



Trowel Talk!

July, 2016

All aflutter with winged wonders

Who does not love the idea of butterflies flitting among garden flowers in the summer sunshine? Even though most of us might not have ideal sunny, sheltered sites, we can still attract butterflies if we take the time to understand what they need.

Butterflies are looking for good nectar flowers, warmth and the right plant on which to lay their eggs. They need the sun for energy so you seldom see them on the wing before mid-morning, and not at all when it is cold and wet.



Photo by Monique Paré

White cabbage moths are a common sight in the garden

Some local butterfly species overwinter as adults and you might see one or two flying on a warm spring day in April. Most of those you see in May or June have overwintered as eggs or in a chrysalis. The life span of most butterflies only lasts about a month and you can generally expect to see the most numbers and species in July.

Each species of butterfly needs special 'host' plants on which to lay eggs because the caterpillars only feed on those particular leaves. Sometimes you might see a female butterfly ignoring all the flowers and flying from one plant leaf to another. She is searching for the correct plant for her eggs. She can 'taste' the leaf through

sensors on her feet which tell her when she has found the right one. If you are lucky you may see the female laying eggs and then watch the caterpillars grow.

The only host plants for Monarch butterflies are members of the milkweed family and, if you grow the ornamental ones, you will give them a better chance at breeding success and help combat the slow decline in their numbers. Black Swallowtail butterflies lay their eggs on plants from the carrot family such as parsley, dill, fennel or the wild Queen Anne's lace. Both of these plant groups attract many other passing butterflies and beneficial insects to feed on the flowers.

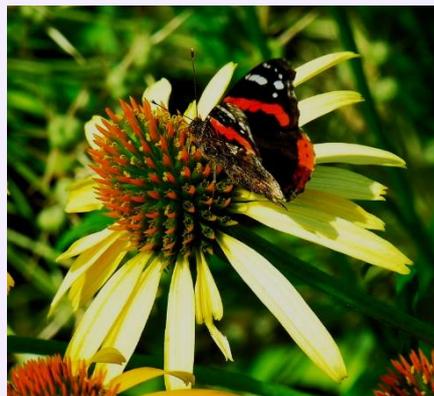


Photo by Monique Paré

A red admiral butterfly on an Echinacea

Butterflies are very vulnerable to pollutants and chemicals. They are also affected by ultra-violet light and see colours differently from us. They can see the markings on good nectar flowers that we might overlook. Butterflies like plants with flowers in the form of spikes, flat pads, cones and clusters. When the florets are close together, they can conserve energy and move between them without having to fly. Double flowers and showy cultivars rarely appeal and simple single flowers are preferable.

Some recommended plants: rock cress (*Arabis*); Aster spp; butterfly

bush (*Buddleia sp* - not reliably hardy); candytuft (*Iberis umbellata* - annual); coneflower (*Echinacea spp*); blazing-star (*Liatris spp*); Joe Pye weed (*Eupatorium spp*); pincushion flower (*Scabiosa spp*); swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*).

Local butterflies we might see in our gardens: Cabbage White, Mourning Cloak, Tiger Swallowtail, Red Admiral, Black Swallowtail, Monarch, Great Spangled Fritillary and Common Sulphur.



Photo by Gillian Boyd

A monarch butterfly enjoys an early autumn meal on an Aster

Try and aim for as much plant diversity as possible in the space available. Your garden could become a magnet for butterflies and one day you might be thrilled, like me, to find a butterfly basking on your shoulder.

Gillian Boyd
Master Gardener

"It's been proven by quite a few studies that plants are good for our psychological development. If you green an area, the rate of crime goes down. Torture victims begin to recover when they spend time outside in a garden with flowers. So we need them, in some deep psychological sense, which I don't suppose anybody really understands yet."

— Jane Goodall

July TO DO List

- Japanese beetles are eating your plants. Do a daily check and observe which plants are their favourite so you know where to concentrate your control efforts. The best control method is hand picking or flicking them into a bucket of soapy water.
- Start to collect seed as it matures or tag plants when you see ones that you want to collect seed from.
- Take photos to document the garden's progress, to note problem areas and to remind yourself of things that you plan to move or divide in the fall.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Do the suckers need to be removed from tomato plants?

Suckers are the side shoots that develop between the stem and the branch of the tomato plant. If left to grow, suckers will become another main stem with branches, flowers, fruit and more suckers of their own.



Photo: www.tomatodirt.com

The sucker is the fine growth at the branch junction

Removing the sucker is as simple as snapping off the new growth off at its base – the junction between the stem and a branch (as shown in the photo above) – but is it necessary?

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:

Cumberland Market: Aug 6, Sept 3, (9am–1pm)

North Gower Farmers Market: Sept 17, (8:30am–1pm)

Main Market (Museum of Nature): July 23, Aug 13 & 27, Sept 10 & 24, (10am–2pm)

Ottawa Farmers Market (Lansdowne Park): Sundays, July 3 - Sept 25, (9am–1pm)

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

The MGs are enjoying their gardens – talks will resume in the fall.



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



If the plant is strong and healthy and well staked, it can support the extra sucker growth and will produce more tomatoes. On the other hand, a plant with a weak root system will have a better chance of producing good fruit if the suckers are removed.

Removing suckers from tomatoes grown in pots is recommended to ensure the plants don't become top heavy and topple over.

Sucker removal is a method of thinning out or pruning the plant. Some argue it puts more energy back into the main stem of the plant to produce larger fruit. This may be essential in commercial operations, but isn't really necessary for the home garden.

Another consideration when deciding whether or not to remove the suckers is the growth habit of the tomato. There are two types of growth habits: determinate and indeterminate. Determinate tomatoes (bush types) grow a certain

height and then stop growing. Indeterminate tomatoes (vine types) continue to grow as long as the environmental conditions remain favourable. The vining tomatoes used in commercial hydroponics operations have the suckers removed regularly as these vines can reach 7m in length and commercial growers need to produce a consistent size of fruit.

Tomatoes are tropical plants so they enjoy hot temperatures and lots of water. When those conditions, along with good, humus-rich soil are present, a good yield will result regardless of sucker removal.

Consider a day of touring gardens! Along with being enjoyable, the outing will be educational and enlightening. [The 1000 Island Rideau Canal Garden Trail](#) (poster attached) has many beautiful gardens to visit.

2nd Annual

1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Garden Trail

Mid-May through September 2016

A Labour of Love

3002 Porter Road, Oxford Station

Chillane Gardens

10 Junetown Rd., Mallorytown

Diane & Keith Haskins

3909 Freeland Rd., Portland

Garden of Hope and Faith Walk

3545 Centennial Rd. / County Rd. 27, Lyn

Gardens of Gananoque

2 King St. East / 35 Main St. Gananoque

Healing Circle Labyrinth

2424 County Rd. 2, Johnstown

The Ivy Lea Club

61 Shipman's Lane, Lansdowne

Machal Gardens

6 South St., Spencerville

Maitland Garden of Hope

1 Jones Court, Maitland

Norgaard Gardens

2384 County Rd. 18, Kemptville

Rideau Woodland Ramble

7210 Burritts Rapids Rd. / County Rd 23
North Grenville

Shakespearean Gardens

Sandra S. Lawn Harbour, Water St., Prescott

Van Berlo Gardens

1357 County Rd. 2, Maitland

Wilstead Manor Gardens

559 County Rd. 2, Lansdowne

Hours and contacts vary per garden,
see website for more info.



gardentrail.1000islandsandrideaucanal.com