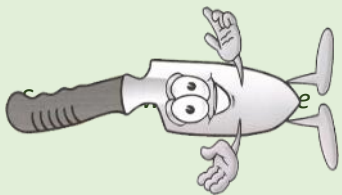


# Trowel Talk!

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## Backyard bliss – just add water

Adding a water feature to your garden adds a whole new dimension but, before you take the plunge, consider the pros and cons. As with any design element in your garden, the trick is to balance your desires with your lifestyle and budget.



Photo: Suzanne Juneau

**The author's backyard pond is enjoyed by wildlife and is a relaxing oasis for the owners.**

Real estate agents used to advise that a pond or swimming pool would, at best, have no impact on value and could make a house harder to sell. Nowadays, warmer summers and the trend for entertaining at home make water features attractive to many homebuyers.

Water features range from wall-mounted circulating fountains, through above-ground containers, to in-ground pond installations of various sizes. Costs, too, vary widely. You can spend plenty on an original sculpture that has been adapted to serve as a small water feature. In contrast, if you dig your own hole, you can build a largish pond on a modest budget.

Before you dig, check with utility companies for underground pipes and with city hall regarding bylaws. Many municipalities, including Ottawa, require deeper ponds to be fenced.

How much space you devote to your water feature depends on how much space you have and what else you want to do in your yard. Even in a huge yard, a large pond may not work if there

are small children or boisterous dogs. Mum and dad can better enjoy the tranquillity of a small circulating fountain without worrying that the kids might drown or Rover will take a swim and destroy the pond liner.

An in-ground pond is relatively permanent and takes space that cannot then be used for other purposes. However, the large pond in my small garden mod-

erates the temperature, making it a degree or two cooler on hot days.

A pond's potential for attracting wildlife is often considered an asset and it is! I love watching birds bathing in my waterfall and dragonflies swooping over the pond at sunset. But wildlife is a mixed blessing. We don't get to pick what will be attracted. Along with the birds and butterflies come rabbits, groundhogs and other

unwelcome visitors.

Adding a few inexpensive goldfish easily eliminates the risk of mosquitoes hatching on your pond. Just don't name your fish, as few will survive winter in a shallow pond unless you have a de-icer. Bring the fish inside if you have an aquarium or find a pet store to take them back at the end of the season.

Something in the human psyche is soothed by the sound of running water. The background trickle dampens other sounds, creating a restful refuge. But a pond also requires some work, especially in spring and fall. Pipes and circulating pumps need to be maintained, water quality has to be monitored and water plants require tending, just as do land plants.

I love my pond – pattering around it, gazing at the fish in its depths or contemplating a beautiful waterlily. So research first, decide what suits you and enjoy your water feature for years to come.

*Rebecca Last  
Master Gardener*



## Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

### Where to find us 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:

**Parkdale Market:** Mother's Day, May 7 (10 am – 1 pm) and Saturdays, May 6 to June 17 (8 am – 11 am)

**Carp Market:** Saturdays, May 13 to June 17 (8 am – 1 pm) & June 24 (Herbs)

**Westboro Market:** Saturdays, May 27, June 17, July 15, Aug. 12 (9 am to 1 pm)

**Cumberland Market:** June 10, July 8, August 12, Sept. 9, 9am-1pm

**North Gower Farmers Market:** June 17, Sept. 16, 8:30am-1pm

**Main St. Market:** July 8 & 22, August 12 & 26, Sept. 9 & 23, 10am-2pm

**Ottawa Farmers Market:** (Lansdowne Park) Sundays, June 18 to Sept. 24, 9am-1pm

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Culinary Herbs – June 24 – 10:00 am**

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener with a cooking demo by Richard Guenette

Carp Market 2017 Herbfest – Carp Fairgrounds, Carp

Hosted by the Carp Farmers Market (Guest fee: N/A)



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



### June TO DO List

- Be patient, some plants are still emerging. The heavy snow cover, which melted late this year, and the cooler spring have put gardens behind.
- Deadhead perennials after they have finished blooming to encourage a second bloom and to stop self-seeding (which ultimately means less weeding).
- Mulch the vegetable garden with straw or grass clippings to keep weeds to a minimum and to keep the roots moist.
- If you have gardening or plant ID questions, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

### Tip of the Month

Shrubs require pruning to maintain their shape, health and vigour.

The rule of thumb is to prune spring blooming shrubs after they bloom (for instance: lilac, spirea, azalea) since they have set their flower buds in the fall of the previous growing season. If you prune in early spring, you would be cutting off this year's blooms.

Shrubs that bloom after spring (for instance: hydrangea, rose of Sharon, smoke bush) form their blooms on new growth so an early spring pruning will promote more growth and potentially more blooms.



A spent flower on a common lilac

While it is not absolutely necessary to deadhead all shrubs (for instance a lilac bush),

their appearance will be refreshed with the spent blooms removed. At the same time, the overall size of the shrub can be reduced by a judicious pruning.

Another pruning guideline is to never remove more than 1/3 of the shrub each year; so, a badly neglected shrub will take three years to rejuvenate completely.

Of course, that is just a guideline, there are shrubs that can take a hard pruning (being completely cut down to the ground) such as the Annabelle hydrangea.

Others will not be so forgiving, so make sure you know your shrub's pruning requirements. A hard pruning is done in early

spring while the shrub is dormant. The common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) can be pruned back hard, but you would be sacrificing this year's flowers.

The final pruning guideline is to remove dead, diseased and damaged branches first. This includes any branches that are rubbing together as the wound from rubbing could be an entry point for disease. Once that pruning is done, you can make any cosmetic cuts to shape the shrub, always pruning to an outward facing bud to encourage the shrub to have an open growth habit to allow air circulation.