



# Trowel Talk!

February, 2015

## A feast of follies

We build a wide variety of structures in our yards and gardens. What inspires us to fill spaces with wooden animals, metallic flowers and imitation butterflies – to mention just a few? Why are these objects important to us?

Garden ornamentation has a long history. For centuries we have sought to add uniqueness and beauty to our surroundings. In the middle 1800's, the practice rose to a peak. Wealthy families sought to out-display each other with full or partial replicas of mythical figures, pyramids, cathedrals, mosques and even, in one case, a working volcano. These structures were sometimes referred to as "follies" – a reference to their sometimes questionable beauty or possibly a mild insult to the wisdom of the persons who paid fortunes for their construction. Many fell apart quite quickly. Others survive to this day.

What are the modern day equivalents? In today's heavily populated urban settings we are seeing small and not so small inukshuks. Inukshuks were stone structures erected in earlier times by the Inuit peoples of the Arctic. These enormous stone edifices had a function in the lives of Arctic dwellers. Some gave directions, some warned of dangers ahead and some pointed the way to food caches, or good hunting areas. Unlike the follies that were a product of whimsy and wealth, inukshuks were a functional part of Inuit civilization. Travel to Ottawa's



Photo: Roy Falconer

A stone "folly" in the author's garden.

new airport building and you will see a large inukshuk by one of the main entrances – perhaps directing today's travelers. The past is being "revued" and honoured.

I have my own "follies" – a variety of magnificent rocks, a pair of ornate tractor wheels and an old wagon wheel. Some of the rocks now form a miniature Stonehenge, minus the Druids, but I'm sure these could be had too, if I checked around. Sometimes I try to imagine what the spirit of the pioneer farmer who first broke this land must now be thinking. He removed these enormous rocks to one side of his fields without any modern conveniences. Now we have moved them back. He must think we're crazy!

The tractor wheels front on the old pioneer trail that runs along the west side of our property – a fitting tribute to the hard scrabble endured by previous occupants. Originally, I had looked for a duplicate of the wheel we had had in the middle of our flower garden on the prairies. Those that I have now are a compromise between nostalgia, availa-

bility and cost. My sister and her husband did offer the one that stands at the entrance to their farm, to which they have attached a sign reading "Aggravation Acres".

You have now probably noted at least a few of the reasons we add "stuff" to our surroundings – nostalgia, connection, continuity, recreating nature, surplus wealth, identity, artistic creation, sense of humour. These landscaping statements are as varied as all humankind. Their motivations are natural expressions of our selves. Some of our follies may be foolish but they are precious. All together, they are a "revue" of our humanity and our unique ways of saying who we are.

*Edythe Falconer*  
Master Gardener

### Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
- [mgottawaeditor@gmail.com](mailto:mgottawaeditor@gmail.com)

## Event of note!

**Garden Design Workshop**  
Hosted by Master Gardeners of  
Ottawa-Carleton  
April 25, 2015  
See page 3 for more info!



## 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](mailto:mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca)

- monitored daily

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

#### CLINICS:

**March 7, 2015, 10am to 3pm – Seedy Saturday** – Ron Kolbus Centre, 102 Greenview Avenue, Britannia Park, Ottawa

**March 26-29, 2015 – Ottawa Home & Garden Show** – EY Centre, 4899 Uplands Drive, Ottawa – Visit us at our booth. We'll be there all weekend at this annual spring show, to answer your gardening questions.

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Mucking about In the Dirt Is Good for your Health** (and ways to stay healthy when gardening) – February 24 – 7:30 pm

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener

Tom Brown Arena, 141 Bayview Road, Ottawa

Hosted by Ottawa Horticultural Society (No guest fee)

**Vegetable Growing Possibilities in the Urban Landscape** – March 3 – 7:30pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata

Hosted by Kanata-March Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$5)

**Bugs, Slugs and Other Thugs** – March 17 – 7:00pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Athens District High School

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

**Makeovers for Tired Gardens and Tired Gardeners** – March 18 – 7:30pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

St Andrews United Church, Main St (Highway 29)

Hosted by Pakenham Horticultural Society

**Garden Pests and Diseases** – March 23 – 7:30pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

Cornerstone Community Church, 1728 Concession 11, Almonte

Hosted by the Almonte and District Horticultural Society (No guest fee)

**Some Newer Perennials and Woodies: How do They Really Fare?** – March 23 – 7:30pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church, 537 Highway 105 (across from FreshMart)

Hosted by Gatineau Valley Gardeners Club

#### 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 by e-mail [info@friendsofthefarm.ca](mailto:info@friendsofthefarm.ca)

**Plant for Incredible Edibles** – April 7 – 7:00 pm

David Hinks, Master Gardener

**Three mini-lectures in one evening** – April 21 – 7:00pm

**Earthy Delights** – Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

**Keeping the Garden Going Strong** – Josie Pazdzior, Master Gardener

**Trees and Shrubs for the Urban Garden** – Laura Henderson, Master Gardener

**Rejuvenating a Tired Garden** – May 5 – 7:00 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

**Plant for Continuous Garden Joy** – May 19 – 7:00 pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: [mgottawaspeakers@gmail.com](mailto:mgottawaspeakers@gmail.com)

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

### February TO DO List

- It's not too early to start your TO DO list for spring. That way, you can pick and choose jobs off your list depending on weather and/or time available.
- Watch for pests or diseases on houseplants so that you get them under control before they become a major problem.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

### Tip of the Month

Another type of garden structure that could be considered a folly is a 'trompe l'oeil' – a structure that 'tricks the eye' into thinking it is something that it isn't. The trompe l'oeil can be a focal point or it can be used to disguise an eyesore by blocking it out of view or by drawing the eye away from it. The trompe l'oeil can be simple (like a mirror added to a wall to make the garden look larger) or very complex (like a false wall or structure).



ABOVE: The woodwork has been built in a design that adds depth to a flat wall. The mirror in the middle completes the impression of the structure having three-dimensions.



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**MASTER GARDENERS of  
Offawa-Carleton**



## **Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton One-Day Garden Design Workshop**

**Saturday, April 25th, 2015**

**Rideau Park United Church, 2203 Alta Vista Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario**

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton are pleased to present this day-long intensive garden design workshop. Intended for gardeners of all skill levels, this workshop will walk you through:

- Taking stock of your garden: assess your soil, sun, shade, wind and other environmental factors; and develop a working sketch of your garden. Identify your specific goals by defining your functional needs and your garden style.
- Creating the structural bones of your garden by defining areas for access paths, decks, fences, pergolas, patios, sheds and water features; choose the colour, size and shape of these garden features to match your garden style.
- Considering all the important factors when choosing large planting material: trees, shrubs, hedges, and vines.
- Appreciating good garden design principles and using them to create your personal vision, with all-season interest.
- Selecting perennials and using their best features to create beauty and that 'Wow! Factor' to make your garden a neighbourhood knockout.
- Understanding how your garden matures and what to do to keep it looking its best.
- One-on-one advice from experienced Master Gardeners will guide you through the practicalities of garden design.

Your \$60 registration fee covers all costs for the day, including refreshments and a lunch of sandwiches, fresh fruit and vegetables.

**Seating is limited and early registration is recommended.**

You can register on-line or by mail. For program and registration information go to our website: <http://mgottawa.ca>

