



Trowel Talk!

May, 2012

For the love of lilacs

Walk down a lane bordered by blooming lilacs and be transported to another time. Breathe in deeply and imagine horses trotting along, children swooping back and forth on a swing in an apple tree, laundry flapping in the breeze, animals lowing, and take a romantic trip into the past.

The trusty lilac is still with us, happy with any sunny location, tolerant of roving children helping themselves to a bouquet for their teacher or their mother or anyone who might benefit from a bit of bribery or affection. Grannies are prime targets.



Syringa meyeri 'Palibin' (Dwarf Korean lilac 'Palibin')

Our Korean lilac is small and bushy, and looks good beside our small pond. Buds are bursting and soon this shrub will be covered with miniature sprays of pinkish lavender blossoms. It will bloom for at least 4 to 6 weeks and is one of the few lilacs that offers good foliage colour in autumn. It

can grow as tall as 2.7m, so unless I want to move mine, it will need regular pruning to keep its size down. There is also a dwarf cultivar of Korean lilac (1.5m) which may suit smaller yards.

Our white lilac arrived in a large chunk of compacted sod from a city friend who had too many spreaders. I was delighted. It now grows at the side of our vegetable garden where we can inhale its perfume as we work. On the prairies, my mother treasured a white lilac that was descended from one her mother had brought from Ontario to Saskatchewan in the early 1900's.



Photo by Mary Ann Van Berlo

Syringa x henryi 'Summer White' at the Central Experimental Farm

Our Preston lilacs are taller and less compact than the others. Preston lilacs were developed by Isabella Preston at the Central Experimental Farm here in Ottawa. Many of ours have self-seeded to the back of our property. We enjoy their subtle scent and later blooming time.

The common lavender lilac is my favourite. These beauties clothe themselves in wall-to-wall blossoms on one side of our orchard, where we try to keep them sepa-

rate from wild grapes that twine through our fence. I love to stand close by on a busy-bee day, listening to the intense sound of 1000's of furry little pollinators working in the foliage.

All lilacs are hardy in our area and do well with a minimum amount of care – witness those that soldier on for decades on old farm sites. They benefit from watering during droughts and, from time to time, modest amounts of fertilizer. It is wise to remove suckers (new growth at the base), and water-sprouts (straight, thin shoots growing out of a main branch).



Photo by Mary Ann Van Berlo

Double flower form of lilac

Lilacs are hardy, generous, aromatic, nostalgic, easy-to-grow shrubs that deck themselves in colours of white, pink, violet, lavender, reddish-purple and purple. They link us to our rural pasts but fit well into the urban lifestyles of our present. They are coming soon, along the streets and in our yards and in the countryside. Be sure to keep your sense of smell at the ready!

Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener

Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Volume 3, Number 5
- <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>
- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
- trowel_talk_editor@rogers.com

Editor's Note:

Make time to visit the Central Experimental Farm when the lilacs are in bloom. Friends of the Farm host an annual tour. For details go to:
<http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca/events.htm>



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)
- Wednesday 7-8 pm (April –September)

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.)

Ottawa Farmer's Market (Brewer Park – formerly located at Lansdowne Park):
Sundays, July through September (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.)

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Self-Guided Tour of Heritage and Explorer Roses – June 10, 2012 – 1:00 p.m.

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener available to answer questions
Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa (West of Prince of Wales Drive, adjacent to lilac and iris displays. Watch for the signs)
Hosted by the Friends of the Farm (Free & open to the public—guide book provided)

Japanese Beetle Day – June 24, 2012 – 2:00 p.m.

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener will share info on dealing with this pest.
Bring a jar of soapy water and pick beetles. Presentation & info sheet available.
Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa (West of Prince of Wales Drive, adjacent to lilac and iris displays. Watch for the signs)
Hosted by the Friends of the Farm (Free & open to the public)



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>

May TO DO List

- Begin hardening off seedlings that were started indoors. Gradually increase the amount of exposure to sun and wind over 7-10 days.
- Set aside an hour or two every week for weeding to stay ahead of the undesirables this year. Better yet, take a daily stroll around your yard and pick a few every day as you watch your garden come to life for the season.
- Lawns will benefit from a feeding of slow release fertilizer in the form of Corn Gluten Meal (CGM) – just don't fertilize newly seeded lawns since CGM inhibits seed germination (which helps stop weed seeds, but can also inhibit grass seed).
- As an alternative to fertilizer for the lawn, consider top-dressing with a light layer of compost or manure to improve the soil and feed the lawn.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month:

As our tip this month, I thought I would share a couple of the interesting questions that have come up on Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton's e-mail help-desk recently. (mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca)

We have 2 medium sized lobo apple trees (about 10 years old). They produced a fair amount of tasty apples in Fall 2011. But these apple trees have been neglected and we hope to give them some help. We have pruned these trees ... but need help with advice on their feeding ... what to use, what schedule and any other advice that you could give.

The best thing would be to feed the soil which would in turn provide all the

nutrients your trees need. Since you're in the country, you could always try to get some well rotted manure and apply about an inch around the trees. If you can't get manure you could use compost. Make sure you apply it well outside of the tree's drip zone as the feeder roots extend well beyond the perimeter of the canopy. Ideally this would be done in the fall, but could still be done now and then perhaps again in the fall (since they have been neglected). By adding organic matter you will be improving the soil and you should see signs of more earthworm activity which will also aerate the soil and make it easier for the tree's roots to get oxygen and moisture.

I have a small vegetable plot that only receives about 4½ hours of direct sunlight per day. Can you suggest any

vegetables that would better grow in the conditions I have mentioned?

Most plants that you grow for the fruit or the root needs full sun.

If you grow a plant for the leaves, stems, or buds, a little shade will be just fine.

Keep in mind that no vegetable will grow in full, dense shade.

The following crops will produce with three to six hours of sun, or fairly constant dappled shade, per day.

- Salad Greens, such as leaf lettuce, arugula, endive, and cress.
- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Peas
- Brussels Sprouts
- Radishes
- Swiss Chard
- Rhubarb