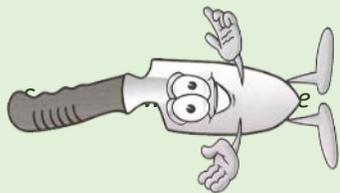


Trowel Talk!

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Wonders of the woodland

A few years ago, I was one of hundreds of visitors on West Carleton's Red Trillium Studio and Garden Tour. The feature garden displayed flower beds, a pond, tree-lined pathways and unique statuary on 2 ½ acres. Its ever-changing landscape flourishes under the watchful eye of its owner, Joan.

The light in this woodland garden ranges from deep shade to full morning sun near the front of the house. During my visit, shade-loving native plants like Canada bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), round-lobed hepatica (*Hepatica americana*) and wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*) were abundant and blooming. In amongst them, several varieties of fern were unfurling, some of them still protected in their early spring cauls (skin). All around, understory plants and shrubs were leafing out, providing a backdrop in shades of green.

Many elements have been incorporated into the design of Joan's garden. Shady corners are brightened by the use of light colours: willows and tamaracks, with variegated and light green early spring foliage; birch, green alder and dogwoods, with contrasting bark colours; and shrubs that bloom in the early spring. The white blossoms of cherry trees along the round-rail perimeter fence stood out in the understory and a spectacular *Forsythia* 'Northern Gold' was in bloom. This forsythia has flower-buds hardy to Canadian growing zone 4. It blooms first and faithfully every spring, even when the winter has been harsh.

As the canopy changes with the seasons, it affects the sun/shade patterns in the garden beds and along the woodland paths. In this woodland garden, there is a constant succession of blooms featuring native woodland plants and some introduced species that adapt to the changing light conditions.

Trout lilies (*Erythronium americanum*), Canada mayflower (*Maianthemum canadense*), white and red trilliums (*Trillium grandiflorum* and *T. erectum*), small yellow lady's slippers (*Cypripedium calceolus* var. *parviflorum*), and small jack-in-the-pulpits (*Arisaema triphyllum*) bloom in early spring. Their blooms may be short-lived but their beauty justifies growing them in any shade garden.

Other plants like northern bluebells (*Mertensia paniculata*), red and white baneberries (*Actaea rubra* and *A. pachypoda*), Solomon's seal (*Polygonatum pubescens*), false Solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*) and wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) start blooming a little later and continue well into June and early July. These were just awakening when I was there in early May.

For texture, form and subtle colour differences, Joan encourages native ferns to spread, and she has enhanced the design with tall, large leaved, coarse textured hostas like 'Great Expectations' (cream coloured with green variegation) and 'Sum and Substance' (yellow-green).

Joan has used strongly textured hostas in the shade of tall trees where their rounded forms create a spacious effect. They are complemented by introduced species – forget-me-nots (*Myosotis scorpioides*), long-leaf lungwort (*Pulmonaria longifolia*), and bleeding hearts (*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*).

If you would like to grow woodland plants, there are numerous native plant nurseries that sell seed and grow their own stock. Much information is available from internet sites, specialized catalogues and wildflower societies. Or ask a Master Gardener (contact info is on the next page).



Photos: Fleurette Huneault

Top: *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Multiplex' (double bloodroot)

Bottom: *Actaea rubra* (baneberry)

Two beautiful, native woodland plants.

Fleurette Huneault
Retired Master Gardener

May TO DO List

- Be patient, working saturated soil will damage the soil structure. Wait until the soil dries out sufficiently. A simple test is to take a handful of soil, close your fist to form a ball of soil. Poke the soil ball with a finger. If it breaks apart, the soil is dry enough to work.
- Start to harden-off seedlings and houseplants that you want to move outdoors for the summer. Gradually introduce them to more sun and wind each day until the plant tissue has adapted to the harsher outdoor conditions.
- If you have gardening or plant ID questions, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

Just do it! So many times people say "I don't know where to start". Gardening is about learning from mistakes and enjoying small successes. Don't worry if it isn't perfect – nature isn't and there's always next year. Every gardener has had epic failures but why not focus on that tasty tomato or fragrant rose. So, it doesn't matter where you start, just start with something of interest; you'll be amazed at how gardening becomes instinctual.

An initiative in Ottawa this year is to celebrate Garden Days – June 9-18. Check out their website for details:



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

- monitored daily

- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

Byward Market: Mother's Day, May 7 (10 am – 1 pm) and Saturdays, May 6 to June 10 (9 am – 12 noon)

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 3, 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:

FRIENDS OF THE FARM LECTURE SERIES:

7:00 pm on the evenings stated below.

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

Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

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

Going Grassless: Honey, I Shrank the Lawn – May 23

Julianne Labreche, Master Gardener

Purple Carrots, Honey Bees and Magic; Gardening with Children – May 16 –

7:00 pm – Judith Cox, Master Gardener

Pretty Street Community Centre, 2 Pretty Street, Stittsville

Hosted by Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society (Guest fee: N/A)

Mucking about in the Dirt is Good for your Health – May 17 – 1:00 pm

Nancy McDonald, Master Gardener

Abbotsford Community Centre, 950 Bank Street, Ottawa

Part of the Spring Speakers' Series (Guest fee: \$2 includes refreshments)

Gardening with Wildlife – May 17 – 7:00 pm

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Greenboro Community Centre, 363 Lorry Greenberg Drive, Ottawa

Hosted by the Greater Ottawa Water Garden Horticultural Society (Guest fee: N/A)



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

