



# Cross Pollination

September 2009

## Coordinator's Corner

### Many partnerships make it work

What a great year Halton Region Master Gardeners have had so far! We participated in the Ontario Garden Show and Canada Blooms, donating our time and expertise as speakers and at information booths. Feedback from our participation in RBG festivals indicates that our members thought there was great interest and there were good questions from the public, that the festivals were well organized and that our work was appreciated. I am especially pleased with the exceptional partnership that we have developed with the RBG and hope our members take a moment to express gratitude to those RBG staff members who have been so accommodating. These old partnerships as well as more recent ones from various groups such as *Plant a row/Grow a row* and *Pollination Canada* are giving our members the opportunity to share their gardening expertise in meaningful ways.



### Many hands make light work

I also feel we are going in a positive direction in our group by having more people share the workload.



The festival signup sheet filled up surprisingly quickly and I know some of you were there in all kinds of weather this year. We now have a committee of three people (June, Doris and Gerry) to plan the educational program of our meetings. Maureen has volunteered to work on membership and is keeping track of member status in order to make sure your years of service are recognized. Responsibility for refreshments is being shared on a monthly basis. Donna, Sheelagh, Lorne, Sheila, Jess and Maureen have all contributed written material to help our members serve the gardening public. June generously and graciously hosted

our summer BBQ and made us all feel welcome in her gorgeous garden and home. Some members are continuing in the same capacities: Patty our stellar treasurer, Marg the Queen of signup sheets, Christine our valued RBG contact and Dot our creative newsletter editor and thank you card creator. Thanks to all these members (and sometimes also their spouses and family) as well as anyone that I have inadvertently omitted for giving of their time to make Halton Master Gardeners such a special group.

Claudette Sims



## 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 from Marg for our first meeting:**

- *Bill Kertzylia - please bring snacks*
- *Claudette Sims - please bring beverages*
- *Everyone - please bring your own cup for beverages*

### 2009 meetings:

- October 7<sup>th</sup>
- November 4<sup>th</sup>
- December 2<sup>nd</sup>

### Other Garden-Worthy Dates

- September 12 - Niagara MG Plant Sale
- September 19 – Guelph Technical Update
- October 17 – MG Coordinators' conference

## REFRESHMENTS SCHEDULE:

MEETING	SNACKS (& NAPKINS)	BEVERAGES (& PAPER CUPS)
SEPTEMBER	Bill Kertzylia	Claudette Sims
OCTOBER	Marjorie Latimer	Marjorie Latimer
NOVEMBER	Doris Calder	Jess Cronin
FEBRUARY	Donna Parker	June Wright
MARCH	Karen Walsh	Patty King
APRIL	Maureen Millar	Larry Aldebert



## What should we, as Master Gardeners or MGIT's know about late blight?

*Submitted by June Wright*

A devastating infestation of late blight is sweeping through eastern North America.

**What is late blight:** It is an infection caused by the fungus *Phytophthora infestans*. This fungus was responsible for the Great Famine in Ireland in the 1850's which left millions starving as potatoes rotted in the fields.

**Which plants are affected:** Late blight attacks plants which belong to the Solanaceae family, one of the largest plant families. Species in this family include potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, chili peppers and many ornamentals. Petunias are also affected.

**What does it look like:** If the plant was infected by spores you will notice the disease in the leaves first. Tiny brown spots develop into greenish, grey or brown areas, expanding to envelop the whole leaf causing it to drop. If the seedlings were infected, the stems will initially exhibit brownish, black areas which eventually lead to a withering of the plant. Tomatoes will have rough skin and rotten texture.



Potato



Tomato

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**How do plants become infected and how does it spread:** The fungus survives in live plant material. Seed potatoes and seedlings which are infected are planted and the fungus starts to grow. Eventually millions of spores are produced which travel on the wind, land on damp plants and infect them. Spores are also washed off the infected plant by rain. The spores then enter the soil and contaminate the developing tubers of potatoes.

**Conditions for growth:** Phytophthera thrives in 15-21 degrees C days, with cool nights and high humidity, which would describe our past summer.

**Controlling late blight:** Organically there are no approved fungicides. Prevention and attempting to limit the disease spread are the only options. From an IPM perspective, there is no threshold of tolerance for the disease. Once it enters a crop it spreads rapidly. Constant surveillance of the crop to identify diseased plants early, pulling them and disposing of them in the garbage may help to limit its spread. Mainstream farmers will have to apply fungicides every 5-7 days, which is very expensive, time consuming and environmentally unfriendly.

**What can we do as gardeners:** Inspect our own plants for signs of late blight. If a plant is infected, pull it immediately and dispose of it in the garbage, not in the compost pile. We are trying to limit the production and dissemination of the spores. The following year, rotation of crops in the garden helps to prevent the rise of the disease.

**Material for the article was taken from:**

- Late Blight-Ontario Crop IPM from the Ministry of Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs
- New York State IPM at Cornell University;
- The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control

**Websites for additional information:**

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/IPM/english/tomatoes/diseases-and-disorders/late-blight.html>  
<http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/publications/blight/>



**Tomatoes**

