



March 15 2026, Vol 16, no. 03

Subscribe to Trowel Talk at www.mgottawa.ca

Contents

- ◆ Creating a Japanese-inspired garden 1
- ◆ Ask a Master Gardener 3
- ◆ Japanese Beetles 5
- ◆ New Jersey Tea—*Ceanothus americanus* 7
- ◆ Book Review: The Hidden Life of Trees 8
- ◆ Find Us 11

Creating a Japanese-inspired garden

Barbara Sibbald

My English-style flower garden had its moments of glory but was mostly a mishmash of one-off and failure-to-thrive plants. I wanted something simpler, cohesive, peaceful even; I found all that and more in the Japanese-inspired garden I created in my small Centretown Ottawa backyard.

Japan's unique gardening tradition, passed from Master to pupil for 1600 years, is rooted in reverence for the natural world: small ponds or raked gravel suggest the sea, rocks evoke mountains, bamboo speak to resilience, conifers to longevity.

After much research, I built two types of Japanese gardens: a spiritual *Karesansui* or dry garden with carefully placed rocks in a sea of gravel (such as the one at Ottawa's Museum of History), and a very small secular stroll or pond garden. The former is complex, so I will describe the stroll garden.

These began around the 8th century as places for entertaining and aesthetic enjoyment. They usually include a villa, water, paths, bridges, a gate, as well as plants. My stroll garden is much modified from the Japanese ideal; it depends on available plants and the limits of my small space. The garden is only 4.3 m (14-feet) long by 3.7 m (12-feet) wide, although it is expanded visually by the borrowed landscape or *shakkei* of my neighbour's maples and cedars.

Japanese stroll gardens are intended to appear natural, as if they grew by themselves, but the components are carefully chosen and arranged. Asymmetry is key; rocks and plants appear in odd-numbered groupings (1, 3, 5, 7 etc.) often arranged in a triangular shape. Paths and beds are curved; nature has few straight lines. And there are a limited number of elements and plant types with space, or *Ma*, in between.

Hardscaping my garden began with the meandering path, which determined the placement of other elements. I chose simple flag stones, flush to the ground. To stay on the path, you must look down at the stones. When you come to wider stones, strollers may pause and look up to see a specific garden view, like a framed work of art. This is the essence of the stroll garden.

A fence or wall provides a backdrop and encloses the garden. Often these are bamboo, but I already had lattice, which allows air to flow through on hot days, so I kept that.

Lanark County
Master Gardeners



Ottawa-Carleton
Master Gardeners



I also had a bridge, of sorts. These can be arched or flat, slabs of stone or logs. Mine bridges a downward slope in the garden and is made from floor planks recovered from a demolished workshop. This is in keeping with the Japanese concept of *wabi-sabi*: succinctly put, embracing imperfect, often aged, natural materials, that illustrate the impermanence of life, a Buddhist tenet.

or river. I put in a three-foot wide concrete pond, and later nestled flagstones all around.



A spring overview. The bench, in keeping with *wabi-sabi*, is repurposed wood from a demolished airplane hangar.

Barbara Sibbald

After all this, I considered the plants. These should be limited in number and repeated across the space, with an emphasis on foliage rather than flowers. They provide beauty and may also hide something or serve as a backdrop. I struggled to contain my love of flowers. Unlike my English-style garden where plants were chock-a-block, in the Japanese garden there is *Ma*, or space in between elements. *Ma* can also be a gap between two branches, a lawn or expanses of moss.

There are three key plants in Japanese gardens: bamboo, hydrangea and a cherry (Sakura) tree. I already had dragon head bamboo (*Fargesia rufa*), which is evergreen and clump-forming (not a spreader). My pink-flowering *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Little Quick Fire' blooms in a corner of the main garden. I don't have a cherry, but the yard came with a weeping crabapple (*Malus x scheideckeri* 'Red Jade') which blooms profusely.

In the new garden space, I planted a Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Crimson Queen'), its reddish leaves cascade over my pond.



The garden gate, designed and made by Stuart Kinmond, affords a glimpse of the garden but locks securely.

Barbara Sibbald

I had admired the wooden Torii Gates, which mark the entrance to a Shinto shrine, but I needed something I could close and lock. My husband designed and built a metal lattice-work fence in red and black, the colours of our house.

Water, an essential feature, can be a simple basin or birdbath, or a small pond; it represents the sea, lake

Conifers are revered in Japan. On a recent trip, I saw one that was 600 years old. My garden lacks proper sun so I planted a Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*) in the part shade. On the sunnier periphery, a low-spreading juniper (*Juniperus sabina* 'Tamariscifolia') grows.



A late August view pops with purple annual bush violet (*Browallia* hybrid 'Endless illumination') and pink Japanese anemone ('September Charm').

Stuart Kinmond

I adore the Japanese Anemone ('September charm') which are tall enough to hide the back part of the garden in keeping with *Miegakure*, or the concept of partially obscuring what lays beyond to create mystery and tension and lead the viewer to move down the path to discover hidden vistas.

This is the heart of the Japanese stroll garden. 🌿

This article first appeared in Postmedia,
Ottawa Citizen, July 2025

Ask a Master Gardener

Compiled by Amanda Carrigan, Agnieszka Keough

Master Gardeners answer helpline questions.

My ornamental sweet potato vines last year produced a few good-sized tubers, so I decided to save them to plant this year. I've heard you can grow edible sweet potatoes from slips or sprouts, to get multiple plants from one potato. Do you think that would work with these as well? Is it difficult?

Both the ornamental and edible sweet potatoes are the same species, *Ipomea batatas*, only the tubers from the edible ones have been selected to be tastier and more prolific. So there's no reason you can't grow slips off your stored tubers. It's a pretty straightforward process, similar to taking cuttings.

Get your sweet potatoes started by putting the tubers sideways in a pot or tray of soil. The small ends should be covered with soil, but it's all right if the fatter middle part sticks out if your pot or tray is shallow. Alternatively, the tubers can be supported in a glass of water so that only one end is in the water. Either use a glass or jar that is too small around the top to let the wide part of the tuber through or stick some toothpicks in around the middle and balance those on the glass rim. Put your potato in a sunny location and keep the soil moist or the water clean and topped up until the potato starts to sprout. Multiple sprouts will come from the end of the potato. When these shoots have grown leaves and are 10-15 cm long, you can gently cut or twist them off the potato to make slips. The shoots grown in soil may already have roots; those slips can be planted directly into a pot of moist soil (or outdoors if the soil is warm enough). If the slips don't have substantial roots, you can put them in a glass of water like cuttings and wait for

them to root before planting them.

Sweet potatoes don't like the cold, so wait until a couple weeks after the last frost date to plant; the soil temperature should be above 15°C. It can take 6-8 weeks to grow the slips to planting stage, so if you are planting around Victoria Day, you should start potting up your saved tubers around the beginning of April. Don't forget to harden your little plants off before planting them outside!

I want to grow luffa sponge gourds for something different this year. Will they grow here (zone 5)?

Luffa gourds should grow in zone 5, but it could be a little tricky to get them to sponge stage. They need a long growing season to mature and are a little finicky about other growing conditions.

Plan ahead: Depending on the cultivar you get, luffas can take anywhere from 105-200 days to mature to sponge stage. They will get mature enough to use as sponges before they are fully dry, but you still want as long a season as possible. You will have to start them indoors at least 6-8 weeks before planting outside, and make sure you have the space to keep them indoors until it gets warm out – they will stop growing if they get too cold (around 10°C) and can take a month to recover from that.

Starting seed: Luffas have a reputation for being hard to germinate. Nicking the seed coat and soaking the seed 24 hours before planting will help, as will a heat mat under the pots. They dislike transplanting, so growing them in biodegradable pots or soil blocks might be a good idea. Harden them off gradually, and don't plant them outside until you have warm (21°C) daytime temperatures

Outdoor space: Luffas like full sun, fertile soil, and will want a good sturdy trellis support; luffa vines can grow to 9 m (30 ft), although you can pinch them back a little. Keep them evenly moist, as they don't like to dry out or have uneven watering. Pinch off small fruit and new flowers starting a couple months before frost, so the plant can focus on maturing the fruits left.

Note that immature luffa fruits can be used like zucchini in the kitchen.

Pests and diseases: Luffa are susceptible to most of the problems that other cucurbits can get, such as powdery mildew, squash vine borer, and cucumber beetle.

Harvesting: You will need to pick before frost. Fully mature luffas will be brown and papery-skinned and light-weight. The fibers will develop while they are still green, though, so if a frost is coming, it's worth picking any fairly large fruit, especially if they feel fairly light. Crack the skin and peel it off in pieces, and thoroughly rinse the sponge, removing seeds and any gooey bits. Dry the sponge on the counter overnight. Any seeds left inside will come out more easily when dry.

For a couple first-hand experiences of growing luffa in colder climates:

<https://www.theartofdoingstuff.com/growing-luffa-sponges/>

<https://shiftingroots.com/how-to-grow-luffa-sponge/>

“Science, or para-science, tells us that geraniums bloom better if they are spoken to. But a kind word every now and then is really quite enough. Too much attention, like too much feeding, and weeding and hoeing, inhibits and embarrasses them.” –Victoria Glendinning, author

Japanese Beetles

Rob Stuart



Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*) in Guelph, Ontario

Ryan Hodnett, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Beetles_\(Popillia_japonica\)_-Guelph,_Ontario.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Beetles_(Popillia_japonica)_-Guelph,_Ontario.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

I'm sure most gardeners in Ontario have experienced or heard of Japanese beetles (*Popillia japonica*). An invasive species from Japan with metallic green and copper-coloured elytra, their thickened forewings act as protective, shell-like covers for the delicate hind wings and abdomen. These beetles burrow into our lawns towards the end of summer and lay their eggs, which change into larvae, feed on grass and plant roots and then overwinter in the ground. When the soil temperatures reach 10°C in the spring, the larvae return to the surface and continue feeding for four to six weeks after which they pupate for about two weeks. Around late June, early July, they emerge as the beetles we are familiar with. One of their favourite foods is the rose, the flower petals and leaves. They will also eat Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), canna lily (*Canna* sp.), and just about anything else they can get their mouths on. In fact, research shows that they feed on over 300 different plant species.

Currently, the most effective remedy to remove them is to drop the adults into a small pail of soapy water, where they drown. This requires persistence and unfortunately is not a quick process since there seems to be an endless supply of these beetles.

Another method of reducing the population of Japanese beetles is to apply *Heterorhabditis* and/or *Steinernema* insect-parasitic nematodes on your lawn in the fall when the larvae are present. It is extremely important that the soil be moist after a rain or thorough watering to ensure the nematodes are able to move through the soil to parasitize the Japanese beetle larvae. If the soil is too dry, the nematodes will die before reaching their prey. Many home owners, unfortunately, do not apply the nematodes correctly or at the appropriate time and the results are disappointing. In addition, these nematodes are non-selective and will kill the larvae of any beetle which they contact. Thus, killing native beetles as well as the Japanese beetles.

Although pheromone traps can be purchased to attract and kill the male Japanese beetles, they unfortunately seem to attract more beetles than they kill, leaving gardeners with a bigger problem than they started with.

Fortunately, there is a beetle foe, the winsome fly (*Istocheta aldrichi*), a Japanese beetle parasitoid, also from Japan, which was released in New Jersey in 1923 and has become established in the north-east United States, Ontario and Southern Quebec. A parasitoid feeds on a living host which they eventually kill, typically before it can produce offspring, whereas conventional parasites usually do not kill their hosts.



Winsome fly

Benjamin Burgunder, <https://www.inaturalist.org/photos/216241814>, CC BY 4.0

The winsome fly emerges from the ground a couple of weeks before the Japanese beetle appears, so you'll want to entice them to stay around until the Japanese beetles emerge from the ground. Once a winsome fly notices a Japanese beetle it lays its eggs on top of the beetle's thorax, just behind its head. After hatching, the fly larvae chew into the beetle which then burrows into the lawn and dies. The Japanese beetle carcass then continues to feed the fly larva over winter. Next spring, the larvae evolve into the fly stage and emerge from the soil to search out and attack next year's Japanese beetle. So, if you see a white dot on the thorax of a Japanese beetle, let the beetle live. Its eventual death will result in more winsome flies next season.



Infected Japanese beetle - white spot on thorax is a winsome fly egg

R. Stuart

Where to get winsome fly?

While it is not possible to commercially purchase winsome flies, fortunately for us, they are already in our area, so all we need to do is to attract them to our yard. There are several plants which we can grow to attract this fly:

- **Umbellifers:** (also known as carrot family plants): dill (*Anethum graveolens*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), lovage (*Levisticum officinale*), and native plants like purple stemmed angelica (*Angelica atropurpurea*) and golden alexander (*Zizia aurea*)
- **Crucifers:** sweet alyssum (*Alyssum maritimum*) and mustard (*Sinapis alba*)
- **Asteraceae:** (also known as the daisy or aster family): yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), native black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*), chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) and **Asteraceae** (*Aster* spp., *Symphotrichum* spp., and *Eurybia* spp.)
- Other native plants: wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) and rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*).

You should grow at least a few of these plants that will begin blooming in the late spring and continue until at least the end of August. This will keep the winsome fly around during the summer as the Japanese beetles continue to emerge from the soil. I had them on my roses and they stayed around until mid-autumn. So, it certainly will pay to keep the winsome fly well fed.

The other thing that can be done is to grow plants that the Japanese beetle dislikes. These include: ornamental onion (*Allium* spp.), lily (*Lilium* spp.), juniper (*Juniperus* spp.), hosta (*Hosta* spp.), gaillardia (*Gaillardia* spp.), Christmas rose (*Helleborus niger*), columbine (*Aquilegia* spp.), milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.), catmint (*Nepeta* spp.), petunia (*Petunia* sp.), black-eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and tickseed (*Coreopsis* spp.). Japanese beetle also dislikes trees such as hemlock (*Tsuga* spp.), white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), magnolia (*Magnolia* spp.), witch hazel (*Hamamelis* spp.), hickory (*Carya* spp.), red maple (*Acer rubrum*) and white fir (*Abies concolor*). These plants won't discourage the Japanese beetle from eating your roses, etc. but they themselves won't be eaten. 🌿

Native Shrubs: New Jersey Tea—*Ceanothus americanus*

Heather A. Clemenson

New Jersey tea is a deciduous shrub native to Eastern Ontario. This shrub has many other common names including red root, mountain sweet, mountain snowbell, wild snowball, Indian tea, and soapbloom. The name New Jersey tea was created during the American revolution when its leaves were used as a substitute for imported tea. The shrub was abundant in the New Jersey region. *Ceanothus* is a Greek name, but its original meaning is uncertain. It now refers to a genus of around 50 to 60 species of nitrogen-fixing shrubs and small trees in the buckthorn family.

Indigenous people and early pioneers used the plant's roots and bark for medicinal purposes. Different parts of the plant were used to create dyes: the roots for red dye, the flowers for green dye, and the whole plant for cinnamon-coloured dye. The flowers were crushed and mixed with water to produce a soapy lather for washing; hence the name soapbloom. Modern herbalists and craftspeople similarly continue to make use of the plant today.

Description:

The natural habitat of New Jersey tea is oak or pine woodlands, forest clearings, abandoned fields and road banks. The shrub is compact, dense and rounded and grows to a height of 1 to 1.5 metres and a width of 1 metre. It prefers full sun and well-drained sand, loam or rocky soil. New Jersey tea is drought tolerant and does well in hot and dry conditions. It is also one of few native shrubs that are nitrogen fixing which means that the shrub can enrich the soil to the benefit of neighbouring plants.

Once established this shrub has a deep and dense root system which makes it valuable for erosion control but hard to transplant. The deep roots also make New Jersey tea highly tolerant of fire. The

shrub will regenerate new shoots after the top has been destroyed by fire.

The green leaves of New Jersey tea are alternate, ovate and hairy with finely serrated margins and three distinct veins from the leaf base. They are from 2.5 to 7.5 cm long. Young stems are light green, turning reddish with age. The fall colour is not significant, the leaves turning a reddish brown.

New Jersey Tea is monoecious, meaning the plant produces both male and female flowers. The shrub produces branch-tip clusters of small, white, fragrant flowers on new growth from May through to July. The flowers are pollinated by many insects, including bees and butterflies, and by hummingbirds. The ripe fruit is a small, triangular three-part capsule from 5 to 6mm across. Each capsule usually contains three seeds and starts as greenish red, turning dark brown or black as it ripens. When mature in July or August, the capsule bursts open to eject the seeds, sending them several feet away from the parent plant.



White spring flowers of New Jersey tea
Heather Douglas

Maintenance:

New Jersey tea is a low-maintenance shrub and its position in the garden should be considered as permanent as they do not transplant well. A young shrub needs deep but infrequent watering to help develop the root system, particularly during hot dry summers. Avoid overwatering as this can cause root rot. Once established, after two or three years, the plant will need minimal watering and can tolerate drought conditions.

An application of compost can be beneficial for a young plant, though fertilizer is generally not needed once a plant is established.

Pests and Diseases:

New Jersey tea is considered largely pest and disease resistant.

Pests such as aphids and spider mites can cause some leaf damage, and depending on location, young plants might need some protection from browsing deer or rabbits.

Common fungal diseases include leaf spot and powdery mildew, however, good air circulation around the plant and watering at ground level can help prevent these diseases.

Garden use:

New Jersey tea is an excellent, compact and long-lived native shrub useful for small gardens. It is a good choice for dry and sunny slopes, rock gardens, and naturalized areas. It can tolerate road salt which also makes it a useful plant for pathways and roadsides prone to road spray or winter run-off.

The flowers are beneficial and popular for many pollinator species including bumble bees, miner bees, specialist wasps, as well as butterflies, moths and hummingbirds. It is the larval host plant for the mottled duskywing, spring azure, and summer azure butterflies. Game birds such as wild turkey and ruffed grouse, and songbirds such as goldfinches and house finches, are also known to eat the seeds of New Jersey tea.

New Jersey tea is readily available from local nurseries. I must admit that I knew very little about this

shrub until recently when a speaker at our local gardening club spoke enthusiastically about New Jersey tea and how he uses it in his garden designs. Unfortunately, this shrub would probably not do well in our garden, which has few areas that would be both dry and sunny enough. ☘

Book Review:

The Hidden Life of Trees: What they Feel, How They Communicate – Discoveries from a Secret World

Peter Wohlleben

Lee Ann Smith

Greystone Books Ltd., 2016
English translation by Jane Billingham
ISBN: 978-1-77164-4 (cloth)
ISBN: 978-1-77164-279-1 (epub)

The Hidden Life of Trees: The Illustrated Edition
Greystone Books Ltd., 2018
English translation by Jane Billingham
ISBN: 978-1-77164-348-1 (cloth)
ISBN: 978-1-77164-348-8 (epub)

The Hidden Life of Trees: A Graphic Adaptation
Greystone Books Ltd., 2024
Graphic Adaptation by
Fred Bernard and Benjamin Flao
English translation by David Warriner
ISBN: 978-1-77840-165-7 (cloth)
ISBN: 978-1-77840-166-4 (epub)

This book by forester Peter Wohlleben became a bestseller in its original German in 2015, and then again with the English translation of 2016. In 2018, the illustrated edition was published with abridged

text and is another award-winner. The graphic adaptation followed in 2024, giving readers a total of three best-selling options for exploring the life processes of trees.

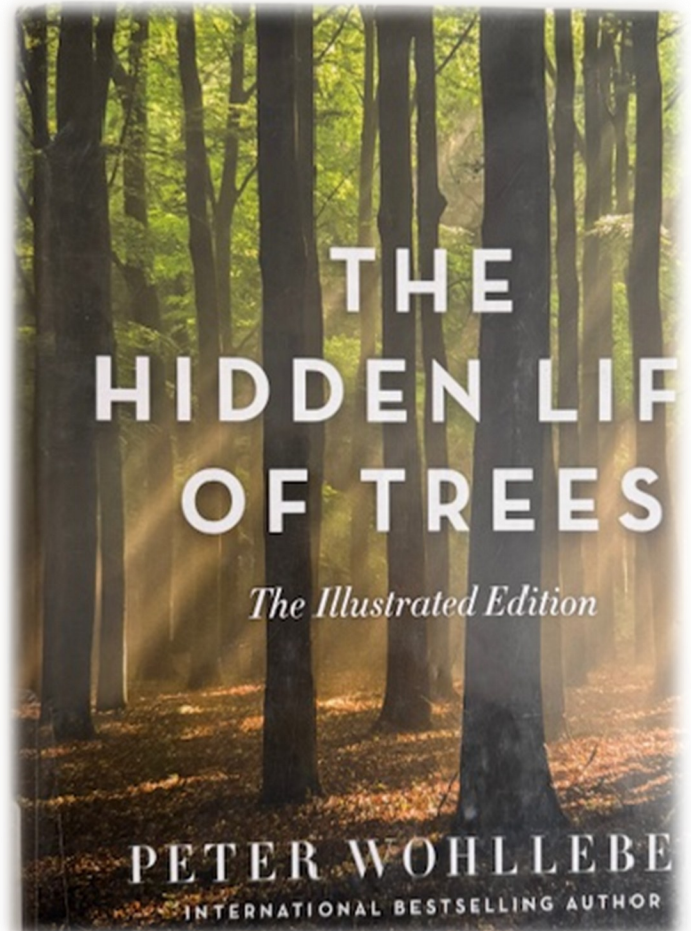
The book's central theme, that trees are sentient, social beings, is presented in deliberately non-scientific language. Wohlleben describes the transformation of the way he thinks about trees and treats them, from originally considering only their commercial value to "*being aware of countless wonders.*" He manages a mixed forest of beech, oak, spruce and pine in Germany, where his forestry practices have evolved from traditional lumbering to leaving the woods largely untouched and, when the occasional harvesting is necessary, using only horses and manual labour.

The main strength of the book is the science Wohlleben refers to in support of his conversational narrative. As Dr. Suzanne Simard, Canada's leader in this field, attests in her end note, "*there's been a burst of careful scientific research occurring worldwide.*" We have learned that trees in a forest are connected by a vast underground mycelial network of mycorrhizal fungal species. Carbon and nutrients are transmitted back and forth between the trees. Above ground, trees send chemical warnings via their leaves to other trees when they are under attack by animals or insects or disease. Wohlleben describes all of this well, and these processes will be eye-opening to many readers.

He also describes clearly the slow tempo in which trees live. For example, when a leaf's tissue is under attack by an insect or animal, the signal is not transmitted in milliseconds, as human signals are. Instead, the plant signal has been measured at one third of an inch per minute. So it can take up to an hour or so before defensive compounds reach the leaves to spoil a pest's meal. This information alone can help readers to appreciate these unique life forms, and their differences from humans or animals.

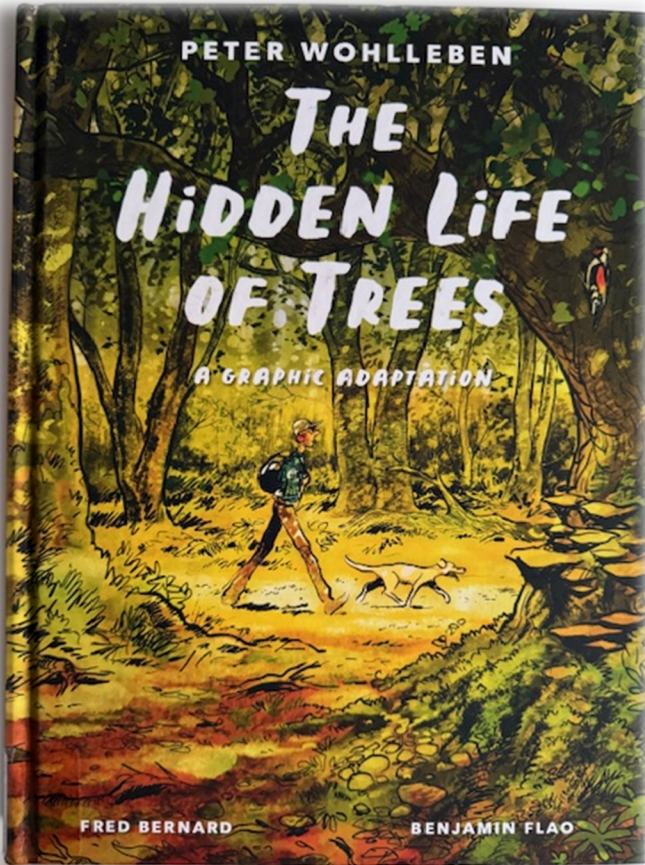
Wohlleben contends that human intervention interferes with trees being able to live "*a full life appropriate to their species.*" A tree's full life can be aston-

ishingly long, as one famous *Picea abies* (Norway spruce) proves. Known as "Old Tjikko", this tree lives in Sweden, and has one of the oldest living root systems in the world. Its roots were tested using carbon 14 dating and revealed to be 9,550 years old. Old Tjikko is what is known as a clonal tree, which over millennia, regenerates new trunks, branches and roots. For those readers who want to know what this tree looks like, there is a photograph in the illustrated edition of the book.



The Hidden Life of Trees, illustrated edition cover
Lee Ann Smith

The text in the illustrated version is abridged from the original but contains all the main themes and scientific data. This version is a great option for readers who want to see full colour examples of some of the "*countless wonders*" Wohlleben writes about. Intertwined roots, nurse logs, stunted evergreens on craggy mountaintops are all included here, not just for their beauty but also to help explain the text.



The Hidden Life of Trees, graphic edition cover
Lee Ann Smith

The graphic adaptation, like the earlier two editions, is written in first person. However, here Wohlleben's life story provides the main narrative thread and there is much more detail about him. Intertwined with the stages of his life and his evolving convictions about trees and forest management are countless lessons related to trees and forests. These include beneficial and destructive insects, fungi, storms, the process of photosynthesis, threats from climate change, carbon sequestering, and even how soil first developed on Earth from primeval rock.

Where the author has ignited controversy among readers and scientists is with his personification of trees. Trees feel pain, he contends, and scream when thirsty. He points to a 1970s African study of giraffes feeding on acacias and writes, "the trees didn't like this one bit." He goes on to describe the chemicals released by the trees to both change the

taste of the leaves and give off a warning gas to neighbouring trees so they can pump toxins into their leaves "to prepare themselves." While the science he's describing is solid, the way he presents it seems to indicate that his overall purpose is to provide a layperson's version and to help readers identify more closely with trees. Judging from the awards, he has achieved this goal.

Wohlleben does admit that the majority of plant researchers are skeptical about whether the behaviours he describes point to a repository for tree intelligence, memory and emotions. Maybe more important is that readers and scientists alike have noted the missed opportunity for the book to discuss issues like how foresters might balance the need for lumber and paper with the climate-enhancing benefits of giving trees time to develop into old growth forests. The author does not open a discussion about an ecological basis for forest management beyond his promotion of a laissez-faire approach to woodlands. Nor does the book talk about the impacts of forest non-management.

Still, there is no doubt that his way of presenting forest science has struck a chord with readers worldwide. These books have introduced millions of people to authenticated scientific discoveries about trees and forests. And who knows what future research might reveal about the intelligence, memory and even emotions of trees? 🌿

Tip: As spring arrives and the days become longer it's time to start feeding houseplants and do some repotting. To avoid feast or famine scenario, feed half or quarter strength fertilizer more frequently than a full strength fertilizer. Check moisture levels more often as plants grow more vigorously. Wash any build-up of salts out of the pots by placing in a sink or bath raised on a drainer and water thoroughly until the water running out of the bottom is clear. Plants can be repotted one pot size up or root pruned if going back into the same pot.

Find Us:



On the Web

Lanark County Master Gardeners



Blog



Helpline



Calendar



Facebook

Ottawa-Carleton Master Gardeners



Website



Helpline



Calendar



Facebook

Helplines are monitored daily.

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/>

Article suggestions box

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.



Trowel Talk team:

Amanda Carrigan, Judith Cox, Kelly Noel, Agnieszka Keough, Andrea Knight, Julianne Labreche, Dale Odorizzi, Josie Pazdzior, Evelyne Power, Rob Stuart, Belinda Boekhoven, Heather Clemenson, Mary Crawford, Rebecca Last, Mary Reid, Margaret Ryan, Stephanie Sleeth, Barbara Sibbald, Lee Ann Smith

Letters to editor: newsletter@mgottawa.ca

Banner Photograph: Golden Torch Cactus (*Echinopsis spachiana*)? S.R.Bicket

Design and layout: S.R.Bicket



Clinics

Ask a Master Gardener, face to face gardening questions.

Market locations can be found on the calendars of the Lanark and Ottawa-Carleton websites

Ottawa Home and Garden Show

Thursday, March 19, 20, 12:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Saturday, March 21, 10:00 am to 7:00 pm

Sunday, March 22, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm

Smiths Falls Horticultural Society Seed Swap

Legion Branch 95, 7 Main St. Smiths Falls On.

Sunday, March 29, 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Pontiac Seedy Saturday

Saturday March 28, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Ottawa Cottage and Backyard Show

Friday, April 10, 12:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Saturday, April 11, 10:00 am to 6:00 pm

Sunday April 12, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm



Talks and Events

Notes on a Japanese Garden

Wednesday, March 18, 7:00 pm

Barbara Sibbald

[Greater Ottawa Water Garden Horticultural Society](#)

Seed Starting

Monday, March 23, 7:30 pm

David Hinks and Gerda Franssen

[Almonte Horticultural society](#)

Culinary Herbs, Easy to Grow, Delicious and Nutritious!

Wednesday, April 1, 7:00 pm

Nancy McDonald

[Greely Garden Club](#)

High Performance, Low Maintenance Plants

Tuesday, April 7, 7:30 pm

Lee Ann Smith

[Kanata-March Horticultural Society](#)

Waterwise Gardening

Friday, April 10, 3:00 pm

Rebecca Last

[Ottawa Cottage and Backyard Show](#)

Growing Vegetables at the Cottage - Yes You Can!

Saturday, April 11th, 3:00 pm

Joanne McRae

[Ottawa Cottage and Backyard Show](#)

Good Bugs, Bad Bugs

Thursday, April 16, 10:00 am to 11:30 am

Dale Odorizzi

Maberly Community Hall (180 Maberly Elphin Road)

REGISTER TODAY!
www.friendsofthefarm.ca

2026 FRIENDS OF THE FARM LECTURE SERIES:

Members: \$10 per lecture or \$45 entire Series
Non-members: \$12 per lecture or \$55 Entire series

Presented by:
Friends of the Central Experimental Farm & Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

What's Bugging You? Integrated Pest Management for your Garden
With Master Gardener EP Power
March 3rd, 2026

Nurturing Your Own Food Forest
With Master Gardeners
Andrea Knight & Angelina Singson
March 17th, 2026

Cold Frames & Cold Crops: Extending the Season
With Master Gardener
Odette McIntyre
March 31st, 2026

Growing Unusual Edibles: Successes, Failures & Learnings
With Master Gardener
Claire McCaughey
April 14th, 2026

Tiny Gardens Big Harvest
With Master Gardener Judith Cox
April 28th, 2026