

# The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

ISSUE # 14

VOLUME #3

FALL 2022



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## Upcoming Gardening/AMGA Events Of Interest

- **September 23, 24, 25, 2022**—Free conference :



<https://vergepermaculture.ca/cold-climate-permaculture-conference/>

- **September 26, 2022 - AMGA AGM** - 7:00PM via Zoom  
Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84034870009?pwd=SzNzaHdmVUVBZGhJM20weThldGdkUT09>
- **October 1, 2022 - 1st Registration date for Dalhousie University Master Gardener Training Program** (Faculty of Agriculture, Extended Learning): [Master Gardener Training Program - Atlantic | Dalhousie University](#)
- **October 3, 2022 - Live Zoom Gardening Session, 7:00pm**  
Topic: "Putting your Garden to Bed for Winter"  
Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84232976941?pwd=eStlWU5UQko2SjVUL2UwcklNUWhKUT09>
- **October 24, 2022 - AMGA Executive Meeting** - 8:00pm via Zoom



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- by Sandra Matchett,

Where did the summer go?

I am certain many of you are asking that same question. As our growing season starts to wane, we are busy reaping the benefits of our work. Vegetables are being collected, enjoyed and persevered. There is nothing like the taste of fresh produce from your own garden. Our flowers are still giving us delight but some are slowing down their flower development. We are now critiquing our results, gathering seeds and thinking about selections for next year selections. I look forward to hearing what worked and what did not work this year.

It was a delight to see everyone in person at our conference in July and the opportunity to make new friends and acquaintances. I personally felt it was a great conference and am already looking forward to the conference next year. Our Monthly Zoom sessions are starting on September 12<sup>th</sup> and next intake for the Dalhousie Master Gardener program is in October.

Enjoy your remaining summer and gardening.

- Sandra



## AMGA CONFERENCE 2022 LEARNING FROM NATURE

- by Sandra Matchett, AMGA President

As I sit at my computer to do a summary of our Conference 2022, memories keep flooding back about the great time I had. The conference planning committee under the leadership of Jim Sharpe gave us a fantastic time and education sessions. Thanks so much to Jim, Heather, Carol, and Frances for all the work they put into making the conference such a great experience.



We started Day 1 with **Gerald Gloade**.

As a speaker he was mesmerizing.

Understanding how signs and patterns in nature guided the Mi'kmaw when to hunt, plant, harvest and prepare for winter was truly inspirational. For me, it brought back memories of a specific snow squall in the spring that my Dad would say "the smelt are running" and we would head to the Stewiacke River to fish. A wonderful childhood memory. Gerald brought back this memory and to me it became an example of his wisdom. In today's busy life style, we need to take time and listen and observe nature to help guide us in our gardening and in life. The multiple examples and explanations that Gerald gave us instilled a search for further understanding of our environment and the impact of the lunar cycles. Gerald is focused on passing traditional knowledge he has learned from his parents and grandparents and many other Mi'kmaw knowledge holders. Gerald is not only a great educator but also an accomplished artist and author. An inspiration to us all!



**Keith Williams** was our second presenter on Indigenous Knowledge and The Three Sisters Gardening. The Three Sisters are corn, beans and squash and are central to multiple Indigenous cosmologies. The heritage seeds he uses sound terrific and a joy to grow. His presentation brought us a further understanding of

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# AMGA CONFERENCE 2022 "LEARNING FROM NATURE"

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the Indigenous knowledge in sustaining their environment and our need to follow their example. This concept of "the three Sisters" was new to me and Keith's scientific approach to use this concept in his work will do much to help address his research in contemporary sustainability concerns. Such research will do much to help with our environmental issues.



**Bugs!** Who knew that a session on bugs could be so delightful?

**Dr. Paul Manning** started our afternoon with this presentation and there was no nodding off as a result of full stomachs. His research aims to better understand

the importance of biodiversity (specifically insects) to the health and functioning of agricultural ecosystems. His work on educating us on how to identify insects was terrific. Learning to identify by wing structure, leg numbers and head structure brought to life a way to identify these little creatures that can be either so helpful or destructive in our gardening. Striving to have our gardening endeavors a success can often be a challenge and the more knowledge we have the better our results. The handout he provided is a great tool to use in our identification of the insects we encounter.



Our last presenter of the day was **Frances Dorsey**, Master Gardener. Her work to develop a pollinator garden on the Dalhousie University Campus is a true inspiration. Her goal of taking the art gallery "out of the white box into the world" was definitely achieved. The garden is designed around a Mi'kmaq glyph which says "Jiksituinen" or "Listen to Us". The use of native plants that will feed Nature's creatures is a true boost for the environment. Frances taught at NSCAD and brought her knowledge to life using nature's natural palette of colour and design materials. Her slides accompanying her presentation brought to life her concept of "out of the white box".

As the garden evolves it will bring constant joy to many, give a boost to our environment, as well as provide a beautiful spot to take a break from the hectic campus life.

We ended the day with our banquet. It provided a wonderful opportunity to mingle, meet new members and be with others we already knew. It seemed like a life time since we had been together in person and we made up for lost time. After our meal, certificates were presented to students who had completed their Master Gardener Program as well as certificates to those that have met the criteria for their Master Gardener Certification. Our membership is growing!



**2022 AMGA Banquet Awards.** From left to right, Sandra Matchett (AMGA President), Sarah Evans (MG), Richelle Gregg (MG), Robert Fraser (MG), Karen Rogers (MG), Judy Estey (MG), Shelagh Legere, Alicia Clarkson, and Sherry Johnson (MG).

*Not pictured* Carol Dewar and Christina Clorey.

**Master Gardeners certified in absentia:** Christine Letcher, Kristine Swaren, Maureen Bayne, Rosie MacLean, and Wayne Tanner.

### Master Gardeners certified during Covid shutdown



*Left to right, AMGA President Sandra Matchett congratulates Penny Irving and Carolyn Green*

### Congratulations to the following members who earned milestone Volunteer Pins:

200 Volunteer Hours -Helen Cook, Marwan Iskander, Michel Parent  
500 Volunteer Hours - Johanne Robertson, Jim Sharpe, Diane Griffin-Boudreau, and Gigi Pelletier

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# AMGA CONFERENCE 2022 "LEARNING FROM NATURE"

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Friday was workshop day with **Julie Moir Messervy** and her husband Steve and what a day it was! Her theme for the workshop was "**Home Outside**". Julie introduced us to a process to evaluate our existing site by studying the conditions including the **soil, sun, wind, slope, circulation, vegetation, and views** to help us decide what we want to keep and what to change. Following this, Steve had us all do the Myers-Briggs personality test to help us understand our personalities and the impact they have on our garden design and preferences. Julie's creation of her **seven spatial archetypes – sea, cave, harbour, promontory, island, mountain and sky** brought to life the incorporation of these concepts in her design and it makes one think about ourselves and the type of space we desire. From here we were introduced to the area around our home and her four basic layout choices and "**zones**". These zones are the **Surrounding Zone, Welcoming Zone, Neighbouring Zone, and Living Zone**. We then went into ways to enhance the flow through the different types of motion: moving, pausing and stopping and then to determine how to create Designs to make these types of motion a space to enjoy. From here we went into ways to compose the elements of our property into a coherent whole by using "**4 Cs**": **concentrating, connecting, conveying, and containing**.

The next part was how to place **focal points** on your property, both vertical and horizontal and the creation of structures to highlight them.

This was followed by a **Design exercise**. Multiple items were put out to work with such as rocks, paper, ribbon and so many other items to even remember them all. We were divided into groups and asked to design a landscape using the materials we collected. The results were amazing. The creativity of the group was amazing. As each group presented their design, I became more intrigued. I cannot remember the last time I was so invigorated at a workshop.



Julie Moir Messervy  
with workshop participants



I would highly recommend Julie's workshop to anyone that has an opportunity to attend it. Julie has now launched her Home Outside landscape app and award-winning Home Outside online design service. Her most recent **book, "Home Outside, Creating the Landscape You Love"** gives you amazing ideas.

I always look forward to our annual conference and I feel the committee more than accomplished the goal of providing us with 2 days of stimulating education. A special thank you to the organizing committee and the wonderful presenters.

Submitted by **Sandra Matchett**

# TIPS FOR PLANTING GARLIC IN YOUR HOME GARDEN



- by Kristine Swaren

Garlic is a bulb, like tulips and daffodils, so it likes to be planted in the fall in our climate – it will establish roots in the fall, go dormant for the winter (a first necessary stage in its life cycle), then resume growth thing in the spring. Ideally it will have 3 to 6 weeks before the ground freezes for that root growth, so a planting date between Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day should work well. But it's a good idea to start preparing the soil several weeks before planting. Healthy soil makes healthy plants.

## Preparing the Soil

Choose a location that gets 8-10 hours of sunlight. The roots of garlic will be much larger than the bulb, so it prefers to grow in the ground or a raised bed rather than in containers.

When rotating your veggie crops from bed to bed, garlic will be happy following peas, especially if you cut off the pea plants when harvest is finished, leaving the roots with their nitrogen nodules in the ground. If you haven't grown peas (or beans), no worries, just plan to grow the garlic where no garlic or onions have been grown for at least four years to avoid soil-borne pests and diseases. Plant the bed with buckwheat in mid to late summer, and when it gets to be six inches high (or two weeks before planting garlic), till it in or turn it under – that will provide lots of organic matter and nutrients to the soil. Add other soil amendments at the same time, perhaps ONE of the following on a 20 square foot bed:

- seaweed compost (1 bag)
- sheep/horse manure (1 bag)
- alfalfa meal (1/4 lb)
- compost 2-3" thick

centres are difficult to interpret, and they don't include any trace minerals or organic matter.

If soil test results show low sulfur, adding 1/5 lb (per 20 square feet) will make for hotter garlic. If calcium and magnesium are low or pH is less than 6.0, add a sprinkle of dolomitic lime several weeks before planting; ideal pH for garlic is in the range 6.0-6.8.

In spring, when the new plants have 2 leaves, sprinkle soybean meal or blood meal or chicken manure pellets or a slow-release pelleted vegetable fertilizer (under any mulch) along side the plants, applied to provide nitrogen at a rate of a half pound per 20 square feet. Any plant-based fertilizers should be organic (look for an OMRI icon) to avoid glyphosate (Roundup) residue. Garlic is a heavy feeder, so it wants lots of nutrients, both the macros N-P-K and the micro trace elements. That can be accomplished with generous amounts of organic compost plus amendments—about 30% of the total amendments added in the fall, 70% in the spring. Compost adds organic matter, which helps moisture retention, soil structure, nutrients, and microorganisms.

Measure your soil amendments! Too much can produce weak growth that is vulnerable to pests and diseases. Let all the amendments rest for a couple of weeks, do a final cleanup of any weeds that have sprouted, then plant.

## Seed Garlic

Not garlic seed, but seed garlic – garlic very rarely (almost never) produces actual seeds. Next year's garlic head or bulb grows from this year's cloves, producing a clone. (You can also plant bulbils – the miniature cloves formed at the top of a scape – but they are still clones, not seeds.)

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# TIPS FOR PLANTING GARLIC IN YOUR HOME GARDEN

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As you use your own garlic cloves for planting from one year to the next, it adapts to your specific soil and climate conditions, so that's the best choice. If you're just starting, buy garlic from your farmers market or local farm. If it's called seed garlic, great – that just means the grower has inspected it for quality, and it's a good example of its variety - otherwise, just garlic is great too. However, don't use garlic from the supermarket – it's probably imported, probably a soft neck, and probably treated to inhibit sprouting.

What's a **softneck**? Several varieties grow without producing a central hard-stemmed scape, thus soft neck, but most of them don't much like Canadian winters. If you're in zone 6, try one though, as they last longer when stored than hardnecks. There's lots of choice in hardneck varieties too, with different sizes, number of cloves, skin colour, and degree of heat. Your farmer should be able to advise on the flavour profile. Then think about size – do you use a big clove or two at a time, or smaller cloves for a milder impact?

How often do you use it? A bulb with 7 cloves allows one per day, so you would need 52 bulbs for a year's supply. Allow a few more for potential damage and a few more for replanting next year, so this year you'd want to plant 77 cloves (from 11 bulbs). Next year, you'll save your best 11 for replanting, and eat the rest. If you choose a variety with larger cloves that has 4 cloves per bulb, you'd need to plant 124 cloves (from 31 bulbs) this year, giving you 124 bulbs next year – 23 to replant, 92 for your daily supply, and a few extra. If you don't eat garlic every day, reduce those amounts!

When you buy garlic, it should look healthy and full, with a circle of roots intact on the bottom. The roots can be trimmed, but the base plate should not be exposed (see the photo). A little dirt isn't harmful. The base plate is the most important part for successful growing—that's where both the roots and new cloves start.



**BASE PLATE** Clockwise from left: roots trimmed for storage; roots trimmed completely off can damage the 'base plate' and reduce storage time; one clove removed shows where the cloves grow from the base plate on the inside; clove ready to plant with its own healthy base plate.

## Planting Day

Separate the bulbs into cloves on planting day or just one or two days before so they don't dry out. For hardnecks with stems trimmed to an inch or so, you can whack the cut end of the stem on a hard surface (like a chocolate orange); otherwise, run a thumbnail or dull knife between the cloves. Don't peel the cloves. Inspect them for any damage from cuts or insect larvae, and discard those. The best garlic grows from the biggest base plates, so eat the tiny cloves and plant the bigger ones.

Spacing depends on the size of your garlic variety, anywhere from 4 to 8 inches apart in all directions. That's 4 large or 9 small cloves per square foot if you're using that method. Closer spacing than recommended for your variety will produce smaller bulbs but allows more to be planted in the same space.

Make planting holes deep enough that the clove will

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# TIPS FOR PLANTING GARLIC IN YOUR HOME GARDEN

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be covered by 2" of soil. Go deeper if your winters are long, cold, and with little snow cover. Drop one clove in each hole, pointy end up! Sprinkle with compost and fill the hole with soil. It's easier to do the sprinkling and filling after all the cloves are in their holes so you don't lose track of where they are. Water the bed.

After any local rodents have found other homes for the winter (after freeze-up), spread mulch – straw, eelgrass, shredded leaves - at least 3 inches thick, more if you expect a harsh winter. Adding mulch gives winter protection, adds fertility, and suppresses weeds if you leave it on in the spring.



**MULCH** – both beds were mulched heavily with straw for winter; on the left bed, a thin layer of mulch was left on in the spring; on the right bed, the mulch was removed – demonstrating, a few weeks later, the value of mulch for weed suppression.

## Planning for Companions

To promote the health of the garlic, interplant sweet alyssum and marigolds. Most companion planting advice is about how the garlic helps other plants. Just allow for the correct garlic spacing and leave room for the other plants.

- with roses for protection from aphids, ants, snails, black spot fungal diseases
- with spinach or radishes which will be harvested before the garlic gets big
- with a late planting of kale or broccoli (for

fall harvest) planted between garlic rows after removing scapes

- with beets, carrots, celery, potatoes, tomatoes

Use the smaller cloves interplanted with these crops for their beneficial effects, but grow the larger cloves in their own very fertile bed for best garlic results.

Avoid growing garlic near peas, beans, strawberries, asparagus, sage and parsley as it can inhibit the growth of those crops.

## Winter

Enjoy the winter while your garlic is snug underground. In the spring, remove or thin out the mulch to about an inch to allow the soil to warm up and the garlic to emerge. Watch for another article with spring and summer tips!

## Soil test resources

New Brunswick and PEI (ask for the S3 test) <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-land/pei-analytical-laboratories-pei/>

Nova Scotia (ask for the S1 test) <https://novascotia.ca/agri/programs-and-services/lab-services/analytical-lab/>



## GARLIC BRAIDS

- celebrate your harvest!

## MORE TIPS

- Clean the garlic smell off your hands by scrubbing with used coffee grounds or rubbing your hands on stainless steel (the kitchen sink).
- If your stored garlic starts to sprout mid-winter, plant some cloves in a pot of soil indoors and snip the greens for eating, OR freeze the cloves and use them in cooking – thaw out for 10 minutes, then press with the side of a knife-blade to remove the skin.



# Thugs in the Garden

- by Lynn Brooks  
Master Gardener

The Master Gardener experience has expanded my gardening world and also my vocabulary. For example: I had never heard the expression 'garden thug' until it came out of the mouth of Carol Goodwin at summer school many moons ago. There was a collective head nodding in agreement by most of the class, mine being the exception. But it was and is the most apt expression to describe the group of plants I want to discuss.

The difference being that these are 'thugs' that I love because they are aggressive, hardy, and shade the ground so weeds do not stand a chance. Using plants I once would have avoided is all about my journey as a gardener. I have built or renovated 4 different landscapes in my life, three of them pretty much the same. Foundation plantings, a few shrubs, a veggie patch and of course the lawn. This is my last - and if I am to stay here and not be forced to move, it is demanding a different approach.

I had never owned a property with so many deciduous trees! The backyard that first summer was in total shade and what wasn't treed was lawn; which I was told had been religiously maintained with pesticides and I can only imagine how much watering. I am a firm believer in no pesticides, especially not for the cosmetic use of maintaining turf. And all the mowing around trees was exhausting.

Some trees were cut and Hurricane Juan eliminated a few more. The remaining were corralled by gardens to simplify the mowing pattern, and trees, conifers (for the birds), and shrubs were added. The choices based on growth pattern, flowers, berries, and colour. My mantra is, if a tree has to come down, it needs to be replaced by something also woody. Trees and shrubs grow, and very quickly there was too much exposed soil and lots of undesirables lusting to move in. I was so

ready to try a new approach, mainly to save my aging back. I had been reading about the concept of building healthy plant communities and using matrix plantings to eliminate the need for truckloads of bark mulch... Climate change is forcing us to change just about everything, and rethinking our landscapes has to be high on the agenda.

I decided to stop fretting about my site and learn to work with what I had. No more buying soil. Tons of leaves were readily available, and the purchase of a small chipper makes short work of garden debris. I did have to accept the limited palette of plants that tolerate and thrive in my conditions (that wasn't easy). A big property is really far too labour intensive for a staff of one. So I accepted that turf is still the best option for areas that need to be walked on, played on, and it does define planted areas. Any more just seems excessive. Scale is also important when you have massive trees. So no diminutive precious darlings for me, bigger is better. And as a bonus big leaves hide the edge between turf and garden which cuts down on edging.

Hosta is the go-to plant for most people and as much as I love them, I think they are over-used and frankly a bit boring. Also they are a salad for deer, generations of these long-eared urban pests have been brought up on them as a food source. Petasites, Rodgersia, and Damera enjoy the same growing conditions as hosta, without the deer.

Big plants and some favourite ground covers are my go-to in my transition from large lawn to a mostly planted space that still looks like it was planned. Some weeding and tidying in the spring and fall is all that is really needed. Once my brutes get growing you can't see the weeds, and I certainly don't go looking...

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# Thugs in the Garden

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Here are a few of my favourite big boys :



**Filipendula rubra** (Queen of the prairie) hardy to Zone 3 it grows to 4 feet and in August is a sea of frothy pink flowers. The roots like to wander so plants do pop up rather far from where they were first planted. The good thing is that it doesn't self-seed. In my a bog garden it has no problem living happily with the mass of growth that thrives in that setting.



**Darmera peltata** (Umbrella plant) If butterbar may be a bit scary this thick-rhizomed perennial (Zone 5) may be a better choice. Can take full sun as long as the soil is moist. Very pretty flowers arise before the leaves. Its thick root mass will help stabilize the banks of a stream. Height and width 3-5'.



**Petasites** (Common Butterbar), this member of the sunflower family, has thick shallow roots like rhubarb, unattractive flowers appear in early spring before the leaves and provide nectar to pollinators on warm days before anything else has emerged. A rampant grower it needs to be watched carefully to keep it in place but even gout-weed can't compete with the soil shade it provides. It is a dramatic focal point at the end of my septic field.



**Rodgersia pinnata** is underused in the garden settings but can still be a thug if given the space. Leaves emerge with a bronze cast which turns green with age. It is hardy to zone 5 and in my foggy world grows quite well in full sun. It likes a moisture retentive soil but even with the drought we are having is still looking good.



# AMGA Executive 2022

Contact executive members at:

[atlanticmastergardeners3@gmail.com](mailto:atlanticmastergardeners3@gmail.com)

**PRESIDENT:** - Sandra Matchett

**VICE-PRESIDENT:** - Heather Connors-Dunphy

**PAST PRESIDENT:** - Jim Sharpe

**SECRETARY:** - Gigi Pelletier

**TREASURER:** - Johanne Robertson

**MEMBER AT LARGE (1):** - Carol Goodwin  
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**MEMBER AT LARGE (2):** - Ann Buck  
Halifax NS

**MEMBER AT LARGE (3):** - Janet Elsie  
Cape Breton, NS

**MEMBER AT LARGE (4):** - Heather Connors-Dunphy  
New Brunswick

**VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR:** - Helen Cook

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR:** - Sue Stuart