



# Trowel Talk!

November, 2013

## Time to pond-er a lovely backyard

Now that our growing season is over for the year, tender plants are gone and evening frost appears more regularly, we are nostalgic about the beauty and the abundance of life in our backyard pond.



Photo: Diane McClymont Peace

The gazebo overlooks the pond allowing us to enjoy the pond in all weather

Our backyard is an open meadow and to get relief from the sun, we constructed a gazebo, large enough to allow our family of five to eat and play comfortably. We also constructed a pond right beside the gazebo to give us the feeling of being beside a lake. It is about 5 metres in diameter and 60 cm at the deepest part. Once the hole was excavated and the sides levelled, we laid down the liner and secured the edges with field stones. This was done in the spring 15 years ago, just before several days of heavy rain. The pond was soon full of rainwater and within days it was teeming

### Trowel Talk!

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with life - caddis flies, water striders, dragonflies, and frogs. We planted native water lilies, iris and cattails and added a dozen goldfish to control mosquitoes.

The following spring, the pond was even more abundant with wildlife. There were hundreds of tadpoles, the fish had survived and produced many more fish and a green turtle moved in. When the children were young, they frequently swam in the pond alongside the fish and spent hours investigating the wildlife.



Photo: Diane McClymont Peace

Goldfish control the mosquito problem by eating their larvae

The pond has matured over the years. A snapping turtle moved in for many years and helped control the numerous goldfish. Raccoons and skunks have been sighted as well as the occasional deer venturing out from the neighbouring forest.



Photo: Diane McClymont Peace

Another visitor to the pond

Although we have an industrial pump and a filtration system, we rarely use it. The surface area is large enough to allow the wind to circulate the water. We try to keep at least half the pond covered with plants for shelter and

shade. In the spring, there are so many tadpoles and baby fish that filtering the water would destroy many of them. Sometimes the water is green and murky but the aquatic life continues to thrive. In the fall, it is easy to skim off most of the fallen leaves and scoop out debris from the bottom.

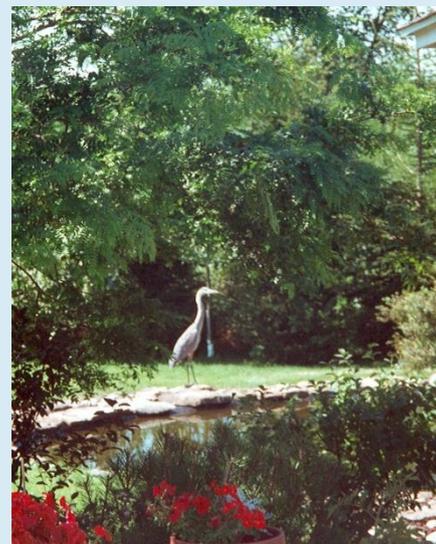


Photo: Diane McClymont Peace

A blue heron checks out the fish and frog smorgasbord and keeps their population in check

The pond changes from season to season. When the ice melts, the water is clear and we can see how many fish have survived. Every spring mallard ducks swim, preen and rest on the rocks. Other birds drink and bathe in the shallow margins. Once the plants have sprouted, dragonflies feed, mate and lay eggs. In the heat of the summer, we hook up a water fountain to enjoy the sound of falling water and to help aerate the pond. Every fall, a great blue heron visits almost daily to feed on some of the fish. Later when the leaves turn, the vivid autumn colours are reflected in the water and signal the finale of another year of life in the pond.

Diane McClymont Peace  
Master Gardener



## 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](mailto:mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca)

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

#### CLINICS:

**No clinics until spring.**

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Little Roses for Small Gardens** – November 18 – 7:00 pm

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Ottawa South Community Centre, 260 Sunnyside Ave., Ottawa

Hosted by Old Ottawa South Garden Club (guests welcome – \$7 for non-members)

**Today's Urban Indoor Gardener: House Plants Galore!** – November 21 – 9:15 am

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Bell's Corners United Church, 3955 Richmond Road, Nepean

Hosted by Cope Kit (guests welcome)

**10 metre diet** – December 11 – 6:00 pm

Tom Marcantonio, Master Gardener

Ottawa Public Library, Carlingwood Branch, 281 Woodroffe Ave., Ottawa

Hosted by [Earthship Ottawa](http://earthshipottawa.com) (\$2.50 admission fee)

**Garden Pests & Diseases** – January 16 – 7:30 pm

Diane McClymont Peace, Master Gardener

City View United Church, 6 Epworth Ave., Ottawa

Hosted by Nepean Horticultural Society (Guests welcome)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: [speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca](mailto:speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca)

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

### November TO DO List

- Insert stakes now, but wait for the ground to freeze before wrapping shrubs that require winter protection. Otherwise rodents will find your protection a cozy home for winter and eat what you're trying to protect!
- Easily clean and sharpen tools by adding some mineral oil to a bucket of clean sand. Simply push your tools into the sand, pull them out, and you're done.
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

### Tip of the Month

If you don't have room for a large pond as described in the article on the previous page, consider adding a smaller water feature. You will still get many benefits from the addition of water to your yard.

A small pond or fountain will attract birds, wildlife and interesting insects such dragonflies, damselflies and darners.

The sound of running water masks less pleasant background noise.

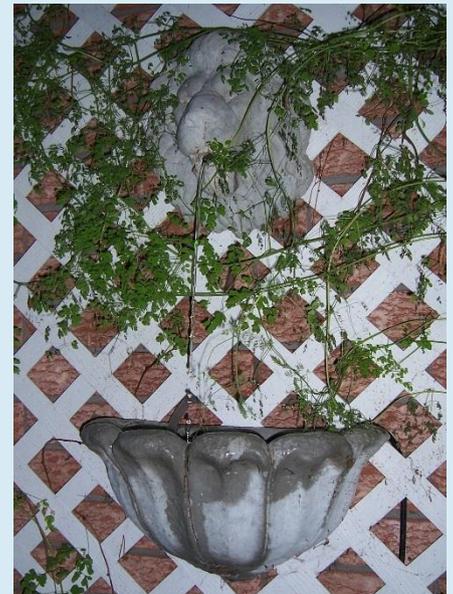
A water feature appeals to our sense of sight and hearing. It can have a calming effect and become a gathering spot for your family to relax.



A bubbling rock features the sound of running water and a spot for birds to drink and bathe.



A half barrel with a plastic liner can be made into a mini-pond, complete with water plants and fish to eat the mosquito larvae.



A lion's head wall fountain can add ambience to a patio.