



Trowel Talk!

October, 2014

Tuck in garden for the winter

When heavy frosts settle on your garden causing some of the most beautiful plants to blacken, that is your warning. If you have procrastinated doing your fall chores, get busy now. It's time.

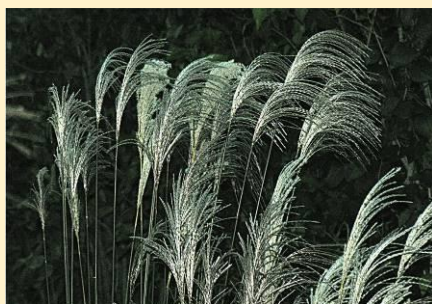


Photo: Monique Paré

Miscanthus with light shining on it.

When cutting back perennials, consider being selective. Recently I saw goldfinches atop the cones of my purple cone-flowers (*Echinacea*) which I had already decided to leave as birdseed for winter. Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*), sea holly (*Eryngium*) and globe-thistle (*Echinops*) are in that same category. Avoid cutting back plants you believe will provide winter interest. Ornamental grasses, especially *Miscanthus* cultivars, can be spectacular when the winter sun backlights their silvery seed-heads and icy winds set them swaying. The taller sedums also have their place throughout winter as their heads poke through the snow.

Trowel Talk!

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Leave evergreen and semi-evergreen perennials as well. Bugleweed (*Ajuga*), coral bells (*Heuchera*) and elephant ears (*Bergenia*) should wait until spring for any trimming. You can cut other plants such as daylilies, Siberian iris, hostas and phlox now. This will clean up the garden considerably and spotlight the plants that are staying.



Photo: Monique Paré

Evergreen leaves of *Bergenia* should not be cut back in the fall

This fall protect your small trees and shrubs from rodent and rabbit damage. Wrap a protective guard around them; the white tubing and chicken wire come to mind. You can also paint repellent on the lower bark for added protection. Apparently it tastes terrible and should keep the pests away. Remember that majestic Siberian Crabapple you proudly brought home from the garden center last spring and gave a place of honour in your front yard. It would be a shame to lose it because some hungry critter had nibbled the bark all around the trunk.

Lift and properly store your tender bulbs and tubers. It may be tempting to leave dahlias, gladiolus and canna lilies deep in the ground over our Ottawa winter, but I guarantee you: next spring you'll find only mushy remains. I know. I've tried.

Check the depth to which you have planted your roses. If grafted, even our Ottawa hardy Explorer and Parkland series roses need to have their bud unions (the bump at the base of the plant) at least 10 cm. (4 inches) below the soil to ensure they survive the vagaries of our winters. If necessary, hill them up with extra soil and replant more deeply in the spring.

Collect any seeds you want to save. Before storing them, ensure they are clean and dry. Don't bother taking seeds of a "hybrid" plant, as they won't turn out like the parent. Continue watering your trees and shrubs, particularly evergreens, right up until the ground freezes.



Photo: Nancy Seppala

Rain barrels should be drained and stored upside down. Extend the downspouts to direct water away from the house's foundation

And don't forget to drain your water barrel completely. When even a few centimeters of water freezes it could expand not only upwards, but also sideways, splitting the barrel.

This summer was fairly wet, making it difficult for many gardeners to spend time outside. Fall days, especially the bright sunny ones are perfect for working outdoors. Seize the opportunity; complete these and other garden chores before the snow flies.

Nancy Seppala
Retired 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

- monitored daily

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

CLINICS:

No advice clinics until next spring.

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

What's New in Perennials & Woodies – October 20 – 7:30pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Top Generation Hall, 4373 Generation Court, Ramsayville

Hosted by Gloucester Horticultural Society – Guests no charge

Whispering in the Wind – Ornamental grasses – November 4 – 7:30pm

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Rd, Kanata

Hosted by Kanata March Horticultural Society – Guests \$5

Lessons from My Big Fat Garden Reno – November 11 – 7:00pm

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Champlain Park Fieldhouse, 149 Cowley Ave, Ottawa

Hosted by Champlain Park Garden Club (Guest fee: \$5)



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: speakers@mgottawa.mgoi.ca

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



October TO DO List

- It's not too late to plant spring bulbs but they should be planted ASAP to allow the roots to establish. Tulips are more forgiving than daffodils for late season planting.
- If there is a tree or shrub that you want to wrap for winter protection, hammer the supports in now before the ground freezes. Only add the burlap or perennial blanket (white felt-like cloth) after the ground has frozen and rodents have already found their winter home.
- Fall is a good time to pull up weeds so that you're off to a fresh start next spring.
- Clean and oil your tools before putting them away for the winter to prevent rust.
- Make sure you have any seed starting supplies (such as pots) stored in the house or garage (so that you're not trying to shovel out the garden shed in March).
- If you have a gardening or plant identification question, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month

To quote Paul Zammit, well-known garden lecturer and Director of Horticulture at the Toronto Botanical Garden, "Don't mum-ify your garden for fall colour". Paul's point is that mums are great for a splash of colour but there are so many other great fall plants that can shine in our late season gardens.



Aster novae-angliae 'Alma Potschke'

A tall New-England aster that stops garden visitors in their tracks with her bright rose-pink blooms, *Aster novae-angliae* 'Alma Potschke' puts on a great show in the fall.

Sedum spectabile is another fall classic that keeps blooming right until a hard frost. Cultivars such as *S.* 'Chocolate Drop' or 'Autumn Charm' provide good foliage colour all season and have fall flowers that the pollinators need as a nectar source when the rest of the garden is waning.



The deep maroon foliage of *Sedum* 'Chocolate Drop' will add great colour contrast to your garden beds.



***Sedum* 'Autumn Charm'**

Heucheras also look good all season, but their colours seem to intensify as the weather cools.



***Heuchera* 'Caramel'**