

DIGGING IN

NOVA SCOTIA HORTICULTURE FOR HEALTH NETWORK

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nshhortnetwork@gmail.com

The Nova Scotia Horticulture for Health Network is a coalition of people interested in supporting horticulture for health initiatives through resource-sharing, exchange of practices/knowledge, and networking.



Halifax Public Gardens

Text & photos by Lesley Fleming, HTR

Halifax Public Gardens opened in 1867 after amalgamating two adjoining gardens with a swampy wasteland plot. The Gardens continue to provide recreational and historic experiences for local and international visitors. The 16 acre Victorian-era garden with an axially symmetrical plan and Grand Allee in the Gardenesque style was designed by Richard Power, the first superintendent, and has been designated as a national Historic Site of Canada. It includes many interesting hardscape features, many of them over a century old - the white building, Horticulture Hall, the original meeting hall built in 1847 used by the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society (the oldest part of the Gardens), wrought iron gates and fencing, statues commemorating Canadian participation in world wars, Roman mythology statues, Jubilee Fountain, bandstand built in 1887, and a grotto, paths and Griffin's Pond. The botanical specimens are diverse, with heritage trees, annual and perennial plants in well-tended beds, some in serpentine shapes.

Halifax Literary Landmarks. (2022). Welcome to the Public Gardens.

<https://halifaxliterarylandmarks.ca/items/show/16>

The Friends of the Public Gardens (2018). *History of the Gardens*. <https://www.halifaxpublicgardens.ca/history-of-the-gardens>

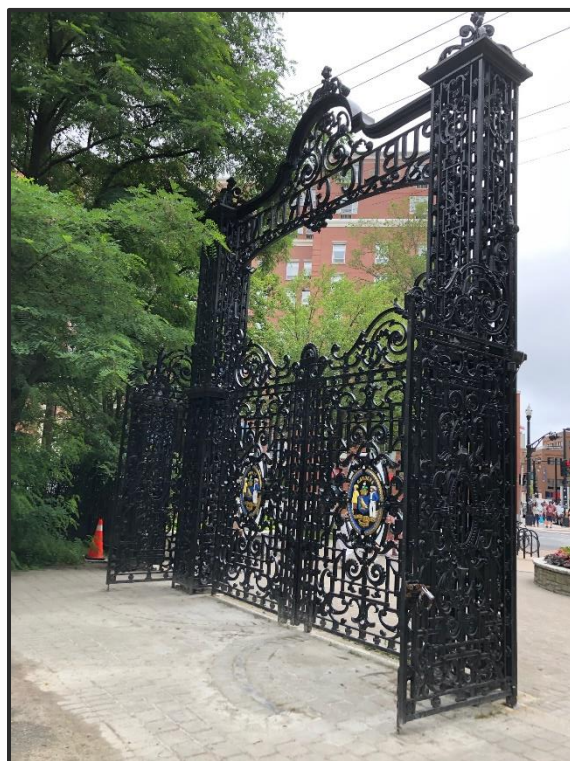
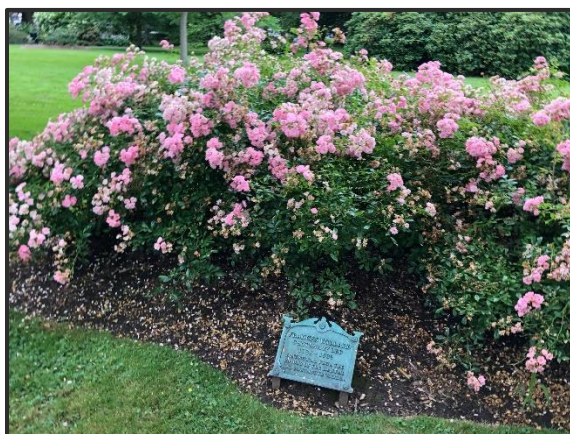
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Photo top right: L. Fleming

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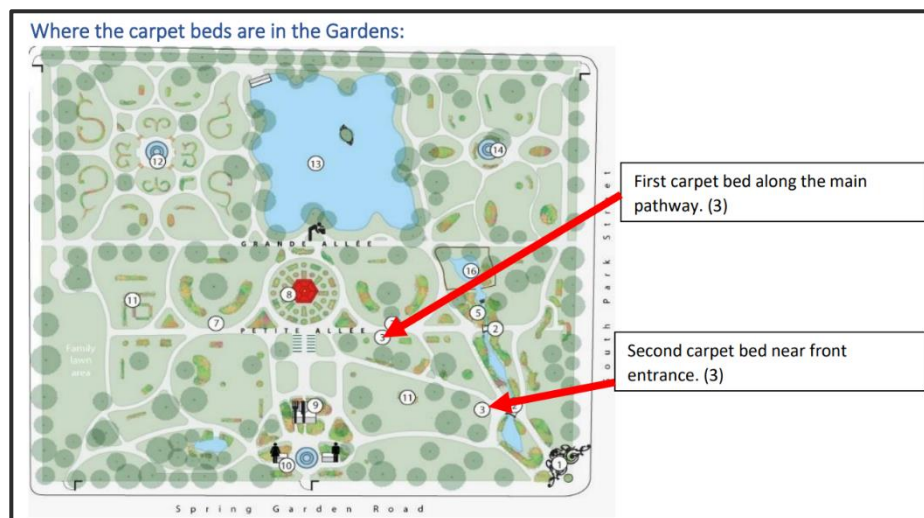
Carpet Beds: Horticultural History with Present Day Examples

By Tracy Jessen & Lesley Fleming, HTR

Photos by L. Fleming & J.A. Irvine. Graphic by T. Jessen

Carpet beds are a style of decorative gardening using intricate patterns and low growing foliage plants associated with Victorian era gardening and their decorative interior carpet rugs. Referred to as gardenesque, pattern or mosaiculture gardening, it involved the tradition of “bedding out” as a horticultural practice integrating design artistry, advances in greenhouse technology growing specific plants, plant collecting, and skills of gardeners (Andersen, 2017).

Horticulturists embraced this form of gardening using coats of arms, floral logos, and floral clocks. Early carpet beds were found in gardens including Versailles and its parterres de broderie, George Washington’s Mount Vernon garden’s boxwood fleur de lis (Andersen, 2017), and the Halifax Public Gardens’ whose carpet beds date back to 1913 (Jessen, 2022).



Early carpet beds highlighted the British Monarchy and other images intended to cultivate civic pride. Carpet beds installed at the Halifax Public Gardens over the years have commemorated Canada Post (1991), Halifax Dartmouth 250 years (1999), Nova Scotia Garden Club (2014), International Gathering of the Clans (1979), and Hospice Halifax (2018) (Jessen, 2022). It’s carpet beds, of which there have been several in various locations, originally were in-ground flat beds. The style of carpet beds and their planting have evolved, now set up as angled beds. Plantings use angled ladders above the bed to avoid soil compaction with this technique believed to have been first introduced at Mosaiculture, a horticultural competition in Montreal in 2000 creating 3-dimensional sculptures (Jessen, 2022).

A garden display using carpet beds is labor intensive, temporary, and reliant on appropriate plant selection critical to the maintenance. The Halifax Public Gardens, zone 5, has used Santolina Sage, Iresine, Echeveria and Alternanthera, all of which are low growing, have textural variety, and without flowers (eliminating the need to deadhead). There tends to be a theme of using tropical or semi-tropical plants from South America, Africa or the Mediterranean region in carpet beds. Notable

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advances during the Victorian era in green houses, glass houses, and related plant propagation propelled this gardening style, as did color theory. The impact was evident worldwide, particularly in the horticultural trade of the time, with color perception, contrast and color combinations being used in gardens, public park designs and ornamental plant attractions in the 1890s (Chicago, New York, Boston, London) (Andersen, 2017). During the peak of popularity, carpet beds were considered garish and in poor taste by some, while others felt they enhanced public parks. Examples are revered today for their historical roots and for their current interpretation of horticultural practices and displays.

Andersen, P. (2017). Flora clocks, carpet beds, and the ornamentation of public parks. *Arnoldia*, 75(1).

<https://arboretum.harvard.edu/stories/floral-clocks-carpet-beds-and-the-ornamentation-of-public-parks/>

Halifax Public Gardens Carpet Bed Creation 20114 timelapse video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RhjkDQ5_Gg

Jessen, T. (2022). *A Compilation of the History of Carpet Beds in the Halifax Public Gardens*. Halifax Municipal Archives.

National Trust (n.d.). How to make a carpet bed. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/how-to-make-a-carpet-bed#>



Photo left by J. A. Irvine is of a 3-dimensional carpet bed "Hamilton" at Halifax Public Gardens. Reference: J.A. Irvine Nova Scotia Archives Album 35 photo 107/negative: N-5665\

Tracy Jessen and Lesley Fleming, HTR collaborated on this article to showcase the beauty and history of carpet beds at the Halifax Public Gardens. Tracy, a horticulturist on staff at the Gardens, researched and wrote *A Compilation of the History of Carpet Beds in the Halifax Public Gardens* with support from the Sue Ellen Murray Educational Bursary and Friends of the Public Gardens. Lesley photographed the carpet beds in 2022.

Garden Bed Shapes to Suit the Site

Text & graphics by Lesley Fleming, HTR

Creating garden beds can be exhilarating or challenging depending on the space available for planting. Professional garden designers have solutions for any shape or size bed. Consider some of these.

L-Shaped Beds

Many properties have L-shaped space best used as outdoor garden space. Using a tree, seating area or fountain as a focal point can delineate the two areas, inviting the visitor to explore what's beyond. The two spaces can provide distinct uses – patio in one area, long grassy play space in the other, with repeated plantings, colors or hardscape materials providing coherency.

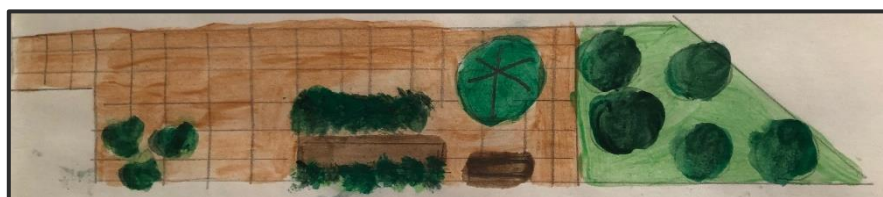


Long and Narrow Beds

Using a path through long rectangular areas draws the eye down the length of the space, particularly interesting if the pathway is set on the diagonal. Designing larger circular hardscape areas at each end can be used for patios, play or viewing areas. Plantings can allow for sense of exploration when shrubs, trees or ornamental grasses do not immediately reveal garden elements.



In cases where the land is not a perfect rectangle, but has a pointed end, the long view can be retained with planting points of interest, changes to grade, and planting or installing a screen (of plants, gate, fencing) where the land narrows, suggesting more to be explored beyond the visual barrier.



Another plan for long and narrow space is the use of diagonal lines within a grid schema. Planning the garden in these grid sections provides interest with mini gardens along a path, where a variety of plantings provide interest along the way.



Corner or Curved Spaces

These shapes can be perplexing, with underutilized space seen as side yards, corner lots, or properties with unusual lot lines. But they can provide extra-large space for beds. If choosing straight lines in the garden design, angle the bed which will suggest a greater viewpoint. Elevating decking, using grass alternatives like thyme or chamomile in small gardens will provide additional elements of interest. Another option is using both straight and curved lines in the garden for beds and hardscape areas, this obscuring the hard rectangular space.



Curved (often corner) sites can use straight and curved lines to counterbalance planting beds, driveways, patios and the house itself. The curve will be more effective if planted rather than hardscaped, and low walls, paths or even patios can provide visual interest and separation from the plant specimens being used to soften the hard and unusual lines of the space.

Embracing Nature: Tips for Establishing a Wildlife Garden in Spring

Text & photos by Tim Mason



Spring is a special time of year when the activity of animals serves as a timely reminder that garden season is almost upon us. Observing local fauna interacting with the blooming flora can bring immense satisfaction as new life begins to blossom. Gardening is a pastime you can enjoy all year round by creating a wildlife-friendly garden. Locating your garden near a window or similar lookout means that you can witness the burgeoning ecosystem from the comfort of your home or facility.

Simply adding 3 key elements (food/shelter/water) to an existing garden can create habitat and subsistence for a wide variety of temporary visitors and permanent residents. Here are some tips to get started this spring in creating an environment:

Shelter

Shelter is vital in creating a safe environment for animals, giving cover from potential predators or inclement weather. It gives invertebrates like Praying Mantis a permanent habitat or a place to lay their eggs to overwinter. Providing different types of shelter, like those listed below, will encourage a diverse range of wildlife. Luckily, at this time of year the most efficient garden practices also require less activity than typical spring preparations in most conventional gardens.

- **Logs/Brush Piles/Leaf Litter**

Spread as an even layer (3-4 inches) or create larger piles. Spiders, beetles, salamanders, frogs and toads will find refuge in these areas. Birds and chipmunks will quickly visit these sites once insect populations establish.

- **No Mow May**

Park the lawnmower for a while longer and save your wallet and back in the process. Emerging pollinators will be protected by the growing vegetation which provides necessary sustenance for the season ahead.

- **Rock Piles**

While they can be frustrating to find when digging a new garden, stones are actually an asset to any garden. Building a stable pile will attract cold-blooded animals such as toads, turtles, and salamanders. Their presence will help with an integrated pest management plan.

Food & Water

Providing the right amount and type of sustenance will largely mitigate any issues of pests or other unwanted visitors. Invite the right neighbours into your garden and they'll be happy to assist with keeping invader populations to a minimum!

- **Bird Feeders**

Different feeders will cater to different species. Suet bird feeders are a great way to provide high-energy food for birds like woodpeckers and chickadees. When using seed bird feeders, the type of feeder and choice of seed is imperative to draw in the birds you want, while discouraging problem feeders like pigeons or squirrels who can become a nuisance.

- **Scatter Native Wildflower Seed**

Sowing with native wildflower seed provides a twofold benefit, seeds not devoured by songbirds will germinate, providing a source of nectar later in the season.

- **Water, Water, Everywhere**

Providing several sizes of non-toxic dishes allow all manner of wildlife to both bathe and quench their thirst. Add a branch or half-fill with pebbles to provide an escape for insects that may not be able to scale slippery sides. Keep in mind, monitoring for mosquito activity is imperative however the daily patrons will aid in keeping these pests in check.



Plants

- **Goldenrod & Asters**

These native flowers (in NS) are renowned for their complementary beauty but are also extremely important as nectar to bees and butterflies. They bloom late in the season, planting these now will allow pollinators to last long into the year and overwinter.

- **Milkweed**

Several varieties of milkweed exist and are a host plant for monarch butterflies. Similar to goldenrod & asters, milkweed is a valuable resource to many species and an invaluable plant ally in building a wildlife community.

- **Identify and Remove Invasives Properly**

Mowing early in the season removes immature foliage that makes plant identification possible. By implementing 'No Mow May' you are better able to identify invasive plants for permanent removal.

Spring is a perfect opportunity to rediscover your garden with a new lens. Leave the power tools a little longer this spring and practice mindfulness over activity. Observe how nature interacts and grows with your space - remember 'If nothing is living in your garden, then your garden is not living!'

Canadian Wildlife Federation (n.d.). Wildlife Friendly Gardening Guide. https://cwf-fcf.org/en/resources/downloads/booklets-handouts/gardening_guide_en.pdf

Le Rouzic, A. (2021). The 'No Mow May' challenge is on! Greenpeace.

<https://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/story/48371/the-no-mow-may-challenge-is-on/>

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Xerxes Society. (2022). Pollinator Conservation Resource Center. <https://xerxes.org/pollinator-resource-center>

Tim Mason is a nature-based gardener living in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Originally from Australia, Tim grew up with a deep love for nature which influences his garden design and creation, notably 'Wildlife Windows'.



Horticultural Therapy: Professionalism & Professional Associations

Text & photos by Lesley Fleming, HTR



Professionalism in every discipline relies on individual practitioners to abide by defined standards of practice, code of ethics and fair treatment of clients, staff, and members of the public. The recognized professional body sets these codes and standards, and typically enforces breeches of conduct unbecoming a professional. This certainly applies to the horticultural therapy profession. Enforcement of professional transgressions is not as strident in horticultural therapy as it is in other professions like law, medicine, or accounting.

An individual's adherence to these standards and codes of conduct reflects not only on themselves and their professional training, but also on the profession. Professionalism involves performance of discipline-related tasks and competency in the particular discipline, attitude, character, engagement, and accountability. It also involves professional

appearance, professional language, integrity, and on-going professional development.

The professional association plays an essential role in all aspects of a discipline. As a collective entity it sets and modifies standards and ethics to which practitioners abide by, and most are involved in granting professional status to those achieving designated requirements (Fleming, 2016). Some disciplines, as is the case with American therapeutic recreation, have independent bodies that review and grant professional designations (National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification (NCTRC)), related to, but separate from the professional association (American Therapeutic Recreation Association, 2022).

In many sectors, becoming a member of a professional organization represents the highest achievement of specialized knowledge and commitment to the values espoused by the profession. Across the globe, horticultural therapy professional associations play important roles and are well-respected. Most horticultural therapy professional bodies are structured on the national level – American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA), Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association (CHTA), and Taiwan Horticultural Therapy Association (THTA). The Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture (HKATH) is an exception to this (Tham, 2021).

The implications of people ignoring professional bodies and their set standards diminishes the profession and the practice. This certainly applies to horticultural therapy. When individuals ignore or practice in the field without membership in the professional horticultural therapy association and do not have appropriate professional designation or status, the public becomes confused or misled about the level of training and professional behavior these individuals might have. Standards of practice may be ignored. Conduct may be contrary to professional behavior. This can be a liability issue when individuals misrepresent themselves. (In the U.S. and Canada, the job title *horticultural therapist* can only be used by those granted the professional designation of HTR from AHTA or CHTA) (AHTA, 2015; van der Stoel, 2022).



While some individuals may wish to use the profession's standards and ethics in delivering services, their decision to avoid joining the professional body suggests non-compliance with the accepted rules, and lacks supervised experience obtained through internships and professional training. Internships and the process of professional accreditation identify those who possess required training, temperament and judgement deemed

essential to deliver services to the level specified by the professional organization. In many professions including horticultural therapy, multiple levels of membership reflect varying levels of skill, education, and professional status, these structured to allow for varying degrees of professional services, levels of responsibility and client interactions, and stages within the professional process. For example, student members, emerging practitioners doing internships, and retired members. Some individuals cite membership fees as a barrier to joining professional associations. Most professional organizations make provision for those unable to pay membership fees.

Professional bodies including those in horticultural therapy perform multiple functions to the benefit of its members, the profession, and the broader health sector. They are the leading authority in the field, and often the acknowledged spokesperson for the profession, the primary contact for media, interested parties, and educational institutions.

Regional horticultural therapy groups play a role in educating and articulating the values and standards, but they do not have the responsibility for setting these standards as does the professional horticultural therapy organization. Individuals may prefer to join these more local/regional groups with the express purpose of networking in their areas, this also an important function within the profession. However, the communication of standards of practice, evidence-based research guiding practice, and peer pressure to comply with codes is often less strenuous, and therefore compliance tends to be less effective. Membership in both regional and national professional associations is promoted.

Professionalism within horticultural therapy relies on individuals choosing and self-regulating their conduct, ethics, services, and membership in the professional body. Voluntary membership in professional horticultural therapy associations may provide a looser system for adherence to standards of practice, but for those committed to delivering quality horticultural therapy services, joining the professional organization reflects their commitment to their professional discipline and their desire to stay informed and in compliance with standards of practice. Within the health and therapeutic sector, such behavior and membership in professional organizations is expected.

Aluminati. (2023). What is a professional association and how can it benefit your organization?

<https://www.aluminati.net/what-is-a-professional-association-and-how-can-it-benefit-your-organization/>

American Horticultural Therapy Association. (2015). Code of professional conduct for horticultural therapists. <https://www.ahta.org/code-of-ethics>

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Lesley Fleming, MA, HTR is active in the field of horticultural therapy and is a member of both the American and the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Associations. She leads the Nova Scotia and the Florida Horticulture for Health Networks, is editor in chief of Cultivate and Digging In epublications and is a reviewer for the Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture. This article is being published concurrently in Hong Kong Association of Therapeutic Horticulture's Newsletter and Nova Scotia Horticulture for Health's Digging In epub.



Resources Spring 2023

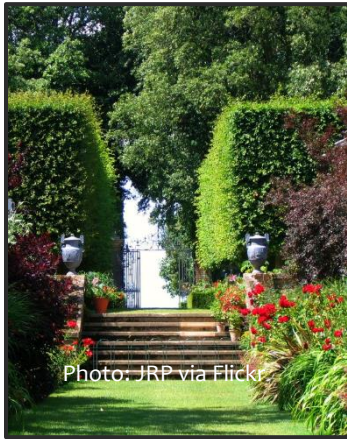


Photo: JRP via Flickr

Looking beyond borders helps expand knowledge and inspire gardens, travel, writing and more. Canadian-UK connections, historically bound together, provide an interesting way to investigate different ways of doing things, seeing things, using a lens on nature and gardens.

[National Trust.UK](#), Europe's largest conservation charity offers website & online info with articles, videos, podcasts, and tips for planting gardens related to their management of more than 200 gardens and parks with topics of top gardens for children, medieval gardens, garden locations for The Secret Garden film, wildflower grassland in North Devon countryside, and plant conservation.

[Cotsworld Outdoors](#) partners with National Trust to identify walking landscapes and trails in Britain's countryside including Ashridge Estate, Brecon Beacons horseshoe ridge walk, and [Felbrigg Estate mountain walk](#).

[Barbour](#) partnership is restoring and protecting natural landscapes in Northumberland UK. Initiatives include Hadrian's Wall & other sites, with tree planting activities, and support for farmers to addressing climate change.

[12 of England's Most Beautiful Gardens](#) article in *Smithsonian Magazine* includes Hidcote Manor Garden (photo above), Wimpole Estate in Cambridgeshire, Lost Gardens in Heligan Cornwall, and Sissinghurst Castle Garden in Kent.

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Nova Scotia Flowers

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