



# Trowel Talk

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## Climate Change and the Home Gardener

*Dale Odorizzi*

More and more people are believing that climate change is real. If there are any doubts, look at this past year. Our past summer in Eastern Ontario had us breathing in smoke from forest fires to the west and north. Some days, we were warned to not go outside. Not only was the smoke hard on a lot of us, but much of the boreal forest was also destroyed, eliminating a great deal of area for carbon capture. This past winter was the warmest in recorded history. In recent memory, we have had floods and tornadoes, something almost unheard of in Eastern Ontario.

Climate change is not just about the temperature getting warmer, it is also about conditions becoming more and more unpredictable. For instance, in 2022, on April 30, the temperature in Perth reached 30°C. All the folks in our allotment garden raced out and brought large, beautiful tomato plants. On June 4 we had a hard frost and most of the plants were frozen.

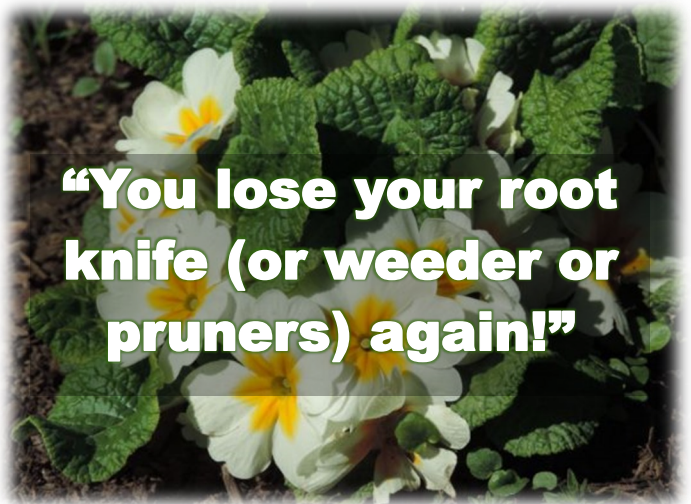
### What can Home Gardeners do?

As home gardeners, we can be superheroes in the solution to slow down and prevent climate change by using sustainable gardening techniques. We can slow future warming by reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon storage in soil and plants.

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## You Know You're a Gardener When...



Josie Pazdzior

*Photo: Julianne Labreche*

Lanark County  
Master Gardeners



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We can make our gardens more resilient to climate change by adding native plant diversity, improving soil health, and managing stormwater runoff.



*Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed) — Host plant for monarch butterfly larvae and very popular with other pollinators, a well behaved native milkweed.

*Dale Odorizzi*

### Gas-powered Tools

Over the years, many of us have used gas-powered tools, such as lawn mowers, leaf blowers, string trimmers, and pruning equipment. These tools are typically powerful and allow you to work farther away from an electrical outlet. They are also huge producers of greenhouse gas. People use their leaf blowers to blow grass clippings off their sidewalk. In the time it takes to do this, you could easily use a broom to do the job with much less noise and air pollution. When it comes time to replace your equipment, investigate rechargeable electric powered tools or consider manual tools. Also consider reducing your lawn size, replacing it with native trees, shrubs, and plants.

### Plant Trees

Trees, especially native trees, are beautiful and provide many benefits — shade, cooling, cleaner air, habitat for wildlife and stormwater management. They are “carbon sinks” in that they capture and store carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Trees help reduce heat, especially if they shade your house, reducing the cost of cooling in terms of dollars and pollution.

## Ask a Master Gardener

Compiled by Amanda Carrigan, Agnieszka Keough

Master Gardeners answer helpline questions.

*When I plant tulips, it seems like they bloom for maybe a few years and then just produce leaves. Why does this happen? Is it something I can fix, or should I just keep replacing them with new tulips?*

Both varieties that you grow and the cultural conditions can affect the longevity of your tulips. So by planting the right tulips in the right conditions, you should have flowers for years.

Start with choosing the right variety. Modern, highly hybridized varieties are less likely to behave as perennials. Many of them will only bloom for one season, regardless of how well you treat them. When shopping, look for tulips that are specifically labeled as ‘perennial’, ‘perennialized’ or ‘naturalizing’. Classic Darwin tulips are often a good choice, as are smaller ‘species’ tulips such as *Tulipa clusiana* and *Tulipa sylvestris*. You may have to dig and divide perennial tulips every few years to keep them from declining, as the bulbs will multiply and they won’t bloom well if they get too crowded.

Tulips come originally from open areas in Russia, Turkey and Anatolia. They evolved to need gritty soils, cold winters, and hot summers. Soil should be neutral to slightly acidic, fertile, and well-drained to dry or sandy. Excess moisture can cause the bulbs to rot or go moldy. They will last longer if you avoid planting in heavy clay soil that may get too much water in summer, whether from rain or watering the garden. The tulips under my living room window were planted by a previous resident and, although they aren’t multiplying significantly, they have been blooming for over two decades. They are in dry sandy soil (within the drip line, so they don’t get much rain), on a western exposure. They get some compost, but no other care.

They provide cleaner air and increase feelings of calmness. Their roots stabilize stream and lakeshore banks, reduce erosion, and keep the water clean. Finally, trees can reduce stormwater runoff.



View into the Woods shows leaves left on the ground that provides a blanket for spring ephemerals, plants that emerge quickly in the spring and die back to their underground parts after a short growth and reproductive phase, such as trilliums.

*Dale Odorizzi*

When we moved to our 30 acre rural property 25 years ago, there were many native trees growing close to the house, predominantly sugar maples and black cherry. The first thing we did was plant 40 native trees and shrubs in what we called the back lawn. We mulched them with cedar mulch and watered them well in year one and after that they looked after themselves. That was one decision we have never regretted.

### Lawns

There is often a big debate over lawns. Many folks and city by-law officers think that a lush, green lawn should occupy the front yard. Others like a mixed species lawn that attracts pollinators. The average lawn that looks like a golf course may be fun for children to play on, but it takes a lot of work and is not environmentally friendly. It needs to be mowed weekly, at a minimum. This costs money and uses

Tulips are planted in the fall. Choose a site in sun to light shade. The correct planting depth and spacing will make a big difference in how well the tulips do. Usually the package will tell you, but if you bought them loose or you don't have the information, a good rule of thumb is to plant at three times the bulb depth, which is 15-20 cm deep (6"-8") for most tulips. Planting too shallowly can decrease their lifespan, but planting too deep can hinder their emergence. Don't crowd the bulbs; for regular tulips they should be spaced 10-15 cm (4"-6") apart. Add some bone meal or blood meal to the planting hole, and water after planting. In spring, fertilize with blood or bone meal on emergence, then add compost after blooming is finished. Cut back the flower stems after blooming, but leave the foliage to die down (usually about 6 weeks) until the leaves yellow and can be pulled out with a small tug. This allows the leaves to contribute to storing food in the bulb for next year.

*My backyard is north-facing, and at best there are a few hours of dappled sun because of existing trees. Are there any herbs or other edibles that could be grown in those conditions?*

Most edibles, like most plants, need a certain amount of sunlight to grow, so you are going to be quite limited in your options.

Generally speaking, greens (lettuce, spinach, kale, arugula, etc.) are common edibles that take shade the best. You might want to experiment with a few varieties of those. Mint and chives are fairly tough herbs that can take some shade, so those would be worth trying. Some lowbush blueberry species (e.g. *Vaccinium angustifolium*, *V. pallidum*) grow in fairly shaded locations in the wild, but they may be difficult to source commercially. Black raspberry (*Rubus occidentalis*) and flowering raspberry (*R. odoratus*) are often found at wood edges. You might have enough light for them to grow, although fruiting will likely be light.

gas which puts CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. In fact, a Swedish study shows that the CO<sub>2</sub> produced from one hour of mowing with a gas-powered lawn mower is roughly equivalent to that from a 160 km automobile drive. The roots of most lawn grasses are very shallow, so they store little CO<sub>2</sub> and dry out quickly. In the hot, dry months, grass needs to be watered daily, using precious resources. Chemicals are needed to keep the weeds down, but weeds are likely the only food for pollinators.

On the other hand, mixed species lawns, planted mostly with native plants, require no regular mowing which saves you time, money, and gas. Once the plants are established, there is no need to water. This type of lawn provides food for pollinators. The deep roots of native plants capture carbon and stabilize and build the soil. Water is absorbed so the risk of nearby flooding is reduced.

I have just read that the City of Ottawa is now allowing homeowners to plant their gardens right to the curb. There are restrictions, of course but it is a wonderful step forward.



*Viburnum trilobum* (highbush cranberry) is popular with turkeys and overwintering birds.

Dale Odorizzi

### Improve Soil Health

Every gardener wants to protect and improve the soil. In the past, this often meant using chemical fertilizers. The manufacturing of these fertilizers

How adventurous would you be with the definition of edible? Hostas, which will grow in shade, actually have edible shoots, and are grown and sold for that purpose in Japan. There are other common shade-tolerant plants like ostrich ferns, daylilies, and violas, which have edible parts.

If the trees creating the shade are close, their root systems may also interfere with planting, and decrease the available nutrients and water for your plants. Growing your plants in pots on wheels would be an option that would allow you to give them adequate water and nutrients, and move them around to get sunlight. 🌱

uses natural gas and puts a tremendous amount of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere. We have now learned that soil stores huge amounts of carbon in the form of CO<sub>2</sub> and organic matter. Organic matter, such as leaves or compost, holds the soil particles together into stable aggregates (groups of soil particles that bind to each other). These aggregates are more resistant to erosion from heavy rainfall and improve water infiltration and holding capacity.

### To improve soil health:

- Keep soil covered with plants, mulches, and cover crops. Leave some places bare so that our native ground nesting bees can build their nests. Grass clippings, leaves, and compost work well for this.
- Minimize soil disturbances with no-till or low dig approaches. Tilling and turning the soil brings weed seeds to the surface, accelerates the loss of organic matter, and spoils the soil structure. When starting a garden, layer cardboard or newspapers to smother the existing vegetation.
- Keep living roots in the soil year-round. Fall planted cover crops protect the soil and build soil organic matter.
- Increase plant diversity to increase soil biodiversity. Different plants support different soil microorganisms.
- Increase the organic matter in the soil. This, in turn, will reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers.

Make your own compost to recycle nutrients in your gardens and yard.

- Do not walk on your garden bed. This causes compaction and compaction is the enemy of carbon sequestration. Carbon sequestration is the process in which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere and held in solid or liquid form in the soil. Leave paths between your beds to walk upon.
- Before using synthetic fertilizer, have your soil tested at a reputable laboratory.



Composter — Reduce your carbon footprint and compost.

*Dale Odorizzi*

More frequent heavy rainfalls are anticipated with climate change. Try to slow the excess water so it soaks in and reduces soil erosion. Create a rain garden or a swale and use rain barrels to store the water to use later.

**Tip:** Watch for lily beetles—bright red beetles which eats the leaves, stems and flowers of fritillaria and lilies. Handpick and squash the beetles. The beetles tend to drop to the ground when disturbed, but by placing pale sheets on the ground around the lily or fritillaria any that drop will be clearly visible. Squash any of the orange eggs or frass covered larvae found on the underside of leaves.



*Filipendula rubra* (Queen of the prairie) grows to over 180 cm tall. Holds it own against invasive plants and very popular pollinator plant. Likes to grow in marshy soil.

*Dale Odorizzi*

### Reduce Food Waste

Finally, reduce food waste and grow some food locally. Food waste in landfills generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas. This is the largest source of CO<sub>2</sub> in Lanark County. As much as possible, compost your vegetable scraps. If you grow your own food or buy it from a local farmer, you reduce emissions associated with long distance transportation. Fruits and vegetables grown locally not only reduce emissions, but they also taste so much better.

I often think that I am just one person and what can I do to slow climate change. After much research, I know that I am a gardener and I have a superpower. The more gardeners realize they too have this same superpower and use it, the better our environment will become. ♻️

**Tip:** Shallow holes in lawns are often created by animals and birds digging for grubs, acting as a natural grub control. Wait for the feast to finish, rake to level, adding compost as needed to fill the holes and overseed with fresh grass seed.

# Egyptian Walking Onions – A No-Fuss Vegetable

*Agnieszka Keough*



Egyptian onion bulbs and bulbils sprouting

*Agnieszka Keough*

**A**s an onion-indifferent gardener, I was never willing to devote precious garden space to something that, to me, was just a grocery store staple. A patch of chives, lovely in flower and needed for the kitchen, and a few ornamental onions were the only members of the *Allium* genus I grew. That is, until I discovered a plant with a curious name - Egyptian walking onions. Onions from Egypt? And, they walk?

At first, they proved rather ordinary: growing thicker greens than those of chives, but fail-proof in their early spring arrival, when we are desperate for anything fresh-from-the-garden. It was only after a few seasons that they surprised me. Mature plants developed tall, thick stalks, twisting and coiling near the top, before bursting, not into typical *Allium* globe flowers, but heads comprised of miniature onion bulbs.

Botanically known as bulbils, they sprouted little green leaves at their tips. Often, another curly shoot with a second tier of bulbs appeared floating in the air, making for a charming show among my perennial flowers. This wild and crazy top growth, together

with “Egyptian” in the name, always brought to mind some twisty shaped hieroglyphs. Of course, the little bulbils perform a useful role in plant propagation, when the drying stalks bend down to the ground “planting” a new onion clump a couple of feet away from the mother plant. Indeed, as the name suggests, these plants “walk” around the garden.



Bulbils and sterile flowers

*Agnieszka Keough*

I learned how useful these onions really are from an old timer at our community gardens. Perplexed, when he heard me talking about Egyptian onions in his plot, he explained that these were actually bunching onions. Yes, they do grow in a bunch, as if ready to be plucked for the supermarket. As my

friend was digging an older clump, he told me that his patch provided him with onions most of the summer. The bulbs vary in size and are never very large, but always available. Little bulbils can be eaten as well and apparently make wonderful, although hot, pickled onions. Young greens are the most tender and when harvesting, a few middle leaves should be left intact for the plant to photosynthesize and continue growing.

Egyptian onions, *Allium x proliferum* (prolific), also called tree or topset onions, resulted from an ancient cross between the common onion, *Allium cepa* and Welsh onion, *A. fistulosum*. The ancestor of the widely used common onion comes from milder regions of Asia and is a biennial, multiplying only by seed. The Welsh onion, despite its name, did not originate in the British Isles, but in Siberia. The name comes from old-English “welisc” – meaning “foreign”. Unlike *A. cepa*, it’s a cold-hardy, perennial plant. It belongs to the Aggregatum group, meaning the bulbs are able to multiply, thanks to the active lateral buds. All these traits were passed to the Egyptian onions.

So, if the Welsh onions didn’t come from Wales, maybe the Pharaohs never feasted on the so-called Egyptian onions? Indeed, it’s possible that the name refers to the travelling Gypsies, now known as Roma people, erroneously thought to have come from Egypt, who might have brought these onions to Europe. Such a perennial, growing and multiplying quickly, easy to transport, would make for a nourishing crop for voyageurs or early settlers.

You don’t have to be a traveler to appreciate these edibles. *A. x proliferum* are happy in most soils, as long as they have good drainage. Preferring full sun, they also grow reasonably well in partly sunny locations. In my compost enriched clay soil, they are never watered or fertilized, requiring minimal attention. They spread, but not aggressively and are a snap to remove where not wanted, landing mostly on my dinner table. The only work I’ve done recently was to divide some clumps. Although they can be left to grow without division and still be productive, the crowded bulbs are smaller. Replanting

individual bulbs is best done in fall or early spring, or you can use bulbils to start new plants. Singly or in clumps, they’ll grow either way and be ready for harvest next year. Reflecting their Siberian parentage, these onions are very cold hardy and I intend to try overwintering them in a container.

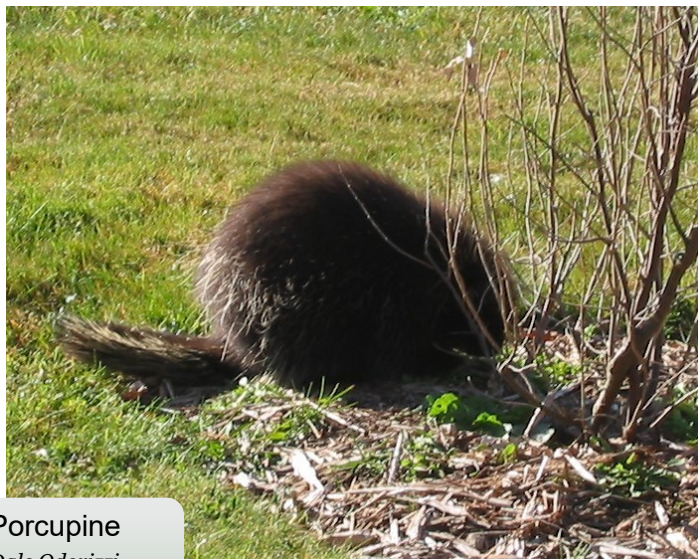


A clump ready for transplanting

Agnieszka Keough

Although I didn’t find any proof that my onions originated in ancient Egypt, where we know *A. cepa* was widely cultivated, I didn’t lose my enthusiasm for giving them space in my garden. What easier vegetable could there be? Thriving on neglect, they could be considered edible weeds, but with much more charm. 🌱

## In my garden I saw:



Porcupine

Dale Odorizzi

## Native Tree Profile: Tamarack—*Larix laricina*

Heather A. Clemenson



Nine-year-old tamarack tree leafing out.

S. R. Bicket

**T**amarack (*Larix laricina*), also known as hackmatack, eastern, black, red, or American larch is found in every province and territory in Canada. It is Ontario's only native deciduous conifer. While most conifers hold their needles year-round, the tamarack sheds its needles in the fall and grows new ones the following spring.

The word tamarack is from the Algonquian language and means "wood used for snowshoes". Like other native trees it had many edible and medicinal uses for Indigenous peoples. As a building material early settlers valued the natural curves in tamarack tree stumps and roots for knees (used for bracing or reinforcing joints) in wooden boats. As the wood is also

resistant to rot, tamarack poles were used in early corduroy road construction. Today, tamarack is mainly used commercially for pulpwood, poles, and posts.

Tamarack is a medium sized tree reaching over 15 meters (50 feet) at maturity with a trunk of 30 to 60 centimeters (one to two feet) in diameter. It is considered a fast-growing tree, averaging over 60 centimeters (two feet) a year when young. Its growth rate tends to slow with maturity. Tamarack has a shallow and compact root system, only 30 to 60 centimeters deep (one to two feet) spreading over a wide radius. The shallow roots leave the tree susceptible to damage from strong winds.

In its natural habitat tamarack is found in cold, wet, and poorly drained places but grows best on moist, well-drained and light soils. It does not do well in shade and prefers a full sun location and acidic soil. It is a very cold tolerant tree but can struggle in hot and dry summers. Keeping the soil moist is key to the survival of the tree and it may need additional watering in periods of drought. Mulching around the tree can also help retain moisture.

Tamarack is a monoecious tree, meaning that both pollen cones and seed cones are found on the same tree. While this implies that the tree can self-pollinate, tamarack trees are also cross-pollinated by the wind. Tamarack is sometimes confused with European larch, though there are notable differences, particularly in the cones and needles. The cones on tamarack are about 1.2 centimeters (half an inch) long whereas the cones on European larch are approximately five centimeters (two inches) long. The young cones on tamarack are also a deep red wine colour. The tamarack has very soft and tightly clumped inch-long needles, in groups of 10 to 20, compared with the slightly longer needles of the European larch. Before being shed, the needles of both tamarack and European larch turn a bright golden yellow in the fall. The tree also has



attractive flaking bark which gives it winter appeal.

### Maintenance

A tamarack tree needs very little pruning and is best left to grow naturally. Any pruning of dead, crossing or diseased branches is best done from late fall to early spring after the tree has dropped its needles and while it is dormant. As this tree can survive in very harsh conditions, it generally can survive with little to no fertilizing, though fertilizing a young tree can improve its growth.

### Pests and Diseases

The larch casebearer was introduced to North America from Europe in the late 1800s. The small grey casebearer moths lay their eggs on green larch needles in June. When the larvae hatch, they bore into the needles where they feed before emerging to live inside a small sheath-like light brown case. They emerge only to change their feeding position on the tree. The larvae effectively mine the needles and cause them to turn brown. The casebearer larvae attach to twigs for the winter, emerging the following spring to resume feeding until pupation in late May. The adult moths emerge in early June to continue the cycle. Evidence of this pest can be seen in the tree canopy as large sections of dry brown needles. The introduction of European parasites by the Canadian Forestry Service has been used as a biocontrol for this pest and has largely brought this disease under control in eastern North America. Generally, trees infected by these pests do not die but their growth can be severely curtailed.

The larch sawfly can be the most damaging pest to occur on tamarack. It was first introduced into Canada from Europe in the late 1880s. The larch sawfly overwinters in cocoons in partly decayed organic matter on the forest floor. Adults emerge in the spring and lay eggs in small slits along one side of a shoot causing curling. Newly hatched larvae feed in groups mainly on clusters of needles on older twigs. The larvae feed from mid-May to September and can defoliate entire branches. Mature larvae drop to the ground and spin cocoons in the forest litter where they overwinter until the following spring. As tamarack is a deciduous conifer it can



Young tamarack needles and cones

Steven Katovich, Bugwood.org, [forestryimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5369979](https://forestryimages.org/browse/detail.cfm?imgnum=5369979), CC BY 3.0 US DEED



Mature tamarack cones

Heather A. Clemenson

tolerate defoliation and is not usually killed by a sawfly outbreak, although a tree can be severely weakened.

The rust fungus or larch needle cast can also affect tamarack. It is evident in early summer by the needles turning yellow and then reddish-brown. The needles are then shed. The appearance resembles frost damage. Tamarack is also an alternate host for poplar leaf rust, another rust fungus. Though rust generally does not kill a tree, it can weaken a tree making it susceptible to other pests.

One interesting feature of all larches, including tamarack, is that they are excellent subjects for bonsai. They are easy to grow and carve, are very strong, and can withstand foliar and root pruning. Larches have the double advantage of looking like a conifer when in leaf but having a seasonal colour change going to rich golden yellow in the fall before shedding their needles. In addition, larches can develop new shoots from very old wood which most other conifers cannot. They have flaky bark and very small cones which gives them character. Although all varieties of larch are suitable for bonsai, Japanese larch is considered best and European larch is also commonly used. Tamarack is more widely used by Canadian and North American bonsai growers.

If you would like a tamarack in your garden but do not have the space for a tall tree, there are over ten



Tamarack bark  
*Heather A. Clemenson*

compact cultivars, though they do not yet appear to be available in our region. These include 'Northern Torch' a dwarf form that grows to 3 meters (10 feet); 'Ethan' another dwarf only grows to 2.5 meters (8 feet) and 'Deborah Waxman' a pyramidal variety grows to 1.8 meters (6 feet) with a spread of 1.2 meters (4 feet). Even a small space can accommodate a cultivar of this lovely native tree. 🌳

## Great Gardening Tools: The Tool Butler

*Kelly Noel*

The first time I saw the "Tool Butler" in the Lee Valley catalogue was thirty years ago. I remember reading that it had been designed by a Mr. Macgregor when he was ninety and decided it was time to stop bending over to pick up his tools. The story amused me. As you can see in the drawing, it is a metal stem about waist high, with two pointed prongs on one end



and an S-shaped curve mounted on the other end. The idea is to sink the prongs into the soil near where you are working, and lean your tools against either side of the S curve. I didn't buy one at the time but the story stuck in my mind.

After 23 years of gardening on a large lot, we moved to a condo where, lucky for me, there were two small gardens I could tend. But I was

just getting over two spine surgeries, walking gingerly, and not as able to bend and reach as before. I thought of Mr. Macgregor's Tool Butler. I was very happy to find that it was still in the Lee Valley catalogue. I bought one – never mind that I was not yet ninety! It was so handy, and for more than just holding up tools, that two years later I bought another one. They cost around \$20.00 at the time.



Tool butler in use

Kelly Noel

It is very easy to sink the prongs into the soil in a grassed area – just requires a push with my foot. I usually position one near the edge of the garden and lean my tools against it – typically some assortment of bed rake, edger, small hoe, long-handled snippers. It can hold several and you don't have to be careful to balance the number of tools on each side. It might lean a little but has never fallen over for me.

## In the Alcove Garden: *Harebell—Campanula rotundifolia*

Amanda Carrigan

**Botanical name:** *Campanula rotundifolia*

**Zones:** 3-7

**Growing conditions:** sun to part shade; moist to dry, well-drained soil.

I often step into the garden to do some grooming with my secateurs and hand snippers (which are in my apron pocket). I do leave spaces between plants but I have to be careful where I put my feet and I am not as agile as I once was. This is where the second tool butler comes in handy. I use it as a third point of balance as I walk into the bed – like a cane – I put the S end down to walk in and then I turn it over and push the prongs into the soil, freeing up my hand. Like any well-trained butler, it is right there, ready to help if I have to move a step or two. And if I decide I need it in a different spot, I can easily pull it out and move it.

A search through the Lee Valley online catalogue to see what they are charging for it now came up empty. It appears they are no longer selling it. So I am very grateful I bought mine when I did! While not really a tool, it has become invaluable to me, allowing me to use my actual garden tools more safely.



**Note:** I sent a query to Lee Valley Customer Service and got this reply:

*“Thank you for your email. The MacGregor Tool Butler (PC975) was discontinued in 2022. The good news is that we do still have some. Though not available on our website, these can be ordered via our Call Center. The number is 1-800-267-8767 and the hours of operation are Monday to Friday 9am EST to 5:30pm EST. These are \$22.50 each, with shipping and taxes being extra.”*

**Native to:** Wide range in Eurasia and North America, Labrador to BC, south to Indiana, Maryland, N. California. Some mountain populations further south.



## Harebell

Amanda Carrigan

Most *Campanula* species are native to Europe and Asia, but a few belong to North America. One of the most adaptable and widespread is the harebell, *Campanula rotundifolia*, delicate, diminutive, and charming. It is tougher than it looks, though. Although in the wild it tends to grow in rocky, sandy, or mountainous locations, it can take a variety of garden conditions. Ideally, harebell prefers some protection from the hot afternoon sun. The whole plant only gets to about 30 cm tall, and is often shorter. In the garden, it is best in the front of a bed or in a rock garden, where it will not be overwhelmed by larger plants.

Why is it called a harebell? Some say it was because it may be found where hares are, or because the basal leaves are shaped a little like a hare's ear. Some associate it with witchcraft and the old idea that a witch could turn herself into a hare. It has other common names, including witches' thimble,

and the bluebell of Scotland or Scottish bluebell. The harebell's botanical name translates to 'little bell with round leaves', which gives you an idea of its appearance. The basal leaves are round, although the upper leaves are long and slim, looking as if they belong to a different plant entirely. The basal leaves often wither as the plant starts blooming. Each of the thin flower spikes has several buds which mature into small purple star or bell-shaped flowers. Blooming starts in early summer, and can continue intermittently until fall. Possibly because of this long blooming period, individual plants are often short-lived, lasting only a few seasons. If they like the site, however, they will often produce seedlings, so the plant will stay in the garden, if not quite in the same location over time. Some sources state the plants are not self-fertile. In that case, you would only get seeds if you start with multiple plants that can cross-pollinate.

Harebell seeds are very tiny, and the seed pods crack open when ripe. If you are collecting seeds, pick several pods that are ripe or almost ripe (plump, green, maybe turning to brown), and let them dry in a paper bag. Planting can be done with fresh dry seed or seed which has had three months' cold, moist treatment (i.e. winter conditions). They will need light to germinate.

Hummingbirds like it, and bees visit to pollinate it. Deer seem to overlook it. Perhaps it seems too insubstantial to be worth a bite? Slugs or snails may be an occasional issue. The only other pest or disease problem that harebells have is a few aphids. Harebell has not been used traditionally for many purposes by humans either. It is said to have been employed by the Chippewa for an earache remedy, and by Woodlands Cree for heart ailments.

For almost any garden with a little space left that has some sun, a few harebells might be just the thing to tuck in to make you smile. 🌱

***Quote: Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul.***  
—Luther Burbank, botanist

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Send questions and photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for Identification.

Trowel Talk can be found on the [Lanark County Master Gardener's blogsite](#) and Ottawa Carleton Master Gardener's Website <https://mgottawa.ca/>

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This is your chance, as a reader, to suggest an idea for an article you would like to see in Trowel Talk. Click on the button.



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Banner Photograph: .Daffodils—Thalia, S. R. Bicket



### Clinics

Ask a Master Gardener, face to face, gardening questions.



### Talks and Events

**Almonte Farmers Market**, 8:30 am to 12:30 pm  
Saturday, May 18, June 1, June 15

**Barrhaven Market**, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm  
Saturday, May 25, June 2

**Beechwood Market**, 8:00 am to 2:00 pm  
Saturday, June 8 June 15

**Carp Farmers Market**, 8:00 am to 1:00 pm  
Saturday, May 18, May 25, June 1, June 8, June 15

**Cumberland Market**, 8:30 am to 1:30 pm  
Saturday, June 1, June 15

Wednesday, May 15, 7:00 pm  
Rebecca Last, **Veggies and your Harvest**  
[Pakenham Horticultural Society](#)

Saturday, June 1, 1:30 pm  
Judith Cox, **Vegetables in Small Spaces**  
[Carlingwood Library](#) (pre register)

Wednesday June 5, 7 pm  
Mary Crawford, **Bugs in the Garden**  
[Greely Garden Club](#)

**Main Farmers Market**, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm  
Saturday, May 18, May 25, June 15

**North Gower Farmers Market**, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm  
Saturday, May 25, June 15

**Ottawa Farmers Market**, 9:00 am to 12:00 pm  
Sunday , May 19, June 9

**Parkdale Market**, 9:00 am to 11:00 am  
Sunday, May 19

**Parkdale Market**, 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm  
Wednesday, June 5, June 12

**Perth Farmers Market, 8:00 am to 1:00 pm**  
Saturday, May 18 (plant sale), June 1, June 15

**Sandy Hill eco fair**, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm  
Saturday, June 1

**Westboro Market**, 9:00 am to 1:00 pm  
Saturday, May 25, June 8, June 15

Tuesday, June 11, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm  
Lanark County MGs, **Ask a Master Gardener**  
Perth & District Horticultural Society at [Perth Lions Club](#)

For addresses of the markets attended by Ottawa Carleton Master Gardeners see <https://mgottawa.ca/events/>