

# The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners

ISSUE #14

VOLUME #4

WINTER 2022-2023



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

The Christmas Wreath	1
President's Message	2
AMGA Winter Calendar	2
Thoughts on Garden Design	3-4
Who is Sleeping in Your Garden Bed?	5-10
Book Reviews	11
AMGA Executive 2022/23	12

## The Story Behind The Christmas Wreath

- By Robin Sweetser



<https://www.almanac.com/-your-christmas-wreathstory-behind>

Wreaths are part of many ancient traditions dating back to the earliest civilizations. The circle is a symbol of immortality; throughout history, wreaths have been associated with life, rejuvenation, and renewal. Originally, wreaths were worn around the head, neck, or waist.

The Greeks awarded laurel wreaths to their triumphant athletes; in the Persian Empire they were worn on the head as a symbol of importance; and ancient Romans wore them like crowns. In Sweden, candles were incorporated in the wreaths to celebrate the return of light after the winter solstice. Nowadays we use them in a window or on a door as a sign of welcome during the holidays. Every wreath starts with a base ; wire, straw, vine, or wood, etc.. Wire evergreen boughs to the base. Using greens of different colors and textures provide richness. Add cones, dried flowers, berries, and fruit for accents.

**Symbolic meaning :**

- Rosemary for **remembrance**
- Sage for **good health**
- Thyme for **bravery**
- Lavender for **purity**
- Rue for **virtue**
- Juniper for **life and hope**
- Hawthorn berries for **protection and joy**
- Cedar for **strength,**
- Holly for **immortality**
- Pine cones for **long life and prosperity**



## A Message from the AMGA President

- by *Sandra Matchett*

By now, hopefully, our gardens are put to bed for the winter. I will never understand how time can pass so quickly and the cold weather sets in way before I am ever ready for it. Now is the time for reflection on what was a success and what was not a success as we start dreaming of next year.

This year I dug up my mother's peonies (she died in 2021) and brought them to my place. Since I live in the woods and they do want some sun, I put them in big pots so they could be put in a location with some sunlight and they survived the move. They are now still in the pots and are in our unheated garage. I will be anxiously awaiting spring to see if they overwinter for me. If successful, they will be a great memory for me as my mom loved her gardens.

We managed to finally have a summer conference in July, and what a conference it was! It was so great to see everyone in person again and to meet new members face to face. We are in the beginning stages of planning our 2023 conference and as soon as we get the dates, we will let you know. By now you should all have received a survey from Gigi and thanks so much to all of you who took the time to complete it. I do hope some of our ideas appealed to you.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all our new members. To those of you who are new to the program and have chosen to join our Association please feel free to reach out for whatever assistance we can provide. We are here to help you!

As Christmas approaches, I wish you all an enjoyable holiday season!

- *Sandra Matchett*



## AMGA Calendar December, 2022 - March, 2023

- **December 10, 2022** - Tis the Season Decorating Workshop and Pot Luck-Lynn Brooks
- **December 12, 2022** - AMGA Executive Meeting-8pm Zoom
- **December 31, 2022** - Deadline for submission of Volunteer Hours. [Membership Page - Atlantic Master Gardeners Association \(AMGA\), Canada](#)
- **January 4 - February 8, 1-4pm (6 weeks)** - Zoom - Ecological Landscape Design  
Instructor: Rosmarie Lohnes, Helping Nature Heal  
Details: <https://mailchi.mp/4ecd216ff983/s7krymtsy9?e=bfd8f7c757>
- **Toronto Master Gardeners, Technical Update**  
Saturday **January 14, 2023**, 10:00am-2:30 EST,  
**COST: \$30.00**  
"Ecological Gardening - Part 2: Digging Deeper Into Our Changing Relationship With The Garden"  
Details: [Webinar Registration - Zoom](#)  
For help with registration and/or payment, please email [TU2023@torontomastergardeners.ca](mailto:TU2023@torontomastergardeners.ca)
- **NANPS Webinar - Making Gorgeous Pollinator Gardens using Native Plants: How to do it!**  
Clement Kent, January 17, 2023, 7:00 - 8:30 PM (EST)  
<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/making-gorgeous-pollinator-gardens-using-native-plants-how-to-do-it-tickets-439138794957>
- **March 1, 2023** -  
**Deadline** for submissions to **AMGA Spring Newsletter**
- **NANPS Webinar - Native Shrubs for your Garden**  
with Colleen Cirillo - **March 21, 2023, 7:00-8:30 PM (EST)**  
<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/making-gorgeous-pollinator-gardens-using-native-plants-how-to-do-it-tickets-439138794957>

# Thoughts on Garden Redesign

- By **Bonnie Snow**, Master Gardener

~~Plan A~~  
~~Plan B~~  
Plan C



Over many years of attending garden talks and tours I've listened to advice about 'aging' your garden, making upkeep and chores manageable. With the exception of storm damage and replacement, or donated plants I've made few changes to my own garden in the last several years. Garden design has been a spontaneous affair with shovel and plants in hand. I am now motivated not only by my aching back but a desire to have a garden that is more eco friendly, invites pollinators, includes more native plants and is generally more of an inviting sanctuary than what I presently have. I've been thinking a lot about changes as I put the garden to bed, making some hard decisions about what has to go.

As Master Gardeners we've had exceptional opportunities to participate in landscape and garden design workshops, most recently with Julie Moir Messervy and Steve Jonas at the 2022 Conference Workshop. Another memorable learning experience was our three days spent with Richard Hughes at 2014 Conference. This last was very challenging with the course objective being to design for a client. We had a blank slate and a generous budget. By Day Three many participants were asking questions about their own gardens and where to begin with simple redesigns. He remarked that if we all hired landscape architects and garden designers we would be compelled to do extensive planning, wish lists, interviews and questionnaires. Few of us do this on our own. He strongly recommended being your own client. Going through this planning process forces you to look at your garden with fresh eyes, revisiting site conditions, soil, wind, sun and shade. He suggested fall and winter as good times of the year to look at your garden. The 'bones' are more obvious as there is less colour distraction. He prints black and white photos on paper and tries design changes right on the photo. During the summer I am too busy with actual gardening chores to think much about changes so his

Julie Messervy's approach to landscape design, the activities and practical exercises made me feel more. The plan doesn't have to be a master plan on paper. You can have it in your head. Some of the loveliest gardens in the world originated with amateur horticulturists - Sissinghurst in Kent and Butchart Gardens here in Canada are examples. Julie reminded us to think of our favourite gardens, and what we liked about them. They had a good feel and fit their location. Genius loci - Latin for the spirit of a place. Good design draws out this essential energy. Her books have been a source of inspiration.

The principles of garden design - proportion, order, repetition and unity are there to help you create a more pleasing landscape but both designers stressed these are not hard and fast rules. Each landscape is a unique creation and, in this case, your creation. There are endless books and online sources to fill any gaps in your knowledge of design principles.

Advice I've heard often is to use strong shapes. Organize your design around these, avoiding wiggly, fussy edges. The Historic Gardens in Annapolis Royal have good examples of this with the large curves creating a sense of movement. Keep it simple with a consistent theme or thread throughout. Consider repeating a colour throughout. I thought I had achieved this with repetitions of Black Mondo Grass which sadly did not survive. Tougher lavender has taken its place. The big idea I took away from both presenters was it's your garden. You are the client. You want to bring out your own personality and make the changes that please you. There do not have to be elaborate plans drawn to scale. You should know your site, what will grow there and what you yourself are able to maintain. Climate change is also having subtle effects on my garden with reduced rainfall in summer and much stronger and sustained winds throughout the year. I will have to make

(Continued on Page 4)

## Thoughts on Garden Redesign

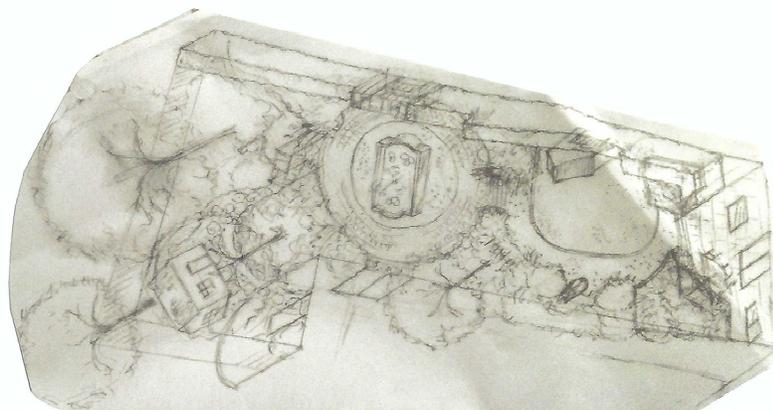
(Continued from Page 3)

hard choices, especially regarding trees.

It will be a long winter. I've been making sketches and taking notes while things are fresh in my mind and to remind myself how sore my back is right now. It's time to consider making life easier as part of design changes. I'll look forward to one of Lynn Brook's garden design presentations and a conversation with Carol Goodwin about plant choices, valuable resources close to home.

P.S. There are good site planning guides, wish lists, interviews and questionnaires online. I would be glad to share what I have used.

- *Bonnie Snow,*  
**Master Gardener**



### *Landscape Design Sketch*

- from Landscape Design Course with  
Richard Hughes, July 2014 AMGA Conference

# Who is sleeping in your garden bed?

**-by Penny Irving, Master Gardener**

Summer is gone and with winter on the horizon I wonder what happens to all those hardworking garden creatures that make my garden so enjoyable year after year. After all, we wouldn't even have a garden to enjoy if it wasn't for the insects, amphibians, birds and other wildlife. Where these little creatures are finding shelter during the cold, windy winter months may surprise you .



Leaf litter, those drifts of brown and gold leaves that gather in corners and invade the garden spaces are winter homes for many of the insects that help keep our gardens beautiful. In fact, it can get pretty crowded in there. Centipedes, millipedes, spiders, beetles, pill bugs, and worms are just a few of the many insects that the leaf litter supports. Many insects enter a state of suspended animation in the fall called diapause. They will remain in this state until spring even when there is a slight thaw. Insect pupae, including moth and butterfly pupae, are also found in the leaf litter and remain dormant until spring. In the spring, the pupae will complete their metamorphosis and emerge from their leaf blanket as a moth or butterfly. The hummingbird **moth** and **fritillary butterfly** are just two examples.



*Pupae in leaf litter*



*Hummingbird moth*



*Fritillary Butterfly*

## Who is sleeping in your garden bed?

But some, like the **wolf spider** (technically not an insect) survive the winter by hiding deep under plant debris and/or in almost vertical burrows in the ground. They also produce a protein called glycol which prevents them from freezing. They prey on other ground dwelling insects such as ants, aphids, earwigs, pill bugs, and other spiders when temperatures permit.

Along with the ladybug beetle, **ground beetles** play a huge role in controlling insects that are harmful to our ornamental gardens, vegetable gardens and lawns. **Ladybugs** along with their larvae are well known for their appetite for aphids, but did you know that ground beetles feed on harmful nematodes, caterpillars, thrips, weevils, slugs and silverfish? Soldier beetles are also important in pest control and Nova Scotia has three different kinds.

Leaf litter and plant debris are not the only winter refuge for beetles and other insects. Protected locations are also found under logs and rocks, in bark crevices and underground burrows.

The **Green lacewing** is also a winter resident of these possible locations. Did you know that in the summer each lacewing larva will prey on 200 pests or pest eggs in a single week? The adult female lacewing will lay more than 250 eggs; if the habitat is favorable, then



*That rotting log at the garden's edge and rock crevice will also do nicely as winter lodging.*

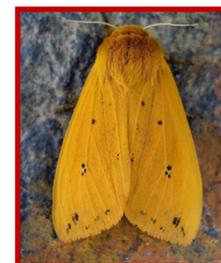
Open buildings such as wood sheds offer protection from the elements and predators for many overwintering guests including the **mourning cloak butterfly**; because it overwinters as an adult it is one of the first butterflies seen in the spring.



*Mourning Cloak butterfly*



The **black and orange woolly bear caterpillar** will look for similar protection and in the spring will spin a cocoon and transform into the **Isabella Tiger moth**.



## Who is sleeping in your garden bed?

Hopefully, the friendly **garden toad** is a year-round resident of your garden. They seem to be scarce these days so encourage these garden favorites to make your garden their home with an area of sandy soil. Toads are not freeze-tolerant so they must find or dig a winter burrow. Sandy soil is a preferred medium as it makes digging much easier, especially when you have to dig a winter burrow three feet deep to be below the frost line!



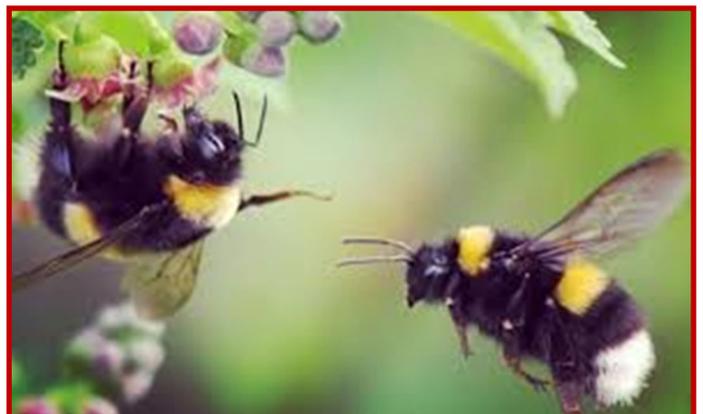
*Garden Toad*

They may also spend the winter in a rodent burrow, under large rocks (we all have plenty of those!) under logs or root wads, and even in decayed root tunnels. After the mating season ends in the summer, a toad will eat large amounts of insects, spiders, slugs, worms and pretty much anything it can find to get ready for winter. It is estimated that one toad can eat up to 10,000 insects over one summer. I would like to have more toads in my garden!

I loved looking for salamanders as a kid and you may have seen one or two hiding under a plant pot. Like toads, salamanders are not freeze-tolerant so anywhere they can avoid freezing will work for the winter. They will also use old rodent burrows, cracks in rocks, log piles and even compost heaps. In fact, your compost heap is like a winter vacation paradise for many critters.



Rodent holes and plant debris appear to be valuable real estate for critters; add a new queen bumble bee to the list of overwintering residents as she can be found there too! In the spring she will look for a protected nesting site to start a new colony.



## Who is sleeping in your garden bed?

The majority of bees that are seen in the garden are solitary ground nesting bees. Patches of undisturbed bare soil in or around your garden will likely be home to the next generation of native bees. The use of landscaping fabric for weed control can have dire consequences for their winter survival.

Cavity nesting native bees look for standing or broken stems of tall perennials like Echinacea, black eyed susans, hollyhock, shasta daisy, stone crop sedum, etc.



Look around your garden and anywhere the stems are left standing is where you could find next year's bees. Beetle holes in trees-standing or on the ground-are also potential nesting sites. It is easy to leave some dead wood around your property for cavity nesting bees, especially after hurricane season!

The most visible winter residents are **red squirrels** and **birds**.



Red  
Squirrel



Drey

A squirrel's tree nest is called a **drey**. It looks like a pile of twigs, leaves and bark, but the inside is hollow and lined with grass, moss and lichen. The squirrel will sleep in the nest at night and shelter there in bad weather. Dreys are often found in conifers because of a ready food supply in cones. A squirrel will also nest at the base of a tree, a bird house or in the hollow of a tree. Although a squirrel will bulk up for the winter, it has many caches of nuts and seeds hidden nearby to fuel its active winter lifestyle.



Chipmunk

Chipmunks on the other hand are usually nowhere to be seen because they sleep in a burrow dug 3 feet down and up to 30 feet long. Entrances are hidden at the base of a tree or in thick brush. Food supplies

(Continued on Page 9)

## Who is sleeping in your garden bed?

are gathered for the winter and kept close by in the burrow. The chipmunk will awaken every few days to eat and then return to sleep (technically called a torpor or torpid state) as long as food supplies last.



*Black  
Capped  
Chickadee*

Birds seem to be the only ones that bare the brunt of the winter weather. Birds that don't migrate for the winter are left in the open because they have no burrows, dens or winter nests. Winter is a challenging season for them. At night and in bad weather birds will roost together in groups in thick vegetation such as hedges, brush and brambles. Tree hollows and well-placed bird houses offer welcome protection.

So our gardens can be very much alive even in the dead of winter when your garden is winter friendly. Making sure your garden is winter friendly is really very easy; Leave that pile of brush for the birds and clean it up in spring.

Dispose of leaf piles in spring when all overwintering insects have moved on.

When clearing up downed trees leave some of the dead wood in place or move it to multiple areas in the garden where it won't be noticed.

Leave parts of your garden looking a bit untidy with standing plant stubble, dead vegetation and plant debris.

Try adding bird houses and see who decides to move in!! I hope that you and your garden have a very happy and cozy winter!



- *Penelope Irving*



# Who is sleeping in your garden bed?

## References

Matthew S. Jones, Washington State University, Joseph M. Taylor, Washington State University, William E. Snyder, University of Georgia, "An Introduction to Ground Beetles: Beneficial Predators on Your Farm", <https://eorganic.org/node/33936> Accessed 22 Oct 2022

Robin Sweetster. "Beneficial Insects in the Garden" <https://www.almanac.com/beneficial-insects-garden> Accessed 22 Oct 2022

Nova Scotia Beetles.

<https://www.beetleidentification.org/beetles-by-state-listing.php?reach=Nova%20Scotia> Accessed 2 Oct 2022

Julie Renolds. "How Insects Prepare for Winter; Research on the suspended-animation state called diapause might help save our crops—and our health". <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/how-insects-prepare-for-winter/#:~:text=Insect%20diapause%20is%20a%20lot,cold%20for%20them%20to%20function>. Accessed 24 Oct 2022

John and Janet Allen. "Our Habitat Garden; A Wild Habitat Garden in Central New York"

<https://ourhabitatgarden.org/home/habitat/seasons/winter/> Accessed 24 Oct 2022

Neighborhood Greening. 'Your Garden "Still Works" in the Winter'.

<https://neighborhoodgreening.org/garden-still-works-winter/> Accessed 22 Oct 2022

Monica Cardoza. Birds&Blooms, Winter Wildlife: Animals That Hibernate in Your Yard,

<https://www.birdsandblooms.com/gardening/backyard-wildlife/animals-that-hibernate/> Accessed 23 Oct 2022

Backyard Ecology. "How do butterflies and moths survive the winter?"

<https://www.backyardecology.net/how-do-butterflies-and-moths-survive-the-winter/> Accessed 23 Oct 2022

Toads N Frogs. "Where do Toads Go in the Winter?"

<https://toadsnfrogs.com/where-toads-go-winter/> Accessed 22 Oct 2022

Hamilton Conservation Authority. "Reptile and Amphibian Hibernation; Where Do Toads Go In The Winter?"

<https://conservationhamilton.ca/blog/reptile-and-amphibian-hibernation/> Accessed 24 Oct 2022

Steve Foster. "Where do Wolf Spiders Go in the Winter?"

<https://schoolofbugs.com/where-do-wolf-spiders-go-in-the-winter/> Accessed 29 Oct 2022

Almanac. "Woolly Bear Caterpillars and Weather Prediction" <https://www.almanac.com/woolly-bear-caterpillars-and-weather-prediction> Accessed 28 Oct 2022

Christine Hanrahan. "Red squirrels at the FWG"

<https://ofnc.ca/programs/fletcher-wildlife-garden/flora-and-fauna-at-the-fwg/red-squirrels-at-the-fwg>

Accessed 26 Oct 2022

## Suggestions For a Snowy Day:

Snow is Falling  
And books are  
calling....

**Book Reviews** -by Ann Buck

As the temperatures drop and the sun becomes scarce, it is a good time to curl up with a good book. Especially if gardening figures prominently. I have two books that I want to share with you. The first is:

**The History of Rain** – by Halifax Writer,  
**Stephens Gerard Malone**

The story begins in war-ravaged France, after the first world war. In a convalescent hospital, with a former soldier severely disfigured during one of the battles. As well he is suffering with survivors' remorse. While wallowing in his self pity, he notices a small man attempting to turn the mud puddle of a yard into a garden. Rain decides to help. Over the next few years, he learns everything the gentleman knows and finds his purpose. And like most good stories, there is a girl involved. Rain falls hard for her, but knows he has no hope because of his disfigurement. She does however fall for a fellow patient. They marry and move to an estate elsewhere in France. They hire Rain to be their gardener. The lengths he goes to develop the property boggles the mind. Unfortunately, the Nazis are rising in power and World War 2 is approaching. Rain's employers are on the side of the Nazis. Rain sees the writing on the wall and through contacts moves to Los Angeles and works for private clients which leads him to working in the movie industry doing sets. Needless to say, these are just the high points. The ups and downs of Rain's life make for an enjoyable read.

The second is:

**The \$64 Tomato**  
- by **William Alexander**

This book follows the creation of a garden from the ground up. The development of the garden design, establishment of the beds, landscaping, planting the beds, dealing with deer and groundhogs, dealing with the produce at the end of the season. This is a story as old as time - lets grow a garden to have fresh produce and save money.

As is also often the case, yields are not always what we hope. At one point, the author calculated the cost to produce a single tomato to be \$64 hence the title.

This was a fun read, especially since we have all lived through the same situations.

Just a couple suggestions for a cold snowy day.



# AMGA Executive 2022-2023

**NOTE:** To contact a member of the Executive below, please send an email to:  
[atlanticmastergardeners3@gmail.com](mailto:atlanticmastergardeners3@gmail.com)

**PRESIDENT:** Sandra Matchett

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

**PAST PRESIDENT:** Jim Sharpe

**WEBMASTER:** Gigi Pelletier

**SOCIAL MEDIA REP:** Richelle Gregg

**SECRETARY:** Elizabeth Kelley

**TREASURER:** Johanne Robertson

**MEMBER AT LARGE (1):** Carol Goodwin  
Annapolis Valley/Central NS

**MEMBER AT LARGE (2):** Penny Irving  
Halifax NS (Coastal Gardeners)

**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