



The Garden Master News



Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

ISSUE # 7

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WINTER 2015



AMGA Notes



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Some dates to take note of:

1) AMGA Executive Meeting dates for 2015: February 8, April 12 and June 3

- If you have any questions, suggestions, comments, etc. you would like to have discussed at an Executive meeting or AGM please contact one of the executive members listed on page 14.

2) Lynn Brooks will be looking for nominations for the AMGA Executive positions for 2015/16.

If interested in playing an active role in your AMGA, or if you know someone you would like to nominate for a position, please contact Lynn (see contact list page 15).

3) The AMGA Conference, AGM and plant exchange will take place **July 9-10** in Truro. This will be an opportunity for Continuing Education credit as

well as an opportunity to share gardening knowledge and socialize with your fellow MGs. Don't forget to pot up some plants in spring for the member plant exchange! More info to come on Conference 2015!

DON'T FORGET

.....Continuing Education **hours** and Membership **Dues** (\$25) are due at the end of **May**. Notice will be sent in March by Secretary Aileen Reid (See contact list page 15).

..... The 2nd **Halifax AMGA Chapter Meeting** is scheduled for February 21st 12-2pm at Keshen Goodman Public Library, 330 Lacewood Dr, Halifax, NS. (weather permitting!)

.... The deadline for submissions for the **Spring Newsletter** will be **April 24th**. Please send items for Newsletter to Sue Stuart (Contact list page 15)



Presidents Message

- by Heather Connors-Dunphy

Hello, Master Gardeners... have you noticed that the hours of daylight are getting a little longer? I have and it looks good to me!... We had a few thaws here and there is very little snow left. It is surely the time for seed catalogues and plans for the summer's gardening.



Fuzzy face sunflowers growing in greenhouse for children's garden planting early June 2014

I am just looking at catalogues to figure out what I want to grow in the greenhouse this year. Most of my garden is mature perennials and shrubs so I usually punch it up with annuals and biennials and some scree plantings to hide roses etc which have gone over. I also plant too many planters... I grow veggie and herb set outs for Greener Village (aka Fredericton Foodbank) gardens. They are always in need of volunteers in the garden as they have in addition to rental beds, three former greenhouse structures in which they grow veggies of their clients.



Pansies in planter... as weather improves these are relocated and more tender plants take their place for summer.

Your Executive met by phone in December.

We made some good progress on a couple of issues including making one process out of membership renewal and certification. More about this later in the spring.

Sue, Glen, Carol and I have been working on the format and content of our Second MG Conference. The tentative dates are July 9 and 10, 2015. Please mark these days on your calendars! The AGM will be on the afternoon of July 9.

Our Cape Breton Chapter will be managing the plant exchange this year. Keep posted for more details including pricing for the Conference. We hope to have all the details out to you in March.

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Presidents Message

(Continued from page 2)

We have another Executive meeting in early February (the 8th). Please share your ideas, constructive comments etc. with us. We got some good feedback from the Halifax group after their first meeting, they have a second meeting planned for around the end of January. Lynn will be contacting you re: recruitment of Executive members for the 2015 slate of Officers

I know that you all work hard on your volunteer/community work. We are all part of a volunteer organization. As members we need to contribute to the AMGA too. Your contribution can be in AMGA Executive membership, writing an article for the newsletter, presenting education at a local garden club meeting and promoting the MG program, or attending educational offerings. All of these items can be used in fulfillment of your volunteer hours too! I know that we are geographically distant from each other but this doesn't mean that we can't all participate. Please make it your goal in 2015 make your voice heard.

In the meanwhile, as I am one of the Judges for the International MG Conference Search for Excellence awards, I have to get busy doing the evaluations of the projects assigned to me.

Happy seed catalogue browsing!

Heather

Message from Dalhousie Agricultural Campus

- by Carol Goodwin

Hello Master Gardeners from the Agricultural Campus of Dalhousie!

Shubenacadie Sam predicated a late spring, and based on the recent weather and forecasts, it would seem winter has finally arrived in force! I hope that as you hone your digging skills with the snow, you are dreaming of the spring flowers and plants in your gardens. Watching the rollercoaster of temperatures we're having, I'm grateful for a blanket of snow over my plants.

The final intake for this academic year has started and we have quite a few students who will be completing their program in July. The planning has begun for the 2015 Summer School which will be July 6-10. Forms and more information will be on the Extended Learning website any time. Keep checking for updates. The next intake will be October 1, 2015 (deadline September 15)

The Master Gardener Association has planned an exciting summer conference program, and we'll be celebrating new program grads and certified MGs all together. It would be wonderful to see everyone there!

May the New Year bring you fertile soil and positive growth in all that you do. Enjoy the seed catalogues slipping through the mail slot!

Respectfully,
Carol Goodwin
Faculty of Agriculture – Dalhousie University



Winter and Watching the Birds

- by Brenda Hiltz



I have a book I treasure written by Thornton W. Burgess; "The Burgess Bird Book for Children". I feel it is the best book about birds ever written for children and is one I encourage you to read and share with the children in your life. Fifty eight species of birds, each one beautifully illustrated, are described in a series of stories all told by the birds themselves. The author says in his preface: "If as a result of it even a few children are led to a keener interest in and a better understanding of our feathered friends, its purpose will have been accomplished."

I am one who has a keen interest and am saddened that many of these birds of my youth are among those we count at risk today.

I watch, feed and photograph birds throughout the year. I have learned and am continuing to learn how to identify species, sex, habits & needs.

Flocking to our feeders on frigid days of winter, we watch birds with their feathers puffed out against the cold, a soft fluffy under-layer of ultra fine down feathers that trap insulating air.

In order to attract and provide for the birds in winter keep in mind three things:

1. Cover: Native trees offer a place to rest and dense planting of smaller trees and shrubs provide cover from predators such as hawks or cats. Brush piles out of woody debris such as branches and

clippings from pruned shrubs and trees help shelter many birds throughout the winter.

2. Food: Diverse plantings, perennials seeds and offerings of black oil sunflower seeds, niger seeds and home made treats promise food attracting many species.

3. Water: Water is hard for birds to find in winter. Shallow dishes hold clean water for drinking and bathing (yes, even on mild days in winter). Fresh water can be placed at the feeder site at the same time each day and the birds will use it until it freezes. There are also many heated dishes available both commercially made and fashioned in the workshop.

Ultimately, keep in mind that birds are a very amiable species. When one selects your yard, it may return year after year. To boost the chances of this happening, incorporate a variety of native trees, shrubs, plants and available water in your yard.

Resources:

The Burgess Bird Book For Children
Birds & Blooms

www.wildaboutgardening.org

www.allaboutbirds.org

James Hirtle jbirder@hotmail.com

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Winter and Watching the Birds

(Continued from Page 4)



Pheasant



^ Downy Woodpecker



< Chickadee



^ Blue Jay



< Starling & Mourning Dove



^ Robin



^ Song Sparrow



< White-Throated Sparrow



American Goldfinch



^ Junco



^ Sharp Shinned Hawk



< Cedar Waxwing



Baltimore Oriole



My Adventures with Garlic

- by **Ann Buck**

I decided a couple of years ago to attempt to grow garlic. One member of our garden club had been growing it for years, and another friend from work wanted to try just for the novelty.

I had heard that you could plant in the fall or the spring. Since it was spring, I decided to give that a try. The look of skepticism on my expert friends face should have been a clue, but I figured, what the heck. So I picked up some hard neck garlic from the local seed supplier and gave it a go. Needless to say, my expert friend was right to have some doubts. I suspect our season is too short for it to develop properly. When I harvested it in the fall, what I had were larger single cloves. Undaunted, I got some more seed and planted Continental and Korean Red varieties and got them in the ground in the fall.

In the spring there were green sprouts poking through the surface early on and they developed well over the spring. I dutifully cut the scapes off early on and thoroughly enjoyed them with dinner on a couple of occasions. A fact I dug up from somewhere is that the reason there is so much garlic from China sold in North America is that for them it is a by crop. They are more interested in the scapes and now I understand why. Come mid - August, I harvested our crop. The Continental variety produced smaller heads, while the Korean Red gave me much larger heads. Both have incredible flavor.



2013
Crop

This past fall, I decided to go whole hog. I planted a full 4x8 bed with nothing but garlic. I had Korean Red and Continental from the previous crop, a variety called Musical from the seed store, and Porcelain from my friends the experts. As I waited over the winter I read about an experiment where someone wanted to test the conventional wisdom by cutting the scapes off half of their garlic to see if it really had any impact on head size. Their conclusion was that it wasn't essential to remove the scapes and they had marginally larger heads from the plants they had not cut the scapes off of. About the time my garlic started to develop scapes, we had an extended run of cold wet weather and my daughter's extracurricular activities required a huge time commitment, so I never did get out and trim the scapes. I didn't stress about it because of the experiment I had read about. There was a break in the weather during the first week of August and it appeared the garlic was ready, so I went for it. I have a bumper crop of garlic, but there were some hits and some misses. There was a possible labelling error for two of the varieties, discovered when I harvested. The bulbs that I believed to be Continental produced nice large heads and I was very impressed with how well it performed. The Porcelain produces small heads, usually with only four cloves. My crop had good sized heads relative to what I planted, many with five cloves. I need to research what sized heads the Musical normally produces. They were fairly small, but it could be that is the nature of the beast. The heads I believed to be Korean Red which had been a hit last year were somewhat disappointing.

My Adventures with Garlic

(Continued from Page 4)

The heads were small, with a low clove count. I suspect that had I cut off the scapes like I did last year, maybe production may have been better. When it came time to use some of the garlic, the heads I thought were Continental, may have been Korean Red, as they had the red tint to the paper closest to the clove.



2014
Crop

As I write this, next year's crop is in the ground. For the first year, I have not purchased any new seed. I have no idea what the correct name is for the two varieties in question and at the end of the day, it really doesn't matter. I am not selling it and anyone I give it to will know that I'm not sure what it is. It tastes great and that is all that matters. There are a couple of things that I have and will do differently this year. For starters, when I planted, I tried to give the cloves a little more room. How closely they are planted together can impact head size. The second is that I am going to make every attempt to cut the scapes off the entire crop this year. This is because I want to see how the crop compares to last year and because they are so tasty.

Nothing to do now but wait and see.

Thoughts of Spring

- by Joan Evong

To see tiny seedlings poke their little heads out of the soil, looking around, heralding visions of spring, is really a renewing and satisfying undertaking. Starting my own seeds allows me to envision my garden during a time when most garden centres are closed, the cold wind is blowing, and the snow is falling. For me, this is one of the best times of the year to dream, to plan, to create. Growing your own plants from seeds gives promise of a unique garden and one that will invoke "garden envy".

I find seed catalogues useful tools to help me visualize potential garden projects or color schemes, gets me thinking about trying new varieties, or starting seeds for plants hard to find in my area. I am so looking forward to seed starting, especially on this very cold, but sunny day. I have already started circling too many plants and seed packets in the gardening catalogues. I am not sure if I am dizzy from my current cold or anticipation!

I am going to try a new idea I read about in an organic magazine in an effort to thwart the damping-off fungi this year. Once I wash and disinfect my containers with a 10% bleach solution and use a commercial sterile seedling mix, I will water my seedlings with a solution containing 1 tbsp. clove oil, a drop of liquid dishwashing detergent, and mix it all up in a gallon of water. If anyone already uses this solution, I would like to hear how it worked or did not work for you, and I will report in the summer and let you know how it worked out for me.





Growing Flowers and Grasses from Seed

-by Heather Connors-Dunphy



shutterstock · 28770397

It is time to think of seeds again. Most of the older varieties of annuals are available in seed format. If you are craving the colour but not the price of individually potted annuals at \$3 or \$4 each why not try growing from seed?

I'd like to share some flowers and grasses I have had success with and maybe whet your appetite to grow some that you may not have tried before.

I use lupin as a spring garden accent. Early to mid June is when lupin do their best. As lupin is a biennial, I grow a crop each year. This is a Russell hybrid mix, sometimes mixed colours, other times blue, or rose or yellow for a monochromatic look. Lupin are easy to start from seed. The seed should be frozen and then soaked for a day or so. Lupin is a warm germinator. The plants are a little top heavy at first, but really perk up in the greenhouse.

Generally I use *Verbena bonariensis* for scree planting. These are erratic germinators and the freshest seed you can find works best. The plants are tiny, but they too bulk up quickly in the greenhouse. In my zone these seeded plants bloom in August. Most years I have a few that come back as volunteers as I let the plants go to seed.

Trailing lobelia, *Lobelia erinus* is a staple in my planters. They germinate quickly and I pot three

plants per cell so that the plants are vigorous and full. Another staple is sweet alyssum., *Lobularia maritima*. The 'Snow Crystals' variety is a good basket performer. These I plant in pressed peat trays, three seeds to a planting position. This produces nice thrifty plants.

An all time favourite is nicotiana. There is a tall white variety called "Only the Lonely" , *Nicotiana sylvestris* 'Only the Lonely' which has a divine scent. I grow it most years for planting by the front door. I have also grown most of the "Saratoga" varieties, pelleted seed for this is a must. Nicotiana seed needs light to germinate.

I usually have several grasses to add interest to border edge plantings. I have had good success with Bunny Tail Grass, *Lagurus ovatus*, Ornamental Millet, *Pennisetum glaucum* and Mexican feather grass, *Nassella tenuissima*. This year I am going to try sedge, Carex 'Red Rooster'. It needs to be started earlier that I can start it, but I'll try it anyway.

I always grow seed dahlia too. There is a variety called 'Rigoletto' which is about 12" inches tall and produces colourful flowers. If you are ambitious you can harvest and store the resulting tubers for next year.

Others that I have grown successfully include: *Amaranthus*, tricolor and caudatus

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Growing Flowers and Grasses from Seed

(Continued from page 8)



Queen Anne's Lace...*Ami majus* ...a great filler with airy white flowers

Balsam...*Impatiens balsama* ... the seed needs light to germinate

Bells of Ireland...*Moluccella laevis* ... the seed needs to be chilled first

Cosmos.. 'Seashells' is a nice variety

Cleome.. starts better from "primed seed". As plants were not readily available commercially here last year, I will grow them this year.

Coleus... *Solenostemon scutellariodes*... sometimes the variety available locally as seeds is quite limited. A little on line shopping may get you some more exotic colors and leaf shapes.

Flowering kale... these are easy, but trying to get them ready for September planting can be trying as cabbage moths love them

Marigolds... Calendula

Evening scented stock.....*Matthiola bicornis* . These are really hard to transplant and don't look like much but the scent is heavenly. I plant these in pressed peat containers and take the whole block out of the peat pot and plant as is. These scent the walk going to our patio.

Nasturtium, the variety Alaska has variegated leaves in looks great in planters

Love in a mist...*Nigella damascena* ...these don't transplant well, but once you get them going, they seed themselves at will and carry on. The seed pods are interesting when dried.

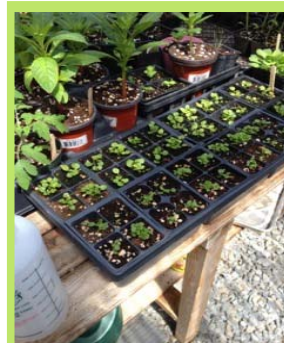
Salvia.. also needs light to germinate. There are some showy multicoloured varieties.

Make sure you know what conditions are needed for germination and growth and plant away!

I hope this encourages you to try a new plant or cultivar this year.



Snapdragons,
pinched several times,
planted three in a pot
for a plant sale



Lobelia
in the greenhouse,
balsam are the tall plants
behind the tray of lobelia



Love in a Mist.
I kept growing them from
seed until I had a little
colony; now they come
back from volunteer
seed each year



PROJECT REPORT

"Fall Essentials"

- by Janet Elsie

The Cape Breton Chapter of Atlantic Master Gardeners, Thelma MacKillop, Bibiane Lessard and Janet Elsie gave an educational presentation on several aspects of fall gardening to the general public Oct. 7 2014 at the Cape Breton Regional Library.

During the summer the regional library was approached regarding the possibility of providing the space for a presentation given by the Master Gardeners on some topic in relation to gardening. They were very receptive and not only would they provide the room but also post it on their facebook page, newsletter and send info to the regional CBC radio station for community events broadcast. They also provided tea, coffee and oatcakes refreshments. It was very generous indeed. They requested an outline of the topic for review and for information as to how to publicize the session. A short outline was provided which they used to promote the event. During September and early Oct we had two major planning sessions deciding who would do the different segments of the presentation. We have worked together on such presentations over the years and are aware of each other strengths, gardening interests and comfort levels. We decided to purchase some packages of bulbs for door prizes as well as 1½ dozen bulb planting trowels. I also had some bags of Iris rhizomes and peony divisions that were sent to new garden homes as well. Every gardener in

attendance went home with some little token from the evening event.

Donned in our MG shirts, aprons and pins with association banners flying we gave our presentation to 35 gardeners who seemed interested and pleased with our information and presentation. We the Master Gardeners enjoy working together and what could be more fun than sharing information about a subject that you have a passion for and enjoy. Watching others get excited about gardening and anxious to learn or try something new gives us gratification and certainly promotes the educational mission of the Association. As well as our own individual efforts we try to come together to do at least one and most often two of these presentations during the year.



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PROJECT REPORT

“Fall Essentials”

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Following is the outline of our presentation:

“Fall Essentials”

Cape Breton Master Gardeners invite you to a session on Fall gardening.

Now is not the time to Fall behind in your garden! Fall has many stress free weeks for our garden plants. So don't put that trowel away yet.

Now is the time to:

- Divide perennials and plant shrubs. Which ones?
- Clean-up. How to properly clean-up your garden. What goes? What stays?
- Prepare and protect plants and gardens for their winter hibernation.
- Plan for spring. Now is the time to plant 'Spring', so those first joyous blooms and bursts of color won't be blooming on some catalogue page but in your own garden! How to plant bulbs? Where to plant? How to conceal dying foliage?

The more TLC time spent in your garden this fall pays huge dividends next spring.

Cape Breton Master Gardeners



Left -Right:
Thelma MacKillop, Janet Elsie, Bibiane Lessard



Identify This Plant

- by Diane Giffin-Boudreau



This plant appeared in our Fall Newsletter but was not identified. Diane investigated further and here is what she tells us:

'This plant, only one on my property and none that I am aware of in the neighbourhood, had me stymied regarding specie but even moreso as to its arrival in my garden. I do not have a tag suggesting that I purchased the plant so it had to have been a "gift" from a "friend", an uninformed purchase at a plant sale or as an interloper in another plant purchased at a garden center. Nonetheless, it peeks out every year from under a burning bush in a highly shaded area. Its rich green, cordate-shaped leaves with entire margins and pretty pink blossom was a welcomed late summer arrival as many other perennials were dying back. I liked it so much, I thought of dividing it as it was gaining some considerable size in its more mature state.

Having gained a whole new network of contacts through the Master Gardener's Program at

Dalhousie's Agricultural Campus in Truro, I sent along a photo to see if someone could help me identify the plant. With the suggestion that it had significant similarities to Japanese knotweed, I began my internet search.

Wikipedia defines *Fallopia japonica* as a large, herbaceous perennial plant of the Polygonaceae family, native to Eastern Asia. Commonly referred to as Japanese knotwood, it is also called a variety of other names such as bistort, tearthumb and mile-a-minute. The last common name is likely resulting from its invasive nature. I must say that I was saddened by this reference because I had not seen this side of my plant in its five year existence. However, it gained greater size and a very healthy habit this past year, likely the result of the addition of some very rich soil the previous year. So my study began for the indices that aligned well and for those that did not.

My garden specimen is definitely an herbaceous perennial which I cut back to its base every fall. It is a survivor as it has continued to thrive even after the dog unearthed it at least twice burying himself in the lovely cool earth at mid-summer (the reason for the addition of rich soil mentioned above).

Agriculture and Rural Development, Government of Alberta (www1.agric.gov.ab.ca) key identifiers of Giant Knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*) include bamboo like stems, distinct heart-shaped leaves

Identify This Plant

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with hairs on the underside, and rhizomatous root System. The information provided indicates that *F. Japonica* can be distinguished by leaves which are usually 3-10cm, straight at the base, leaf tip abruptly pointed, leaf texture thick and leathery whereas Hybrid Japanese knotweed (*F.x bohemica*) can be distinguished by its leaves – 5-30cm, variable at the base, leaf tip variably pointed with an intermediate texture. Similar descriptors appear on the Ministry of Agriculture for British Columbia's site which aptly describes the leaves as egg-shaped and lists it as an aggressive ornamental(www.agf.gov.bc.ca).



The specimen shown in the above photo has bamboo-like stalks with reddish nodes, leathery, cordate-shaped leaves coming to an abrupt cuspidate point measuring up to 15cm. The petiole and main vein are also red adding to its interest. The question is not whether it is a knotweed but which one. It is not near the size of the Giant knotweed

nor does it have the green to white flower color of this specie. The Alberta Weed Monitoring Network suggests that the hybrid grows to a height of 2.5-3.0 metres with leaves up to 25cm long and 18cm wide.

The leaf shape varies and is usually longer than it is wide and pointed at the tip with a slightly crinkled appearance. The flower is listed as creamy-white appearing in dense-clusters in late summer/early autumn. All of these indices match with the exception of the color of the axillary panicles which are distinctly rosy-pink on my specimen. Further research needed to explain the blossom color.

Wikipedia describes *Persicaria bistorta*, commonly referred to as bistort and also listed in the family Polygonaceae, as an herbaceous perennial growing to 75cm tall. The photos present a bushier blossom of similar style and rose-pink color; however, this is where the similarities end. The foliage on bistort is normally basal, the leaves oblong-ovate and narrow at the base.

Given the information gleaned from the above investigation, I am declaring this a Hybrid knotweed which will be eradicated at its source on my property to avoid any longer term issues of what is widely referred to as an invasive specie. Once again, if weed appears in its name, gardener beware! '

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NAME THAT PLANT - CHALLENGE



Butternut tree

Catkins, flowers & Nuts

This tree was correctly identified by Rodger Ledrew as *Juglans cinerea* commonly known as **Butternut**, **White walnut**, **Lemonnut**, **Oilnut**, **Noyer cendré**.

It is native to Canada in New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec, growing in hardwood forests. It was designated as “endangered” in 2003 in some areas because of its susceptibility to Butternut canker.

Butternut has broad flat compound, alternate leaves. It grows to approximately 60-70'. It flowers between April –June, is monoecious (male & female flowers on one tree). Fruit is lemon-shaped nuts growing in bunches of 2-6. Nuts are edible and nutritious. Butternut is hardy to zone 3, requires well-drained soil and sun.

A hybrid between Butternut and the Japanese Walnut or Heartnut, *Juglans ailantifolia* known as the 'Buartnut' shows resistance to Butternut canker.

Rodger Ledrew has chosen a new plant for you to identify:



Rodger states that this shrub will grow to 10 -12' and will do well in our climate for 25 years

Do you know this plant?

Send your guess to:

suestuart@bellaliant.net



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2014 - 2015

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