



# Trowel Talk!

June, 2016

## Inspiration all round

Do you find yourself sometimes overwhelmed by all these "picture perfect" gardens in magazines or on TV? When admiring a young plant at the garden center or nursery, do you wonder what it will really look like when it's fully grown in your garden? Perhaps you've admired a flower while traveling and would love to grow it but haven't been able to find its name. There are many reasons to visit botanical gardens but treating yourself to a feast for the eyes is reason enough.



Photo by Monique Paré

The colourful plumes of the *Melinis mervigium* (Ruby Grass) echo the red of the *Antirrhinum majus* (snapdragons).

A visit to the Montreal Botanical Gardens a few years ago left me wanting to make such visits a recurring excursion. That's partly because you can't take it all in on a one-day visit. It's best to focus on a few themes and give yourself time to enjoy the sights. Among the many choices, there are the greenhouse collections, the rose garden, the alpine garden, the arboretum and the water garden.

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Other gardens feature different cultures such as the first Nations garden, or the Chinese and Japanese gardens,



Photo by Monique Paré

The silver fuzzy foliage of *Salvia argentea* (silver sage) contrasts beautifully with the ornamental grass behind it.

One idea that was well demonstrated was how tropical plants can be blended into our temperate gardens to add a touch of the exotic. You may not be able to do it with the same abandon as a botanical garden can afford to do, but just one or two strategically placed plants can change the look of a garden. I have been using this concept to a limited extent by buying small houseplants around March-April and repotting them in bigger pots to encourage their growth. Around mid-May, I start acclimatizing them to outdoor conditions by taking them out in a shady and sheltered spot at first, and gradually increasing their time out and their exposure to the elements. Once hardened off, they take their place in my flower beds, either in sun or shade depending on their light requirements. You can consider keeping these plants over winter indoors or can treat them as annuals and buy new ones every year.

Other ideas abound in these botanical gardens: Using ornamental grasses for best effect; incorporating colourful vegetable plants within ornamental beds;

making combinations of plant colour and texture for special effects. A digital camera is handy for recording the ones that interest you; take a picture of the plant making sure to catch the plant label too. This ensures you have all the details right at hand later if you want to do more research in garden books or on the internet before purchasing it.



Photo by Monique Paré

*Cynara cardunculus* (cardo) displayed with a background of *Ocimum basilicum* (purple basil) is a visual treat.

If you're looking for inspiration, think about visiting gardens that are within similar climatic zones to your own as they are more likely to provide ideas that are readily applicable in your own backyard. I know I will be visiting more than one botanical garden this summer. Don't be surprised if you come away from your visit having experienced "love at first sight" for a particular beauty that you will want to add to your own garden. Curious about the Montreal gardens? Visit:

<http://espacepurlavie.ca/en/botanical-garden>

Monique Paré  
Master Gardener

"It was such a pleasure to sink one's hands into the warm earth, to feel at one's fingertips the possibilities of the new season."

— Kate Morton  
The Forgotten Garden

## June TO DO List

- Be diligent about pest control. A daily 'patrol' of the garden will help you spot pests before they become a problem.
- Thin root vegetables to give them adequate growing space. This will ensure a crop of well-formed vegetables that reach their maximum size.
- Raise the blade on your lawn mower to 7.5cm as the weather heats up. At that height, the grass is better able to shade its roots which reduces browning in drought conditions.
- If you haven't done so already, stake plants before they get too tall and are susceptible to heavy winds.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

## Tip of the Month

There are many good reasons for gardening – the beauty of plants, the satisfaction of working with nature, the exercise and fresh air and, finally, the stress relief.

Even with all those benefits, gardening can still cause health issues. A few cautions should be heeded by all gardeners and weekend warriors.

1. Make sure your tetanus vaccination is up-to-date. Digging in soil can unearth rusty debris. A scratch could be fatal.
2. Wear appropriate protective gear for the job at hand such as ear plugs or noise cancelling headphones when cutting the grass, safety glasses when using a string trimmer, gloves for most jobs, etc.
3. Warm up and stretch before gardening and do some more stretching when you're finished. Gardening is physical activity and muscle conditioning is required as

## 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 7-28 (10am–2pm) and June 4-25 (9am–12pm)

**Parkdale Market:** Saturdays, May 7 – June 25 (9am–1pm)

**Carp Market:** Saturdays, May 7 – June 25 (8am–1pm)

**Herb Event, Carp Market:** June 26

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

**North Gower Farmers Market:** June 18, Sept 17, (8:30am–1pm)

**Main Market** (Museum of Nature): July 9 & 23, Aug 13 & 27, Sept 10 & 24, (10am–2pm)

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

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Child-Friendly Gardening: Fairy Gardens and more** – June 28 – 7:30 pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Tom Brown Arena, 141 Bayview Road, Ottawa

Hosted by Ottawa Horticultural Society (No guest fee)



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



with any other exercise. The Ontario Chiropractic Association has good information on their [website](#).



4. Avoid doing the same or repetitive physical activity for long periods of time. Switch activities or take a break at 20 minute intervals.

5. A number of plants can cause dermatitis or skin irritation. Some

individuals are more susceptible than others. Get to know your plants and use caution where needed or remove the problem plants.

6. Some common garden plants are poisonous. Make sure children know not to eat plants from the garden. Here is a [list of some poisonous garden plants](#).



Daffodils are toxic if consumed in large enough quantities.