

CROSS POLLINATION

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



Sept.
2017

The Great Canada 150 Tulip Mystery SOLVED!

First, there was no specially designed 'Canada 150' tulip. It's just a trade name for an existing Dutch tulip created nearly 20 years ago. Second, Dutch tulip harvesters messed up the massive order, resulting in thousands of the wrong bulbs being shipped to Canada.

In truth, the bulb predates any thought about an official Canadian sesquicentennial tulip. The variety was actually registered with Dutch tulip authorities as 'Carnaval de Rio' in 1999. But Ottawa's National Capital Commission (Canada's #1 buyer of bulbs) travelled to Netherlands to select an official tulip for the sesquicentennial, and settled on Carnaval de Rio, "given that it evokes the Canadian flag". The 'Canada 150' trade name was then officially registered with the Royal General Bulb Growers' Association in Netherlands.

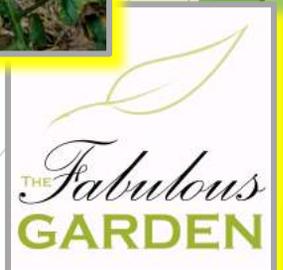


After the bloom colour problems were noticed, an investigation found that there was a small percentage (around 1% of bulbs sold) gathered and packed incorrectly in the Netherlands – "a human error issue in the supply chain process". As if Mother Nature weren't already fickle enough!

More on Tomatoes

As we observed in the last newsletter, our collective tomato obsession brings with it much advice from folks telling us in great detail what we should be doing to grow tomatoes as wonderful as theirs.

A refreshing change is the approach taken by Toronto garden blogger Jennifer Arnott, who discusses frankly her struggles with the crisp brown-ness that many of us see in our tomato gardens at this time of year. In addition to the usual doses of facts and good advice, Jennifer offers perspective: "This isn't the first year I've had less than perfect foliage on my tomatoes, and it won't be the last. I've looked into a lot of other people's vegetable gardens, including people who really know their tomatoes, and I know I'm not alone".



thefabulousgarden.com/blog/2017/08/31/tomato-problems-but-are-they-really-a-problem/



Weeds are flowers, too... once you get to know them. — A.A. Milne

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Can you name this insect?



We'll forgive you if you thought it was a wasp. People are fooled by the black & yellow markings. But take a closer look at the big bug eyes and you might start thinking: fly.

Hover flies (*Allograpta oblique*, also known as syrphid flies, flower flies, and drone flies) are true flies, but they look like small bees or wasps. They are the helicopters of the insect world, often seen hovering in the air, darting a short distance, and then hovering again. These beneficial insects are valuable tools in the fight against aphids, thrips, scale insects, and caterpillars.

Hover flies in gardens are a common sight throughout the country, especially where aphids are present. The adults feed on nectar as they pollinate flowers. The female lays her tiny, creamy white eggs near aphid colonies, and the eggs hatch in two or three days. The beneficial hover fly larvae begin feeding on the aphids as they hatch. After spending several days eating aphids, the hover fly larvae attach themselves to a stem and build a cocoon. They spend 10 days or so inside the cocoon during warm weather, and longer when the weather is cool. Adult hover flies emerge from the cocoons to begin the cycle again.

Hover flies are nearly as effective as ladybugs and lacewings at controlling aphids. A well-established population of larvae can control 70 to 80 percent of an aphid infestation, and also help control other soft-bodied insects.

The bright bands of colour on a hover fly's abdomen probably help to defend the insect from predators. The bright colour makes them look a lot like wasps so that predators, such as birds, might think they can sting. You can tell the difference between hover flies and wasps by their heads, which look like typical fly heads. Another identifying factor is that flies have two wings, while wasps have four.

Plants that attract hover flies include fragrant herbs such as oregano, garlic chives, sweet alyssum, buckwheat, and bachelor buttons.

Of course, it helps to have an abundance of aphids in the garden too!



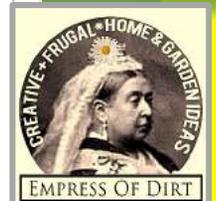
Death has come for me many times, but finds me always in my lovely garden and leaves me there, I think, as an excuse to return. — Robert Brault

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Dealing with Japanese Beetles

This summer's abundance of rain will likely lead to next year's overabundance of the dreaded Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*). Not known to be a picky eater, it has a voracious appetite for virtually everything in your garden, leaving behind only the skeletonized remains of your prized plants.



We've often been told the only reliable method of dealing with them is to hunt them down and destroy them manually. Strathroy's **Empress of Dirt**, Melissa Will, discusses the pros and (mostly) cons of pheromone traps, then offers her best advice for dealing with the pests. Difficulties arise because they congregate in groups, so even if you're successful in killing 1 or 2, many others have dropped to the ground or flown away to resume their meals on neighbouring plants.

Melissa recommends a two-pronged approach, starting with duct tape wrapped around the fingers for trapping beetles, and ending with dunking them into soapy water before discarding. She has even made YouTube video to demonstrate:

<https://youtu.be/hTC-IC3oXHk>

While you're there, you can subscribe to her YouTube channel, or visit her blog at: empressofdirt.net. She currently has some great advice on how to take fall hardwood cuttings of ornamental shrubs — a great way to stretch your gardening dollar!

Ontario's Greenway Program needs our help

The **Greenway Program** was established to restore & maintain a livable landscape in southern & eastern Ontario in the face of ever-increasing population & development. It creates Greenways — webs of interconnected core natural areas & corridors — to conserve biodiversity & enhance resilience in the face of climate change. A draft proposal was released 6 July, but important habitats in fast-growing areas such as Wellington & Waterloo are not adequately represented in the draft plan. This needs to be fixed. The proposed system builds on the current Oak Ridges Moraine & the Greenbelt Plans. Linking these natural heritage systems is key to creating a more resilient, healthy landscape, but the proposed connecting corridors are much too narrow — only 500 metres wide (compared to corridors in the Oak Ridges Moraine up to 2km wide).

The program now asks for public help to urge the Minister of Natural Resources & Forestry to ensure stronger protection for nature across the Greater Golden Horseshoe. Decisions made now will have a lasting impact for our water, nature, and communities. 725 emails have currently been sent to the Minister, and you can easily add yours to the list with just a few mouse clicks (send the template message or compose your own) by visiting:

ontarionature.org/protect/habitat/greenway_program.php



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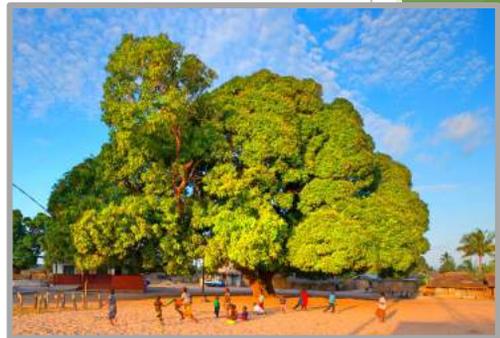
The Wisdom of Trees

While not strictly a local gardening topic, a page devoted to trees will never go amiss. Trees are nature's memory stick, even at the molecular level. "Each growth layer that they put on every year contains a bit of the air from that year, transformed into carbon, and so the tree physically holds the years and years of the life of the city." — Benjamin Swett, author of *New York City of Trees*.

Read their stories at nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2017/03/wisdom-of-trees/



The Montezuma Cypress in Mexico, where expressways were diverted and wells dug to keep it healthy.



The Palaver (storytelling) Mango in Mozambique, where stories are handed down through the generations.



Newton's 'Gravity' Apple Tree, which was uprooted in an 1820 storm, but regrew from its roots and remains today.



The Child-Giving Ginkgo in a Japanese temple, reputed to bring fertility to worshippers.



The Pando clonal colony of Quaking Aspens in Utah: 47,000 genetically identical tree trunks covering 106 acres, estimated to weigh 13 million pounds, began life from a single seed tens of thousands of years ago.



We have descended into the garden and caught three hundred slugs. How I love the mixture of the beautiful and the squalid in gardening. It makes it so lifelike. — Evelyn Underhill, *Letters*

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