

Master Gardeners of Ontario

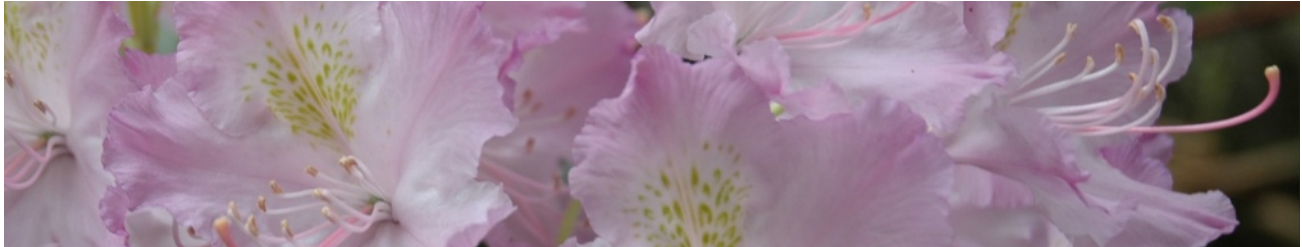
What's growing on?



Join the email list and have the newsletter sent to you directly. Send an email to editor@mastergardener.ca with your name, email and group.

Spring, 2008

www.mastergardener.ca



From the Editors

Dianne and Gary Westlake

As we take on our new responsibilities for the newsletter, we embark on our travels with trembling trepidation. We hope that we can organize newsletters that Master Gardeners all over Ontario will read and carefully save, binding them in fine leather covers to be passed on to their children and grandchildren.

We are not the smartest or the most skilled Master Gardeners in the province, so we will be counting on your contributions to make our dreams of great newsletters come true. Four times a year we will be pestering, brow beating, whining and begging you to submit articles and information. Ask anyone who knows us - we can be relentless, so you might as well give up and submit something wonderful on time for the deadlines in April, July, October, and January. This is your newsletter and we want it to be by you and for you.



As you can see from the example before you, we

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In this Issue

- Reducing Soil pH
- On Stage at Canada Blooms
- MGIT Report on Education
- Denise Edwards Retires
- Revenue Development Committee

For Peat's Sake Use Sulfur

Gary Westlake - Peterborough

One way of reducing soil pH (making it more acidic) so that you can grow blueberries and rhododendrons where they don't belong, is to add peat. Peat collects calcium releasing hydrogen ions, and lowering the pH of the soil. But what if you could not, or should not, use peat for this purpose? Peat is an important ecological resource that is being 'mined' for our benefit. The regrowth of peat is extremely slow compared to its rate of removal.



When the pH is too high, leaf growth is reduced and the leaves yellow. Although nitrogen deficiency can also cause yellowing of leaves, the pH problem causes the leaves to have darker green around the veins. These symptoms are caused by iron deficiency because iron is less available to plants at high pH.

The use of pine needle or oak leaf mulches is often suggested to reduce pH in soils. But are they effective? How much pH reduction can you expect? It is difficult to trace the origin of these methods back to solid science. In fact, some suggest that they have negligible or no effect. The idea that pine needles reduce pH may come from the fact that the forest floor below pines often is devoid of other plants. But this lack of undergrowth could be due to deep mulch layers with slow decomposition. It has also been suggested that since pines often prefer acid conditions, they must be altering the soil with their needles. This is, of course, faulty logic. Similarly, oak leaves contain tannic acids giving rise to the idea

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want to include a technical article of 600 words or less, meant for the experienced gardener. It could be a translation of science into lay terminology or perhaps an essay on an issue affecting MGs. We want to move beyond a listing of what activities are taking place by including your innovative and special projects, letters to the editor, survey questions, milestones and events. We are open to all your suggestions and advice and await your emails.

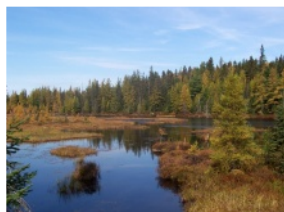
MGs On the Net

If you would like to get signed up for the MG-list, Avalon Hamlin hamlin@ebtech.net will need your name, email and group. MGs using the MG-list also need to keep her up to date with any changes in email addresses.

Check out MGOI's website. It also has links to other Ontario MG sites: www.mastergardener.ca

BC Master Gardeners have a great site that includes newsletters: www.bcmastergardeners.org

By watching bees at sunflowers in your garden, you can help the study of them: www.greatsunflower.org



left: peat bog, right: peat harvest. The Royal Horticultural Society in the UK is phasing out the use of peat in their operations for environmental reasons. For more detail see www.rhs.org.uk/Learning/Research/conservation_and_environment/peat.htm. It is only a matter of time before we are asked to advise on alternatives to peat for gardening.



Mystery Plant

Do you know this plant? The answer will be revealed next issue.

For Peat's Sake continued from page 1

that they release them to the soil. Unfortunately, the pH of composted oak leaves is relatively neutral. What we really need to support our advice are scientific studies, rather than anecdotal remarks passed on from gardener to gardener.

It is also possible to reduce soil pH with fertilizers like ammonium nitrate, urea, ammonium phosphate and ammonium sulfate. These are sometimes used for existing plants but it may take several years of applications and it only changes the top inch or so of soil. Aluminum sulfate is sometimes used but, over time, it can contaminate the soil.

If you are serious about growing acid loving plants and you do not have the soil for it, then the best method involves the use of elemental sulfur. Finely ground sulfur is thoroughly mixed into the soil at an application rate depending on the starting pH and the amount of clay. There is a useful article with details from Oregon State University (google "acidifying soil"). The pH does not drop right away, since it requires bacterial action to slowly create the acid. It can take up to two years to complete the process, and regular pH measurements are needed to check the progress. More than one application spaced one year apart may be necessary. This is the method used by David Hinton, owner of Rhododendron Woods and breeder/grower extraordinaire of rhododendrons in his garden east of Oshawa. (The rhododendron photo on page 1 is from his garden.)

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On Stage at Canada Blooms

Valerie Liney - Zone 6

As most of you are aware Landscape Ontario gave Master Gardeners of Ontario an opportunity to show what we can do.

We were asked to find eighteen speakers for the Master Gardener Ask the Expert Stage from our own organization along with speakers from Tourism Ireland and



Communities in Bloom. We also added several other great speakers like Katie Terpstra and Richard Gruerner from Valleybrook Gardens, Margaret Nevett, Russ and Katherine Loader and Tom Bradley. The presentations were in the areas of Tourism, Plants, Design, Ecology and Family Gardening. I sent the word out on the MG list and was pleasantly surprised by the replies and how quickly Master Gardeners eagerly offered to help. Master Gardeners or MGITs were also asked to volunteer to set up and man the Ask the Expert booth next to the stage. Again the replies came in rapidly.

Thanks to: Aldona Satterthwaite, Anka Dean, Ann Stallman, Anna Arabczuk, Barbara Anderson, Barbara Evans, Barbara Peat, Belinda Gallagher, Bernice Uebele, Beth Cook, Betty Fretz, Bruce MacNeil, Cathy Park, Charlie Dobbin, Dan Cooper, Donna Parker, Donna Slater, Doris Calder, Eileen Mayfield, Elizabeth Brims, Elizabeth Stewart, Emma Chow, Georgie Kennedy, Helen Gordon, Ida Harding, Janice Eckland, Jean Sinclair, Jennifer Howe, Jennifer Walton, Jerry Yates, Jess Cronin, John Craw, Joyce Killin, Kathleen Lang, Kerry Hackett, Kim Pileggi, Larry Aldebert, Leslie Muscar, Linda Barkovsky, Linda Boyko, Linda Brentnall, Linda Fischer, Linda Huggli, Lindsay Dale-Harris, Lori DiMonte, Lorne Sparrow, Lorraine Bridgman, Marcela Crowe, Marsha Gettas, Mary Ann Gilhuly, Mary Ann Van Berlo, Merle Bersto, Nancy Cole, Nancy Dattrino, Naomi Bernan, Nicole Leaper, Nikola Warnock, Pam Love, Pat Cappelli, Pat de Valance, Patty King, Ron Rossini, Sean James, Shelly Walsh, Susan Dolby, Susan Lipchak, Tom Bradley, Veronica Callinan, Wanda Oprea, Wendy Chrystian, Wendy Fletcher

The Next Best Thing to Visiting Nova Scotia is Taking an MG Course

Cathy Fraser - Peterborough

What have I got myself into! As I entered my User name and Password to access the Nova Scotia Online Master Gardener Course I thought, "I am way outside of my comfort zone!" My computer expertise was limited to the occasional e-mail, so navigating the extensive Course Menu with topics such as Binomial Nomenclature, Dichotomous Keys and Discussion Forums was venturing into the unknown. And by the way...What is a WebCT?

Well that was 6 months ago and those fears have faded from my memory and been replaced with a feeling of accomplishment as I have vastly increased my knowledge of plant identification, their uses and also their scientific names. My husband has been impressed by my new vocabulary as I point out how beautiful the *Impatiens walleriana* is looking today. Wading through the immense quantity of information has been a bit trying at times but I have learned so much. The assignments have been an opportunity to dig deeper and research a variety of topics. I thought my essay writing days were over 20 years ago, but what a great feeling to have my daughter lean over my shoulder and say "You're doing a great job mom, I'm proud of you".

So keep up the great work. I know there are lots of MGITs out there working away at their computers. We still have a lot to learn but look how far we've come already!

Revenue Development

John Craw and Andrew Cartmell

The Revenue Development Committee consisting of John Craw, (Chair), zone 11; James Lee, MGOI President; Andrew Cartmell, zone 4, Wendy Fletcher, Niagara, Kathleen Teahen, Ottawa, Cynthia Armour, Consultant, Elderstone Resource Development have been meeting over the winter and presented a draft high level plan at the Board Meeting on March 14th. The Board has approved the plan in principle, and the committee intends to work through the details and present it to the coordinators at the Coordinators' Conference in October.

Milestones

New MGITs - welcome!

Lake Simcoe South - Cindy Scythes, Terri Briggs, Vicky Dempster

Peterborough - Joan Harding

New MG

Lake Simcoe South - Kathleen Gorsline

5 years

Niagara - Barbara Large, Diana Jones, Gail Bruneau, Lain Hay, James Lee, Sue Lusted

Peterborough - Don Nicholson

Lake Simcoe South - George Kennedy, Janet Tresize

15 years

Niagara - Marilyn Shepherd

20 years

Sudbury - Enzo Floreani, Tina Hansen

Emeritus

Niagara - Wendy Chrystian

Honorary

Essex - Windsor Guy R. Jolin

All the best for MGOI's Future

Denise Edwards

It is the end of March as I write this and reflect on more than 34 1/2 years in the Ontario Public Service and OMAFRA. I have been honoured to work with an amazing group of clients and am pleased to call many of you friends. For the last 12 years I have had the opportunity to work closely with Master Gardeners in Ontario. There have been many changes and highs and lows as MGOI struggles to survive and thrive. I am amazed at the knowledge, skill, dedication and commitment of all of you to the organization and its programs.

I will be retiring on March 28th and will miss the contact I have had working with "real people". I hope to see MGOI continue to grow and bloom in the future. I challenge you to think broadly and maintain your standards, credibility and impartiality. It means working together, respecting each other, considering all viewpoints and compromise for the good of the organization....an organization worth working for!

Events

April 4, 5, 6, Thunder Bay Home & Garden Show 'The Dirt on Dirt', Thunder Bay CLE

April 5 from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Garden Design Workshop, Oakville Central Library on Navy Street, Linda Brentnall 905-257-2442, \$75 inc. lunch

April 5: 1:00pm-5:00pm, United Counties Master Gardeners Seminar on Northern Hybrid Roses, Morrisburg Meeting Centre, 613-774-3996, \$12

April 11, 12 and 13, Peterborough Garden Show - For the Love of Gardening, Evinrude Centre, www.peterboroughgardens.ca, \$5.00

April 19 and 20 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Fifth Annual Scugog Spring Garden Show, Scugog Community Recreation Centre, 1165 Reach St. Port Perry, Shirley Love 905-986-5330, shlove@sympatico.ca, \$5.00

April 24 at 7:30 p.m., Accessorizing Your Garden - Frank Kershaw, Rene M Caisse Memorial Theatre Bracebridge, Muskoka Parry Sound Master Gardeners 645-0004 or 789-3430, \$10 advance, \$12 at the door

May 10, Prince Edward County MG Plant Sale, Main & Elizabeth, Picton, Virginia Mitchell, VKmitchell@persona.ca

May 24 & 25, Lilac Festival - sale and advice clinic, Macaulay Heritage Park, Picton, Virginia Mitchell, VKmitchell@persona.ca, Free

June, Lady Slipper Display, Purdon Conservation, www.ovrghs.org

June 4, Move & Mulch 'Hands on Learning Experience', Thunder Bay Observatory Gardens

June 12-15, North American Rock Garden Society AGM, Ottawa, Ernie Boyd, Eboyardfarm@aol.com

July 16-17, Midwest Regional MG Conference Milwaukee, WI, http://sewmg.encampus.com

August 22, MGOI AGM at OHA Convention, Sheraton College - Davis Campus, Brampton

August 23, 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Technical Update Lakeview Gardens, Eagle, Brenda Szusz at bszus@hotmai.com, \$20 inc lunch

September 13, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., 'To Bee or not To Bee:' Zone 4 Ed Seminar, Bayfield Community Center, betsy1@ezlink.on.ca, \$40 inc lunch

September 20, 9:00a.m. to 4:00 p.m., The Healing Properties of Gardens, Willow Room, Colasanti's Greenhouses, Ruthven, ON Juliette St. Pierre, canadel@cogeco.ca, \$35 Limited space, no refunds after September 10

October 25, Coordinators' Conference

late
breaking
news!

Summer Workshops

info
still
tentative

Ontario Master Gardeners have an opportunity to upgrade their plant propagation production skills at 2-day workshops being offered at 4 different locations across the province. The sessions are being delivered by highly skilled college instructors.

The 4 offerings are as follows:

Algonquin College - Ottawa - May 31 - June 1

Contact: Brian Henderson, 613-926-1389 henderb@jcis.ca

St Clair College - Windsor - end of May

Contact: Irene Moore 519-972-2727 ext. 4735 IMoore@stclaircollege.ca

Niagara School of Horticulture - Niagara Falls - middle/end of July

Contact: Liz Klose 905-356-8554 ext. 225 lklose@niagaraparks.com

Ridgetown Campus (University of Guelph) Ridgetown - Aug 7-8

Contact: Ken Nentwig 519-674-1628 knentwig@ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca

Cost is expected to be \$200 - \$250. Each institution will provide information on local accommodations, attractions, registration process etc.

NB - All contact information is tentative and will be updated later.



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