as they are not shading out smaller plants. What I like best is their exquisite scent, particularly intense in the evening - aromatherapy free of charge.

If you would like a high-rise, NBA style garden these could be some of your players. These perennial giants add variety, not only with their height, but also with their blossoms, their foliage and their wonderful range of colours. Their "brag" potential is great and, unlike the fisherman with his stories of the "one that got away", you have your proof towering over you in your very own garden.

Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener

Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
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- <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>
- trowel_talk_editor@rogers.com



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

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

Children's Garden: 321 Main St., Leggett Park, Saturdays, July (10 a.m. – noon)

Lansdowne Market: Sundays, July through September (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.) EXCEPT during Super Ex (Aug 22 & 29)

MGOC Plant Sale: Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, August 15 (9 a.m. – until sold out or 1:00 p.m.)

SPEAKING EVENTS:

Attracting birds & butterflies to your garden – September 1, 2010 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Nancy Seppala, Master Gardener

Royal Canadian Legion, 177 George Street, Carleton Place

Hosted by Carleton Place & District Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Seed Saving & Storage– September 8, 2010 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, 319 Prescott Street, Kemptville

Hosted by Kemptville Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

The Vertical Aspect of Gardening– September 14, 2010 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Reid, Master Gardener

Navy Veterans Association Club, 30 Sixth Street, Cornwall

Hosted by Cornwall & District Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Fall Seasonal Decorations – September 21, 2010 – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Catherine Disley-Engler, Master Gardener

Pretty Street Community Centre, (Corner of Orville & Pretty St.), Stittsville

Hosted by Stittsville-Goulbourn Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

All About Hardy Roses– October 12, 2010 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

The Old Firehall (Ottawa South Community Centre), 260 Sunnyside Ave, Ottawa

Hosted by Old Ottawa South Garden Club (guests welcome)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: 613-836-1491

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website:

<http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>

August TO DO List

- Deadhead regularly to stop invasive plants from self-seeding.
- Start marking plants that need moving or dividing so that you can start this task when the cooler weather comes.
- Late August, early September is a great time to over-seed lawns. Add a thin layer of soil or compost, sow seed, and rake in. Keep newly seeded lawn areas moist until well established.

Tip of the Month:

July was the month of the Japanese Beetles. As with most pests, their population cycles from highs to lows – this year being a high! Japanese beetles are an introduced pest and have no natural enemies in our area. While they are only active in the adult beetle stage for a 4-5 week period, they can do considerable damage in that short time. They can skeletonize a plant (eat the green from between the leaf veins) very quickly. Don't dismay, most plants will recover and send out a new flush of growth.



Control – adult stage

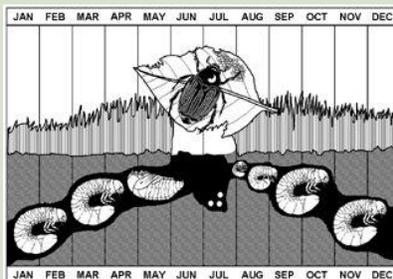
The best control is to manually pick the beetles or flick them into a bucket of soapy water. If a whole branch or plant is infested, shake it off over a drop cloth then empty the drop cloth into the bucket of soapy water.

Pheromone traps will attract and kill the beetles. The only problem is that they do attract the beetles. If you chose to go this route, make sure the trap is far away from the plants you are trying to protect.

Control – larval stage

The Japanese beetle lays its eggs in lawn areas. These become white grubs – one of three types of white grubs that damage our lawns. The best way to control them at this stage is through the use of beneficial nematodes. These microscopic worm-like creatures parasitize the larvae. Make sure you follow the instructions on the package. The soil must remain moist for the nematodes to survive. Mid-

August is the time to apply nematodes since the larvae will have emerged from the eggs and be close to the soil surface.



Japanese beetle life-cycle

Plant Sale!

Sunday, August 15th is the date for Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton's annual plant sale at the Central Experimental Farm (Building 72, in the Arboretum). The sale starts at 9:00 a.m. and goes until the earlier of: 1:00 p.m. or when the plants are sold out.

There will be an assortment of favourite perennials, shrubs and trees, as well as some unusual garden gems.

Everything will be well-priced.