



Trowel Talk!

June, 2011

Well contained gardens

Don't have much space? Tired of the same old landscape? Want to move things around once in a while? Then container gardens may be just the thing for you. With a little bit of help from your local nursery, your own imagination and the following basic tips on how to get going – you can produce displays bursting with color, elegance and personality.

First think of where you will place your planters. How much shade or sun will they get? Consider not just the direction they will be facing but also if direct sunlight will be obstructed. Then, estimate the wind they will get because the amount of exposure influences how much watering is needed. These two basic considerations will influence your choice of container and plant material.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

A collection of pots of tropical foliage plants

Planter selection is immense, but you can narrow your search by remembering that short, stout containers are better than tall ones

Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Volume 2, Number 6
- <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>
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for windy locales and terra cotta planters dry out more quickly than plastic containers.

When you are ready to plant, remember that container plants need good drainage. You can place stones and shards in the bottom of the pot. Or, I have found that broken-up flats or scrunched-up plastic pots and cell packs work just as well and are lighter. And, for small pots, coffee filters, old panty hose, or landscape fabric don't take up much space and they keep the potting mix in the container too!



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Annuals offer a full season of colour

The next step is to fill planters with a suitable growing mix. A porous planting mix will provide adequate drainage and will help to avoid root rot. Soil from our gardens is usually too heavy and may contain insects, diseases and weed seeds – not the sort of thing that we want, especially if our intent is to bring the containers inside for the winter.

Plant-up your pots as soon as possible after purchase. If you are delayed, keep plants watered and in partial shade. Evenings and cloudy days are best for planting, and even then it is wise to leave your newly planted containers out of direct sun for a few days before moving them to their final location.

You don't have to worry about normal spacing requirements when planting in containers. Plants can be clustered because

this helps to shade the plants' roots and reduce the amount of watering needed. For a layered look, use tall plants as a backdrop and mounding plants in the centre. In the front and around the edges, ivies and other trailing plants will add a graceful touch. A trellis with a vine can add yet another dimension. However, if you are in a windy area, stay closer to the ground with your arrangements.

In August it is a good idea to cut back leggy annuals by one-third. They very often fill out again and give you another round of blossoms before the end of the season. Grasses, evergreens or other perennials grown in containers can withstand Ottawa's winter weather only if they are in containers at least one metre high by one metre wide. Otherwise, you must heel the pots into the ground in the fall. Choosing plants that survive in a zone or two lower than ours can help with the overwintering.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

A Hosta in a pot for a shady area

You can work these tips into a system of your own. Let this be the year that you produce a "well-contained" garden with beautiful displays in every corner of your domain.

Mary Shearman Reid
Master Gardener

June TO DO List

- Stay ahead of the weeds. Clean a small area each day and the task will become less of a chore.
- Stake tall plants such as delphiniums before they get to the stage where they are falling over. Staking earlier rather than later allows the foliage to cover the stakes & strings as the plant grows and helps avoid that “trussed up” look.
- Watch for pests and take measures before they do too much damage. Hand picking at the early stages is one of the best controls.
- Conserve water in flower beds and vegetable gardens by mulching before the dog days of summer arrive.
- Prune your spring flowering shrubs right after they have finished blooming.
- Revitalize an old lilac bush by removing up to 1/3 of the growth taking out the oldest branches first.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month:

Plants bloom solely for the purpose of reproduction. So, once a plant has flowered and produced seed, it feels its job is done for the year. Deadheading or removing the faded blossoms is important because it will:

- tidy up the plant,
- prevent self-seeding (and the subsequent weeding of the unwanted seedlings),
- direct the plant's energy to its roots and leaves instead of producing seed (or in the case of bulbs, direct the energy into the bulb to form next year's bloom), and

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)
- Saturdays 7-8 pm (April through September ONLY)

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

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

CLINICS:

Byward Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 a.m. - 5 p.m.)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

Carp Market: Saturdays, May through June (8 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

Lansdowne Market: Sundays, July through September (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)

SPEAKING EVENTS:

Gardening During a Water Shortage: Solutions - June 21, 2011 - 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Ruth E. Dickinson Branch, Ottawa Public Library, 100 Malvern, Barrhaven, Ontario

Hosted by the Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Pre-register by calling: 613-580-2424 ext 30353)

More Gardening with Less Water: Long Term Approaches - June 25, 2011 - 2:00 p.m.

Speaker: Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Ruth E. Dickinson Branch, Ottawa Public Library, 100 Malvern, Barrhaven, Ontario

Hosted by the Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Pre-register by calling: 613-580-2424 ext 30353)



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>

- promote continuous blooms in annual flowers.



Before & after deadheading a daylily plant.

Shrubs, such as lilacs, rhododendrons and magnolia, will also benefit from deadheading.

On fruit trees, the size of fruit can be increased by reducing the number of fruit on each branch. The pollinated blossoms will show signs of the fruit forming shortly after pollination, but wait three weeks after pollination to dead-head or reduce the number of fruit - by that time any unpollinated fruit will have dropped. This “thinning” of the fruits so that they are spaced 15-18cm apart on the branch will result in larger fruits and also reduce the weight on the tree limbs.



Thinning fruits to 15-18cm spacing