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## *Touring Dundurn Castle Grounds*

*By Patty King*

We were fortunate to have a lovely day for our tour of Dundurn Castle on August 19, home of Sir Allan Napier MacNab, one of Canada's first premiers.

We were offered a choice between an in- depth tour of the kitchen garden or the history of the property and in the end our two very accommodating and charming guides gave us both.

The addition of trees to the property came fairly late in Dundurn's history. Battlements were set out on the property during the

War of 1812 as protection from the American soldiers.

There was the necessity to see far afield especially from war ships coming up the lake around what is now Princess Point.

Today, the house is no longer visible from the water. Dundurn is still considered to be a picturesque landscape for its time.

The folly of the cock pit is one of the few picturesque elements remaining along with the large open landscape with the view to the

lake. The kitchen garden was re- designed to recreate Sir Allan MacNab's Victorian kitchen garden. The fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers that are grown here today must all be from heritage seeds and conform to the type of plants grown during the Victorian time. The food was grown to feed the family year round.

Following the tours many stayed behind for a picnic style lunch at the pavilion, for a very enjoyable end to our stay at Dundurn.



## *Pictures of Dundurn Grounds*



# Portulacaceae oderacea or in other words Purslane

By Christine Says



This is the tenacious fleshy thick leaved plant growing in the cracks of the walkway or anywhere else and you are trying to get rid of it – well don't.

You would be much better off eating it in either salads, soups, casse-

roles or anything else you can think of.

It is a powerhouse of nutrition. It contains the following:

- It is high in vitamin A and E, and the minerals phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, calcium, iron, zinc and is super rich in omega 3.
- It has all the B vitamins.
- It is low in cholesterol. Has beta carotene, fibre and antioxidants.
- It is also low in fat and high in protein.

It is also cheap it's on your property, or someone else's. I have cooked it and frozen it in baggies for winter consumption.

Mind you it can be a bit of a pain if you forget to cut it off just above the root otherwise you have to wash off more earth.

I just swish it around in a bucket of water (outside) spin off excess water and simmer it for a few minutes.

If you decide to use this wonderful much maligned plant you'll be jumping around like a jack-in-the box, so much energy.

## Events

1. Simcoe County MG's TU: 'Back to the Future' October 20, 2012
2. Canadian Master Gardener Conference 2013 at the Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville, Ontario Friday, April 5th to Sunday, April 7th, 2013
3. International Master Gardener Alaska conference 2013 update: <http://www.uaex.edu/imgc2013/> September 7-14, 2013

## Volunteer Opportunities

1. Turner Park Branch Hamilton Public Library are interested in presentations this fall. If you have ideas and/or are interested in participating let Patty know.
2. Discover Agriculture in the City Saturday October 13 (9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.) and Sunday October 14 (12 to 5 p.m.), 2012 at Burlington Mall. It is a free, family-oriented festival that explores how farming is all around us and the important role it plays in the province. The free event will feature interactive displays of farm and local organiza-
3. We can do an advice clinic or perhaps mini presentations on composting, putting the garden to bed, dividing

plants etc. If there is not enough interest I will cancel our application.



View of Princess Point

# Whistling Gardens

By Larry Aldebert

**S**ome 30-35 years ago a young boy was working in the family greenhouse with his Grandmother. He declared to her, "Grandma, someday, I am going to make a beautiful garden".

Approximately 2 years ago this young boy, now a man, was a guest speaker at the Georgetown Horticulture Society. Since then and for some time Eloise and I had planned to visit Whistling Gardens in Wilsonville, Ontario. Our plan came true on Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, which turned out to be the eve of the seventh anniversary of the Gardens.

Darren Heimbecker, the young boy, is the owner and planner of his dream garden. Darren was a most proud and gracious host to us as he shared his current and future plans. The Gardens were officially opened on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and are advertised as "Canada's newest Botanical Garden".

There we found 18 acres of landscaped gardens and 4 km of walking trails meandering through these 18 acres. The formal areas are based on the grounds of The Palace of Versailles. We wandered through a



Greek Temple Garden, Whistling Gardens

Welcome Garden, Marsh Garden, Formal garden, Redwood Forest, Conifer Garden, Rock Garden and a Temple Garden. Brides and Grooms love The Temple Garden for their wedding ceremonies.

The Middle Eastern Geometric garden contains 1500 or more Boxwoods. The Rock Garden, (1 acre), contains rocks and preserved fossils as well as several species of Cacti, (perhaps of interest to our upcoming speaker).

We finished our tour at the

outdoor stone Amphitheatre. There, we enjoyed a water fountain show of dancing waters choreographed to music. Apparently it is lit up but we were unable to see the lights as it was daylight.

Darren told us that he has plans to greatly expand the fountain show. He also states that he believes he has the largest public collection of Conifers in the world. There are 2300 different specimens. Darren said he is about to add 1000's of bulbs to his vast kaleidoscope of spring and fall colour and he was expecting a shipment of 700 trees in the next few days. Like all gardens, it will never be finished.

And yes, there is a retail area offering rare and unique plant treasures - of course we bought more plants!



Amphitheatre, Whistling Gardens

## ***Dealing with a Difficult Duo: Plants for the Dry Shade Garden***

By Dee Miron

Think colourful, bountiful blooms and think full, radiant sun and ample water. Think shade and think peaceful, cooling space populated with graceful ferns and soft moss. Now think dry shade. Creating and maintaining a beautiful garden in a shaded area where the soil dries out is a challenge. Light and water, two of the essentials to plant growth and health, are limited. In some cases you may be able to modify the conditions to bring more light and moisture to your garden. Luckily, the plant world consists of a diverse domain of species that populates a variety of environmental conditions, including plants that grow naturally in a dry shade habitat or at least tolerate such conditions.

### **How to get there:**

40 minutes from Hamilton, well worth the price! Information can be found at:

[www.whistlinggardens.ca](http://www.whistlinggardens.ca)

## *Plants for the Dry Shade Garden cont'd*



*Asarum canadense* or Wild Ginger

Shade can result from an overhead canopy of leaves, or it can occur from the shadows of buildings. The density of the leaf canopy can increase over time as the tree(s) mature and can eventually produce deep shade.

The amount and location of shade from buildings usually varies over the course of the day with the movement of the sun. Shade naturally reduces evaporation of water however the trees providing the shade may have large roots that compete for water and dry out the soil. Dryness can also result from loss of moisture through soil that has a high content of sand or stone allowing for easy drainage. Drainage is further promoted by a sloping terrain.

There are options to address the dryness without having to constantly water the area. One can amend the soil by digging in moisture-holding organic materials such as compost, mature manure, peat moss or seaweed. Adding a layer of mulch to the top of the soil will also reduce the evaporation of water. Preventing the mulch from drying out too much will help stop it from washing away in a hard rain. Increasing sunlight may be a little more difficult. Pruning to thin tree branches or removing lower branches to

raise the leaf canopy will let in more sun and lighten up some of the shaded area.

Finally, there is the wonderful world of plants. The plant world has produced many different species to adapt to all kinds of conditions. There are plants that will tolerate shade and there are plants that will tolerate drought. Finding plants that will tolerate some level of both of these conditions will take a little more effort. Searching the garden centres and nurseries for these remarkable survivors to create a beautiful spot out of dry shade can be an enjoyable past time. There are many native plants that naturally grow on the slope of a woodland forest. Spending some time in the woods can provide inspiration for your garden design.

Choosing plants for the dry shade garden requires consideration of how much shade

and how much dryness you have in your garden and how much of each the plants will tolerate. Not many plants are actual shade-lovers but there are many plants that will tolerate various levels of shade better than others. Some may end up with fewer flowers or be less lush but will look good just the same. Shade ranges from dappled or filtered to partial through to full or deep shade. Plant choices become more limited as the amount of shade increases. There are not many plants that do well in full or deep shade. On the other hand, drought-tolerant plants are often sun-loving plants that have adapted to living in dry conditions resulting from an abundance of sunshine and therefore are not designed for shade. Just as “shade-tolerant” does not mean “shade-loving, “moist, well-drained” soil does not mean “dry” soil. Many plants considered here prefer moist, well-drained soil however will tolerate some dryness. Therefore, it is best to seek out the ‘shade plant’ section of the garden centre, then single out those plants that will also tolerate drier conditions. As mentioned above, it is usually easier to manipulate drier conditions than shaded areas.

The plants discussed in this article have been researched through books, magazine articles, the internet and a Master Gardener course taken by the author through Nova Scotia



*Bergenia cordifolia*, Heartleaf Bergenia

**“Spending some time in the woods can provide inspiration for your garden design.”**

Agricultural College. Many of the plants are familiar to the author by direct experience in her own dry shade garden in southern Ontario, the result of a medium-sized Norway maple in the middle of a sloped and tiered area originally created by backfill and supported by a structure of rocks and boulders.

There are several woodland plants, such as trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), false Solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*) and sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) that will work in the dry shade garden, simply because their life cycle involves growing and blooming in the early spring before the ground has dried out and the leaf canopy has developed. Old-fashioned bleeding heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*) does well for the same reason then fades and dies back as the soil becomes drier in the summer.

Hostas (*Hosta spp.*) are the work horses of the dry shade garden. The large leaves not only prevent evaporation of the soil underneath they but come in countless varieties of size and colour. Juxtapositioning a Hosta with an autumn fern (*Dryopteris erythrosora*), which will do well if mulched, creates interest through the contrast in foliage. Hostas will produce stalks of mauve flowers in summer if not designated to a place of too much shade. Perennial geraniums, such as big root geranium (*Geranium macrorrhizum*), will bloom in light to partial shade and tolerate a certain amount of dryness, as do heartleaf bergenia (*Bergenia cordifolia*) and common foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*).

Groundcovers prevent evaporation as well as weeds due to their spread-

ing growth habit. Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) has pretty, little bluish flowers. The small, white flowers of Japanese spurge (*Pachysandra terminalis*) are rather inconspicuous. Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*) also can act as a groundcover due to its aggressive spreading via rhizomes. It is considered an invasive species (Ontario Invasive Plant Council) however the double-whammy of dry shade makes it somewhat easier to control.

Boxwoods (*Buxus spp.*), which are broadleaf, evergreen shrubs, prefer some shade, but not full shade. *Buxus sinica var. insularis* (syn. *Buxus microphylla var. koreana*) is a hardy boxwood that prefers well-drained soil and will do well if placed out of the wind. Mulching will help keep the roots moist. *Euonymus fortunei* is a broadleaf, evergreen shrub that tolerates most soil types and provides structure in the garden. The cultivar, 'Emerald Gaiety', has irregular white margins on the dark green leaves bringing an area of brightness to the shade. The cultivar, 'Coloratus', which also does well in dry shade conditions, can be grown as a groundcover. Leucothoe (*Leucothoe fontanesiana*) and Oregon grapeholly (*Mabonia aquifolium*) are broadleaf, evergreen shrubs that prefer partial shade and moist, well-drained soil. *Leucothoe fontanesiana* 'Rainbow' has graceful-looking, white flowers. *Mabonia aquifolium* has yellow flowers.

Don't forget to plant some spring bulbs in the fall. Like the early spring woodland flowers mentioned above, they bloom in the spring before the leaf canopy is out and the ground dries out and they add lots of colour and interest when the garden is otherwise rather barren looking. Some good bulbs for a dry shade garden are glory-of-the-snow



*Leucothoe fontanesiana*, Drooping leucothoe

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