



Trowel Talk!

February, 2016

Symbol beauty

What is the connection between mayflower, prairie crocus, prickly wild rose, purple violet, white trillium, western red lily, lady's slipper, pitcher plant, Pacific dogwood, fireweed, mountain avens, blue flag and purple saxifrage?

Yes, all are plants but the group includes a tree, shrubs, spring ephemerals, perennials, an orchid and an insectivore.

So what does this diverse collection have in common? Each has been chosen by a province or territory as its official floral emblem.

The mayflower (*Epigaea repens*) was chosen by Nova Scotia in 1901. The proclamation declared it had been their emblem "from time immemorial". This ground-hugging woodland wildflower has fragrant pink blossoms in May.

The mauve prairie crocus (*Pulsatilla ludoviciana*) pokes through the snow in early spring. It was selected for Manitoba in 1906 by a vote of their schoolchildren. The western red lily (*Lilium philadelphicum*), which came second in Manitoba's vote, was chosen by Saskatchewan in 1941. Every summer, it decorates the fields with brilliant spots of scarlet. In 1930, Alberta's children picked the prickly wild rose (*Rosa acicularis*). The fruits of this pink-blossomed shrub can be used to make tea and jelly. Another plant with a long history of culinary and

medicinal uses is the purple violet (*Viola cucullata*). This small sturdy wildflower was selected by New Brunswick in 1936.



Photos: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Top: *Trillium grandiflorum*

Bottom: *Cypripedium acaule*

Documents published by Ontario bear a symbol based on the three petals of the white trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) which became Ontario's flower in 1937. That same year, PEI chose the lady's slipper, an orchid. Several years later, they narrowed this down to pink lady's slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*). Trilliums and lady's slippers are spring-blooming ephemerals found in woodland settings. Picking endangers them because they come from seed and take several years to reach blooming size. Admire them in place!

BC chose the Pacific dogwood (*Cornus nuttallii*) in 1956. These trees are covered with white blossoms in April and have brilliant red colour in fall from both foliage and berries.

The pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*) appeared on Newfoundland coins in the late 1800's and was chosen as the floral emblem in 1954. It has a specialized leaf which holds water. Insects that fall into this pitcher are trapped

and digested, providing the plant with nutrients.

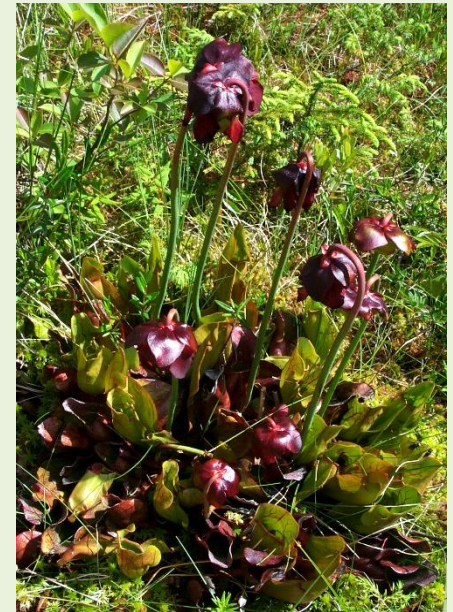


Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Sarracenia purpurea at MUN Botanical Garden, St. John's, NFLD

The Yukon Territory chose fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*) in 1957 because the fields are ablaze with its pink blossoms in late July. The Northwest Territories chose mountain avens (*Dryas integrifolia*) that same year. This low-growing sub-shrub flourishes on the sunny tundra and lights up June with its white blossoms.

The Madonna lily was the original choice of Quebec and the familiar fleur-de-lis is a stylized diagram of its blossom. But it is not native, so in 1999 the government chose the indigenous blue flag (*Iris versicolor*) instead.

The last plant elected to this group was purple saxifrage (*Saxifraga oppositifolia*), chosen by Nunavut in 2000. From April to July, the rocky soil is covered with mats of its bright purple flowers. These native Canadian plants form a colourful chain from sea to sea to sea.

Kelly Noel
Master Gardener

Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Volume 7, Number 2
- <http://mgottawa.ca>
- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
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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:

Seedy Saturday – March 5, 2016, 10am to 3pm

Ron Kolbus Centre, 102 Greenview Avenue, Britannia Park, Ottawa

Ottawa Home & Garden Show – March 25-28, 2016

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 and presenting two talks:

Flower Pots that WOW! – March 25, 2016 – 4:00pm

Laura Moses, Master Gardener

Plant Guilds – taking companion planting to the next level – March 27, 2016 – 1:00pm

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Hedges – planting, maintaining, renewing– February 18 – 7:30pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

CityView United Church, 6 Epworth Ave., Nepean

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

Continuous Joy in the Garden – March 1 – 7:30pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata

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

Pruning Shrubs and Small Trees – March 3 – 7:00pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely

Hosted by the Greely Gardeners Group (Guest fee: \$2)

Soil 101 – March 5 – 10:00am

David Hinks & Gerda Franssen, Master Gardeners

Almonte Public Library, 155 High Street, Almonte

Register at: kkiddey@mississippimills.ca

Hosted by the Mississippi Mills Public Library (Guest fee: \$0)

Seeds and Propagation – March 9 – 7:30pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Carveth Care Centre, 375 James Street, Gananoque

Hosted by the Gananoque Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$0)

Tips to Make Gardening Enjoyable & Fun – March 9, 2016 – 7:00pm

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener

St. Mary's Hall, Smith Road, Navan

Hosted by the Navan Women's Institute (Guest fee: \$0)

Creating a New Garden Bed – March 22 – 7:00pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Athens District High School, 21 Church Street, Athens

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

Lawn Maintenance for the Traditional Lawn, Plus Some Lawn Alternatives

– April 5 – 7:30pm Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Road, Kanata

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

February TO DO List

- It's still too early to start most vegetable or annual seeds. A few could be started now – petunias for example take a long time to get to bloom size from seed and could use an early start. Onions and leeks (grown from seed, not sets) can be seeded in flats now.
- Get seeding supplies (seeds, soil, pots/flats) ready so that when the time comes, you are prepared to start your seeds indoors.
- Check on any bulbs and tubers you have stored to make sure they are not going mouldy or conversely are not drying out completely. If they are getting mouldy, unwrap to allow more air circulation (discard infected packing material) and cut off any affected parts.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

There are so many garden tools available that claim to make gardening easier so we thought we'd share a few favourites to save you some research.

Stirrup hoe – this hoe makes short work of weeds as its double sided blade cuts through their root system. Choose a lightweight model to reduce strain. Work only the top 1cm of soil to cut weeds off just below the surface. It's perfect for the veggie garden.



Dutch hoe – very similar to the stirrup hoe, but the hoeing mechanism is fixed. Test both hoes in the store to find which one works best for you.



Transplant Spade – this is short handled shovel with a long narrow spade that is perfect for digging/dividing a perennial in a confined space. The long spade helps you get a good deep root ball. Choose one with a stainless steel blade to ensure that it doesn't rust and remains sharp.



**WORKSHOP:
Garden Design for
Evolving Realities**

Hosted by Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

April 23, 2016 (full day with lunch)

Rideau Park United Church

2203 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa

Program & registration will be available on our website soon!

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton



SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS (Continued)

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](#)

Yes, you can grow vegetables – April 5 – 7:00pm

Esther Bryan, Master Gardener

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

Reviving a Tired Garden – April 12 – 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Carp Memorial Hall, 3739 Carp Road, Carp

Hosted by the West Carleton Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$5)



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



By-pass Pruners (or secateurs) – a good pair of pruners are a must-have for every gardener, but they are not a one-size fits all tool. Choose either a left or right-handed pair. They come in different sizes so choose one that fits your grip comfortably. Consider a ratchet style if you have weak hands although they may take some getting used to.



Hori-Hori Knife – this tool can be used for digging, cutting and weeding. The stainless steel model stays clean and sharp. It comes with a sheath that can be attached to your belt so it is always handy. The ruler on the blade is good for determining planting depth.



Weed Torch – this lightweight propane torch is perfect for killing weeds down to the roots. You need only apply enough heat to shrivel the foliage, which in turn causes the root to atrophy. It is especially useful in interlock patios and walkways. Of course caution must be exercised – do not use it near dry grass, mulch, etc. that might catch fire and spread quickly. It would be wise to keep a full watering can handy.

