



Cross Pollination

November 2009

Coordinator's Corner

The Real Reason that Leaves Change Colour in Autumn

I have been admiring the amazing colours of autumn for some time now. There is an astounding threesome standing side by side outside my kitchen window—a fiery red Bloodgut Japanese maple, a brilliant orange cut leaf sumac, and a bright green dwarf white pine. Some of us have been led to believe that deciduous trees turn colour in fall because of a change in photoperiod which triggers a reduction in the total supply of chlorophyll. The dwindling chlorophyll allows the carotenoids, the yellows, browns and oranges which have been present all year, to show through. The anthocyanins, red and purple combinations that decorate autumn foliage, are not present throughout the growing season but develop in late summer. During the summer growing season, phosphate is at a high level. But in the fall, phosphate, along with the other chemicals and nutrients, moves out of the leaf into the stem of the plant. When this happens, the sugar-breakdown process changes, leading to the production of anthocyanin pigments. The brighter the light during this period, the greater the production of anthocyanins and the more brilliant the resulting colour display we see. When the days of autumn are bright and cool, and the nights chilly but not freezing, the brightest colourations usually develop.

That of course is the “official” answer as to why we have such marvelous fall colour. But why does this mainly occur in the north? Why don't orange trees turn a brilliant orange or banana trees a boisterous purple-red in autumn?

The answer of course lies in the fact that the south basks in sunny blue skies and greenery all year long, while we Ontarians endure the never ending steel grey skies, the ominous, basalt-coloured clouds, the sooty snow and depressing denuded trees and shrubs of January and February. So my theory is guilt. Mother Nature knows her worst is just around the corner and feels culpable. So like any guilt ridden Mother, she's doing damage control, offering us this eye candy intended to help us through the dark times to come. Now that you know the truth, make sure you get outside and admire the fall colour before it is all gone. You'll need it in the days to come!



Halton Region

Master Gardener Meetings:

7:15 p.m. RBG - Rooms 3 & 4

Please bring something for the draw table and change to buy tickets:

- \$2.00 each
- 3 for \$5.00
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A friendly reminder - *please bring your own cup for beverages.*

2009 meetings:

- November 4th
- December 2nd

Funny Quotes

If I could only grow green stuff in my garden like I can in my refrigerator!

Compostaphile and Compostaphobe – To rot or not to rot . . .

Gardening requires a lot of water - most of it in the form of perspiration.

What do you call a stolen yam?
A hot potato.

My wife's a water sign. I'm an earth sign.
Together we make mud.
- Rodney Dangerfield

REFRESHMENTS SCHEDULE:

MEETING	SNACKS (& NAPKINS)	BEVERAGES (& PAPER CUPS)
NOVEMBER	Doris Calder	Jess Cronin
FEBRUARY	Donna Parker	June Wright
MARCH	Karen Walsh	Patty King
APRIL	Maureen Millar	Larry Aldebert

The real meaning of plant catalogue terminology:

"A favorite of birds" means to avoid planting near cars, sidewalks, or clotheslines.

"Grows more beautiful each year" means "Looks like roadkill for the foreseeable future."

"Zone 5 with protection" is a variation on the phrase "Russian roulette."

"May require support" means your daughter's engineering degree will finally pay off.

"Moisture-loving" plants are ideal for landscaping all your bogs and swamps.

"Vigorous" is code for "has a Napoleonic compulsion to take over the world."

Community Supported Agriculture

Submitted by Karen Walsh

Recently, many Halton Master Gardeners attended the Zone 5 Technical Update in Guelph held at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre, north of Guelph. After a morning of interesting presentations one of the afternoon tours offered was to the farm at the Centre where not only did we get a tour of the fields but a great introduction to the concept of Community Supported Agriculture. For those of us lucky enough to have access to a CSA farm, this is a great way to eat healthy and support your local organic farmer.

Ignatius Farm CSA has been providing families and area businesses with farm-fresh food since 2001. The farm is part of the Centre which fosters an ecological way of life for the well being of land and people. They believe in sustainable agricultural practices and the production of healthy, organic food that is available when fresh in season.

The farm provides 60 types of fresh organic vegetables, strawberries and apples from late June to early November. Community members buy annual shares in the farm which entitles them to a guaranteed 20 weeks of fresh, local, organic produce, generous share sizes, access to cut flowers and herb gardens. There are also extra u-pick events, honey and apple products for sale and farm events and potlucks. To get an idea of what a share costs and what the benefits are visit www.ignatiusguelph.ca. Click on their Community Shared Agriculture tab to see an informative brochure (pdf).

CSA farms are a creative method to keep small farms viable and celebrate community and sharing through food production. We learned an interesting fact: Almost all of the organic food that consumers buy through large food chains is controlled by three families in California. Keeping small, organic farms viable is perhaps one of the most important aspects of an alternative food delivery model. This is achieved by the consumer giving 100% of the dollar they spend on produce directly to the farmer, thereby avoiding wholesalers, middlemen and large corporations making huge profits from mark-ups.

Community Supported Agriculture began in the early 1960's in Germany, Switzerland and Japan as a response to food safety and the urbanization of agricultural land. Groups of consumers and farmers in Europe formed cooperative partnerships to fund farming and pay the full costs of ecologically sound and socially equitable agriculture. Two decades later the idea took root in the United States in 1984. Today North America has thousands of CSA farms.¹ For a list of CSA farms in Ontario visit <http://csafarms.ca/index.html>

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CSA's are about:

- **Community** - Linking farmers and consumers, including low income families, some are part of regional food banks, linking urban, rural and suburban residents, provide education about diets, storing and preserving and can be a drop off for shareholder's compost.
- **Health** - Healthy soil means healthy food. Most CSA's promote sustainable agricultural practices, biodynamic farming practices, and are organic.
- **Ecology** - Through CSA's, consumers share the risks and bounties with farmers. Farmers can grow the highest quality, most nutritious food while preserving the highest environmental quality and soil health.
- **Family and Fun** - As with the Ignatius Farm CSA, many farms offer free farm events and potlucks to expand cooking skills, get hands dirty, learn and share.
- **Learning** - The Ignatius Farm CSA also offers structured educational internships to train individuals in organic methods.



Consumers and farmers work together on behalf of the Earth and each other. While the farmer is tending the Earth on behalf of others, consumers share the costs of supporting the farm and share the risk of variable harvests (and bounties). Membership in the CSA is based on shares of the harvest. Every farm is different in length of season, crops grown, level of social activities and share set price.

There is a lot of work that goes into the organization of a CSA: the Garden/Farm Plan, costing, budgeting, and distribution and/or delivery.¹

An interesting web site can be found at www.tdc.ca. It describes a CSA program very well and sets out topics such as what a shareholder can expect: typical work schedule, charts of crops and quantities.

1. Community Supported Agriculture: An Introduction to CSA found at www.biodynamics.com
2. Wikipedia – Community-supported agriculture
3. Community Supported Agriculture: An Introduction to CSA found at www.biodynamics.com

WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND

Submitted by Marjorie Latimer

The old saying "what goes around comes around" is all so familiar to us and in the case of organic gardening this old saying provides a wealth of truth. Last month I attended the Guelph Technical Update held at the Jesuit Centre in Guelph, Ontario. The professor from the University who spoke to us about organic (sustainable) agriculture had this message: "***Look to the historical wisdom literature***". She went on to tell us that we must harness nature, don't just fix the symptoms: fix the problem. Design properly in the beginning and don't over produce the soil - avoid depletion. Over-fertilizing invites problems. We learned about crop rotation, irrigation management, soil erosion and degradation, surface and ground water contamination. In a nut shell, we learned about the impacts humans can have on soil and our responsibility to protect our land and water resources by gardening with sustainability at the forefront.

I decided to research the historical wisdom of the past by reading portions of a book titled "The Garden of Canada" - Burlington, Oakville and District. It is a reproduction of historical information compiled by the founding fathers of the Burlington Horticultural Society. The fathers were farmers and they knew the soil. Their wisdom taught others to turn to the stables for fertilizer, to use what was available; manure, composted matter, and other organic amendments such as cover crops to stabilize and replenish soil by planting clovers, peas, and vetches to be ploughed under. Wood ashes were used to lighten soil furnishing potash, and bone meal had distinct value for fruit.

The Rodale Book of Composting had reached its 15th printing by 1973 and so I turn to the chapter on the history of composting. The wisdom provided talked about the process by which we transform organic waste into soil-building substance for farm, orchard or garden.

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Probably the oldest existing reference to the use of manure in agriculture was to be found on clay tablets in the Mesopotamian Valley one thousand years before Moses was born. I research next the antiquity of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament. The Bible is interspersed with references to cultivation of soil, dung for fertilizer, bedding (straw) covering the dung pile. Manure fertilizes the fruit trees and improves soil structure. The organic gardening of biblical times refers also to pruning of diseased and broken limbs, weed control among valuable crops, crop rotation and leaving field fallow every seven years, allowing livestock to graze and allow their manure to feed the soil. The Gospel of Luke says ***"good quality soil allows seeds to set and establish good roots, they mature and produce fruit"***

The professor was very familiar with the historical wisdom literature and her advice to gain that understanding and wisdom provides knowledge of how we should be gardening today. When we practice the antiquity of agricultural practice, we provide an improvement of health for soil, water, and for all living things. We begin to realize the inter-connectedness of all life and learn to respect what has been given to us. When we document our progress, we leave the wisdom for the next generation so they too will understand the importance of sustainable gardening.

My study has now been directed to a book titled "Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture" an agrarian reading of the Bible written by Ellen F. Davis. There are nine essays exploring the biblical writer's concern for the care of arable land against the backdrop of geography in ancient Israel. Davis creates a conversation between ancient texts and contemporary agrarian writers and provides a fresh perspective of practices that dominate the global food economy today.

We were well fed at the Guelph Tech Day both physically, and spiritually. The professor left us with this message: ***"Diversity is connecting the dots to achieve eco-friendly gardens"*** and we returned home with a renewed respect for our land and water resources.

**2009 MGOI CO-ORDINATORS CONFERENCE
OCTOBER 17, 2009**

Submitted by Larry Aldebert

I had the pleasure of attending this year's conference on our group's behalf. It was held at Landscape Ontario in Milton and it was very well attended. I estimate at least 100 people were present.

I found that the conference was very well organized. What would you expect at this level of our organization? It started on time with opening remarks, financial reports etc. It then moved on with "cameos". Each club had submitted pictures of their group involved in some activity. The Co-ordinators from each group then explained the activity. Our submission was our group at the Ontario Garden Show.

At various times during the day, the large group was split up into four discussion groups. This was done using a clever system of coloured dots.

FIRST DISCUSSION:

SUSTAINABILITY - MORTALITY OR IMMORTALITY FOR MGOI, led by Jane Beck (my group):

I will leak some information coming from this discussion:

- We need more young members!
- Some groups pay for $\frac{1}{2}$ or all of MGIT courses if successfully completed.

SECOND DISCUSSION:

PESTICIDE BAN- THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL, led by Gary Westlake (my group):

THIRD DISCUSSION:

MORAL GARDENERS - GARDEN ETHICS AIN'T EASY, led by Ann Ironside (my group):

All four discussion groups made copious notes and it is my understanding that all discussion points will be consolidated into a single report and then sent to the Co-ordinators. Depending how they turn out, we possibly could discuss them in one of our meetings.

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Our very own Belinda Gallagher was the Key Note Speaker. Her topic:
"IS HORTICULTURE DEAD? DEFINING GARDENING IN THE 21ST CENTURY. "

I cannot say enough good things about this presentation and the manner in which it was presented. Very well done, Belinda!

(*Thinking out loud*) - if we were to host a technical update in the near future this would be a super theme and presentation.

I went to the conference thinking it would be about "Being a Co-ordinator". They would offer support and ideas to the co-ordinators, i.e. lists of speakers, ideas for meetings, rules regarding member attendance, courses etc., possibly sharing ideas for programs, fund raising and so on. Any MG or MGIT could easily have joined in the discussion groups. However, having said this, I still enjoyed the day immensely.

A note to all:

The funds raised through the silent auction pays for next year's conference. Your donations are a good way to say thank-you to our Co-ordinators. Thanks to all who contributed items this year. The food (all day long) was wonderful and I would like to attend next year's conference.

SOME ADVICE FROM BELINDA:

- Know your stuff - using Botanical names
- Know your Audience
- Be Educators- not Advocates
- Be open minded
- Be cautious of trends

Share your passion about plants