



Trowel Talk!

May, 2016

Getting an edge in the garden

Pictures usually look better with frames. The same is often true for our gardens. They will usually look more beautiful if they are well "framed". We achieve this effect through the use of different kinds of edging.

There are many edging options from which to choose. Each one has its particular advantages and disadvantages. The rocks that surrounded my mother's garden were my first version of edging. Advantages? On our farm they were free, and available with no haulage charge. Disadvantages? Weight, and grass growing up between them.

Railway ties, once considered a good, low cost, relatively long-lasting edging, no longer receive the same acceptance because of our growing concern about chemicals that can leach into the soil. You certainly don't want to use them around your vegetable garden.

The same is true for pressure treated wood. The arsenic that used to go into the treatment process is no longer used. Copper has been substituted and is advertised as being safer. But untreated wood can be just as expensive, and it won't last as long. The ecological dilemma is this – if we use treated woods, they may



Photos: Mary Ann Van Berlo

Before & after pictures showing how a clean, crisp edge makes a garden bed look neat and tidy – no other weeding was done in the after picture.

pollute the soil; if we use untreated woods, they will need to be replaced more often. More trees will be cut down.

My favourite method of edging gets around both of these problems. It is achieved with a good edging spade. Furthermore I love the look of this crisp trench and it costs nothing. Well, not quite. It is certainly very labour-intensive, and as our backs age that's a pretty important consideration. You can get a similar result to that of manual edging if you use a reasonably powerful gas trimmer. I have a light weight trimmer but even it can be hard on the shoulders and arms.

It is noisy, uses gas and the "look" is not as attractive as manual edging. However, it is a great "quick fix". Many commercial products are now available in brick, cement and other synthetics – providing us with an endless variety of textures and forms. In rustic settings, logs and field stone make attractive edges, and

they may be available right on your property.

Less obvious as forms of edging are paths of various kinds – gravel, grass, cement, fieldstone, winding or straight – outlining the parts of your yard. Fences and hedges also function as edges.

There are so many factors to consider when we choose edging materials and styles. How much will the job cost? How will it look? Will it last long enough to justify the cost and labour involved? Are the materials safe to use? Can I reduce costs by doing my own work? Am I physically able to do the work and subsequent maintenance? Do I have the time? The time and thought that you devote to making edging choices will eventually be rewarded. Good framing helps to focus the viewer's attention on the most interesting and beautiful features of our gardens.

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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
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May TO DO List

- Watch the weather forecast carefully before moving plants outdoors. Also exercise caution with annuals and vegetables as late frosts can still occur.
- Keep a record of new additions to the garden with a plant log or a garden map. Some people file the plant tag and attach info on when and where it was purchased and its location in the garden.
- Succession planting (every two weeks) of lettuce will give you a continuous supply of baby greens for your supper table. Stop planting greens when the temperatures increase as they prefer cool temperatures.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Pollinator gardens are currently very popular, The [Canadian Wildlife Federation](#) (CWF) has endorsed plants sold in Monarch or Pollinator Kits at some Ontario retailers. They contain four plants that are good nectar sources for pollinators.

In addition to nectar plants for food, pollinators need a supply of fresh water. Keep a shallow dish of fresh water out for the insects and other garden visitors. Include some pebbles on one side of the dish to have varying depths of water to suit a variety of wildlife.



The plant list in the Ontario Horticultural Association's (OHA) [Roadside Pollinator Patch 'booklet'](#) is a good reference for

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:

Rare & Unusual Plant Sale: Sunday, May 15 (9am–2pm)

Parking lot beside the Neatby Building, Carling at Maple Drive, Central Experimental Farm <http://friendsofthefarm.ca/events.htm>

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: June 11, July 9, Aug 6, Sept 3, (9am–1pm)

North Gower Farmers Market: June 4, 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:

FRIENDS OF THE FARM LECTURE SERIES:

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

Lecture series (4 lectures) FCEF members \$40, non-members \$50

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Register at: 613-230-3276 or [online](#)

All the dirt on container gardening – May 17 – 7:00pm

Catherine Disley-Engler, Master Gardener

Reviving a Tired Garden – May 16 – 7:30 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Cornerstone Community Church, 1728 Concession 11, Almonte

Hosted by the Almonte & District Horticultural Society (no guest fee)

Selecting Plants and Displaying for their Best Features – June 1 – 7:00 pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Martintown Community Centre, 4850 County Road 20, Martintown

Hosted by the Martintown & District Horticultural Society (no guest fee)

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>



choosing the right plants for your pollinator garden.

Include a variety of plants to ensure blooms from early spring

to late fall. While many people despise dandelions, they are a good source of pollen for pollinators when little else is in bloom.