



The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

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Summer with Atlantic Master Gardeners

Volunteers





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Notes from the Treehouse

The conference and AGM this year was a great success. We had fun, learned lots, and welcomed some new Master Gardeners to the family. I was happy to announce that Jim Sharpe will become the new AMGA VP, Janet Elsie who had been the interim VP will stay on as member at large for Cape Breton.



*Aileen Reid, AMGA Secretary and
Lynn Brooks, President at AGM 2016*

At the AGM these were my thoughts on the past year:

It is hard to believe that my first year as president is over. It would have been so much harder, if I didn't have such an amazing group of people to work with. Who was to know that it would take me 3 tries to get a conference call to work without major hiccups. Heather had always made it look so easy. But meet we did and always our number one topic was how we could better support you our members.

Hopefully everyone is now comfortable with the new reporting of hours. And a big thanks to Anita for all

the hard work she has done as volunteer coordinator for the past four years. For those who don't know Anita has been on the board of this organization since it began. She and I were talking, and next year will be the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association. We have come a long way but there is still far to go.

This is the 3rd year for this conference style event, and for a group of less than 40 people it is a major undertaking. I want to acknowledge the people who put it together, Heather and Carol worked on the format and arranged the speakers, Gigi Pelletier and Aileen our Secretary, have been the go to people for registration. And of course our money person

Johanne Robertson who keeps a careful eye on our finances. And my thanks to all of you who take time from busy lives to come to Truro to talk gardening and exchange ideas.

Lets talk a moment about the future. Last winter I read an article in our local Saturday paper "Where have all the Gardeners gone," by Carson Arthur an Ontario landscaper and HGTV personality. He and I had an interesting email exchange since we both agreed that what was once something just about everyone did is in trouble. There seems to be a renewal of interest in the present generation around growing food, and we need to find ways to reach them. Their means of communication is very different from that of an old hippie like me. Public Libraries are showing the way in how to engage people. They want to offer programming that is more than just reading books.

Notes from the Treehouse

(Continued from page 2)

Thanks to Jim Sharpe our Halifax group has got a foot in the door. So in September Aileen is going to host a weekend brainstorming event. The hoped for result is to have a series of canned presentations, that members can use at whatever opportunity presents itself to talk gardening. Opportunity alas does not come knocking, we have to be willing to reach out and engage.

We talk about it at pretty much every executive meeting that to support you in your communities, we must find ways to promote ourselves as an organization.

Ideas, volunteers willing to serve, that is what all organizations need to keep growing. As president I am in contact with other gardening organizations, many of whom are going through the agony of trying to operate without key positions filled. The last thing any group needs is an executive who is tired and wants out, but there is no one offering to take their place. At the moment I feel we are in a good place. Next year will be our 10th anniversary. Planning for the next 10 years should start now!

If you haven't made it to one of our conferences in the past, start planning for next year. Got ideas on what you would like to have presented - let us know!

As always we on your executive are only a mouse click away.....

Lynne



2016 AMGA AGM & CONFERENCE



Early July in Atlantic Canada usually finds Master Gardeners in full Gardening mode—helping with community projects, giving gardening advice to newbie gardeners, etc. Essentially, we are trying to pack as much garden-related activity into our few short months of gardening weather!

However, from July 4-8 2016, many MG's and potential MG's congregated at Dalhousie Agricultural Campus in Truro to update their gardening knowledge. MG students had a week of putting their coursework into hands-on gardening practices. As well, they could socialize with their fellow students and MG's and talk "garden talk" !

Those of us who had graduated and were Certified MG's were there on July 7 to attend the 2016 AGM as well as the AMGA Conference July 7-8.

It was a beehive of activity at the Truro Campus!

To prep for the events AMGA members were invited to our Secretary's lovely home in Lawrencetown, on Tuesday, July 5 for a Meet and Greet. Summer sun, ocean view, gorgeous gardens in colourful bloom, tasty treats and garden conversation with fellow members - what could be more inspiring for a Master Gardener!



On Wednesday evening as members began to arrive in at Dal Agriculture campus, another opportunity to meet and greet fellow members and MG students took place at the President's "Drop-In".



2016 AMGA AGM & CONFERENCE



The topic of the conference was:
Helping Gardeners Respond To Environmental Change.

Our first speaker on Thursday morning was **Lloyd Maplebeck**, well known to AMG's as Instructor and Gardening Entrepreneur, on **The Edible Landscape**. Lloyd provided a most interesting Presentation on Ornamental and Native plants that have edible parts, as well as vegetables /fruit, that can be grown as ornamentals in the flowerbed with beneficial results for our gardens!



Next on the Agenda was an update from **Dr. Vasantha Rupasingh**. Dr Rupasingh, had fascinated us all last year with an account of his research in Plant Flavonoids (Antioxidants) from apples. His research continues with very positive results and has expanded into studies with a number of other foods.

*"Chemoprevention through diet modification has emerged as a most promising and realistic approach to reduce the risk of cancer"**

The **2016 AGM** took place on Thursday afternoon. Several changes were made in the Executive roster with **Ann Buck** becoming **Member at Large** for PEI, **Jim Sharpe** becoming **VP**, **Jane Plant** now **Volunteer Coordinator**, and **Anita Sulley** becoming **Member at Large** for Halifax.

Aileen Reid gave a report on the **Canadian Master Gardeners Conference** she attended in Ontario. Her recommendations for providing available ready-to-use Presentations, accessible to members, was met with approval and enthusiasm!

major efforts for her community groups go beyond the call of MG duty. Well done Linda!

Thursday concluded with Graduation Ceremonies, Certifications and Re-Certifications at King Lam Restaurant.

2016 Master Gardener Graduates (LtoR):



Dawn Svramos	Inez Mitchell	Barb Hopkin	Eric Smith	Frances Dorsey
	Carol Goodwin MG Instructor	R.Lada Rajasekaran Env.Sciences Dept. Head		

Barb Hopkin became our most recent Certified Atlantic Master Gardener.





2016 AMGA AGM & CONFERENCE

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Friday, July 8, was entirely dedicated to Rain Gardens and Sustainable Landscapes. We spent a stimulating day, guided by Tracey MacKenzie on the planning and design of Rain Gardens to retain rain water and return it to the groundwater resource on our properties. Tracey, a NSAC/Dalhousie Instructor has accumulated expertise in urban tree management, environmental processes, natural landscape functions, and urban design. His knowledge has been helping municipalities plan & implement green strategies. His enthusiasm on this topic is Infectious!

After a brief introduction, Tracey led us on a bus tour to Debert where we visited a functioning rain garden helping to collect and utilize water run-off from a parking lot



Tracey MacKenzie explains the structure and function of Rain Garden at Debert NS.

Enroute by bus Tracey pointed out numerous poorly designed sites for water retention and maintenance of groundwater levels. In addition we toured a newly constructed water garden on the Dalhousie campus built to retain water run-off in a parking area on campus.

Tracey's work in this area has led to student exchange programs with China. Students are taking concepts from Dalhousie back to their home cities in China to implement sustainable water retention in that country.

In addition to the Debert site the group toured a newly constructed Rain Garden on the Dalhousie Agriculture campus to retain water runoff from parking area on campus.



Viewing newly installed on-campus Rain Garden designed and constructed by Tracey MacKenzie and students.



A most inspiring day of Continuing Education seeing environmentally sound gardening concepts making such difference for communities.

AMGA Notes

1) Following are the dates of upcoming **AMGA Executive Meetings**: Sunday October 02, 1 pm, Sunday December 04, 1 pm, Sunday February 05 2017, 1pm, Sunday April 09, 1pm, Monday June 05, 7 pm. If you have a topic you would like added to a meeting agenda please email one of the Executive listed on page 9 prior to the Meeting date.

2) **Newsletter Deadlines** for submission of articles:
Fall - October 28/16, **Winter** - January 27/17 ,
Spring - April 28/17, **Summer** - July 28/17
Submit to : suestuart@bellaliant.net

3) Anyone interested in reviewing one of the Presentations received through the Canadian Master Gardeners Association please contact: Aileen Reid at : aileen.reid@apreid.com



Teaching A Student

- by Aileen Reid

I wouldn't be able to garden without my student workers – the neighbourhood teenagers looking to earn a few bucks. Well, I probably could garden without them; but my garden would be reduced to a couple of very small beds.

For the past 4 years, I had one neighbourhood boy, every spring, summer and fall. He worked here about 15 hours a week. I was a reliable source of spending money (and gas money once he got himself a vehicle) and he was a reliable source of labour to heft, tote, dig, spread, weed. He's now all grown up and has moved on and this year I have adopted his younger brother who I hope will become just as helpful to me this year and in the next few years to come before he's all grown up and moving on with an adult life.

I was quite spoiled with Kyle. Over the four years he spent here, he learned my language, came to understand my plants, came to have a special relationship with my weeds and in a few short cryptic phrases, he could head to a bed and do about 80% of what needed to be done in that bed. I am now starting over, with younger brother Hunter.

I was much encouraged when Hunter pulled into the driveway. He's already 16 and has himself quite a nice little red car. Cars need money. Teenagers need to earn that money so we are off to a great start. In the few short weeks he has been coming on the weekend, he's proven himself to be strong, able to dig, run my tractor and my little mini-dump. He's learning a bit about weeding – the first lesson being a small area of a bed infested with Goutweed. School is nearly out and he'll be here 15 hours a

week all summer until school begins and I shall now start the process of teaching him the different tasks of grooming a bed; and as I did with his brother before him, I shall teach him one step at a time.....Do step 1 in all the beds.....Now, do step 2 in all the beds My goal – by the end of the summer I can be cryptic, pointing to a bed and he can go groom it from step 1 to step 7 or 8 without too much further direction and I can follow along behind and do the remaining steps.

Success with students is achievable when make a plan and work the plan. Anyone who is or has been a teacher will tell you that. And so, like I did with his older brother – this first year will probably result in a lot of half-done chores as we take the time necessary to teach, do slower than usual, do out of sequence, play catchup. And, as I write this article for you, I'm typing little checklists and charts for Hunter and me to work with until it's as routine for him as it is for me.

Hunter will do all the mowing. 2 ½ acres of mowing, probably twice a week in the spring. Hunter will also do all the whipper snipping, He will also assist me with the landscape tree maintenance. (That sounds so Public Gardens.) The reality is that I do not have a lot of beautiful landscape trees. I have spruces, and pines and bayberries, and willows; but it's important that they are healthy and look their best. He will cut out the alders, remove limbs for me, make sure the grass is nice and trim below them and so on.

And, I will teach him, over the summer to help me Groom the beds.

When I say "groom a bed", I have a list of chores in my mind. As the season ebbs and flows, different chores



Teaching A Student

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take on different priorities. But, for the purposes of getting the best out of a student, I have a list of chores that I call 'grooming a bed' and I slowly but surely start the process of teaching how to do many of them.

I divide them like this:

1. Pull the big ugly weeds that are growing very close to the plants. The dandelions, the coltsfoot, the buttercup, the plantain. Don't focus on those itty bitty tiny things – scoop out the huge stuff that can be seen from an airplane. I teach that these need a tool. No mere pulling, get out that root.

2. Go back to the start and start pulling the invasive weed that has made it's home in the bed. You probably experience the same thing. I have different invasive weeds in different beds. The horsetail favors two or three beds, the mint favors one in particular; I have two areas where goutweed has started to appear. Sorrel appears in a couple of the beds. Teaching my student weed by weed and how to get rid of it is the method I've always found best. We all know that different weeds need their own approach. So, just pointing out weeds to a student and saying "yank them" isn't productive for you and is a time-waster. Better to educate one weed at a time and send them far and wide hunting out only that one weed and extracting it properly.

3. Add any mulch, or organic matter that bed seems to need today. Many of my beds are on hills and I tend to lose organic matter during rain, it all runs down the bed with the rain gathering at the lower end. So, a step in the grooming process is to either scoop it back up, or simply go get some more and add it. I've taught him my special recipe for mulch and soil conditioner, so even if I am laying it myself, I get him to mix me up wheelbarrows full of it, bag it up and place the bags through-out the garden which

saves me the hefting and toting and mixing.

4. Remove or divide any plants that have outgrown it's space. Pot it up for now and we will determine it's fate later. Of course, your student can't decide, but they can easily learn how to successfully lift while you stand there with pot ready to accept it.....and they are strong enough to split a hosta or daylily with one big foot on a shovel. Trimming the groundcover plants when they get too close to your other plants and shrubs.

5. Remove deadwood and prune any shrubs that are in the bed. Deadhead. I do this job; but a well taught student gives me the time to get the job done. This is so often the job (for me) that gets behind the 8-ball.

6. Tie up and stake your floppies and wayward. The only time I teach this job is when the large ladder is needed and the ground isn't level. Young men have so much more stability hanging from the top of an arbour, and can take the tip without breaking bones.

7. Repair any edging looking sloppy from mowing and wipper snipping activities. Young people do tend to look at an edge and say 'what's wrong with that'; but we super trained Master Gardeners have learned the value of the perfect edge. You be the brain behind the operation and let them be the brawn.

8. Make lists of chores that need to be done at a later date, (dividing in the fall or the spring if it can't be done now). Take good photos and don't lose the 'to do list.'

9. Add any plants you've got potted up that can go in this bed.



Teaching A Student

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10. Water any new plantings or anything looking like it needs a good drink.

Of course, you can't or won't want to delegate all of these chores to a 16 year old strapping young fella --- but when you take a systemic approach, you'd be surprised at how the basics can be delegated leaving you time for the tasks and chores demanding your experience and skill.

I have found that I can successfully (or almost successfully) delegate at least 6 or 7 of these chores to my students leaving me lots of time to focus on the last 3 or 4 and fixing up the bits not done quite right.....and more beds get groomed more often through-out the season.

If you hire a student for the summer, maybe my tips can help you. My new student has been here 3 Saturdays only so far and already I can say, 'go get some Goutweed; or it's horsetail morning; or get out those sorrel clumps'. He's also learned about my 3 favorite groundcovers and how to thin them when they are encroaching around plants. He can thin the Ajuga, the Ladies Mantle and the perennial geranium and knows how to keep them cool and shaded until I decide if they are going someplace else or being tossed.

This CAN make for a somewhat haphazard approach in the early weeks with all of your beds looking a little bit done.....but I've learned that as the summer progresses, this auto-corrects.

Aileen

NAME THAT PLANT



Jim Sharpe chose the above mystery plant for our Spring Newsletter. Unfortunately we had no correct answers so we are again showing Jim's Mystery plant for you to identify!

Send your guess to:

suestuart@bellaliant.net

AMGA 2016-2017 EXECUTIVE

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