



# Trowel Talk!

July, 2013

## Great gardens are in the bag

When my friends head off to the golf course, I head out to my garden. We have the same expectation of spending a few hours out in the fresh air doing something we very much enjoy. I carry a bag with me too, but there are no clubs in it.

Instead, it contains a favourite and well-thumbed reference book on perennials, a clipboard holding to-do lists, maps of garden beds and a printout of my plant database. Once outside, I pick up my baseball base, a bucket, some tools and I am ready.

The base is tattered and was long ago retired from use by the local little league but it is lightweight plastic that does not get waterlogged and it makes a very comfy kneeler. The bucket originally contained detergent, but now it is a weed catcher and chair.

First I water containers and recent transplants - a crucial chore required almost daily. I move on to once-in-a-while jobs like weeding and edging a border or trimming the Virginia creeper. Always, as I circulate through the garden, I deadhead - all the spent blossoms go into my bucket.

Every now and then I stop to take notes. I set the bucket down and put the base on top of it. I sit there, enjoying the view of the garden, and get out my clipboard.

### Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
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Photos by Kelly Noel

The author's garden 'tool kit' covers every possibility.

I update the lists and decide what to do next.

I amend the maps of beds if I have added or removed plants. For new perennials, I write the particulars into my database listing. I note the botanical name and cultivar, colour, height, bloom time and location in my garden. I record the date and where it came from. Sometime during the winter I will turn all those handwritten notes into computer entries and print an updated version for next season.

Next it might be time for once-a-season chores like dividing the iris or pruning the lilacs and rhododendron. One job leads to another and before I know it, several hours have passed. The garden is looking better for the attention and I've had a lovely time, not to mention quite a bit of exercise! When my knees are

weary, I put my tools away and head in for a hot shower and a cold drink.

But once inside the first thing I do is make an entry for that day in my multi-year gardener's journal. I note what I planted or divided, what's in bloom and any problems I spotted. The journal lets me see what was going on at the same time in other years and helps me decide what jobs are pending.

Keeping records is not a chore for me. It is an enjoyable part of my gardening ritual. I know great gardeners who do not write down a single thing and others who, like me, keep track of everything. Whichever way you want to do it is the right way for you. Either way, your garden will be beautiful!

Kelly Noel  
Master Gardener



## 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:

**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)

**Ottawa Farmers Market (Brewers Park):** Sundays, July through September (9 am – 1 pm)

**Main Street Farmer's Market:** July 27, August 10 & 24, September 7 & 21 (10 am – 2 pm)

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Ornamental Grasses** – September 4 – 7:00 pm

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Street, Greely

Hosted by the Greely Gardeners Group (guests welcome)

**Garden Design to Attract Birds to our Gardens** – September 10 – 7:30 pm

David Hinks, Master Gardener

Carp Memorial Hall, 3739 Carp Road, Carp

Hosted by the West Carleton Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

**You're Not Done Yet** – Tasks to do now to improve your garden next year –

September 10 – 7:00 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

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

**Spring Bulbs – A Must for Every Garden** – September 10 – 7:00 pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Ottawa South Community Centre, 260 Sunnyside Ave., Ottawa

Hosted by the Old Ottawa South Garden Club (guests welcome – fee charged to non-members)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: [speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca](mailto:speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca)

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

### July TO DO List

- Stay ahead of the weeds by spending a bit of time every day. A daily 'inspection' of your yard with a hoe in hand to take out annual weeds will make the chore more manageable.
- Take lots of photos of your yard and make notes of plants that need dividing or moving. This fall task is easier to do when you have a reference point.
- Tie a marker ribbon around plants that you want to collect seed from. The seed pods all look the same once they dry out, marking that special coloured bloom will help you collect the right seed.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

### Tip of the Month:

To complement our feature article, we offer some other garden management ideas

- Garden maps do not need to be elaborate landscape drawings. Make an outline of the bed and then fill it with circles containing the names of the plants. Use a good quality paper so it can stand up to some rain! Use permanent marker for the outline and pencil for the contents so it is easy to make changes.



A sample garden map (above) which would be accompanied by a plant list key

- Plant tags aren't attractive but they do come in handy when you get asked 'what is that?' If you don't like the look of the tag in the bed, push it in far enough that it is hidden by the mulch – out of sight but easy to find. Be consistent – chose a spot (i.e., front right quadrant of plant) and always put the tag there.



A sample journal entry for this photo: "July 7, 2013 – *Hemerocallis* 'Black Eyed Stella', *Catananche caerulea* and *Leucanthemum* 'Banana Cream', bloom at the same time, have good graduated heights and are an appealing colour combination. I should repeat this elsewhere in the garden."

- Photos of your garden beds are a great way to record what plants you have and when they bloom. Taking regular (weekly) photos from the same spot will show the progression of your garden through the season.
- Vegetable gardeners should note dates for seeding/planting/transplanting, germination, first harvest, and record crop yields. In larger gardens, noting the layout of veggie beds enables effective crop rotation in future years. Extra notes about weather and pests can be useful when looking back at what worked and what didn't.