



# Trowel Talk!

November, 2011

## Gardening groups can grow on you!

Does your family understand you? Do they think you're obsessed with playing in the dirt? That you waste your money on plants? Well you're not alone! I get comments like "Don't you do anything other than work in your garden?" But I've found a place where my plant addiction is understood, even welcomed – it is my local horticultural society. My fellow gardeners know it's not work; it's a passion.

At a monthly meeting of enthusiastic gardeners, it's commonplace to drool over slide presentations of hardy perennials, to listen with uncurbed enthusiasm to pruning techniques, or to take notes on a new form of pest control. We can share success stories and commiserate over failures. Plant material, seeds and information are all constantly passed back and forth among the members.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

### A group tour of the Beechwood Cemetery gardens

The typical 'hort' society or gar-

den club will have members of all ages and from all walks of life, with vastly varied gardening interests. Neophyte gardeners to seasoned pros are all welcome. And individual interests range from trees to annuals, cacti to roses, vegetables to topiary. You can see why an avid gardener like myself feels at home in this environment.

Beyond the fact that my love of gardening is understood and accepted by the members, there are many other benefits. The list of club activities includes speakers on garden related topics, demonstrations, workshops, field trips, seed exchanges, plant sales, garden tours, shows and competitions, photo contests and community beautification projects. The combined knowledge of the members is a treasure trove of information. As well, a number of garden centres offer discounts to hort society members.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

### A spring flower show hosted by a local horticultural society

There is a network of horticultural societies set up throughout Ontario. Their membership boundaries are set up by region – for instance, Ottawa, Gloucester, Kanata, Almonte, etc. The local societies are part of a larger organization – the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA). There are annual conferences, both regionally and provincially, where you can meet more enthusiasts. To learn

more, go to the OHA website: [www.gardenontario.org](http://www.gardenontario.org)

As well, there are many gardening clubs, such as the Old Ottawa South Garden Club, Barrhaven Garden Club, Champlain Park Garden Club, etc., and specialty groups such as the African Violet Society, the Orchid Society, etc. These groups have similar activities to the horticultural societies, but don't have the structure of the provincial network. If these groups are more to your interest, try doing an internet search to see if there is a club in your area or visit the Ottawa Botanical Garden web-site for a partial list at:

[www.ottawagarden.ca/en/links/](http://www.ottawagarden.ca/en/links/)



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

### Everyone's favourite – the garden club's spring plant sale!

In a recent discussion with fellow plant lovers about our obsession, I felt like we were living out an edition of True Confessions. One gardener admitted to sneaking plants home so her spouse would not see them. Most of us were guilty of hiding the price tag or the 'they were having a sale' fib. Another gardener confessed to planting in the dark so the neighbours wouldn't see him out in the garden moving plants around - yet again. Strangely, we didn't think this behaviour was odd. We understood each other.

Mary Ann Van Berlo  
Master Gardener

## Trowel Talk!

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## 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:

**No advice clinics until Spring 2012**

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Ask a Master Gardener** (our panel will answer questions) – November 16 – 7:30 p.m.

Panel: Ann McQuillan, David Hinks, Stephanie Sleeth, Master Gardeners

St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Prescott Street, Kemptville, Ontario

Hosted by the Kemptville Horticultural Society (guests welcome)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: 613-836-1491

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website:

<http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>

### November TO DO List

- Gardens should be put to bed by the end of November at the latest.
- Ponds should be shut down for the winter. This includes removing the pump and cleaning out any debris. If you use a bubbler or a pond heater, install it now to be ready when the pond ices over.
- It's still not too late to put that container grown plant into the ground. It will have a better chance of survival in the soil, even though it doesn't have much time left to spread its roots.
- Clean, sharpen and oil your tools before you store them for the winter.
- Check houseplants (especially those that spent the summer outdoors) for bugs. Put any infested plants in quarantine and start a spraying regime with insecticidal soap every 7-10 days.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

### Tip of the Month:

A garden that is interesting all year around is every gardener's goal, but is not always easy to achieve. Some planning over the fall and winter months is the first step to a four-season garden.

Observation and records will be the main tools you need. By watching your garden's progression through the year, you can identify areas or periods of time in specific areas that need improvement. Keeping detailed notes or weekly photos of garden beds and views from key vantage points will tell you where to concentrate your efforts.

Once you've identified an area that needs work – let's say colour in mid-June – you can do your research to find plants that suit your growing conditions and bloom at that time. Sometimes it's as simple as a trip to the nursery and looking at the dis-

plays of what is in bloom. Some research is still necessary since nursery stock may actually be a week or two ahead of garden plants. Container stock tends to have warmer soil and the plants may have overwintered in greenhouses and therefore had an early start to the growing season.

In a climate like Ottawa's, it is important to try to include some winter interest also. Trees, shrubs, and statuary are the first things that come to mind for winter interest. But texture, line and form also play a big role. Texture can be as simple as ornamental grasses with feathery plumes or the exfoliating bark of a paper birch. The edges of a path or a linear planting add interest even when covered in snow and can draw the eye through the landscape. The form of a feature may be the only element visible under the snow. The shape of a plant, whether round, conical, columnar or vase shaped, can be used effectively to add repetition or contrast.

So start keeping track of your garden through the seasons to identify areas that need improvement and more importantly, to be able to find those areas again when you're ready to do a garden renovation!

