



Trowel Talk!

June, 2014

Just leaf it ... and love it

A visit to my garden would reveal that I like leaves that are streaked, striped, mottled or spotted. I do have plants with all green leaves but everywhere you look you see another plant with two-tone foliage. The usual combination is green and white, but cream, yellow, blue and even pink accents are not unusual.



Photo by Kelly Noel

Lamium 'White Nancy' is a reliable ground cover for shade.

Lamium is a long-blooming ever-green ground cover that does best in shade. I particularly like the white flowers and silver-frosted leaves of *L. maculatum* 'White Nancy' which lights up the area under my weigela. There are many cultivars available – read the tag to see whether it has silver, yellow or pink-streaked foliage and whether the flowers are pink, mauve or white.

If you have a moist shady spot then you must plant variegated *Brunnera* (Siberian bugloss). I

have *B. macrophylla* 'Variegata' which has large green leaves with a wide rim of creamy white. The foliage stays fresh all summer but can get scorched in too much sun. It is covered with masses of tiny true-blue flowers in May – like the forget-me-not but without any of its bad habits! I recently saw a silver-leaved cultivar called 'Jack Frost' which is now on my "must have" list.

Salix integra 'Hakuro Nishiki' (dappled or Japanese willow) is a spectacular shrub. It always looks to me like it is covered in blooms but a closer examination shows that each tiny green leaf has white and sometimes pink splotches. Its long slender branches sway with every breeze. It grows quickly to 2.5m tall and is vase-shaped so has a similar spread. I have to prune mine to keep it from crowding its neighbours, but this is easily done.



Photo by Kelly Noel

The white margins of *Hosta* 'Patriot' stand out in the shade garden

Of course I have many cultivars of hosta – the queen of the variegated foliage group. Some cultivars have green leaves with white or cream edges, others have just the reverse. There are leaves streaked with yellow or blue or chartreuse, or even all three. So many choices! Check out the cultivars that have the right spread for the spaces you have and pick those with variegation that catches your eye.

I even have ribbon grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) because I love the crisp freshness of its green and white leaves. It is invasive so must be contained, but I am willing to make that effort because it looks good in the garden and makes such a nice accent in arrangements of cut flowers.



Photo by Mary Ann Van Berlo

A variegated *Euphorbia* that has reverted back to green as can be seen by the 'rogue' shoot of non-variegated leaves

Photosynthesis, the food-making process in plants, can only take place in the presence of chlorophyll, the pigment that makes cells green. Fewer green cells often means that plants with variegated foliage grow more slowly than their all-green cousins. Occasionally, plain green "rogue" shoots may appear on a plant with variegated foliage. These should be removed – rogued out – or they might take over.

I have mentioned a few favourites. There are dozens more! If you want a plant that will stand out, create a beautiful accent and provide contrast with the predominantly green backdrop, look for one with variegated foliage.

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Master Gardener

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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:

Byward Market: Saturdays, May 10 through June (9 am - 1 pm)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May 10 through June (9 am - 1 pm)

Carp Market: Saturdays, May 10 through June (9 am - 1 pm)

Ottawa Farmers' Market: (Brewer Park) Sundays, July through Sept. (9 am - 1 pm)

Cumberland Market: July 12, August 9 (9 am - 1 pm)

North Gower Farmers' Market: July 5, August 9 (8:30 am - 1 pm)

Main Farmers' Market: July 12, July 26, August 9 (10 am - 2 pm)

Carp Garlic Festival: August 9 (8 am - 3 pm) & August 10 (10 am - 3 pm)

HerbFest: Herb Garden 3840 Old Almonte Rd, July 27 (9am-5pm)

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Renovating an Older Garden - June 17 - 7:00pm

Royal Canadian Legion, 7 Main Street East, Smiths Falls

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Hosted by the Smiths Falls & District Horticultural Society - Guest fee \$3



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca

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



June TO DO List

- Plant a 2nd crop of vegetables (such as beans, carrots, beets, radishes) to enjoy a succession of young tender vegetables.
- Start a weed control regimen. Set aside a bit of time a couple of days a week to stay ahead of the weeds.
- Continue to evaluate your ornamental garden beds for plant combinations that work (or don't work), gaps in the display of continuous blooms, plants that are too tall or too short for their current location, etc. Note any plants that need moving or dividing and make a note to do so 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

This past winter was very hard on many plants. Gardeners are comparing notes on what plants died or are now struggling. The long and cold winter damaged top/new growth on some plants, but some of the trees and shrubs that are slow to bud out this spring may still come through.



A simple test is to scratch the soft outer bark on a young branch or stem to see if the cambium layer (the inner bark) is still green (as in the photo above). The cambium is the 'living' part of the bark, where the sap (which is carrying nutrients) flows up and down the tree. If the cambium is still green, there is still hope. If it is brown and dry, then that branch is dead. Check other branches or further down on that branch or trunk

(in the case of young trees) to see there are signs of life.



Some shrubs and trees (like the young tree above) suffered from vole damage. Voles (aka. meadow or field mice) are herbivores and would normally eat the grass under the

snow, but with our extreme winter, most of us had a solid 5-7cm of ice on our lawns so the voles found alternative sources of food - our shrubs and trees. In some cases, the bark and cambium layer has been stripped off completely, killing the plant. In other cases, the plant still has enough bark to survive although it will be stressed for a while. Trees and shrubs may branch out from the base. Many shrubs can survive this severe 'pruning'. Trees will probably never form a strong single leader after this damage so it may be best to plant a replacement.

Next fall, apply a rodent repellent (paint or spray it on) which is available at garden centres. An alternative is to wrap the trunks with a plastic tree wrap. Whichever method you use, make sure you protect to a height that is greater than the depth of the coming snow cover.