



Trowel Talk!

May, 2015

Privacy matters in the backyard

If you're like me, you want privacy in your backyard. Not that your neighbours peer out their windows all day. But when you relax on your deck or patio, you want to feel you're away from the eyes of the world.



Photo: Nancy Seppala

Honeysuckle growing on a trellis

To obtain privacy, choose from three different degrees of screening: opaque, semi-transparent and transparent. Opaque is the most private as no one can see through it. Put an opaque screen as far from your sitting area as possible. Too close and it can cause claustrophobia. A solid wooden fence, a stone wall or cedar hedge are all examples of

opaque screening. Try a trellis with climbing vines such as clematis, honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) or annual scarlet runner bean (*Phaseolus coccineus*) to dress up the fence or wall. A cedar hedge works well but requires more space and maintenance and is slower to provide cover.



Photo: Monique Pare

Clematis supported by lattice

Semi-transparent refers to two different kinds of screening. It can be a fence with gaps in the boards – a good neighbour fence that provides partial cover year round. Or it can refer to a deciduous shrub hedge that offers privacy during only the warmer months when you use your patio. Since cities restrict fence heights, if your deck is raised, taller growing shrubs are a good choice. The added bonus with this type of screening is that certain shrubs provide both shelter and food for birds and other wildlife.

These shrubs may include various members of the *Viburnum* genus such as *V. lantana* (wayfaring tree) which has masses of flowers in June, berries in September, stands 3m tall, 2m wide and is drought tolerant. Bristol ruby weigela is 2m tall and wide, produces reddish pink flowers in spring and blooms sporadically until fall. The hummingbirds love the nectar from these trumpet shaped flowers. Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*

canadensis) reaches 6m and has white flowers in spring followed by edible berries in June. Two years ago in my yard, waxwings settled into the shrub and didn't leave until they devoured every berry. Mix several kinds of shrubs for interest and different foods.

A third type of screening is transparent but serves as a barrier. This is the chain-link fence or more attractive wrought-iron one. You may construct it to preserve a view but keep out the kids from the park. Plant a vine on either end of the fence to frame your view. In sunny areas try annual vines such as Cypress vine (*Ipomoea quamoclit*) with its delicate fernlike leaves and tiny red tubular flowers, or purple hyacinth bean (*Dolichos lablab*) which has hot pink flowers and burgundy seed pods. Hummingbirds love the flowers of both of these plants. In a shady spot, try the perennial vine, Dutchman's Pipe (*Aristolochia*).



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

PVC fence as a privacy screen – the addition of a vine will increase the degree of screening

When you think of privacy, think screening. Space permitting, plant a deciduous shrub hedge or dress up a fence with vines. Not only will you create a more private space for yourself, but also you will offer food and shelter to birds, insects and small animals.

Nancy Seppala

Retired Master Gardener

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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
- mgottawaeditor@gmail.com



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 9-30 (10 am – 2 pm) and June 6-20 (9 am – 12 pm)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May 9 – June 20 (9 am – 1 pm)

Carp Market: Saturdays, May 9 through June 27 (9 am – 1 pm)

Ottawa Farmers Market, Lansdowne Park: Sundays, July to Sept, 9am-1pm

Cumberland Market: Saturdays, June 13, July 11, Aug 8, Sept 5, 9am-1pm

North Gower Farmers Market, 2403 Roger Stevens Dr, North Gower: June 6, June 20, Sept 19, 8:30am-1:00pm

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

FRIENDS OF THE FARM LECTURE SERIES:

Individual Lectures: FCEF members \$12, non-members \$15

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Register at: 613-230-3276 or by e-mail info@friendsofthefarm.ca

Plant for Continuous Garden Joy – May 19 – 7:00 pm

Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Dirty Little Underground Secrets - The importance of soil, what it does, what it is comprised of, how we amend it, use it to fertilize and water the plants – June 11 – 6:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Pineview Free Methodist Church, 14397 Hwy 41, Cloyne

Hosted by the Land O'Lakes Garden Club (Guest fee: unknown)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: mgottawaspeakers@gmail.com

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



May TO DO List

- Harden-off (acclimatize) indoor plants or seedlings to the outdoor conditions by slowly increasing their exposure to sun and wind.
- Overseed or patch the lawn. Use a mix of grass seed and Dutch white clover to increase the lawn's drought tolerance. Grass is a cool weather germinator (around 16° Celsius). The area must remain moist until the roots have established.
- Watch the weather and if the conditions are favourable, plant annuals and vegetables. Perennials can tolerate cooler temperatures and can be planted now.
- This is an excellent time of year to apply a fresh layer of mulch to the ornamental garden beds. The plants are just emerging but you can still manoeuvre between them to apply mulch. Organic mulch like shredded bark will help improve the soil and will reduce moisture loss.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Don't forget the pollinators! Many gardeners are including plants that provide nectar or pollen as a food source for pollinators but insects also appreciate a place to live and somewhere close-by to get a drink.



There are commercially available bee-houses or you can build your own bug motel. Pine cones, bundles of straw, branches, and logs

with holes drilled in all provide a home for insects. Include a shallow dish of water in the garden for the insects to drink (with some gravel or glass beads to give insects somewhere to land).



A shallow dish of mud will also be

appreciated by some birds and insects who use it to build their homes/nests.

The [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#) (CWF) has excellent information on making your back-yard a certified wildlife habitat.

CWF shows the plants and conditions that you need to include to make your back-yard friendly to wildlife and pollinators. Every little bit helps, so start now; this is the time of year that the insects are searching for homes for the season.