



# Trowel Talk!

November, 2016

## Furry friend or foe

Most of us enjoy wildlife and welcome, even encourage, little creatures into our gardens. Deer may be the exception. We say "Ooohhh! They're so beautiful" – and then "but not in my backyard!"



Photo: Nelly Van Berlo

A backyard visitor.

A hungry deer will eat just about anything and will be bold enough to come right up to your house to find a prime meal. There are plants they find less appealing; those with a strong smell or fuzzy leaves will be their last choice. Anything fresh and green in the spring, such as tulips, are taste treats for deer after a winter of foraging for twigs and dried grasses under the snow. Succulent hosta leaves and just about anything in a vegetable garden are favourites in the summer.

While some gardeners choose to avoid planting "expensive deer food" such as bulbs or prize hostas, there are other methods to deter deer. There are many home

remedies which many people swear by. I've tried – without success – tying Irish Spring soap around the perimeter of my property. I want to categorically state that I have not tried "marking my territory" – yes, that is exactly what it sounds like – although I've heard this works.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

A young cedar tree wrapped in chicken wire to prevent deer from munching on the plant.

My solution is a combination of two things. In the winter I wrap susceptible trees and shrubs, such as cedars and magnolias with a wire mesh such as chicken wire to about a 2m height. Rhododendrons go under a large rose cone. Japanese maples get a burlap wrap. In addition to protective coverings, I have a very active terrier running around the yard, barking at anything that moves and yes, marking territory.

Deer repellents in a spray form may work. A home remedy of raw eggs and garlic is said to work well (but I have not tested this concoction) and there are commercially available products also. I've had good success with the commercial sprays, even on tulips

in early spring. These spray repellents last a couple of months so they will need to be reapplied. My sister puts deer food out all winter so she can enjoy watching the deer family up close. She sprays repellent on the plants that she does not want included on their smorgasbord. Plants that are sprayed get to live; those that are missed become deer food.



Photo: Mary Ann Van Berlo

A deer fence along the front of a rural Ottawa property – remembering to close the gate is essential!

Deer fences do the trick also, but they must be a minimum of 2.4m high. There is a nylon mesh deer fence product available. The fine, black nylon blends well into the background and is not as much of an eye-sore as one might think. For more visible areas such as the front of the property, a decorative wooden fence will do the trick, as long as it is high enough so the deer can't jump over. Double fences, 1.8m apart, work since the deer won't jump that distance.

The good news is that generally plants do not die from "deer pruning". A season of blooms may be lost or plants may be misshapen for a while, but most plants recover. The goal is to win the battle and prevent the deer from damaging the plants again. Make the score Gardener: 1 - Deer 0.

Mary Ann Van Berlo  
Master Gardener

## Trowel Talk!

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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
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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](mailto:mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca)

- monitored daily

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

#### CLINICS:

**No clinics until next spring.**

#### SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

**Raised Beds** – November 15 – 7:15 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Smiths Falls Legion, 7 Main Street East, Smiths Falls

Hosted by Smiths Falls Horticultural Society (Guest fee: \$3)

**Growing Soft Fruit (Berries)** – January 5 – 7:00 pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely

Hosted by Greely Gardeners Club, (Guest fee: \$5)

**The Gardens of the Lake District and Scottish Borders** – January 9 – 7:00 pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Ottawa South Community Centre – the Fire Hall, 260 Sunnyside, Ottawa

Hosted by Ottawa South Garden Club (Guest fee: \$7)



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



## November TO DO List

- Continue to water trees until the ground freezes. Conifers need water as they continue to transpire throughout the winter. This is especially important after this year's drought.
- Clean, sharpen and put tools away for the winter.
- Ensure hoses are drained and stored (drain outdoor taps also).
- Double check that all tender bulbs have been lifted from the garden (it's easy to miss a few).
- Once the ground freezes, wrap shrubs that need winter protection (assumes you've put stakes in prior to freeze-up).
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

## Tip of the Month

It's time to make a seasonal wreath from evergreen boughs.

You'll need a wire wreath form (available at many craft stores), a spool of fine wire, secateurs, a supply of evergreen branches and decorations.

Cedar or pine boughs work well. Spruce and fir tend to have a front and a back side to their boughs so if you use them, just make sure you are consistent in how you place them.



Start by tying the wire to the wreath frame. Then loop the wire around a small bundle of evergreen branches that are all cut the

same length. The length will depend on the size of your wire frame and the desired fullness of the finished wreath. For the wreath under construction in the photo to the left, the evergreens were cut to 15cm lengths.

Loop the wire around the frame so that the bundle is secure. Continue adding bundles, working in the same direction. When you make it back to the starting point, you will have to lift the first bundle to insert and wire the final ones. Tie the wire to the frame, but leave enough so that you can form a loop for hanging the wreath.

You can decorate your wreath to suit your personal taste using pine cones, dried hydrangea flowers, Christmas ornaments and, of course, a big bow.



Your home-crafted wreath will last longer if hung outdoors, but since you are using very fresh materials from your backyard, it should outperform the commercially available ones.