



# Cross Pollination

May 2012

## Hello Master Gardeners!

I'm very happy to welcome you to the May 2012 Newsletter. If there was a theme to this letter, it would be "Master Gardeners in Action"! We'll start with Shirley Novak's interesting and entertaining submission about her experience working with Field and Stream Rescue.

### Just helpin'

You know when you put your hand up to volunteer for a task but you're not sure of the details? Well, this is how I found myself somewhere in the middle of a good story and a great cause. As a volunteer in a Master Gardener role, I had enlisted myself to a group that



needed help to identify willows and dog wood trees and sent me directions to for a farm on 5th Line, in Nassagaweya Township for April, 2012. As it went....



It's a sunny spring evening; I find the multi-acre hobby farm with its homey ambiance. It's quiet and I look around to see rolling hills, stone fences, and horses in a paddock, and the ol' tire swings in the apple tree, looking across the early veggie garden there are headlights of a vintage car peeking out of a shed, and flying over my head is a tamed pet pigeon, so... I knocked on the door of the yellow farmhouse.



Out comes Kent Rundle, a watershed restoration technician with the Hamilton-Halton Watershed Stewardship Program. As we are waiting for the rest of the group, Kent explains how he volunteers with the Field and Stream (F&S) organization along with David Hulsman, CA, who by day is with Halton Healthcare Services, and during his spare time, he sits on the F&S board.



Tonight's mission; we are collecting willow live stakes that will be put to good use in the upcoming weekend.

We meandered through a cedar trail down to the stream bed in a specific search for *Salix discolor* and *Cornus sericea*, in common terms, pussy willows and red twigged dog wood trees.

Kent gave detailed instructions of the stem cuttings process. Cut the bottoms on a slant and the tops straight across, so later, at replanting time, one could identify which end is up. Then twigs are soaked for a few days and readied to insert into a stream.

Then, it occurs to me, this simple task was unfolding to a much bigger picture. These twigs are being harvested for live stake installations. There will be many hands, by several organizations that will be overlapping to fulfil their project initiatives. These volunteers dedicate uncounted hours to improve our surrounding streams and waterways to make this better for tomorrow.





The **Trout Unlimited** group replanted these Livestake on Saturday April 14, at Bronte Creek in Lowville Park. This group is working to protect the cold water ecosystem originally dominated by Brooktrout and Atlantic salmon as they try to restore the environmental significance of this 304 km watershed.

The **Field and Stream Rescue Team** hosted a planting event on Sunday morning that used the Livestake for their rehabilitating project within the Appleby Creek in Burlington. This creek has a large presence of invasive species, such as garlic mustard, but these dedicated volunteers worked on removing unwanted plants and garbage. Then, continued to replant 100 Livestakes of Native species to replenish the area.



Back at the farm house, the Grierson Family Farm, where the harvested twigs were collected, this too, has been declared for a stewardship project. The Field and Stream Rescue Team has recognized this hobby farm is in a critical area at the headwaters of the Sixteen Mile Creek watershed and their horse pastures are polluting the stream that historically were home to Redside Dace minnows. The group will help to reroute the pasture and the farm offers the group plant sources.



This experience was rewarding to see how groups can overlap each other and even volunteers can use the help of volunteers.

It's true, many hands make light of work.

Shirley Novak

David Hulsmann  
& Friend!



### And Here Are a Few More MG's in Action!



Here we have some of our best ambassadors at the Ontario Volunteers Aware Ceremony as photographed by Barry! And they certainly seem to be enjoying themselves immensely! Not to be outshined by our volunteers at the Glen Abbey Home Show! That's the spirit, Master Gardeners making our communities better places to live!



### And now about Community Gardens

Karen Walsh and Pat Knapp volunteered their support to the inaugural meeting of the gardeners who are fortunate in their selection to 'farm' the community gardens on Saturday April 27<sup>th</sup>. They were very pleased to be a part of an enthusiastic group of gardeners, some new and some very accomplished for all wards of the City of Burlington, who will be launching the harvest of a wonderful new project. Karen and Pat will be speaking on Wednesday evening to discuss opportunities for Master Gardeners of Halton to join this wonderful initiative.

The Community Gardens are sponsored by the Burlington Green Program in collaboration with the City of Burlington. Burlington Green supports many sustainable environmentally sound projects promoting the expansion of green spaces throughout our region. Master Gardeners have been invited to the opening on May 5<sup>th</sup> and also have the opportunity to share in this exciting program by adopting a plot in Central Park. Tune into their program by checking out [www.burlingtongreen.com](http://www.burlingtongreen.com)

This is just what being a Master Gardener is all about! Future meetings will be held on the following dates:

Monthly Gardener Gatherings at Central Arena Auditorium unless otherwise noted or decided by the group:

- Sat. April 28, 11am
- Sat. May 19th, 11am
- Sat. June 9th, 11am Port Nelson room, Sr. Centre
- Sat. July 14th, 11am
- Sat. Aug. 11th, 11am
- Sat. Sept. 15th, 11am

### **About Hostas!**

Our intrepid 'reporter' Roberta Roberts has much to tell us about the Hosta Forum at the RBG...

On April 1, 2012 I attended the all-day Hosta Forum at RBG. This was the 2nd annual Forum organized by the Ontario Hosta Society (2301 Fifth St, South, St. Catharines ON L2R 6P7, [www.ontariohostasociety.com](http://www.ontariohostasociety.com))

There were over 100 participants, all very enthusiastic growers and hybridizers, sharing the latest seedlings, successes and challenges. The man on my right was from north of Milton and had 400 different varieties, man on my left had over 800 in his nursery in Listowel. I have a paltry 30 or so (I need to count and catalogue what I have!)

The program consisted of four presentations - three on hostas and one of photography illustrated by members' photos on a tour of hostas gardens. The final activity was an auction of various new plants and seedlings.

The first presentation was by Kathy Sisson (from Pennsylvania?) who seemed very knowledgeable and has 1800 on her one acre lot. She explained why hostas are popular:

Easy to grow; diverse in uses and characteristics; adaptable to many habitats; maintain good looks; wide variety - 5000 registered and 8000 named.

She elaborated on the characteristics with illustrations and in-depth details: texture; size; colour; form; substance; shape; and flowers (often under rated or ignored.)

She noted that placement in the sun makes the flowers last longer, white varieties only maintain their colour for a week, colours deepen as season progresses. New trends are white leaf backs and coloured pedicels. For the flowers there is a range of colour, and attractive to hummingbirds and fragrance.

Propagation is by tissue culture (produces sports) and by division. Seedlings are unpredictable. For landscape use she observed that hostas are "shade tolerant" not shade loving. In shade they develop slowly, don't flower as much, morning sun is best. While sun tolerant, they need moisture and need sun to maximize the fragrance. Uses include specimens as a focal point, for edging, and in pots and containers and troughs.

She recommended companion plantings of conifers, spruces, mountain laurel, ajuga, hakonechloa Japanese grass, primulas, dicentra, ferns, ginger, tiarella, heuchera, purple cone flower, astilbe, ligularia and mix well with purple fountain grass in pots.

An excellent presentation!

The next speaker was Martin Galloway (from Uxbridge) talking about Pests. He likes hostas because of the huge variety of forms, shade tolerance, drought tolerance, and winter hardy and great for crowding out weeds.

The chief pest seems to be slugs. He is very tolerant of the critters and thinks gardeners get too fussed by their eating the leaves. (This view was not supported by most of the audience but he said that kill 400 and there will be 400 more the next day!! So what's the point!!) He maintained that the slug is attracted by the mass of a collection that invites "eaters" and hence recommends diversity of plants. He explained that slugs are gastropods (their stomachs are at their feet?) they like moisture and breathe through their skin (I don't think I have understood the physiology of the creatures.)

His recommendation for control is to keep the garden dry; plant resistant varieties, go nocturnal hunting; use baits, and maintain garden cleanliness. In dry gardens, the slugs get dried up (desiccated) and drier plant material is less desirable. He noted that "Royal Splendour" is very resistant. In response to questions about barriers and traps he was not enthused about citrus trap, beer or fermented stuff. Even with eggshells, he said their slime trail gives them immunity. Better short term solution is wood ash. Best to overwhelm with diversity of planting.

Remember they are food for somebody (small snakes, robins and thrushes) and also are pollinators.

He recommended the following for companion planting as slug resistant: woody plants, early flowering shrubs, rhodos, witch hazel, maple (acer sebolia better than japanese), epimedium (low light, drought tolerant, pretty showy, slow growing and contained (nice red variety)); heuchera, cimifugia, ferns (maidenhair is very tough) tiarella (good in deep shade).

Trish Symons is an experienced plant photographer and presented photos members had taken on a garden tour of hostas. Gave tips and ways to get the best results, showing excellent results from point and shoot as well as more sophisticated cameras and use of programs like Photoshop..

Ron Livingston was the final speaker and illustrated the results of hybridizing - showing the "mother" and "father" and the resulting "child". Fascinating!

For the very keen collectors the silent auction and regular auction was the focus of the day. Quite a bit beyond my level of Hosta collecting! A very informative, well organized day and a glimpse into the world of hostas .....and more hostas....and more hostas!!!!

### **South of the Border!**

If you are interested in the National Garden Festival in Buffalo from June 22nd to July 29<sup>th</sup>, check out the following website...<http://www.nationalgardenfestival.com>

### **A few words from Jane...**

#### The Hapless Gardener's Glossary of Terms

A Favourite of Birds:	Don't plant near cars, sidewalks, or clotheslines.
Backyard Habitat:	A dandy excuse to sip a daiquiri instead of trimming the hedges.
Bird Feeder:	A quaint, often elaborate structure designed to add fibre to the diet of squirrels.
Bog Garden:	The result of going on vacation without turning off the sprinkler.
Bulb:	Potential flower buried in fall, never to be seen again.
Double Digging:	An evil concept whereby you dig a large area with a shovel, and when you are finished you do it again.
Garden Catalogue:	A well-illustrated work of fiction.
Grass:	A plant found in flower gardens that needs little or no care.
Hoe:	A garden tool calibrated so precisely that when stepped upon its handle rises swiftly up to mouth level, causing the gardener to say "Hoeeee!"
Hoeing:	A manual method of severing roots from stems of newly planted flowers and vegetables.

Perennial: A plant that would have come back year after year if it had survived.  
Pop-Up Sprinkler Head A sprinkler head that retracts below ground level when it is not operating. Pop-up sprinklers which stick in the raised position are known as "lawn mower food".  
Seed Packet: An expensive envelope with a pretty picture containing 99.9% air.  
Vigorous Grower: A plant with a demented compulsion to take over the neighbourhood.  
Wildflowers: Invasive weeds with sexy names.

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<http://www.gardensablaze.com/Glossary.htm>

### **A Last Word...**

Our next meeting is held on Wednesday May 2nd at the RBG in rooms 3 and 4 – note the change- at 7:15pm. The guest speaker for the evening is Larry Sherk from Sheridan Gardens who will be speaking to us about rhododendrons and azaleas. Bring your questions.

Please bring any plant cuttings, seeds, plants for the draw table.

A reminder for MGITs and guests; please bring your questions about being a master gardener, protocol, tracking hours etc.

### **The Green Tip of the Month**

If you're old enough you'll remember a product called "borax". Well, it's still around and offers an environmentally safe way to clean your bathroom. It will remove hard water deposits if blended into a paste and scrubbed onto stains; it leaves everything in the bathroom sparkling clean. It will eat away mould on tiles if blended using 1 cup of borax to 4 litres of hot water. Sometimes old is new!

See you Wednesday!