

The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners

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AMGA CHRISTMAS DECOR

On December 7, the monthly AMGA member gardening session on Zoom, highlighted members sharing photos of their Holiday Creations for 2021. Most members used combinations of evergreens, dried flower heads, berries and other seasonal items from their gardens displayed with seasonal ribbons, bows and heirloom containers and decorations. Below and on the following page are photos shared by members. Apologies to anyone missed!



Helen

Impressive display of Holly highlighted with berries and candles in various types of containers for simple centerpiece.



Bonnie



Bonnie added to the charm of her Farm for the Season with Pine, Fir, Canada Holly, Hydrangea, and an evergreen wreath for her Barn to complete the effect!

AMGA Holiday Decor 2021



DAWNE



SUE



Dawne decided the cost of real Christmas trees was way too high! She went to a recycling depot, got cardboard, painted it and it became a Christmas tree! Well Done Dawne -the Queen of Recycling and Reusing!

This tree uses neither greenery from the garden nor recycled paper. It is green though and classically Maritime material - Beach Glass collected on the Northumberland Strait shores. The Star is a Starfish!



Christmas wreath with red twig dogwood, sumac, incense cedar, boxwood and holly added.



Dried *Allium christophii* flower heads, sprayed to keep seed from falling out



Female Christmas gnome - white pine, black spruce and mugo pine over tomato cage.



PENNY



Some of the plants used in Penny's arrangements included Pine, Fir, Spruce, Cedar, Juniper, Silver Birch as well as Holly, Hydrangea, Rhododendron, Eubonymous and Coneflower seedheads adorned with festive bows and decorations.



A Message from Our New AMGA President

- by **Sandra Matchett**



I would like to start this message by introducing myself. My name is Sandra Matchett and on September 27, 2021 I accepted the position of President of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association (AMGA). I live in New Germany, NS and am a retired nurse who spent most of my career involved in various positions in Operating Rooms.

Growing up, my parents had a beautiful property, to which I paid no attention. My gardening journey began in earnest when we moved to Nova Scotia and built our home here. Our home is located in the woods and I am surrounded by 60-80 foot trees so shade gardening it is. When I read a write-up about the Master Gardener Program in a Saltscapes magazine I quickly applied to the program and have never looked back.

Covid 19 has given us many challenges with both negative and positive outcomes. Gardening has been a positive outcome with many newcomers entering the fascinating world of horticulture. We as Master Gardeners have much to offer these newcomers and it is always a joy to be able to help new gardeners on their journey. Whether it is through casual conversation or through presentations we are able to help and to learn from all gardeners both new and experienced. The use of technology has given us a much easier way to be connected as has been demonstrated through our use of Zoom. Our monthly education sessions have enabled us to be connected and support each other.

With Christmas fast approaching and our gardens put to bed we now have the time to enjoy the Holidays.

January will be here before we know it and the seed catalogues will cover our surfaces, will be scrutinized, debated upon and decisions made. The joy of discovery of new plants to try!

I would like to wish you all a very joyous Holiday Season and look forward to our 2022 gardening experiences.

Sandra



OPIUM
POPPY

Plants, People, and Politics

- by Diane Giffin-Boudreau

MORNING
GLORY

I wanted to share the highlights of a six-week seminar series I attended via zoom with SCANS (Senior's College Association of Nova Scotia) entitled "Plants, People and Politics. An interesting voyage into the ethnobotany of a host of plant species with the addition of the political ramifications on the plants and peoples involved over several centuries. First, a bit about the presenter Dr. Hilda Taylor. She received a BSc from the University of Liverpool and a PhD from Waterloo. She came to Acadia's Biology Department in 1971 with a specific research focus on mycorrhizal fungi (vascular plants in salt marshes). Well, she picked a great geographic location for her efforts!

Of course, we covered the variety of uses of plants including food, fuel, shelter, fibres, ritualistic, and medicinal. We were also reminded that plants are stationary creatures and therefore have to rely on themselves to battle climatic conditions, attract pollinators, and ward off predators. Dr. Taylor talked about plants' ability to develop strong defences against pests and specifically identifying six plant families with high alkaloid properties that have pronounced physiological effects on humans (e.g. morphine, quinine) and poisons (strychnine).

Papavaraceae (opium)

Rubiaceae (quinine)

Erythroxylaceae (coca...cocaine)

Myristaceae (nutmeg for euphoria)

Convolvulaceae (morning glory)

Solanaceae (nightshade)

In the case of the last, potatoes and tomatoes fall in this group. Modern potatoes have been modified for low

alkaloid levels but the bags still suggest storing in a cool dry place and in the case of the PEI brand, it actually says to turn over the bag so the netting is not exposed to light.

The history of use of these mood altering alkaloids found in plants go back many centuries. They were used to curb hunger for the "hunter-gatherers" who often had to do with very little, marijuana seeds were found in burial pits in Romania dating back to the Bronze Age and opium poppies were farmed in 6000 BC in Rome. Shamans tightly controlled the use of these plants to "engage with the gods", predict the future and for healing. Of course many of the valued properties of these plant alkaloids are now pharma designed; and as we well know, can be abused by bad-actors.

So let's just follow one of Dr. Taylor's examples through their people and political interactions. We might call this "the good, the bad and the ugly" segment:

Potato

Let's follow the lowly tuber, the potato. The Inca Empire (1463-1532) used the potato (many varieties found there) as their climate would not support corn production. It was noted that the llamas would forage the tubers, lick clay and then consume. The Inca mimicked what they saw, which unknown to them was reducing the alkaloid loading which could have made them ill as some tubers were actually poisonous. It became a valued crop, protected from wind, pests and invading armies who would crush above-ground crops while parading across the land.

Along came the Spanish seeking gold; and by 1567, records show the Spaniards have taken potatoes around



Plants, People, and Politics

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the world trading with other nations. There is some debate as to whether Sir Walter Raleigh or Sir Francis Drake brought the tuber to England but the Drake statue in London has one hand on his sword and a potato in the other!

Interesting, this valued food source was looked upon with suspicion. It wasn't pretty and the French referred to it as hog feed. Antoine Parmentier, a French army pharmacist, was captured by the Prussians and imprisoned. He attributed the potato to his survival and good health during the ordeal and promoted its use (today we can find a recipe "Hachis Parmentier"). In Russia, Catherine the Great had no luck in convincing the population to adopt the use, and the clergy said it couldn't be found in the bible. It was not cultivated until the Tzar enforced its cultivation. Frederick the Great of Prussia, employed a bit of psychology. He planted some of his fields and put the guards out. The idea was, if it is worth guarding, it was worth stealing... therefore worth growing!

This food crop found its way to Ireland where much of the island was rocky and tough to cultivate. The farmers used "lazy beds" which were shallow troughs following anything but straight lines to plant the seed potatoes. Between 1780-1841, the population doubled and became dependent on only two cultivars. Harsh weather events and severe blight affecting potato crops across Europe took its toll particularly on the labourers. *Phytophthora infestans* are believed to have crossed the Atlantic in the holds of the sailing ships of the day. It infected the crops for multiple years with the ensuing death rate soaring as whole families perished of hunger. Ireland suffered more than most due to the hierarchy of capitalism endorsed by the Brits.

Large estate properties were owned by absentee landlords based in England. Often these lands had been taken by force and handed down through inheritance. The owners hired middlemen who further subdivided the tracks to poor farmers who then rented to cottiers (laborers). Rents were extracted at every level resulting in very little for the poorest. Whatever product they could keep themselves was eaten or spoiled by late spring resulting in what was referred to as meal months when it was common to see the Irish, at all ages, begging for food to get them through until the crop was harvested in the fall.

Needless to say, the haves have always exploited the have nots whether it was to surreptitiously acquire rubber seeds and seedlings from the Amazon farmer tapping the trees, ultimately displacing a thriving business for Brazil and employment for the Amazonians or using an outdated British Corn Law to further devastate a starving Irish population during the famine. On the upside, sharing knowledge of the food and healing benefits and cultivation preferences derived from a great range of renewal plants across continents will continue to contribute to our survival. If we keep an eye on how these benefits are shared, we should see more attribution and a lot less exploitation.

Potato Plant





St. Bernard Parish Park

Enfield, NS

- by Gigi Pelletier

I have lived in Enfield, Nova Scotia for the last 28 years. I love my quaint community, and this has been Home for a long time. Even so, every time I go into 'town', I am reminded of my birthplace as I drive by the E. H. Horne building. Edmund Horne discovered my hometown of Noranda, ('Nor' for north and 'anda' for Canada). Noranda turns 100 years old next May.



E.H. Horne

In their retirement years, Mr. & Mrs. Horne supported the Enfield community, including the St. Bernard's Parish, they are buried in St. Bernard's Cemetery, directly across the road from the E.H. Horne School.



E. H. Horne School

This summer, while I was driving past the St. Bernard Church, I noticed that the work between the church and Enfield Volunteer fire department not only appeared to be fully completed...but is that a garden?! As a gardener, I felt this needed further investigation! What was supposed to be a 15 minute outing to the hardware store turned into a 2.5 hour stroll through a breath-taking garden. I was stunned. Whoever designed this garden...well, this was not their first rodeo! The design was brilliant, thought

through, using every space of the area in unique ways - the variety of specimen trees was amazing, the perennials addressing each season, the extensive irrigation system, which is barely visible, the paths and accessibility to all, the colourful benches and picnic tables. Yup, I was truly blown away and even more curious ... The signage indicated that the Garden was the property of the St. Bernard Parish. Still more research was required - where did this come from and who is maintaining it??

With the help of a friend, I found my answers. Sherri Borden Colley of CBC News reported in 2017 that "A couple who moved to Enfield, N.S., from Switzerland four years ago say they don't expect anything in return for spending \$400,000 of their own money to create a lush and serene public park in their rural community." Sherri wrote how there were "100 different species of flowers, 25 different kinds of trees and 20 different types of grass". The park includes a Japanese garden, a bamboo forest hiding the fire station wall and in the center a 400 ft² red spruce, custom designed gazebo. The spring garden boasts a collection of 15,000 tulips and daffodils. Sherri's article explained how this project was a labour of love for the retired couple, Lorraine and Hervé Burri.

The Burri's have also agreed to pay to maintain the park for the next 20 years. "The park has been a real community effort. Four local landscaping companies, who are normally competitors, worked together on it. The municipality issued the necessary permits and is assisting with supplying water, while the fire department has installed an outdoor faucet for



St. Bernard Parish Park

(Continued from page 5)

watering the grounds. Two workers from Corridor Community Options for Adults, a centre that provides programs and vocational training for people living with intellectual disabilities, water the park each morning.”

Now that it gets dark so early, I get to see the Enfield Christmas tree all lit up. It now stands proudly in the new park. A beautiful tree. Volunteers that put it up reported that there were “134 branches with 12 balls on each branch, making for 1,608 balls and they are anywhere from four inches in diameter to 10”-12” in diameter”.

If anyone with a bit of time on their hands is driving past Exit 7 on Highway 102, this garden/park is definitely worth the visit, and it’s a perfect place to picnic or to grab an ice cream from the truck that is usually in the church parking lot, located in the booming center of town in Enfield.



St. Bernard Park in 2017
(photographed by CBC)



Enfield NS Christmas Tree

(Photo by Healey)

Acknowledgements:

<http://www.ville.rouyn-noranda.qc.ca/en/page/rouyn-noranda/>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/enfield-serenity-public-park-garden-switzerland-couple-1.4251654>

https://thelaker.ca/friends-step-up-to-make-enfield-christmas-tree-come-to-life/?fbclid=IwAR2PT_KnNuaC61KErhYF-

Gardeners Steps To Combatting Climate Change

-by Sue Stuart

The fires, droughts, floods and other disasters recently can leave little doubt that Climate Change is happening and happening very rapidly! We tend to feel pretty small when it comes to doing something about it in our little corner of the world! However, as David Suzuki stated:

"In a world of more than seven billion people, each of us is just a drop in the bucket. But with enough drops, we can fill any bucket."

As Master Gardeners we want to contribute to a Solution. How can we make sure we help to fill that bucket!

Here are some things we now do or should do in our yards:

Grow it yourself

Many of our food items can be grown in our gardens through the summer in beds, containers or through the winter in cold frames or winter sowing. This cuts down on transportation costs, fossil fuels, refrigeration, etc.

Compost

Trashed food ends up in a landfill, rots and emits methane - a greenhouse gas that contributes more to global warming than CO₂. Leftovers in a compost bin emit no methane reduce the energy needed to haul garbage to the dump. Adding compost to your soil will enrich it while increasing moisture retention and reduces the amount of watering you'll need to do.

Recycle everything you can! Purchase products that have **reusable** or **recycleable** containers

Reduce garbage Find out where you can dispose of Environment damaging garbage like batteries,

electronics and medicines. This will help keep harmful chemicals out of landfills and our water supply. Cut Styrofoam out of your life. It isn't recyclable and won't biodegrade. Encourage take-outs to find **biodegradable** solutions.

Diverse Planting Plant and Protect Trees, fruit vegetables native plants that can be consumed by us as well as provide habitat and food for species essential to maintaining our ecosystems in our own yards and our Communities. **Work with Nature!**

A **Rain barrel** collects rainwater for use through the growing Season.

Rain Garden - If you have very wet spots in your yard, try constructing a **rain garden** This will allow excess water to filter its way more slowly through the gravel, soil, providing water for growing plants and allowing more "healthy" runoff as well as providing an eye-catching garden site. Pavement on our driveways, streets, etc results in contaminant (oil, gas herbicides, pesticides, etc.) Runoff Into our water supplies e.g. lakes, rivers) . While we aren't likely to decrease the amount of pavement in our communities much, Rain Gardens can catch some of the runoff and filter it through the gravel layers.

Contact your local **MLA** regarding actions that need to be changed in your Community to prevent or reverse further Climate change.

Scientists agree that we have **10 years** to cut greenhouse gases. Reversing **Nature loss** could account for **30%** of global action to **stabilize** the Climate. Greenhouse gas emissions have to be reduced to avoid more devastation. Actions that conserve, restore or improve sustainability of ecosystems, like forests, allow them to absorb and store carbon from the atmosphere.

Steps To Combat Climate Change

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All of us are able to contribute in small ways to helping Nature take control of sustainability of the Ecosystems of our Planet!

On the page below is a chart I made to help understand how we, as individuals, can assist in the fight against climate change. While we continue to use environmentally sound gardening practices, we can encourage others to do the same in our communities through e.g. garden clubs, libraries, plant nurseries, schools, talking to local government reps, businesses etc. encouraging them to promote nature friendly practices in our Communities and extending it to include Federal Government, Industry, and reaching beyond our country to worldwide approaches to combatting Climate change.



This symbol represents environmentally friendly plantings—individual gardens, Community agriculture plantings to large scale plantings to feed large city populations - a big challenge to use sustainable practices to maintain nature's ability to renew important ecosystems.

References

[Top 10 things you can do about climate change](#)
- David Suzuki Foundation

[What is climate change? - David Suzuki Foundation](#)

[What Is Climate Change? | United Nations](#)

[Global Climate Change: What You Need to Know |](#)

CHART



AMGA Event Calendar December, 2021 - March, 2022

December 31, 2021

- **AMGA** Volunteer Hours deadline.

The reporting period is from June 2019 to December 2021 -See form on AMGA website: Membership Page - Atlantic Master Gardeners Association (AMGA):

<https://www.atlanticmastergardeners.ca/volunteer-service>

January 8, 2022

- **Toronto Master Gardeners** Virtual Technical Update 2022
- Theme: **Ecological Gardening**,
Time: **9:00am-2:30pm**, Place: **Zoom**,
Price: **\$30** per person

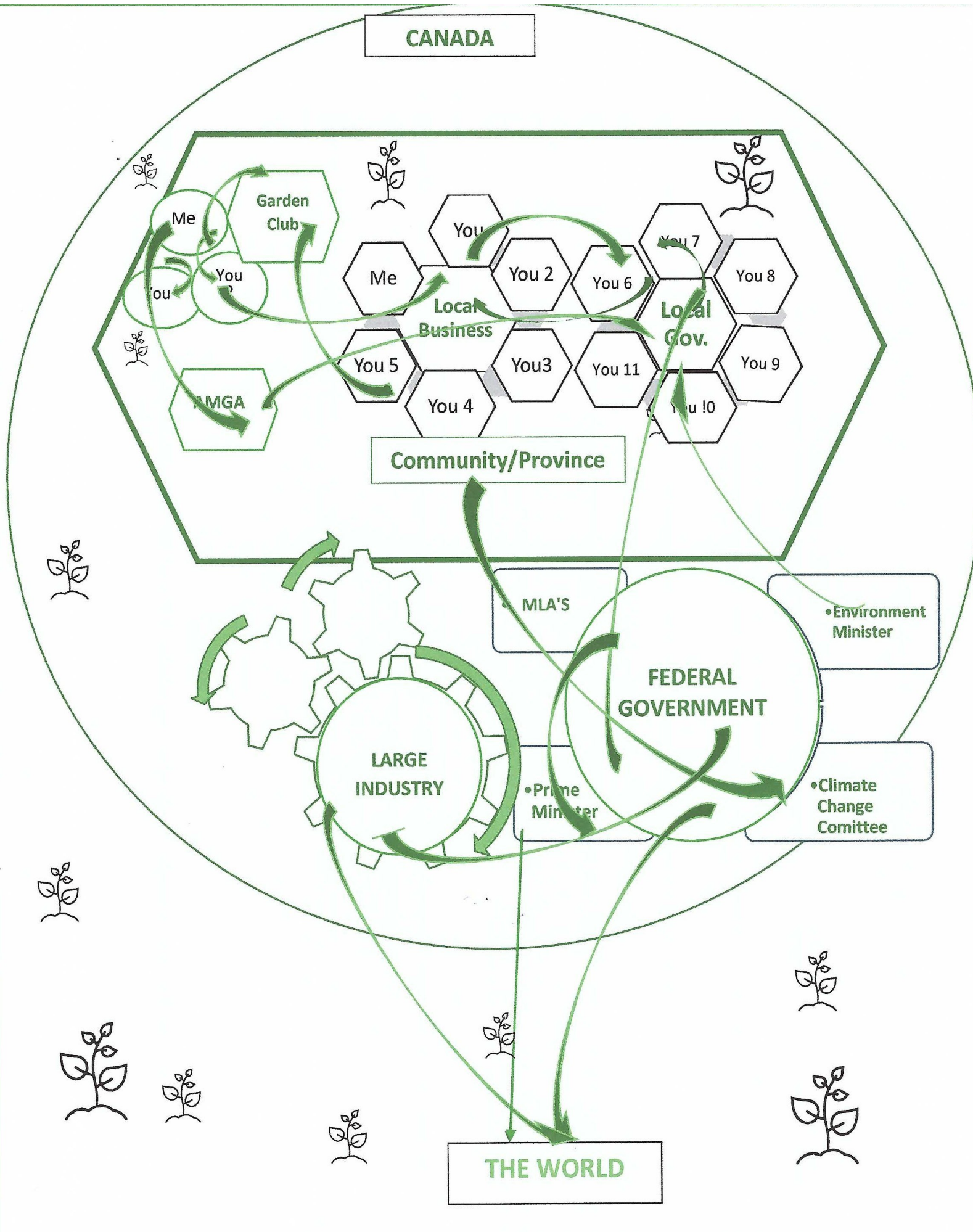
January 31, 2022

- **AMGA** Executive Meeting - **8:00pm** via **Zoom**

March 21, 2022

- **AMGA** Executive Meeting - **8:00pm** via **Zoom**







AMGA Executive 2021-2022

NOTE: To contact a member of the Executive below, please send an email to:

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
Annapolis Valley/Central NS

MEMBER AT LARGE (2): Ann Buck
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