

The GARDEN POST

Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society



May - June 2021

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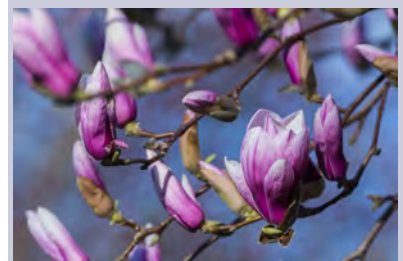
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Members' Gardens Spring to Life

GREENING and BLOOMING in the Mill Pond neighbourhood.



Trees, shrubs, and flowers are blooming and adding colour to our lives. These two photos were taken by Chris Robart while walking around the Mill Pond.



The Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society is an active member of District 15 of the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA)



From Doreen's Desk

Spring has sprung! Those few weeks of warmth in March had many of us taking a second look at the blooms and flowers pushing through the earth in our yards and on the trails as we took a hike or stroll. For some, the sudden growth raised concerns that a frost in early April could cause havoc.

In my front garden, about half of my 200+ tulips burst from the ground to stand tall by mid April! Some sedum and other plants started reappearing amidst the dead leaves left from their last year's glory. By April, the 1st of the daffodils around the pool had raised their lovely yellow heads.

It does my heart good to see this rebirth after a cold winter. After my "call for photos" in mid March done so that we could share that new growth, I was thrilled when several members were kind enough to send me their pictures. And that is why I dedicated our front cover and several articles to the "greening" and "blooming" of spring.

Some members are apparently like me—checking out their gardens to see not only what has grown but how fast it is growing, and to see if there are any signs of late spring or even summer plants starting to show. Some had their eyes on the trees and shrubs. Others are busily hardening off houseplants to take them back outdoors for the summer. Many have been planting seeds or propagating plants to have good sized healthy seedlings to plant outdoors in April and May. Not to mention the plants made from cuttings and propagation by our Greenhouse team in preparation for the ONLINE Plant Sale! We've already sold Compost to get us started and now the Plant Sale is in full swing having started April 22nd. And to water the plants in an ecological way, we are selling rain barrels to both members and the public! Order at rainbarrel.ca/richmondhillgarden/.

Best Regards,
Doreen Coyne, President

A quick thank you to the following members that sent in their spring photos: *Monica Ahrens, Nancy Andrews, Martin Chen, Dinah Gibbs, Heather Gray, Sally Hossain (for the Greenhouse team), Diana Li, Linda Lynott, Dave McCulloch, Raf Ollivierre, Rahe Richards, Chris Robart (pictures of our Public Gardens, the Library garden, and more), Jean Roberts, Jelenko Skakavac, Judy Shi, Ingrid Sunar, and Lyne Webb. With such wonderful photos, they were used on the front cover, placed in articles within this newsletter, in Gardening Tips and will be used in future editions. Also, thanks for permission to publish from Megan Bernard.*



The Garden Post is a bi-monthly newsletter of the Richmond Hill Garden & Horticultural Society

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Check out the latest issue of the OHA newsletter

Read this latest edition of the Trillium, the OHA newsletter, now available on the OHA website's NEWS page or by clicking [this link](#). The online version is free to read online or download for reading at your leisure. You can also register to have it emailed to you at no charge. But if you need a printed copy, you can sign-up for a nominal fee to have it mailed to you. Email your request to the Trillium Distribution lead using email ohatrillium@gmail.com

WHAT'S COMING UP AT THE HORT

May 4, 2021 General Meeting: Jeanne McRight, speaking on "Low Maintenance Boulevard Gardens"



Attendees of tonight's presentation will learn how to replace high-maintenance turf with drought-proof, salt-resistant, no-mow boulevard gardens. With a focus on benefits provided by beautiful native plants, Jeannie McRight's key message is that if we grow flowers instead of grass, we can sit back and enjoy the results! Her presentation includes plant selection, design, installation and care.

BIO: *Master Gardener Jeanne McRight is Founder and President of **Blooming Boulevards** (www.BloomingBoulevards.org), Mississauga's exciting new environmental organization promoting native plant boulevard gardens for pollinators. Jeanne is a professional artist-educator, a Director for the Cloverleaf Garden Club, and a passionate and award-winning advocate for environmentally sustainable horticultural practices.*

June 1 2021 General Meeting: David Dutkiewicz, speaking on "Gypsy Moth in Ontario 2020"



2020 was a banner year for gypsy moths in Ontario – the worst ever! This is an invasive moth that, in earlier life stages, has a huge appetite for a variety of trees and shrubs. Attendees of tonight's presentation will learn why the gypsy moth deserves our attention, the moth's life stages, and techniques we can use to help reduce the population.

BIO: *David Dutkiewicz is an Entomology Technician with the **Invasive Species Centre** (www.InvasiveSpeciesCentre.ca), working in the insect diagnostics lab at the Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie. David earned a Master of Science degree in Environmental Science from the University of Guelph. His professional work is focused on forest pests and invasive species, with a specialization in beetles and moth/butterfly larvae.*

July 6, 2021. General Meeting: Christine Gill, speaking on "Growing Beautiful Delphiniums"



Major topics within her presentation will include: Growing delphiniums in Garden Beds for leisure & pleasure; the importance of care & maintenance for longevity in the garden; growing from seed & the preparations necessary; and watering & fertilization for beautiful delphiniums.

BIO: *Christine Gill has been gardening in Canada since her first garden in Oshawa in 1979. Her speaking engagements on Delphiniums, Rock Gardens, Perennials, Herbs, etc., keep her in touch with the gardening world. She is an accredited RBG Horticultural Judge, an accredited OHA Judge for Horticulture & Design, and a charter member of the Ontario Delphinium Club.*

August 2, 2021. General Meeting: Ben Cullen, speaking on "Take your Harvest to the Next Level"



In Ben's talk he will share several creative ideas and inspirations to make the most of your growing season.

BIO: *Ben is a fourth-generation urban gardener and graduate of both the University of Guelph and Dalhousie University. Ben is Mark Cullen's son and founder of [Cullen's Foods](#). He works together with Mark on a number of gardening-related endeavors, including authoring of a weekly article for the *Toronto Star*, and production of the monthly *Green File* podcast.*



What's the difference between propagating plants and leaf cuttings?

A stem cutting produces new roots, and a root cutting produces new stems. Some plants can be grown from leaf pieces, called leaf cuttings, which produce both stems and roots. The scions (young shoot or twig) used in grafting are also called cuttings. Propagating plants from cuttings is an ancient form of cloning.

Taking Houseplants Outdoors

Most house plants benefit from being outside during the summer months and some even flower around that time after going into dormancy during the winter. Since most house plants are from the tropics, they are unable to endure the cold weather at the beginning of the growing season. Therefore, they must be "hardened" to the weather outside.

To "Harden" House Plants:

- All signs of frost must be over and temperatures constantly around 15 degrees, which will be around mid-May. Keep an eye out for late frost and avoid early heat waves.
- Repot those that need it and refresh the others, by replacing some of the old soil with fresh potting soil.
- Find a shelter – a garage, shed or enclosed patio, or deck. The plants coming outside for the first time are not used to wind and heat. You have to gradually get them used to the weather change. If you put them out in the middle of the yard or patio, they will get sun burnt and wind swept. Find a sheltered place to put them as they get accustomed to being outdoors. Even an outdoor spot where they won't get direct sun nor harsh breeze will be good.
- Put plants outside for two to three hours then take them back in. Do this for a two or three days.
- Increase the hours to four or five each day and repeat that for another few days.
- Prepare the area where they are going to spend the summer months.
- After hardening, they are ready to go out for the summer. Note, Amaryllis plants should be planted in the garden in an area providing partial shade.
- Follow the requirements of watering and fertilizing for each plant.
- Since most succulents and cacti are usually in pots without holes, drain out water if they get rained on to avoid rot.

To Return Houseplants to the House:

- Between mid-September to early October or when frost is expected, reverse the spring "hardening".
- Cut down on watering and fertilization as required by each plant.
- For Christmas cactus, let them experience the first frost before bringing the plants in.
- Dig out Amaryllis and put the plant in a cool dark cupboard for about six weeks. Then repot the plant and put in a sunny place to bloom.

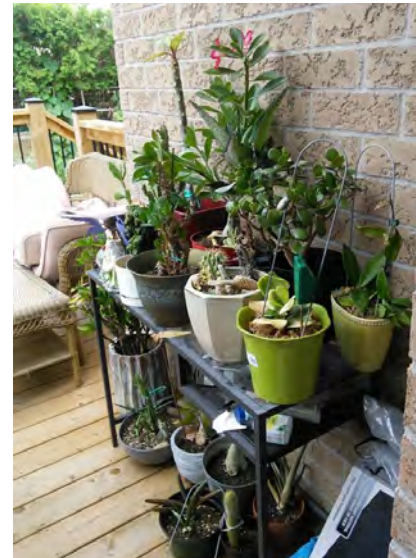
SUMMER BULBS/RHIZONES

For early growing and blooming times, pot up (Dahlias, Canna lily, Calla lily and Gladiola) in April and put them in sunny location inside your house to start to grow. Follow the "Hardening" procedure when their leaves appear and then plant them (minus the pot) in the garden or place outdoors as a potted plant.

Article and photos by Rahe Richards



Rahe moves many of her house plants outdoors to the patio each year.



Martin Chen also moves his red Hibiscus outdoors in early April each year. Photo by Martin Chen.

Square Foot Gardening

Recap of our Mar. 10th, Growing Vegetables Seminar, Module 3 with Guest Speaker **Kathleen Gorsline**
Recap authored by Cathy Nikolaidis

In Module 3 of the *Vegetable Growing Series*, Kathleen Gorsline provides the how-to of **Square Foot Gardening**. Square foot gardening is an efficient growing method that focuses on the specific vegetable plant, spacing, soil, weed control and reduction of food waste. This method is based on the best-selling gardening book by Mel Bartholomew.



Our Speaker:
Kathleen Gorsline

Soil Composition and Natural Fertilizers

Kathleen reviews macro and micro nutrients, soil pH and NPK ratios in fertilizer. Nitrogen (N) promotes strong leaves and stem growth. Phosphorous (P) assists with strong roots, flower budding and setting of fruit. Potassium (K) contributes to overall plant strength and disease resistance. Calcium is a micronutrient that assists with the absorption of phosphorous and helps build soil structure. It binds organic and inorganic components together. In order to absorb phosphorous, soils require a pH between 6.5 – 6.8. PH soil test kits are available at a hardware soil. Make compost in a backyard composter. The ratio is 2/3 Brown to 1/3 Green material. Other natural slow-release fertilizers are Bloodmeal, Bonemeal and Chicken Manure Pellets.

Square foot Gardening Planting methods

One square foot garden bed that measures 4 x 4 feet will create 16 square foot planting areas. Kathleen suggests each of the quantities of vegetable categories specified below to separate squares: Tomato (1); Cucumber (2); Eggplant (1); Squash (2); Pepper (1); Broccoli (1); Beets (16); Swiss Chard (4); Carrots (16); Yellow or Green Beans (9).

Per Square Foot	Plant
1	Broccoli, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Corn, Eggplant, Musk Melon, Pepper, Tomato
2	Cucumbers, summer squash
4	Swiss Chard, Lettuce, Parsley
9	Peas, Beans, Onions, Spinach
16	Green Onions, Radishes, Beets, Carrots

Another planting suggestion per square foot section: Kathleen describes how to plant within a square foot section to maximize crop production. For example, 16 radishes can be planted around the perimeter of the square foot. Then, moving inward, 4 lettuces can be planted closer to the center with an eggplant occupying the center. As radishes mature quickly, they will be harvested and lettuce will have enough space to grow. Finally, by the time the eggplant matures, the lettuce will be past its best and can be removed.

One Planting in a 4 X 4 ft. square can grown one of these quantities of vegetables.	
4 Heads Oak Leaf Lettuce	32 radishes
16 standard size carrots	16 scallions
8 bunches spinach	9 Japanese Turnips
4 heads salad bowl lettuce	1 head cabbage
16 beets and beet greens	1 head broccoli
5 pounds sugar snap peas	1 head cauliflower
8 bunches of Swiss chard	16 small round carrots
4 heads romaine lettuce	4 heads Ruby lettuce

Other suggestions for successional planting include planting green beans in a new square every two weeks. Plant Fall or cool season crops in August to replace beans that are ready to be removed.

Some vegetables prefer shade. Root vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, turnips, potatoes and beet grow well in 4 – 6 hours of sunlight. Mesclun, lettuce, spinach, kale, bok choy, and chards prefer 2 – 4 hours of partial sun.

When starting a raised bed, use nails and string to establish a square foot grid pattern. Kathleen notes that seed germination rates have improved considerably; therefore, it isn't necessary to use all the seeds at once, but instead, stagger planting dates for more efficiency.

Planting by Canadian Zone Hardiness

The Canadian Plant Hardiness Zone for Richmond Hill is Zone 6c. There are approximately 150 -170 frost free days. In Richmond Hill, our last Spring frost free date is May 3 and in Fall, it is October 8th.

Additional Planting Ideas

In pioneer days, they planted by the Moon. In 2021, April 4 is the full moon. The two days before the full moon, the soil holds more moisture and it is a good time for planting. The gardening season can be extended by using row covers and shade cloth for weather and pest

Crops	Zone C
Asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Cabbages, lettuce*, onions (set, seed, Spanish), radishes, rhubarb, peas, spinach, parsnips*, early potatoes*	April 15 - 25
Lima beans, cucumbers, eggplant, muskmelons, peppers, pumpkins, squash, watermelons	May 25 - June 5
Snap beans, sweet corn, tomatoes (after June 1)	May 15 – 25

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protection. Mini hoop tunnels, poly tunnels, greenhouse, cloches and cold frames are useful. Kathleen recommends the book, **Growing Under Cover** by Nicki Jarbour for more ideas. Kathleen uses cloches to protect her tulips from rabbits.

One Yard Revolution by Patrick Dolan explains how to create a hoop house over a square foot garden raised bed. It will create a mini greenhouse out of your bed. He also gives tips on using coffee grounds and eggshells in the garden.

For small spaces, a variety of square foot combinations can be made. Consider a single square foot planter or cloth cubes. A Tiny Tim dwarf tomato can be planted with basil. Basil will deter thrips. **Plant Partners** by Jessica Walliser is suggested for a science-based approach.

Finally, there are additional advantages to square foot gardening. Most vegetable plants only need 6 inches of soil. You start with perfect soil and so roots don't have to reach for nutrients. Turning your soil is unnecessary. It's easy to visualize planting, eliminate over-planting and an over abundance of harvesting. Watering is concentrated to a small area. And lastly, you'll find that weeding is reduced.

OIPC Helps Take Action Against Invasive Plants

We've all heard of invasive plants and know about Native Plants. But have you heard of the OIPC?

The **Ontario Invasive Plant Council (OIPC)** is an incorporated, non-profit, multi-agency organization founded in April 2007 by a group of individuals and organizational representatives who saw the need for a coordinated provincial response to the growing threat of invasive plants. Their staff work out of OIPC's office in Peterborough. Their mandate is to provide leadership, expertise and a forum to engage and empower Ontarians to take action on invasive plant issues.

The OIPC has created a network of over 600 people to receive and share information on invasive plants. It holds annual general meetings and invasive plant symposiums. Its committees work on increasing awareness across the province, reviewing legislation, identifying gaps in order to make change. They provide leadership, expertise and a forum to engage and empower Ontarians against invasive plant issues. They do this by providing expert information on how to manage invasive plants through their forum, seminars, and workshops.

You may want to visit their Resources page and download a pdf of one or more of their documents:

- [Best Management Practices](#) - A Collection of 23 documents on Best Practises plus 14 Bulletins on controlling specific invasive plants.
- [Fact Sheets](#) - A group of post cards, posters, etc. to help identify invasive plants and ensure you don't accidentally bring them home with you are camping or boating.
- [Grow Me Instead](#) - A guide to know which native plants could replace an invasive plant.
- [Technical Documents](#) - Such things as Landowner's guides, Reference Guides, Clean Equipment Protocols, et al.
- [Resources for Teachers](#) - Some resources for grade 4 and 6 students.

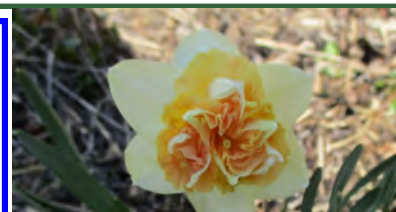
Know that non-native plants that are not invasive can always be an excellent choice for our gardens.

From the Editor

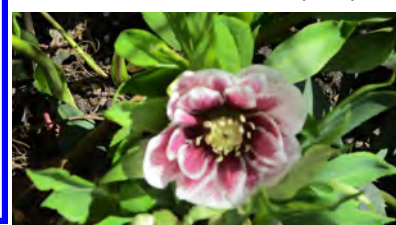


THE GARGANTUA

Doreen Coyne's friend Megan took a picture on April 6th of this newly sprouted plant to the left in a park close to her home near White Rock, BC. She tells me it is a Gargantua plant. If you look at the photo on the left, you'll find Megan standing beside the adult version of the plant last fall in the same park! *Photos courtesy of Megan Bernard.*



Above: Linda Lynott's Narcissus, Flower Parade; Below: Helleborus Winter Jewel, Painted Doubles. Photos by L. Lynott



Remembering When we Could Travel

Article and Photos by Rahe Richards

As March 2021 ends, memories of Peter and I planning for our annual pre-Pandemic vacations return. We love going to countries with different cultures and sights and eating foods not found in North America. The last one being the summer of 2019 in Thailand where, with the help of a tour company we had a great time visiting several towns and cities. Thailand has many cultural attractions which include the following.

In Bangkok, first things we saw at the airport were orchids of different colours and varieties in full bloom in planters all over the common areas. Every street corner, one could see different assortments of made-up planters like old tires with orchids growing, some hanging on trees. One would have thought the pollution from traffic with kill them, but they were thriving.



We went to a floating market in Bang Khlo, where the vendors sold their goods in floating canoes on a river and customers stood at the banks and haggled and bought goods as they passed by. We also visited a Flower Market with a sea of different colours of fresh flowers on sale. These were for people to buy for the temples. We saw vegetables of different cultivars than we have in North America.



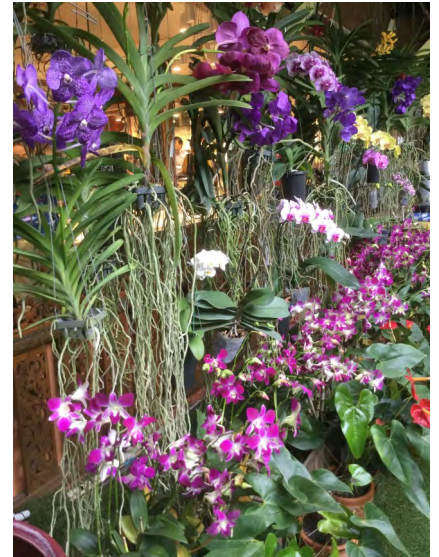
In Chiang Mai, we visited an elephant attraction place where we saw elephants of all sizes doing various activities including painting pictures for sale, and giving rides through a nearby forest and river. Peter had a ride. We fed elephants with buckets full of bananas as they played with us by putting hats on visitors' heads or "shaking hands" with their trunks. We saw many native women with necks that had been stretched very long and held up by rows of rings.

Photos in the article by Rahe Richards and Peter McEwan.



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Imagine arriving at an orchid farm in Mae-Rim, where we were surrounded by orchids of different varieties and colors. As an Orchid lover and collector, I was in heaven. There was information on how to grow and take care of the different varieties of orchids. Unfortunately, no one could buy any to take home due to restrictions.



In Phuket, we visited Buddha temples everywhere we went. After two days of visiting Buddha temples all day long, we were “Buddha-ed out” and did end up missing a few temples.

We went to a Disney type of attraction called “Fantasea” in Phuket where before the shows, we were treated to a huge banquet hall full of all you can eat food as far as the eye could see. It took over fifteen minutes to walk around and observe the cooking of several dishes trying to decide which ones we wanted to eat first. We saw a rare white Bengal tiger and ended up seeing an elephant show telling a legendary medieval tale of a conquering Prince.

Remembering all these simple, yet delightful, activities in Thailand and in other countries around the world are great. But with the Pandemic putting a stop to all that, it is also disheartening. It will be great if everyone did their share to follow the protocols in place and to have the vaccine, so the world could return to “normal” again. Then we can start planning trips again. I’m looking forward to a time when Peter and I can safely take another exciting trip.



OHA & District 15 News

2021 OHA CONVENTION GOES VIRTUAL

Plans for a July 2021 Convention are being finalized. I’m sure we all look forward to it with hopeful hearts. It will be virtual, so the agenda will be different. There’s still talk of a flower show, photo and/or publications competition, seminars, and of course the business meeting. More details will be available soon on the OHA website.

**PLUS: District 15 AGM: ONLINE. Sat., May 15, 2021, 1:00 pm.
OHA Meeting: ONLINE. May 28, 2021, 7 pm.**

OHA Convention July 2021



Selecting the Right Soil & Fertilizer

Recap of our Mar. 24th, Growing Vegetables Seminar, Module 4 with Guest Speaker Robert Pavlis
Recap authored by Debbie Coleman

Robert started his presentation listing the 4 types of soil and then went into other types of alternate soil material listing the pros and cons of each. Knowing this detail per soil type makes a good foundation for understanding which type will work best in your gardens and lawns.

- **Top Soil** is the 4-5" thin layer of dark soil just below the surface of your lawn. It is full of microbes, organic material, nutrients, and minerals. This desirable soil is full of organic matter. As you go deeper down into the soil it becomes lighter and lighter because there is less organic matter.
- **Triple Mix** should be a combination of 1/3 soil, 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 compost. This contains lots of organic matter and is a good choice for most applications.
- **Garden soil** could be anything. There are no regulations or definitions for garden soil. If using garden soil from a reputable source, it is probably a good choice. If it is a no-name brand, it may not be as good.
- **Sand** contains no organic matter. It provides good drainage but does not hold a lot of nutrients.



Alternates to soil:

- **Soiless material:** These include compost (good organic matter), peatmoss, vermiculite, perlite, and coir (aka coco bale). Coir is a waste product made up of ground-up coconut husks. It resembles and acts much like peat moss.
- **Potting Soil:** This is typically a mix of peat moss or sometimes coir. Potting soil allows the plants to grow faster and is used mostly for heating, agriculture and forestry. The horticultural industry uses less than 1% of the volume of potting soil sold. It contains a lot of air (25%) and water thus good for root growth. Adding compost to potting soil will add needed nutrients.

Considering both soil and soiless materials, only compost, peat moss, coir and clay hold on to nutrients in the soil. Whereas, perlite, vermiculite and sand do not hold nutrients. They only provide air and water retention and drainage. Compost, due to its organic matter, is the only component that provides nutrients that feeds the soil.



Speaker: Robert Pavlis

Continuing, Robert discussed traits of fertilizer. We all are familiar with the N-P-K ratings shown on bags of fertilizer; he explained how each reacts in the soil.

- **Nitrogen** is soluble and is taken quickly and deeply into the soil.
- **Phosphate** is very slow to penetrate the soil when applied to the surface. It could take years to move deep enough into the soil to have any benefit. If your soil is phosphate deficient, it is best to add it to the root depth of your planting hole. You could consider placing some under or near the seed as you plant them – but not touching the seeds.
- **Potassium** is somewhere in the middle, it penetrates slower than nitrogen and faster than phosphate. When put into water it separates into a potassium ion and a nitrate ion. It needs to separate into these two components before plants can absorb it. From the Science world, when potassium nitrate (KNO_3) is mixed with water, the K separates from the NO_3 which needs to happen for plant

growth. If your soil is high in clay, that has the benefit of keeping the nutrients near the plants longer. This is due to the clay's ion charge. This process is known as Cation Exchange Capacity (CEC). There is a high CEC in peat moss which helps explain why potting soil is good for plant growth.

Next, he reviewed both organic and synthetic fertilizers. The chemicals from these are identical. The difference that the synthetics release their nutrients and nitrogen faster. Thus, they are immediately available to the plants whereas organic fertilizers are slower to decompose taking months or years to release the fertilizer to the soil. Organic material holds carbons (humus) and builds up the micro populations, including micronutrients, in the soil which build good soil. Organic fertilizer breaks down into two groups:

- **Solid** - compost, leaf mold, manure, vermicompost (worm castings), plant meal (alfalfa), kitchen scraps. All have organic matter containing carbon.

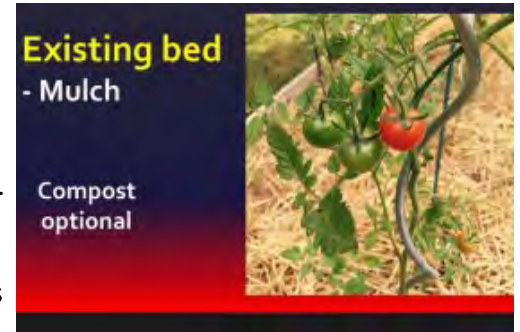
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- **Liquid** – kelp, seaweed extract, fish emulsion, blood meal, compost tea. The first 3 are essentially water with low nutrients. The others, such as bone meal, humic acid, bloom booster compost tea, rock dust. Most of our soil contains sufficient amounts of phosphates. Phosphates do not make more blooms. Blooms are made when you have the right proportions. Liquid fertilizers behave like synthetic fertilizers. However, he noted that home remedies such as banana peels, coffee grounds, eggshells, molasses, milk do not work in his experience. We may be more accustomed to using liquid organics for our indoor plants; some use them for outdoor plants as well. He also noted that bloodmeal is a solid but acts more like a liquid. There are also quick-release versions and soluble versions – some with added micronutrients. Therefore, they are organic but act more like synthetic ones.

He concluded his section on fertilizer stating there is no such thing as plant-specific fertilizer. You need to replace the nutrients that are missing from your soil. You want to feed the soil not your plants. The soil will feed your plants. Most plants need a 3-1-2 fertilizer. Nitrogen is usually is short supply and is washed away quickly. This is what usually limits plant growth.

Robert then moved on to discuss solutions for common garden issues:

- **Filling in low spots or dips in your lawn:** Robert recommends using topsoil rather than triple mix. Triple mix is made up of 2/3 organic matter and will decompose quickly and leave you with low spots again the next year. Topsoil does not have as much organic matter and will not decompose or settle as does triple mix. So it will hold up longer.
- **Containers:** The most common material used for containers is a potting mix or a soilless mix. This is made up of mostly peat moss which holds or carries nutrients but does not contain nutrients. You would have to add fertilizer regularly. He suggests a mix of 50% garden soil, 30% soilless mix, 20% compost.
- **Raised beds:** A triple mix is a good option. However, it needs to be fertilized. Robert recommends topsoil + compost, as it won't settle as much due to the amount of organic matter.
- **Existing Beds and landscape beds.** For these, he recommends mulch and compost. No fertilizer is needed.
- **Vegetable garden.** Compost is good for a long-term feeder and increases the organic matter. Use a synthetic fertilizer for faster growth of plants. For mulch, he recommends straw, rather than woodchips.



In the Q&A. Robert answered a question concerning the pH for soil. Plants like a pH rating of 6-7, making 6.5 a great reading! Note: pH below 7 is acidic, pH above 7 is basic, 7 is neutral. Robert stated that plants can naturally “condition” the soil around their roots – in a way, fixing the pH level themselves. This is great for pH levels near optimum. Although it can be very hard to lower the soil’s pH, you can mix in new soil or even slightly acidic soil to lower its pH. This will likely need to be repeated each year unless you do [crop rotation](#). When the pH level is too high (7 to 14) many plants will not grow properly. If your soil is acidic, perhaps a 5, then you can add some lime (from the stone, not the fruit) to raise it to a 6.

You can learn more about selection of the right soil and fertilizer by listening to the replay of this session using [this link](#). For more information from Robert Pavlis, go to his website: <https://www.gardenfundamentals.com/>.

Members’ Prep for Summer Greening

Dinah Gibbs is growing seedlings. Judith Shi’s husband Johnny made an outdoor greenhouse for seedlings and Jelenko Skakavac is starting a new garden bed for vegetables!



Blooming at the Greenhouse for the Plant Sale

BUY ONLINE NOW: FLOWERS, SUCCULENTS, HERBS & VEGGIES.



Although entry into the Greenhouse has been limited to 1 person at a time since January 2021, committee members have been taking turns ensuring plants are kept watered and doing plant propagation and maintenance. There will be a reduced amount of plant material available for sale this year due to the reduced number of hours that volunteers are allowed into the Greenhouse. Some of the plants available for sale include - Succulents (Echeveria "Topsy Turvy", Snake plant, Opuntia), Ice plant, Tradescantia Spathacea, Martha Washington Geraniums, Coleus, Begonia, Fuchsia, Citronella, Lavender and Spider plants.



Vegetables and herbs include Kale, Swiss Chard, Spinach, Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Tomatoes, Basil, Rosemary, and Thyme. This year the plant sale will be online with curbside pickup. It will be a rolling sale moving from compost, to succulents to flowers, then to vegetables. A "How to Buy Online" guide, was prepared by Susan Biensch for the online store. Compost is now on sale in 30 lb bags. The Greenhouse team has worked hard to grow plants to sell and now the plant sale is happening! Plants are being added each week. Login to view and buy plants at our [online store](#).
Article & Photos by Sally Hossain.



NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome our newest members

Eleanor Cosman, from Thornhill, joined on Feb 21, 2021. She has advanced gardening skills and heard about us from an online gardening newsletter. Her hobbies and interests include photography, reading, bridge, golf, hiking, and cooking.

Diane Sousa joined on Feb 25 and after enjoying Deb Coleman's "Veggie #2" presentation she decided to join the society. She has novice gardening skills and her hobbies and interests are golf and cooking.

Heather Gray joined on Feb. 27 having heard about us from a Society member. She has intermediate gardening skills with interests in floral design & judging. She'd like to volunteer by helping at the plant sale, flower shows, and at the Open Gates Garden Tours.

Sandra McClelland joined the Society on Feb 28 and has Intermediate gardening skills.

Roberta Jennings is from Toronto and joined on March 1, 2021. She heard about our Society from another member and has Intermediate gardening skills.

Nancy Zupancic, from Thornhill, joined on March 1st. She had attended plant sales in the past and has advanced gardening skills. Her interests include travel and she'd like to volunteer by helping at the plant sale and by opening her garden for the Members' Garden Visits.

Robert Francescutto has intermediate gardening skills. His hobbies and interests include photography and woodworking. He'd like to volunteer in the following ways: helping tend a public garden, helping at the plant sale, welcoming new members, flower shows, photography meetings, events, and manning the society booth at special events. His membership started on March 4.

Rajiv Persaud is a former member who rejoined on Mar. 15, 2021. He has novice gardening skills. His hobbies and interests in photography, hiking, and skiing. He'd like to volunteer by helping with publicity, helping at the Open Gates Garden Tour, and as the need arises.

Diane and Colin Chan heard about us from the OnRichmondhill.com online newsletter. They both have intermediate gardening skills with interests in travelling and tennis. They hope to volunteer by opening their

garden at the Members Garden visits and as the need arises. Their membership started on March 23, 2021.

Diane Dorn heard about us from a newsletter article posted OnRichmondHill.com. She is a novice gardener and her membership started on March 24, 2021.

Nancy Moniz, from Toronto joined the Society on April 01, 2021 after finding out about the Club from Facebook. Her gardening skills are at the Intermediate level.

Silvia Strobl is from Peterborough and joined on April 5 having heard about us from another society member and the Garden Making newsletter. She has advanced gardening skills with hobbies and interests in fitness, reading, nature, and photography. She'd look forward to volunteering by opening her garden for the members garden visit, photographing meetings, helping at flower shows and other events.

Chantal Castel-Branco, from Markham, joined April 7th having heard about us from another society member. She has intermediate gardening skills and her hobby is birdwatching.

Kathleen Harding joined on April 13th having heard of us through the OnRichmondHill.com newsletter. She has novice gardening skills.

Marian Robertson Baghel joined April 17th when searching the internet. She has intermediate gardening skills and enjoys crafts. She'd like to help out where the need arises.

Linda Hawker, from London, ON joined us on April 21 after seeing information about our Society on the internet. She has Intermediate gardening skills and her hobbies and interests include gardening, design, and taking RBG horticultural courses!

Please attend our meetings and seminars.

We hope to get to know each of you better!

A green thumbs up to each of you!



2021 is the Year of the Sunflower

Many love the sunflower for its bright yellow petals. Others love that it attracts bees who then help pollinate all the flowers in their garden. It is easy to grow no matter your gardening expertise. Many plants grow from the spill-over caused by birds eating sunflower seeds in bird feeders!



Sunflowers originated in the Americas with domestic seeds dating back to 2100 BC have been found in Mexico. Indigenous people grew sunflowers as a crop, and explorers eventually took the seeds back to Europe in the 1500s. The success of the plant spread throughout Europe and Asia.

The crop was used for both food and non-food uses. As food, it included milling the seeds for flour or meal production to make bread and cakes. Seeds were roasted, cracked, and eaten whole, either as a snack or mixed with other grains, nuts, and other edible seeds into a type of granola. It was even used as a protein-rich animal feed. Early Americans discovered that sunflower oil could be extracted and used for cooking. Non-food uses included purple dye for textiles, body painting, and other decorations. Parts of the plant were used medicinally for snakebites and other body ointments. The oil of the seed was used on the skin and hair. The dried stalk was used as a building material. The plant and the seeds were widely used in ceremonies.

An email newsletter was sent in March by the National Garden Bureau touting the benefits and varieties of Sunflowers and encouraging us to celebrate that 2021 is the Year of the Sunflower. Read the article in full at [this link](#).

Here's a quick synopsis of the article:

- Sunflowers come in both annual and perennial varieties although most modern sunflowers are annuals.
- Sunflowers come in single stem and branching varieties. Single stem sunflower varieties are best for high-density plantings and produce consistently beautiful flowers on tall stems whereas branching varieties produce flowers on multiple shorter stems throughout the season, which makes them ideal if you prefer blooms all season long.
- Although most plants we grow have pollen, some sunflower varieties do NOT. The varieties without pollen are bred as male-sterile which helps extend vase life. Those with pollen attract pollinators.
- The size of a sunflower can vary greatly by variety with smaller, ornamental sunflower varieties, such as Sunrich or ProCut, being only a few feet tall, while American Giant Sunflowers can grow to be 15+ feet. Of course, the size of the flower is proportionately bigger with taller varieties.
- Like most plants today, varieties of the sunflower have been bred to produce large, edible seeds. The seeds can be harvested when the petals have withered exposing the seeds more prominently. Then roast and salt them for a great snack. Of course, you can eat them right from the flower or use them in other dishes or baking.

Sources:

1. National Garden Bureau - <https://ngb.org/year-of-the-sunflower/>
2. History of the Sunflower - <https://nuseed.com/eu/history-of-the-sunflower/>
3. History of the Amazing Sunflower - <https://www.sunflowerusa.com/all-about/history/>
4. McKenzie Seeds (in MB) - <https://mckenzieseeds.com/>
5. The Incredible Seed Co. (in NS) - <https://www.incredibleseeds.ca/>

Article by Doreen Coyne



Jennifer with 12+ foot Sunflower. All photos on this page by Jennifer Wingate.

Greening & Blooming in the Gardens We Tend! Here's 3 of them.

Photos by Chris Robart

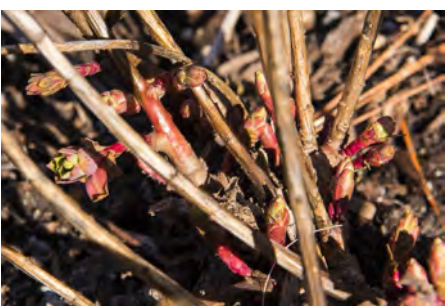
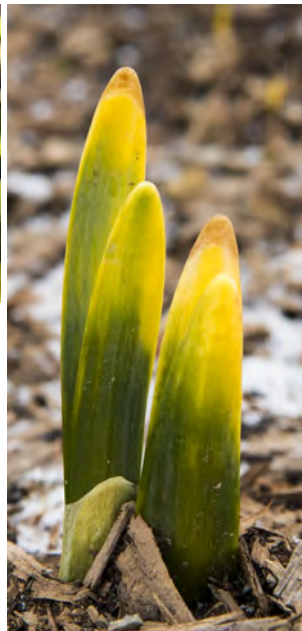
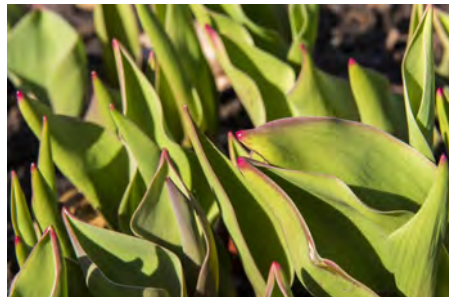
At the Herb Garden: L to R: Lamb's Ear, Peppermint, Chives; row 2- Oregano, Cranesbill.



At the McLatchy Garden: L to R:
Snowdrops and a lovely reddish
plant - maybe a
sedum.



At the Millennium Garden: L to R: Tulips. Tulips. Iris, Daffodils, unknown, Daffodils



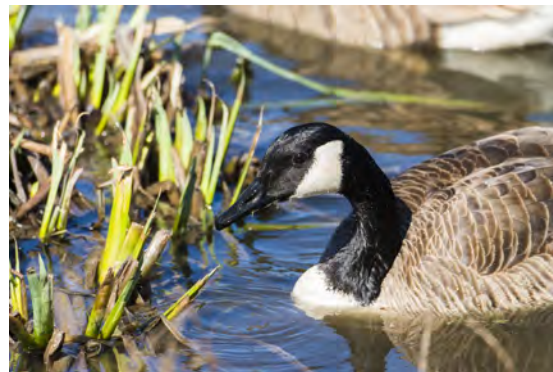
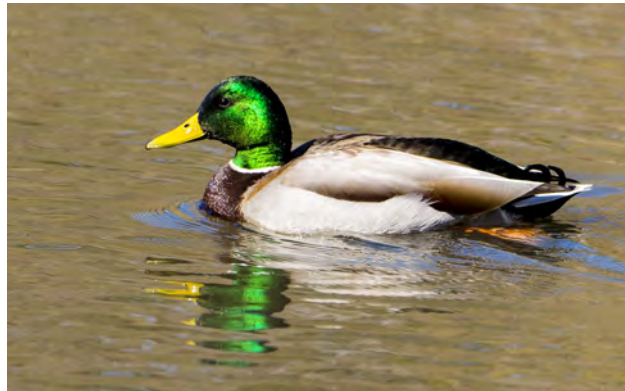
What's Coming "UP" at the Central Library & Around Town

Photos by Chris Robart

At the Central Library: L to R: Tulips with a new shoot in the background, Sedum, and another Tulip.



Around Town, birds seem to be out and about more. L to R: Cardinal. Mallard, Downy Woodpecker, Canada Goose, and Female Cardinal.



And more flowers are blooming! All photos on this page by Chris Robart.





More Members' Spring Blooms

Photo Credit Back Cover Collage: L to R, Top to Bottom: Linda Lynott's Eranthus Hyemalis, Dave McCulloch's Purple Crocus, then his Blue early Iris, Lyne Webb's Oriental Poppy, Diana Li's Grandson with sprouting plant, Linda Lynott's Iris Reticulata "George", Judith Shi's Snowdrops, Nancy Andrews' Hepatica (opened in early March), Judith Shi's Crocus and Rhubarb, Ingrid Sunar's perennial Geraniums and Mountain Mint.

The Garden Post Content Deadlines

Issue	Deadline Date
May/June 2021	April 1, 2021
Jul/Aug 2021	June 1, 2021
Sep/Oct 2021	August 5, 2021
Nov/Dec 2021	October 1, 2021
Jan/Feb 2022	Dec 1, 2021
Mar/Apr 2022	Feb. 1, 2022

Do you have an original article, poem, or a creative writing piece of a horticultural nature to share with your society? Have you been on a hike or trip recently and visited some beautiful gardens? Please *write it up and send it in.*

Articles should be in Word format. Photos and other graphics should be sent as separate files (i.e. not as part of a Word file or email) in high resolution with places and names of people identified, as well as the name of the photographer. Copyrighted material from 3rd party sources will not be accepted without original author's written permission. Submissions may be used in the upcoming issue of *The Garden Post*, saved for use in a future issue, or used for another HORT authored purpose. Usage of a submission is at the discretion of the editor.



Photo Credits Front Cover Collage: L to R, Top to Bottom: Raf Ollivierre's Hellebores, Heather Gray's Reticulata "Harmony", Diana Li's Hyacinth, Jean Roberts' Snowdrops, Jean Roberts; Daffodills.