

# CROSS POLLINATION

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



May  
2017

## Canada 150 — A celebration of red & white... & orange?

Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday just got a lot more colourful. The **Canada 150 tulip** was commissioned to honour the colours of the flag, supplied by a Netherlands grower, and distributed by Home Hardware. However, many gardeners are getting a sesquicentennial surprise because some of the flowers are blooming in different colours — or not at all. Some gardeners have reported that up to 80% of their bulbs have bloomed orange, pink, or yellow, with a disappointing number producing only foliage. For more info, including contributions from **Claudette Sims**, see: [cbc.ca/2017/canada-150-tulips-gardening-diaries-from-across-the-country-1.4026007](http://cbc.ca/2017/canada-150-tulips-gardening-diaries-from-across-the-country-1.4026007)



From a London gardener

## Original Trees of The Hammer

Original trees are remnants of the natural habitats that used to occur in our cities, now stranded amid the urban and suburban neighbourhoods that have been built up around them over the last 200 years. They're the oldest living things in our streets and, in many neighbourhoods, the last voices of our local natural heritage.

Field botanist, landscape designer, and native plant gardening expert Paul O'Hara has spent 20 years working with trees in the Golden Horseshoe, and offers his list of 12 favourite specimens, including the uncommon Hill's oak (*Quercus ellipsoidalis*), remnants of Hamilton Mountain's prairie past, the famous Tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) at Cross & Melville in Dundas, and Ancaster's giant White oak (*Quercus alba*) at Lloymin & Wade.

Read more at Trees Please Hamilton:

<https://treespleasehamilton.org/2017/05/02/tree-tuesday-original-trees-of-the-hammer/>

Trees Please



"Gardening is a matter of your enthusiasm holding up until your back gets used to it."

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**French Tarragon and the Russian Impostor** – Do you know the difference? French (*Artemisia dracunculoides*) is the one used in classic French cuisine, and is difficult to propagate, but the relatively flavourless Russian variety (*A. dracunculus*) is often the one seen for sale in garden centres. And French can't be grown from seed: Richter's and William Dam Seeds have it right, but Vesey's muddies the waters even further by selling as "tarragon" Mexican Mint Marigold aka Sweet Mace Tarragon (*Tagetes lucida*).



 **60cm**



 **150cm**



 **75cm**

The Laidback Gardener offers some history and tips for spotting the difference: [laidbackgardener.wordpress.com/2017/04/27/french-tarragon-and-the-russian-impostor/](http://laidbackgardener.wordpress.com/2017/04/27/french-tarragon-and-the-russian-impostor/)

## Garden Sharing – New Seed and Plant Exchanges Launched

Avid gardeners always seem to have an excess of some things (e.g., perennials needing division) and a desire to try out something new. To meet these needs, a couple of new exchanges have been launched in the spirit of sharing both plant materials and knowledge.

**PlantCatching**, based in Montréal but available worldwide, creates local connections to find free plants, bulbs and seeds, and to let you donate yours back to fellow gardeners. Most members are currently in Québec, but expanding in Ontario daily. [PlantCatching.com](http://PlantCatching.com)



**Linda Brentnall** also suggests the Centre for Food Safety's **Global Seed Network**, a seed exchange with a database searchable by location, plant type, climate suitability, etc. For example, there are currently 40+ types of beans listed, with notes on growing each. Members worldwide, currently primarily in the US, and growing in Canada.

[globalseednetwork.org](http://globalseednetwork.org)

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## An invasive reminder...

An illustration of how pervasive Garlic mustard can be... seen a few days ago at Wilson & Rousseaux in Ancaster.

Maybe it would help to post a sign inviting passers-by to pitch in and help...



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## Queen Rhubarb

Although considered by many to be one of the lowliest of 'fruits', to her fans, rhubarb is nothing short of garden royalty. With a history tracing back 5000 years to ancient China, where it was prized as a laxative, it eventually made its way to Europe in the Middle Ages, first in dried form travelling along the Silk Road with similarly prized tea, silk, and spices.

After it began to be cultivated in Europe, it was used as a vegetable in savoury dishes, but by the 1700s, the availability of cheap sugar in England transformed rhubarb's appeal to the tart-sweet dessert flavour we cherish today.



For more on the history, philosophy, growing, and consumption of Queen Rhubarb in her various disguises – including recipes to enjoy it in ways you've never thought of – see Gina Lorubbio's **Rhubarb: Celebrate What's Fleeting** at [smilinggardener.com/heirloom/rhubarb/](http://smilinggardener.com/heirloom/rhubarb/)



## Plants Hear Water

Ever wondered how trees have the uncanny ability to send their roots directly toward our water and sewer pipes, and thereby complicate our lives? New research from Australia shows that plants can 'hear' the sounds of flowing water and use the acoustical cues to guide the growth of their roots.

[anthropocenemagazine.org/2017/04/plants-hear-water/](http://anthropocenemagazine.org/2017/04/plants-hear-water/)

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## A Day on the Bridge

On Sunday, 11 June 2017 spend A Day On The Bridge with your family, friends and neighbours. Celebrate our magnificent natural surroundings while commemorating Canada's 150th birthday.

Enjoy food, fun, activities, arts and music on the bridge throughout the day, and then a gala fundraising dinner and grand finale celebration to cap off the night. Funds raised will be used to purchase and protect land that will become a part of the Cootes To Escarpment EcoPark System, one of the most biologically-rich areas of Canada

The historic McQuesten High Level Bridge offers a magnificent vantage point from which to view Cootes Paradise, Hamilton Harbour and the Niagara Escarpment.

[ADayOnTheBridge.ca](http://ADayOnTheBridge.ca)

[CootesToEscarpmentEcoPark.com](http://CootesToEscarpmentEcoPark.com)



*To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.*  
— Mahatma Gandhi