



The Garden Master News



Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

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The Garden In Winter

-by Lucy Maud Montgomery



Frosty-white and cold it lies
Underneath the fretful skies;
Snowflakes flutter where the red
Banners of the poppies spread,
And the drifts are wide and deep
Where the lilies fell asleep.

But the sunsets o'er it throw
Flame-like splendor, lucent glow,
And the moonshine makes it gleam
Like a wonderland of dream,
And the sharp winds all the day
Pipe and whistle shrilly gay.

Safe beneath the snowdrifts lie
Rainbow buds of by-and-by;
In the long, sweet days of spring
Music of bluebells shall ring,
And its faintly golden cup
Many a primrose will hold up.

Though the winds are keen and chill
Roses' hearts are beating still,
And the garden tranquilly
Dreams of happy hours to be-
In the summer days of blue
All its dreamings will come true.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FROM THE PATIO

- by Jim Sharpe, AMGA President



Season's Greetings!

It's been an early winter with strong winds, soaking rain and cold snow, so I'm looking forward to next year's gardening. This fall the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association (AMGA) Executive sent out a questionnaire for feedback on our AMGA Conference, presenting five alternative times for our conference. The response was divided with almost an even number preferring the second week of July and a similar number preferring a fall weekend event. At the December Executive meeting, we set the dates for July 11-12 this upcoming summer, but we will also start planning a fall event (conference or workshop) for the future. We approved the theme, "Gardening in Challenging Environments," for our July 2019 conference, to feature the gardeners who work with extreme winds, poor soil, late spring and early fall frosts yet produce wonderful gardens in our region. Stay tuned for the conference program and speakers. I hope you will consider attending this year's conference.

I've had a busy fall attending gardening events. I was able to attend the Community Seed Organizers Symposium in Truro on Sept 30th sponsored by the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN.)

I also enjoyed wonderful lectures with the Atlantic Rhododendron and Horticultural Society (ARHS) including "Hydrangeas for Cold Climate Gardens" by Maurice Foster of England (Steele Lecture), "Gardening for Wildlife" by our own Carol Goodwin, and the "Abby Rockefeller Garden of Desert Island, Maine" by Cassie Banning. I also attended a fascinating lecture by Jamie Ellison on his study visit to the limestone barrens on the Newfoundland Great Northern Peninsula at the Nova Scotia Rock Garden Club meeting. We have such great gardening talent and speakers in our region.

At the end of November, I attended one day of the

ACORN conference in Charlottetown and was able to hear about inspiring innovation by the organic growers of Atlantic Canada.

I'm looking forward to the upcoming spring conferences. In May and June this year there are three interesting ones in the Philadelphia region which has more public gardens than anywhere else in North America, often called "America's Garden Capital." The first is the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) study weekend, "**Rooted in Diversity**" from May 3-5. Having attended the NARGS conference in St. John's last summer, I can attest that this organization is filled with plant enthusiasts.

In fact the Delaware chapter which is hosting the weekend often receives the "Best in Show" award at the March Philadelphia Flower Show. The American Rhododendron Society (ARS) meets May 16-19 for their convention titled "**The Philadelphia Story: Rhododendrons in America's Garden Capital.**" The third of these events is the International Master Gardeners Conference which will be held at Valley Forge from June 17-21, see

(<https://www.internationalmastergardener.com>).

Check out their website to see the speakers, tours, workshops and seminars that will be offered. It would be great if we had members from the Atlantic Region attending the IMG conference. Please send me a message if you are interested.

I look forward to spending the Christmas break reviewing seed catalogs and planning my next year's garden. It looks like another busy year for talks, workshops and gardening tables with the Halifax Library branches.

Have a great winter and happy garden planning!

- Jim

Winter Wonderland

- bringing your Atlantic garden to life in the quiet season

- by Laura Ballem

(Master Gardener Plant ID Course Assignment –2017-2018)

It's late November, your clean up is done, and now you have to wait through four long months of Winter before you can enjoy your garden again, right? Wrong! That traditional view has changed. For too long we've been dazzled by the colours and scents of Spring, Summer and Autumn. We've overlooked the quiet, arresting beauty a garden can show in Winter – through its structure, contrast, and the occasional, breath-taking flash of red or orange – especially if all these elements are dusted with snow, Atlantic Nova Scotia's typical Winter landscape colour.

Evergreens move to the front of the show and anchor our view once deciduous trees have shrugged off their colourful Autumn foliage. Along a property line they can serve the double purpose of a backdrop of green and as a windbreak – a shelter belt of two to four rows of mixed evergreens or a dense hedge, particularly on the north and eastern sides, can reduce heat loss from a house and provide your garden with shelter for shrubs and perennial plants affected by winter winds. Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), Colorado blue spruce (*Picea pungens*), Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*) and Eastern arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) are windbreak tree choices if you have the room. A smaller, dense, dark green border hedge of Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidata*) or the taller, more columnar Hick's yew (*Taxus x media* 'Hicksii') can also provide a garden with definition. Evergreens give a garden visual interest in Winter with the variety of contrasting sizes, shapes, colours, and textures available. Dwarf varieties (grow up to half the size of their larger forms) are wonderful to intersperse in extended mixed house foundation plantings or in groupings or as accents throughout the garden.



Dwarf balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), Dwarf threadleaf false cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera* 'Filifera Nana'), Pfitzer juniper (*Juniperus x pfitzeriana*), Bird's nest spruce (*Picea abies* 'Nidiformis') and Swiss mountain/Mugo pine (*Pinus mugo*) are some of the many smaller evergreens available.



Deciduous trees, with their branches bare and their bark on view, take on a new aspect in winter. White birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and Paperbark maple (*Acer griseum*) are examples of trees with attractive bark. Plant several in the same hole to slow growth, and near a backdrop of Evergreen for beautiful contrast. Star magnolia (*Magnolia stellata*), planted in a sheltered, non-southern exposure also has lovely bark as well as beautiful early Spring flowers, blooming even before its leaves appear.



White or Paper Birch



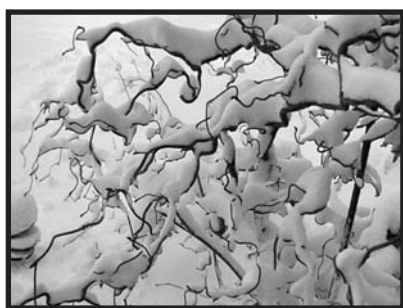
Paperbark Maple

Winter Wonderland

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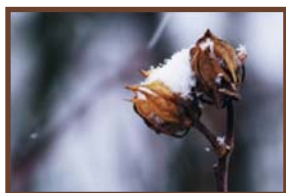
Shrubs such as Red-twig dogwood (*Cornus alba*) and Harry Lauder's Walking Stick (*Corylus avellane* 'Contorta'), with bright twig colour and contorted branches, make a dramatic statement.

**Red-twig
Dogwood**



**Harry Lauder's
Walking Stick**

The flowering shrub Hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata* 'Grandiflora'), and perennials such as Astilbe (*Astilbe arendsii*), Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) and tall Sedums (*Sedum* 'Autumn Joy', 'Purple Emperor') provide an essential winter garden ingredient – seedheads.



Various seedheads showing off in Winter

Ornamental grasses add wonderful visual texture to the winter landscape. Plant them where their silhouettes can catch the low winter sun and enjoy the contrast of their delicate tracery against the snow. Miscanthus (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Juli') is one ornamental grass that looks spectacular in Winter.



Miscanthus

Let's not forget the flash of red – so dramatic against a backdrop of green or catching the eye in a snow-whitened landscape. The deciduous tree Red Jade crabapple (*Malus x scheideckeri* 'Red Jade') produces lovely, small red fruit that attracts birds in Winter, as do the bright orange berries of European Mountain ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*). The glossy red berries of the dioecious broadleaf evergreen shrub, Blue Princess Holly (*Ilex x meserveae*), appear only on the female plant, a male plant needs to be planted nearby in order to fertilize the female shrub. Its native cousin, Winterberry *Ilex verticillata*, loses its leaves in Autumn, leaving the red berries to make an arresting show along bare branches.

**Winterberry
*Ilex verticillata***



Winter Wonderland

(Continued from Page 4)

There are so many more choices within the elements of structure, bark, twig colour, branch shape, seedheads, grasses and berries, than those presented here. With time and patience, adding these type of trees, shrubs and plants to your garden will bring added joy in the long season of Winter, and will help you to see your garden in a new way. Then you can draw your armchair away from the cozy fire to face a window, through which you view, not just a garden under snow, but delightful sculptures of bright or twisted twigs, graceful frost-tinged grasses, contrasting snow-capped dwarf evergreens, ice-filigreed seedheads, eye-catching red berries, and graceful bare trees. Truly, your own Winter Wonderland.



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The New Prairie Landscape Style

Some thoughts on the latest MG course, created by Carol Goodwin, for Dalhousie University

- by Heather Connors-Dunphy

How many of us remember white gloves, poodle skirts, patchwork peasant skirts, jumpsuits for men, leg warmers, bell bottom pants, sweatbands, t-shirts over long-sleeved shirts, or velour tracksuits? These were fashion trends that came and went (for most people).

In the garden design world the same sorts of things happened albeit over longer periods of time and with more staying power. This course outlines the history of landscape design from the Renaissance to the present. It is the first in a series of three dealing with landscape design (the other two, yet to be released, are Aging Gracefully with your Garden and Strategies for a Year Round Garden).

This course has some similarities with the core MG on line courses. It is launched on the Brightspace platform which offers a more rich student experience than the software (Moodle) being used when I took the core courses. A really good tutorial on the use of the software is available. A weekly online chat/help/question and answer session with the instructor and all other MG course participants is one of the new features.

The course features an old friend, Plant Identification. About 50 plants including trees, shrubs, grasses, bulbs, perennials are presented. These are plants that can be used in our Zones to design a Prairie Landscape.

Because this is a design course it is also quite different from the offerings in the core program. It endeavours to explain not only history but also why this sort of development in landscape design at this time. It emphasizes that peoples' expectations of gardens and what they look like are changing and that to appreciate gardens in this style (which some consider messy and

"too wild" looking) we need to take a step back and consider that this new style embraces the ethos of the turn of the 21st century.

One of the "rockstars" of this design school is Piet Oudolf. A quick look at the slide shows at oudolf.com gives a good representation of what these designs are accomplishing in terms of: addressing environmental concern, ecology, climate change impacts and the increasing urbanization of the population. An example of planting in this style is the High Line in New York City. This abandoned railway spur line area has been turned into a city green, walking and people space. It is in the Chelsea area of New York and Piet Oudolf is the designer.

The movement seeks to address biodiversity, carefully use resources such as water, create beauty/interest for residents combined with a low expenditure of dollars and effort across the life of the garden, and respond to climate change. James Hitchmough, one of the proponents, says that because long seasons of interest are easier to sell to people, when things flower and how species compete are vital considerations in designs. Because plants are not cut down in fall, winter interest provided by the plants is also considered.

Fulfilling these needs sounds like a tall order, but a look across landscape architectural practices in this style shows us emphasis on plants that perform across all seasons, grown in media including rock and sand, use of ground covers which discourage weed growth, and plants able to compete successfully with weeds. Some proponents like Oudolf use plants on their designs, others like Hitchmough plant seed to produce "planted meadows".

The New Prairie Landscape Style

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Depending on the style used, New Wave or Prairie Landscape, blocks of plants are interspersed and grasses are used. Through study and travel, “right plant, right space” plays a big role in these designs. In the first style (New Wave), grasses form about 30% of the planting, in the second, the planting is more relaxed and grasses form about 50% of the planting. The increased percentage of grasses, reflects shorter grasses used in the matrix layer. This layer is the portion which is planted to keep weed incursion as low as possible.

Using the forest as a model for a plant community, vegetation is often stacked in layers. In the design phase the paths are placed, then trees and larger shrubs form the first layer, followed by perennials used for presence and texture. The design is often done by month, perennials which bloom in June, then July, August and September are included on different layers.

Preceding planted meadow design much study is done on meadow ecology worldwide and in breeding and selecting the best plants for a particular use. An example of one of these is the London Olympic Park.

The course covered designing in this style, planning the garden layout and planting the garden. Maintenance is key to these gardens in their early years. This was covered in detail as well.

Personal Observations

This was an interesting course, I learned a lot. I also had practical reasons for taking it as I have a large area now covered with very lack lustre grass which I want to redevelop in this style. I want to eliminate mowing in this area, provide more pollinator habitat and stabilize a hilly section with ground covers and grasses.

A few other notes... I am a Mac user and most of the Brightspace course material, including lectures (on video), written instruction materials, plant profiles, galleries, tests and quizzes worked well. Assignments are submitted through the software using Google Chrome. This meant a few extra steps for me.

The course is set up with a two month duration. Unfortunately there was a death in my family during this time, so I was really pressed to meet the deadline (which I did). I didn't want an extension because I had too much garden and greenhouse work to do at the time!

I hope this article will satisfy your curiosity about this course.



**London Olympic
Park meadow planting**



**High Line,
NYC**

AMGA NEWS & Events

• On December 8, 2018, members of the Halifax AMGA Chapter "Coastal Gardeners", met for their annual "Tis the Season Event" at the home of Lynn Brooks. Each member arrived with containers, greenery, decorations, tools, wire and anything to share to compose a seasonal work of art for their home or a Gift. Below are some of the works of art created!



This was followed with Hot apple cider and Seasonal goodies prepared by members. A good time was had by all! This has become an opportunity for Atlantic Master Gardeners to get together and chat on topics "Gardening".

Members of the Coastal Gardeners meet several times a year, often in combination with a few hours of gardening in the Childrens' Garden at the Isaac Walton Killam Childrens Hospital in Halifax, a project near and dear to the hearts of members!

Do Master Gardeners in your area get together Socially or to work on Garden Projects?
We'd love to hear about your events!

• Plans are underway for the 2019 AMGA Conference. This will be held again at the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus in Truro, NS. The AMGA AGM, as well as MG Graduation and Certification will be held Wednesday, July 10, and the Conference, Thursday, July 11. The Topic for this years Conference is:

"Gardening in Challenging Environments"

Gardening in many areas of Atlantic Canada as well as many other parts of Canada can be a Challenge in the best of Summers. Add Climate change to this and there are many more challenges. Perhaps we can together come up with solutions. If you are interested in attending the Conference, or would like to assist with the Planning or set-up, stay tuned for more information, or contact one of the Executive listed on the last page of this Newsletter. Based on the member Survey done this past Fall, plans will be discussed to possibly change the timing of future Conferences to accommodate more members.

• The next Executive Meeting is scheduled for February 3, 2019. If there is any topic you would like to have discussed, please contact Gigi Pelletier, Secretary at : gigipelletier@hotmail.com to have it added to the Agenda

• The next AMGA Newsletter submissions is due by March 1, 2019. Please forward any submissions for the Newsletter anytime between January and March 1, 2019 to: suestuart@bellaliant.net

• From Pauline Kemp:

Pauline forwarded the Winter newsletter from: "DIGGING IN "

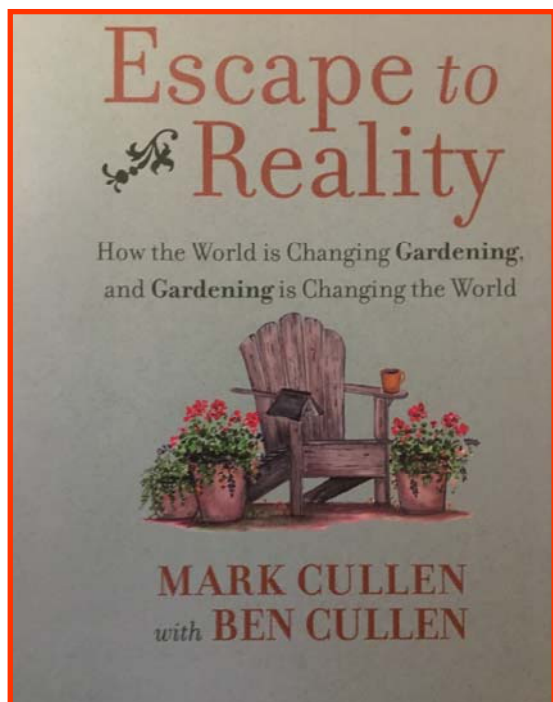
NOVA SCOTIA HORTICULTURE FOR HEALTH NETWORK
Read about their work in their Winter 2019 attached to this email .

Escape to Reality

How the World is Changing Gardening
and Gardening is Changing the World

- by **Mark Cullen** with **Ben Cullen**

BOOK REVIEW - by Sue Stuart



When asked what I would like for Christmas by my Family, I usually refer to my "Gardening Wish List". This year I was pleasantly surprised when I received this book, which wasn't even on my list, nor had I heard about it! I have been enjoying it immensely!

We are all familiar with Mark Cullen, well known Canadian Horticulturalist! Mark covers just about every aspect of Gardening in this book, from the development of our established "Canadian" gardening practices to the impact of socioeconomic factors affecting Millennials with positive outcomes

for all generations. He discusses care of soil, care of pollinators, beneficial insects, growing trees and other plants for health of the environment, enjoyment of their beauty, physical and mental health benefits of being active in the garden environment. The topic of Climate change and its effects is touched on as well.

Rather than coming away from this book with the usual discouraging thoughts related to environmental issues, it seems to promote positive outcomes all related to the garden.

The last section of this book, written by Ben Cullen, Mark's son, puts millennials in a very positive position to bring about changes in difficult socioeconomic times. They are developing different Values that encompass Gardening in many facets of life.

With the topic of our upcoming Conference on "Gardening in Challenging Environments", I can see the benefits of reviewing Mark Cullen's ideas as groundwork for handling "challenges" in Gardening.

I hope you have the opportunity to read this Book!



AMGA Executive 2018-2019

PRESIDENT: Jim Sharpe - sharpe@ns.sympatico.ca

VICE-PRESIDENT: Sandra Matchett - sandra_matchett@hotmail.com

PAST PRESIDENT: Lynn Brooks - lynbrook@bellaliant.net

SECRETARY : Gigi Pelletier - gigipelletier@hotmail.com

TREASURER: Johanne Robertson - jorobertson1632@gmail.com

MEMBER AT LARGE (1): Carol Goodwin - goodwin.carol56@gmail.com
Annapolis Valley/Central NS

MEMBER AT LARGE (2): Ann Buck - buck.annl@gmail.com
Halifax NS (Coastal Gardeners)

MEMBER AT LARGE(3): Janet Elsie - janetelsie@yahoo.ca
Cape Breton NS

MEMBER AT LARGE(4): Heather Connors-Dunphy - hmcd53@gmail.com
New Brunswick

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR: Carolyn Downie - cdownie@ns.sympatico.ca

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Sue Stuart - suestuart@bellaliant.net