

THE EDIBLE GARDEN

JANUARY 2019

Bee Line A Model Bee Keeper

*Julianne Labreche
Master Gardener of Ottawa-Carleton*

Ben Bazinet carefully maneuvers around four hives of honey bees which he affectionately called his "ladies". With over 60,000 buzzing bees, he doesn't want to upset them. That's why he carries a smoker, to calm any 'ladies' that become agitated by his work around the hives. He needs to move slowly and deliberately. He also doesn't want to hurt the bees, especially the important Queen that determines the longevity of the hive.



Ben Bazinet holding honeycomb
Julianne Labreche

Bazinet is a self-taught apiarist whose knowledge of bees is impressive. He's also a funeral director at Beechwood Cemetery where the hives are located. Beechwood is the perfect location for bees, surrounded by 160 acres of native and non-native trees, shrubs, blooming perennials, spring flowering bulbs and water.

The hives are safely tucked away from public view without any disturbance to daily operations. Human visitors are perfectly safe from the bees. The bees also are safe to forage for pollen and nectar during the spring and summer months throughout the cemetery grounds.

"This is a project that has been tremendously well received," he says, proud of the operation that has been underway for a couple of years now. "Bee keeping is fun for people of all ages."

In many ways, Bazinet is a model beekeeper whose philosophy, knowledge and skills around raising bees are an inspiration to anyone considering taking up the hobby.

It helps, of course, that he has been keeping bees since he was a boy. His godfather, a wise uncle, taught him the skills. Later, a high school biology teacher inspired him to hone them further. It happened one day that this teacher observed the apples in her orchard were malformed, caused by a lack of pollinators. So, he offered his services and started a hive for her. It thrived until about a year after he moved away in the 1990s when Colony Collapse Disorder destroyed it.

His advice for future beekeepers is both sage and practical. First, beekeepers should take preventative measures to ensure the well-being of the hive. These include proper licensing and regulated inspection. Care needs to be taken to prevent the spread of varroa mites that can move quickly through a hive, killing bees. Once a year, usually in early spring, a chemical treatment is needed.



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A Year in the Life of a Garden Procrastinator

*Rebecca Last
Master Gardener of Ottawa-Carleton*

January – Find whitefly on houseplants. Close the door of that room to avoid contaminating other houseplants, and plan to deal with the infestation later.

February – Rediscover whitefly, which has now completely desiccated last year's coleus and sweet potato vine cuttings. Throw out whitefly infested cuttings because there's just no saving them now!

March – Contemplate checking seed supplies in preparation for upcoming Seedy Saturday. Attend Seedy Saturday, spend over \$200 on new seeds. Get home, date new seed acquisitions, sort packages and add to prior year's accumulation, discovering multiple copies of Banana Legs tomato seeds, but no parsley or marigold seeds.

April – Start tomato seeds under lights in the basement. Forget to locate oscillating fan, so seedlings get leggy and start to develop powdery mildew. Special order of heritage seed potatoes arrives in mid-April. Carefully store tubers in preparation for spring planting.

May – Finally! Ground is thawed enough to begin planting. Search frantically for seed supplies and carefully stored seed potatoes.

June – Finally get around to transplanting the last of the tomato seedlings. At 2-3 cm high, plan on harvesting tomatoes by mid-October. Plan to harvest first cutting of herbs such as basil and mint.

He also stresses the need to provide plenty of food for bees later in the summer, especially as they begin to prepare for colder weather. His solution is to provide sugar water to sustain the hive later in the season.

Good hygiene, keeping both the hives and the area around the hives clean, also is important. Finally, he cautions anyone thinking about raising bees as a hobby not to grow the operation too large. Two hives and no more than four, he thinks, is sufficient to maintain a healthy colony within city limits.

He'd like to encourage more people to consider becoming beekeepers and learn the skills involved. Bees are critical to our human food chain, he stresses, pollinating about a third of the crops that we consume. Ontario cities are an ideal place for bees, given the province-wide pesticide ban and a growing public interest in replacing grass with clover, flowers, shrubs and trees that all provide sources of pollen and nectar for them.

It's best to check the regulations first though, including the allowable space for a hive between your property line and your neighbours.

"It's been a wonderful little project, very low key," he says, reflecting on his beehives at the cemetery. About 200 pounds of honey is produced each year, most often given out as gifts to visiting clergy, dignitaries or guests at the cemetery, or sometimes sold to help cover the costs of this innovative project.

Seeds! Glorious Seeds!

*Dale Odorizzi
Master Gardener of Lanark County*

It is the first of January and all the hustle and bustle of Christmas has passed and it is now time to look ahead to the new year. Like most gardeners, my fingernails are clean, and I feel like it will be an awfully long time until I can get outside and work in the garden. Suddenly, I remember that since the middle of November my seed catalogues have been arriving, but I put them aside for a quiet moment. That moment has arrived. Going through Seed Catalogues reminds me of the days as a kid when the Eaton and Sears Christmas Catalogues—every night right up to Christmas, I would make a list for Santa, itemizing what I wanted.

I usually start reading at the front where they list their "New Selections for this year". Does the new variety of carrots really sound better than the variety I have used in the past? Maybe one package of them and two packages of the "old reliable's", just to be safe. Now that I am living in a Condo, will the 'Patio Snacker' Cucumbers really survive and flourish in a container, replacing my old sprawlers? Time to move on to page 2.

My favourite thing to grow is in the "Edible Department" so let's spend a lot of time studying what is available there. In my childhood days, I had to share the Christmas Catalogue with my younger brothers, but the seed catalogues are all mine. As I go through, I am free to use a coding scheme to mark the "definites" and the "maybes". All the while, I picture these beauties growing in my allotment garden and on my terrace. Won't they look wonderful! This year, I will keep my gardens weed free, so my vegetables have their best shot. Should I try the heirloom variety of tomato or how about a hybrid?

This process is repeated for each catalogue and then the moment of truth arrives, and it is time to create the order. Is it worth it to order one specialty package of seeds from a company and pay a high shipping fee or can I use a similar product from a company that offers a good shipping rate? Check with my gardening friends to see if anyone is ordering from that company. So many decisions to make. Don't forget to check the seed packages that you have left over from last year. Don't even get me started on the flower seeds.

July – Notice that garlic scapes have completed one full turn and begun to uncurl. Cut scapes and donate to local food bank, along with an abundance of self-seeding dill weed.

August – Plan a regimen of supplemental watering to compensate for lack of rain-fall.

Late August – harvest woody carrots that never developed well due to lack of water.

September – Harvest first tomatoes and collect basil for pesto before the first frost hits. Forget about harvesting fresh mint as it has now flowered and lost its fresh taste. Special order of heritage garlic bulbs arrives. Store carefully for later planting.

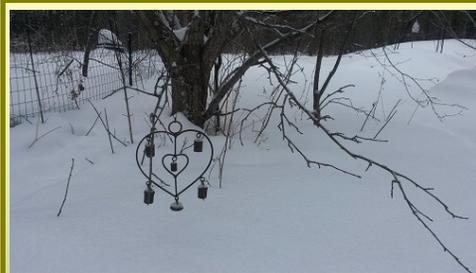
October – Begin fall garden clean up and winter prep. Tomatoes are now at peak productivity.

November – Discover garlic bulbs shortly after the first hard frost. Wait for a warm day to plant garlic. Since weather just keeps getting colder, purchase 2-3 bags of manure, store in front hallway until thawed. Then spread the manure on top of a frozen garden bed and plant garlic, hoping that planting depth is sufficient.

December – Make to-do list of woody plants to prune in late winter. Contemplate past season's many failures and resolve to do better next year!

Tips for Winter Living

*Judith Cox
Master Gardener of Ottawa-Carleton*



Winter Garden

Judith Cox

It is dark when I wake up and dark again when I make supper. Some people find this time of year to be quite difficult on many levels and the greyness can bring on S.A.D. or Seasonal Affective Disorder. Try standing near your plant lights. The plant lights we use have a spectrum different from the light bulbs in our lamps and ceiling lights. Not only will the light cheer you up a bit but having a few plants that you love nearby will add some sunshine to your mood.

I usually prefer to order seeds from Canadian suppliers and my usual go to catalogues are from Stokes and Vesey's and Richter's herbs.

About this time of year, the grocery stores and hardware stores are setting up their seed displays. Of course, you must take them into consideration and study all their seeds. A quick trip to the grocery store becomes a 30-minute seed study. Remember no shipping charges but you might not have the same degree of selection.

Another shopping spot for a "Seed-a-holic" are the Seedy Saturdays and Seedy Sundays. In Almonte it takes place on February 19th 9-3 and in Perth on a Sunday, early in March. These events draw many sellers of local Heirloom seeds and Organic seeds. They have seed exchanges, and talks and the Lanark County Master Gardeners available to answer any of your questions.



This is the time of year when my garden looks whatever way I want it to. There are no weeds, no disease and no blight. The critters haven't discovered it, and everything is properly staked. Of course, all of this is in my mind but nothing beats starting seeds in March, working in the soil and finally getting outside to make it all happen for another year.

Happy Gardening!

Recipe: Colourful Cabbage Salad

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

This recipe was in a small booklet of herb recipes put out by Rideau Community Support Services several years back.

Ingredients

½ each small green and red cabbage, julienned
½ each yellow and red pepper, julienned
½ medium-size red onion, julienned
Fresh parsley, finely chopped, to taste
Fresh mint, finely chopped, to taste

Dressing:

½ cup (125 ml) cold-pressed walnut, hazelnut or flax seed oil
1 Tbsp (15 ml) apple cider vinegar
Juice of 1 lemon
Freshly ground anise, to taste
Dill seed, to taste

Instructions

- Place the dressing ingredients in a jar and shake well. blanch green and red cabbage in boiling water for 30 seconds.
- Drain and rinse in cold water. Place cabbage in a large bowl, add peppers, onion and herbs then toss with dressing. Serves two to four.

Apologies to Andrew Fleming for calling him Andrew Fletcher in the December Edition

Watch for *Trowel Talk* the Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton electronic monthly gardening newsletter available on the 15th at <http://mgottawa.ca/>

Visit the Almonte online community newspaper 'The Millstone' - <http://millstonenews.com/> - for a column by David Hinks of the Lanark County Master Gardeners; under the Gardening tab.

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton and Master Gardeners of Lanark County are member groups of Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc., a registered charity with the mission of providing gardening advice to homeowners. The Edible Garden logo was created by Jon Last (jonlast13@rogers.com).

Scented geraniums are an amazing little slice of sunshine in my opinion. These geraniums (pelargoniums) are hardy and they smell so delicious; I have an apple geranium that smells like pie. You will need to prune these plants over the winter to keep them from getting leggy. Use the clippings as garnish for desserts and put a few in a vase to enjoy. Also, try planting a few herbs like chives or basil for cooking; anything growing and smelling so good will help keep those blues at bay. In addition, this is the time of year where I find myself surrounded by seed catalogues and I want everything! Of course, this means that I am suffering from S.A.D. or Seed Addiction Disorder and there is no cure for that.

Winter is snowy and cold and sounds like sneezes, but warm fires and warm beverages keep us smiling and ready for spring. There are many new humidifiers out on the market and they can help with your dry skin and stuffy nose. Humidifiers are also good for plants. While we water our plants carefully they also like to take in moisture through their leaves.

If you are feeling under the weather with a cold or flu one of the best remedies for this is sage. Sage is an herb that has been used for centuries. It is said to have antibiotic properties and a sage tea can really help you get back on your feet. I like to dry my sage by bringing in branches of it and hanging it in September. To make the tea I take a few dry leaves and put them in a tea strainer then pour the hot water into the cup. Because sage tea has a tendency to be bitter, add a generous spoonful of honey to sweeten it. Use your herbs and spices in your winter stews and stir-fries to get your nose moving. Clearing out your sinuses and adding vitamins to your meals will help you feel better.

Winter can be a beautiful season full of peace and promise. Order your seeds and plan your garden and soon the air will be warm, and the garden will be ready for you.



Sage in Winter

Dale Odorizzi