



Trowel Talk!

September, 2014

Traffic-stoppers worth re-planting

For years I was a perennial snob. I refused to grow anything which couldn't survive our winters. Why would I want plants which I had to renew yearly?

Thankfully about four years ago my attitude changed. I heard a Master Gardener touting the beauty of a plant called *Amaranthus caudatus* – love-lies-bleeding or tassel flower. She called it a real traffic stopper and this intrigued me. I love it when people pause in their walks by my garden to comment on the various flowers. I had to give *Amaranthus* a try.



Photo by Monique Paré

Amaranthus caudatus

I bought a packet of seeds and planted them indoors a few weeks before the last frost date.

Trowel Talk!

- Newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
- Volume 5, Number 9
- <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>
- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
- trowel_talk_editor@rogers.com

Around the beginning of June they were ready for transplanting to their garden bed. This particular location was very sunny, hot and dry. What soon appeared was well worth the few dollars I had spent on seeds. Some of my plants had grown to over 150 cm. tall. Hanging down in long rope-like cherry red tassels were the flowers. These glorified not only my garden but added an exotic touch to all my indoor bouquets. From then on, I've been hooked. Even though I lose them each winter, some always return by self-seeding.



Photo by Monique Paré

A monarch butterfly enjoying the nectar of *Verbena bonariensis*

My success with this flower encouraged me to try a few other annuals. *Verbena bonariensis* – tall verbena was one of these. I first read about it in a garden magazine where it was described as a "see-through" plant. Such plants, although fairly tall, have thin branching stems and can be planted at the front of the flower border. The viewer can easily see through the plants to the ones behind. *V. bonariensis* has very slender stems and grows up to 90cm. tall. At the ends of the stems sit delicate magenta-purple flowers in tiny clusters which remind me of fine candelabras. An added bonus is that they attract Monarch and other

butterflies throughout August. These flowers are prolific self-seeders and return yearly. In fact, they are somewhat temperamental with respect to germination in the home, so best sow them outdoors.

A third plant I have recently grown is *Nicotiana sylvestris*, or flowering tobacco. As an heirloom plant it will grow "true to type" year after year when it self-seeds. Gardeners have grown it for generations in North America. *Nicotiana* stretches up to 180 cm. and has long, widely ovate leaves which vary in shades of dark green to chartreuse depending on the amount of sun received. Panicles of long white trumpet-like flowers hang down in clusters from the top of the plant. The fragrance they emit after dusk is indeed heavenly. By August the plants become so large they also make a wonderful living privacy screen.



Photo by Nancy Seppala

Nicotiana sylvestris attracts pollinators with its scent

These dramatic plants are beautiful in any garden and continue to flower until frost. You might wish to try to germinate the seeds indoors or sow directly into the garden when the soil has warmed. Learn to recognize the seedlings so that if they return the following year, you will allow them to remain and add beauty for another season.

Nancy Seppala
Retired Master Gardener



Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

September TO DO List

- Take advantage of a period of rainy or overcast days in the forecast to divide and move any plants that need it. Make sure you don't wait too late into the fall as you want the roots to re-establish before freeze-up.
- Remove the seed-heads from plants that you don't want to self-seed. This will save you from weeding seedlings out next season.
- Fall is a good time to pull up weeds so that you're off to a fresh start next spring.
- 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 start planting bulbs to add colour to your garden for early next spring. Plant bulbs in a clump, with a minimum of 10 bulbs of the same variety; larger groupings of 25-30 bulbs are even more dramatic.

One planting method is to dig a large hole to the depth required for the bulb being planted. Make sure the bottom of the hole is flat, add some bloodmeal as food for the bulb and as a squirrel deterrent, then space the bulbs apart in the hole and back-fill the hole. Tamp the soil well.



The second method is to use a bulb auger attachment on a power drill to make individual holes.



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:

Ottawa Farmers' Market: (Brewer Park) Sundays, July through Sept. (9 am - 1 pm)

Main Farmers' Market: September 20 (10 am - 2 pm)

North Gower Farmers' Market: October 4 (8:30 am - 1 pm)

SPEAKING EVENTS & WORKSHOPS:

Introduction to Garden Design - September 16 - 7:00pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Athens District High School, 21 Church Street, Athens

Hosted by Athens Horticultural Society - Guests \$3

Flowering Shrubs - September 17 - 7:00pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Maxville Complex Hall, 25 Fair Street, Maxville

Hosted by Maxville Horticultural Society - Guests \$5

Vertical Gardens (Vines) - September 22 - 7:00pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

Brockville Wesleyan Church (basement) 33 Central Ave, Brockville

Hosted by Brockville & District Horticultural Society - Guests \$2

Spring Bulbs - A must for every garden - October 7 - 7:30pm

Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener

Old Town Hall, 821 March Rd, Kanata

Hosted by Kanata March Horticultural Society - Guests \$5

To Everything There is a Season - Phenology 101 - October 11 - 1:00pm

Rebecca Last, Master Gardener

Canada Agriculture & Food Museum, 901 Prince of Wales Drive

Hosted by the Canada Agriculture & Food Museum - Guests no charge

Soft Fruit - October 14 - 7:30pm

Mary Shearman Reid, Master Gardener

St. Paul's United Church, 25 Gore Street, Perth

Hosted by Perth & District Horticultural Society - Guests \$3

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>

