



Trowel Talk!

March, 2013

A leafy retreat is a vine thing

Designing gardeners find many uses for climbing annuals, and there are many from which to choose. Some of my favourites are morning glory, sweet pea, and scarlet runner bean.

Each morning glory (*Ipomoea*) blossom lasts less than 24 hours, but the purple, pink, or red blossoms are abundant right up to first frosts. You can start them in peat pots to ease transplant shock, or seed directly outdoors after danger of frost has passed. I have always been successful with transplants, moving them from where they have self seeded to better locations.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Ipomoea tricolor 'Heavenly Blue'

Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) generate much discussion about how to get them started and flourishing. Personally, my best success with them has been growing them in well-manured soil against a chain link fence. I

planted them in late April after soaking the seeds over night. A thick covering of mulch was put in place and then parted sufficiently for the seeding process. They took a while to come up, but were marvellous when they did. I don't deadhead mine, but if you have time to do this you will enjoy more of their nicely scented blooms.



Phaseolus coccineus on a trellis provides shade, blooms and beans.

Scarlet runner bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) is both an ornamental and a vegetable. Hummingbirds are attracted to its blossoms and these feisty little birds don't mind if I stop to watch them at their work. The beans are some of the best tasting you can grow, especially when gathered tender – 6 to 8 cm in length. I sow them outdoors in mid May, giving them a liberal helping of well-rotted manure, with mulch at the ready for when they start to climb.

This spring I am looking forward to adorning a section of fence with cup-and-saucer vine (*Cobaea scandens*). It is definitely a vine to be reckoned with – growing quickly and copiously – 5 to 8m in zone 5a. If you are not using it for groundcover you need strong supports to hold it up. The foliage is attractive and the fragrant blue blooms go through several transitions, all interesting accents in any

garden. The best time to seed is indoors from mid-March to mid-April.

Seeding outdoors is definitely less labour intensive and often the plants do almost as well as those started earlier. In any case you should nick and/or soak the seeds overnight before planting them. If you are starting vines indoors, don't start them too early and remember to harden them off gradually before transplanting them to their summer location.

Fences, wall, trellises, arbours, flower beds, containers and teepees – twiners or clingers will generously cover them all. If you have space and like to try new ideas, erect an arbour, then plant annual climbers around it. By the time the vines have taken hold you'll want to pause, get a chair, and sit inside your leafy retreat with a book and nice cool drink. You might even be able to munch on a tender young scarlet runner bean.

Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener

Trowel Talk!

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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
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EVENTS OF NOTE!

Garden Design Workshop (beginner level)

Hosted by Master Gardeners of
Ottawa-Carleton

April 27, 2013

Building 469, Uplands AFB
10 de Niverville Private, Ottawa
Space is limited.

For more info, click [here](#).

National Master Gardeners Convention (open to the public)

April 5-7, 2013

Deerhurst Resort, Huntsville

For more info, click [here](#).



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:

Ottawa Home & Garden Show – March 21-24 at the Ernst & Young Centre, 4899 Uplands Drive, Ottawa – Visit us at our booth. We'll be at this annual spring show all weekend to answer your gardening questions.

Rare & Unusual Plant Sale: Sunday, May 12, 9am-1pm,
Tropical Greenhouses on Maple Street, parking lot, Central Experimental Farm

Red Trillium Studio & Garden Tour, May 11-12, 10am-5pm
MGOC advice clinic & plant sale at 112 Terraview Drive, Kinburn.

Byward Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 am – 5 pm)

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

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

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

All About Dirt – March 18 – 7 pm

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener
Brockville Wesleyan Church, 33 Central Avenue West, Brockville
Hosted by the Brockville Horticultural Society

Gardening in Smaller Spaces – March 19 – 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
Stittsville United Church, corner of Fernbank and Main Street Stittsville
Hosted by the Stittsville Horticultural Society

Down to Earth in the Garden – March 21 – 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
City View United Church, 6 Epworth Avenue, Nepean
Hosted by Nepean Horticultural Society

Growing Organic Food – March 21 & 27th – 7 pm

Tom Marcantonio, Master Gardener
Carlingwood Branch, Ottawa Public Library, 281 Woodroffe Ave, Ottawa
Hosted by Ottawa Public Library (guests welcome)

Shade Gardens – March 25 – 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
St. Mary Magdalene Anglican Church on 537 Highway 105. Chelsea, PQ
Hosted by Gatineau Valley Gardeners

The Beauty of Annuals – April 2 – 7:00 pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener
Old March Town Hall, 821 March Rd., Kanata (entrance is on Klondike Rd.)
Hosted by Kanata-March Horticultural Society

Small Gardens – April 9 – 7:00 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener
Navy Club on Sixth St. E., Cornwall
Hosted by Cornwall and District Horticultural Society

Indoor Plants – Benefits, Best Choices & Bugs – April 9 – 6:30 pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener
Osgoode Public Library, 5630 Osgoode Main Street, Osgoode
Hosted by the Osgoode Branch of the Ottawa Public Library

Lecture Series sponsored by Friends of the Farm

Big Bold and Beautiful – Size matters in the Garden – April 9 – 7 pm

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener

Container Gardening – April 23 – 7 pm

Catherine Disley Engler, Master Gardener

Savvy Tips for Spring Gardeners – May 14 – 7 pm

Edythe Falconer & Stephanie Sleeth, Master Gardener
Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa
Hosted by Friends of the Farm, click [here](#) for admission fees & other details

Native Plants in City Gardens: Essential natives for every garden style – April 11 – 7:00 pm

Josie Pazdzior, Master Gardener
Centennial Branch of the Ottawa Public Library, 3870 Old Richmond Road, Bells Corners
Hosted by the Centennial Branch of the Ottawa Public Library

Gardening made Easy in Raised Beds and Containers – April 12 – 10 am

Catherine Disley Engler, Master Gardener
The Good Companion Seniors' Centre, 670 Albert Street, Ottawa
Call to reserve seating (613) 236-0428

March TO DO List

- Now is a good time to start annual seeds indoors. Grow them under lights (regular fluorescent or plant lights) to ensure healthy plants.
- Increase plant stock by taking cuttings and rooting them to be ready for garden beds in May.
- Did you put any pots of plants in cold storage for winter? If yes, it's time to take them out and give them light and water to break their dormancy.
- Get a head start on the gardening season by potting up tubers. Give them as much light as possible to ensure strong plants.
- Avoid the temptation to walk on garden beds or lawns until they dry out. The soil is saturated as it defrosts and will compact easily.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month:

Sticky traps are a great way to take care of flying houseplant pests such as whiteflies and fungus gnats.

They can be purchased at any good garden centre or can be made at home. To make your own, use a yellow piece of plastic or sturdy paper. Smear a thin layer of petroleum jelly on the paper. Hang the trap in among the houseplants. If the plant already has an infestation of pests, give the plant a bit of a shake to get the insects flying about. The trap should continue to work for several months.



Sticky trap in Hibiscus and a close up showing trapped whiteflies.