



Cross Pollination

April 2009

Coordinator's Corner

Are you Shovel-Ready*?

**adj.* Relating to a construction site or project that can be used or started right away.

The first time I heard President Obama use the term *shovel-ready*, I felt he must be a gardener at heart. The term evoked all that anticipation, energy and planning that nature and gardeners generate during the long winter months. And spring is the embodiment of being shovel-ready! The soil is shovel-ready as more and more green sprouts appear daily to inch their way towards the sun. The bees have certainly been shovel-ready. How else could they have appeared at my crocuses the first day they opened in order to feed their hungry sisters? The swelling buds tell me that the trees are also shovel-ready, soon to burst out and delight us with their flowers and promises of summer fruit.

As Master Gardeners, we are getting shovel-ready for our volunteer activities. We are preparing our factsheets and planning festival sign ups.

Many of you are already shovel-ready I'm sure. You have ordered plants from your gardening catalogue. You have started your seeds indoors. You have sharpened and cleaned your secateurs and garden tools.

If you haven't, get with it! And get shovel-ready for another busy gardening season!



Even Michelle Obama's garden is shovel-ready or is that rake-ready?

Halton Region

Master Gardener Meetings

7:00 p.m. RBG - Rooms 3 & 4



Please bring something for the draw table and change to buy tickets - \$2.00 each or 3 for \$5.00

- April 8* (*2nd Wednesday of the month) – Gardens of Tasmania (Bill Kertzia)
 - T-shirts with MG logo have arrived for those who ordered them. \$13 due
 - Bring your calendar for festival sign ups.

Business meeting discussion:

- Feedback re Ontario Garden Show
- Feedback re Canada Blooms
- (Sheelagh) Oakville Hort. Society: MG's needed at this years Plant Sale (May 9th)
- Lorne: Water-Wise Landscaping in Campbellville
- Jess: Master Gardeners possible partnership with Pollination Canada
- Member suggestion: Volunteer needed to update our festival materials: accordion folder, lists of plants i.e. rabbits, hummingbirds.

- May 6 – **Greening your backyard** (Stacy Hickman)

Other Garden-Worthy Dates

- April 20th **Have Your Garden and Eat It Too**
7-8 p.m. in Burlington Central Library's Centennial Hall. (Admission is free.)

Other garden-worthy dates, continued . .

- Saturday, April 25 - **RBG Members Mulch Day;**

8 a.m. to noon

Mercer's Glen site (off Old Guelph Road, next to the Hwy 403 overpass).

Members only

A small donation will offset the cost of providing this opportunity to members. Bring your own containers, shovel or scoop and be sure to bring along your membership card as this event is exclusive to Royal Botanical Gardens' members.

- **RBG Tulip Celebration**

Saturdays and Sundays, May 2, 3, 9, 10, 16 & 18

- **RBG Auxiliary Plant Sale**

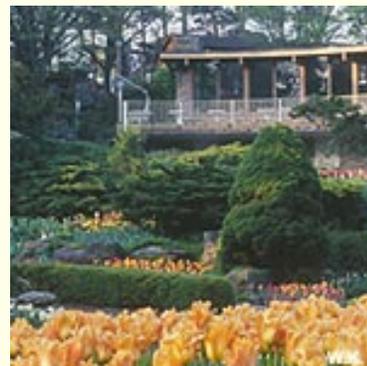
Thursday, May 7 and Saturday, May 9

- **Water-Wise Landscaping in Campbellville**

May 2nd (10-2pm)

- **Oakville Hort Society Plant Sale**

May 9



RBG

Pollinators

by Jess Cronin

During Patty's recent presentation on Native plants, I was stunned by some of the statistics she mentioned. It does, however, make perfect sense that pollinators rely on native plants for survival. Almost 90% of flowering plants rely on animal pollinators for fertilization and about 200,000 species of animals act as pollinators. There are 1,000 species of bees in Canada alone. And while many people think only of bees as pollinators, there are five main categories of insect pollinators; bees, wasps, butterflies & moths, flies and beetles.

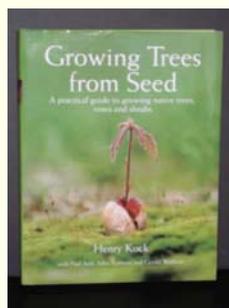
We have all heard of the recent phenomenon of literally millions of honey bees disappearing across North America; while the honey bee is not native to North America its disappearance has brought much needed attention to the plight of all pollinators. With the extensive development in our urban communities, we have removed large areas of the original native flora and fauna which directly impacts our pollinators.

Our role as Master Gardeners and MGIT's presents us with a unique ability to assist the general public in making more pollinator friendly decisions. When asked about plant or tree choices, a native plant or tree not only creates an eco-system for the pollinator, it also comes with a long list of added advantages for the gardener: - native plants are adapted to our region/zone and soil. Native plants also generally require less water and maintenance than horticultural varieties.

So what can we do as gardeners? We can simply provide pollinators with the basics of life, food & shelter. When choosing plants - native plant options are definitely more attractive to pollinators. A second consideration is to provide a sequence of continuous blooms from spring to fall. While a burst of flowers may sustain pollinators for a brief period of time, a succession of blooms will keep many different pollinators visiting your garden all season long.

In 2007, Seeds of Diversity and Environment Canada started a joint venture called 'Pollination Canada'. This group has partnered with both horticultural societies and botanical gardens all over Canada to study and conserve the beneficial insects we rely upon. To participate in the monitoring program, please visit www.pollinatorcanada.ca

See Page 4 for this Book review



Book review “Growing Trees from Seed”, by Henry Koch

By Lorne Sparrow

Seldom do I use a highlighter or make notes in the margins of a book but the book *“Growing Trees from Seed”* by Henry Hock is one of those exceptions. From the opening page I could hardly wait to get to the next page!

The following excerpt from the inside leaf of the book cover best describes the scope of this magnificent book. *“Growing Trees from Seed is the result of a lifetime of study and practical application devoted to gathering and propagating seeds from native species in order to preserve the genetic diversity of important local trees and shrubs. Numerous illustrations and descriptions help the reader with plant identification to species level, and a seed treatment guide provides a handy reference for those interested in hands-on experimentation.”*

The book is written in a style that gives the reader the sense that Henry is there in the room with you, sharing his knowledge or guiding you on a field trip to collect precious seeds for propagation. Chapter 1 outlines the aim of the book and expresses some thought provoking ideas about our trees and their growing environment. Several of these aims and ideas are presented in the following quotes.

- *“To identify plants”*
- *“To think like a seed”*
- *“How to collect, store, plant, germinate and grow seedlings”*
- *“What species are not native but invasive”*
- *“Inspire gathering and growing of seeds to restore and sustain the precious diversity of our natural heritage”*
- *“To nurture a deeper appreciation of the natural diversity of landscapes”*
- *“To understand plants as members of communities of plants and animals rather than as isolated specimens”*
- *“To understand how lands and forests become fragmented and what this means”*
- *“Native or Indigenous plant species are those species that were growing in North America prior to colonial times”*
- *“A species planted outside of its natural range may be called an “exotic” or “alien”*
- *“Seeds collected from a bur oak growing in a swamp may not be the best choice for planting on dry gravelly soil”*
- *“Woody plants are able to tolerate a slight change in habitat but are less likely to survive if there are two or more differences in climate zone, soil type or soil moisture between the original site and the new planting site”*
- *“Trees and shrubs sold in garden centres are usually produced by cuttings or grafting. This means that every plant of the cultivar is genetically identical whether growing in Minnesota or Ontario. This genetic uniformity is unacceptable in the natural world”*

This book will be a valuable addition to your library. It is filled with practical advice on tree identification, seed collection and propagation. The knowledge and lessons learned from this resource can be applied equally across the horticultural field to better our world.

Biological control in your garden using native plants by Patty King

Plants in your garden attract many insects - good and bad. While we are happy to have the good ones around (providing we recognize them), we tend to be more concerned with the bad ones. Natural enemies or beneficial insects, include insect predators and parasites that are attracted to our plants for the nectar and pollen they provide. They are a form of biological control used to suppress a pest's damage and population.

A study by the Michigan State University was looking into attracting more natural enemies to help combat pests in crops on farms. Farmers have used perennial plantings alongside or near their crops for this reason. The majority are exotics that seemed to attract beneficial insects, but did they? In the study they found that there were a great number of native plants that attracted beneficial insects and bees to the crops when they were planted nearby. The native plants provided more benefit than non-native plants. Some examples of plants that were the most attractive include; cup plant, yellow coneflower, shrubby cinquefoil, angelica, and Culver's root. Angelica attracted about 35 different natural enemies, while boneset attracted the highest number at 200. When it came to attracting bees, Culver's root attracted 5 bees and about 13 honey bees. The leader was cup plant with 18 bees and 19 honey bees. With the knowledge that native plants are extremely attractive to beneficial insects, they are preparing the next step in the study which is to determine whether there is an improvement in pest management.

Check out their website for more information, as well as a list of the 43 native plants used in the study and their ranking with the natural enemies and the bees.
<http://nativeplants.msu.edu/>

