

# The Garden Master News

## Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

VOLUME I

ISSUE 3

SEPTEMBER 2008



## 2008 NSAC Master Gardener Graduation

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### Report from your Volunteer Coordinator

- Emily Miller

On July 10<sup>th</sup> 2008 at NSAC, 14 Master Gardener Students graduated. The Ceremony was held during the week of Summer School with friends and family attending. This brings our number of graduates from 4 to 18. Of the 18 Graduates 14 are now Certified Master Gardeners.

To be a certified Master Gardener you must also complete a minimum of 25 hours volunteer work in horticulture each year. Emily Miller talked about this in her speech at the Graduation dinner.



### NSAC Master Gardener Graduates 2008

**Front (L>R):** Christine Boardman, Sherry Chaisson, Carol Goodwin -Instructors  
Joan Francuz, Ann O'Donnell, Annette Hodder.

**Back:** Lana Chisholm (Course Coordinator)  
Carolyn Downie, Brenda Hiltz, Sue Stuart, Phyllis Sutherland, Denise Robichaud, Emily Miller, Anita Sulley.

**Absent:** Barbara Beardswell, Dawn Harmes  
Heidi Sivret.



### AMGA Certification 2008

(L>R) Phyllis Sutherland, Sue Stuart, Christine Boardman, Annette Hodder, Brenda Hiltz, Cyndy Maccormac, Ann O'Donnell, Emily Miller, Anita Sulley.

# First AMGA Master Gardener Certification

## Emily's address:

"Congratulations!

First we were 4 now we are 18.

What better way to spend a winter than studying to be a Master Gardener.

This would not have been possible without the dedicated Instructors and administrators' who made this all possible.

Let's Give them a Hand.

## What is a Master Gardener?

We are mostly a group of enthusiastic amateurs.

Some are Professionals BUT..... What we all have in common is our passion for Gardening.

## How did we get here?

I got here because at last I had time to do something that I loved and wanted to share.

I do not remember a time when I did not have a garden. My parents started their first garden when I was 6 years old.

In 46 years I have gardened in Victoria, Ottawa, Calgary, Oakville and for the past 15 years Lower Sackville, NS. In my case, without any formal gardening education I really enjoyed the Science of Gardening course. Now as a Certified MG I understand my past trials and tribulations of gardening in those different climates, altitudes, acid and alkaline soils, and oh my... don't you look at insects now with more respect?

## Now where do we go from here?

As certified Master gardeners we have been educated by professionals, in horticulture, and leadership to go out and be volunteers to the public in our communities. Promoting enjoyment in all aspects of gardening. For example;

- Volunteering at Schools, getting the Children involved.
- Writing articles for our Web page, your local community newspapers.

- Volunteering at Hospitals and Nursing homes we can encourage the residents to take an interest in their Garden. This can be therapeutic.

- Answering questions.
- Give a seminar,
- Have a Seedy Saturday, get people involved.

In some parts of the country it will be more difficult than in Towns and Cities. You may be the only Master Gardener in a large area.

But with our network of Master Gardeners, and using our web page and chat room we can support each other in sharing information and getting a project off the ground.

But it is up to each of us, to go out there into our community and initiate a project. And most of all let's enjoy this accomplishment we have reached.

Congratulations, Atlantic Master Gardeners. "

## Hosta Virus X (HVX)

As a plant lover and hosta collector it is with much dismay that I am writing about the Hosta Virus X (HVX). Hostas are typically a plant that is known to be relatively disease free, and for many years this has been true. The Hosta Virus X, which appeared around 1998, has changed all that. It is quickly reaching epidemic proportions. It has been seen in gardens and nurseries in Atlantic Canada.

It is important that we as gardeners know how to spot this virus and prevent it from spreading. It is most commonly seen on popular varieties like 'Gold Standard', 'Striptease', and 'Sum and Substance', but many other varieties are



Hosta Virus X(HVX)

being reported infected in large numbers.

Here is a link to an up to date list of plants that are known to be infected:  
<http://www.perennialnursery.com/forums/viewtopic.php?f=63&t=35682>

It is difficult to describe the symptoms. Depending on the leaf color; the plant will display different symptoms. You should be suspicious however of any unusual mottling, twisting or color bleeding. This virus has the ability to spread prolifically and to make matters worse, it often takes several years to show up after infection. Hosta Virus X is spread by sap from an infected plant being mechanically transferred to another plant. Contaminated tools and hands can both spread the disease. Dividing hostas, cutting roots while digging and trimming off damaged leaves and spent flower scapes can easily transfer infected sap to healthy hostas.

Clean tools are key. HVX is a highly stable virus so you

must work to remove and neutralize the plant sap first, then soak to disinfect. The formula is one cup of bleach with one cup of water.

Be aware when shopping. Do not buy plants from batches that show even the slightest markings on even one plant. If you have these plants from batches that show symptoms at your home, dispose of them immediately.

If you are removing a plant that is infected, cut close to the plant, so as not to cut into a neighboring plant and contaminate it. It survives only in living plant tissue and dies without a host. The spot should not be replanted until the remaining roots have rotted away.

Hostas are a spectacular and wonderful plant and make valuable addition to any garden. If we all make the effort, we will keep this disease in check and out of our gardens.

- Anita Sulley

## Rocky Road

...Christine Boardman



Not the Ice cream!

On Saturday, April 5, Brenda Hiltz kindly invited Nicole L., Tanya W. and Christine B. to accompany her to Truro, where the Agricultural College was hosting a Nova Scotia Rock Garden Club event!

A talk was given by Peter Korn who runs an alpine nursery in Sweden.

That's Peter in the background.



You know the rest of us!



He is delightful young, plant obsessed man, who works a 15 hour day in his garden in the Swedish woods!

He shocked us all, I think, as he described his methods. He has huge amounts of sand delivered, (pretty much the texture of Traction Sand, no salt, obviously!) which he dumps artistically in various places on his acreage. Some are in sunny positions, others in shade. Most are oriented so that they have long North and South faces with the shorter sides West and East. The tops are dry, the bottoms wet, (they seem to get a lot of rain in his area) and then he brings in variously sized rocks which he places to

simulate natural formations.

Alpines which like sunny dryness are planted at the tops and those that prefer damp conditions are set towards the bottom.

Those that like sun are set towards the south and west; cold lovers which require less sun are set to the north and east.

His seeds come from Siberia to Morocco, Australia to the Americas; everywhere you can think of with an extreme climate!

Seeds are collected by Peter's botanist brother, equally dotty,\* who bikes around all these places and then sends them home to Peter. He describes the habitat of each parent plant to that Peter can simulate their preferred positions. The scale is enormous! He plants hundreds of these seeds every year, setting them out when they are ready. Some take up to ten years in the seed pot before they are big enough! Many adult alpines are very tiny anyway!

(cont'd from page 4)

NO SOIL! NO FERTILISER AT ALL! Lots of love but no sweet talk! He never waters! He prefers to put the plants in an environment just like their native one. (Sweden! and Morocco? I wonder how this goes! I have no doubt that Peter makes it work!) Their pH is about the same as ours but he has created a large limestone region as well.

NO MULCH in the Swedish winters. He says that the rain releases any minerals the plants require, and that their native habitats, even when they come from hot deserts, are harsher than his garden. He showed us pictures of glorious plants, set beautifully in his gardens. He grows cacti too. He has bog gardens, a pit alpine garden and several peat gardens. (In Europe peat blocks can be easily purchased.)

His website, *Peterkornstradgard.se* is well worth a visit. Lots of flower pictures! Unless your Swedish is good, when you get into the site look at the bottom right of the first page to find the English version.

A fascinating talk and we had a lovely day! Thank you Brenda!



Questions?

\* Dotty in the nicest possible way!



Then we went for a walk around the NSAC Rock Garden.

# My Planting is for the Birds *and...*

By Brenda Hiltz

In 1998, when my husband and I retired to an older home and left some modern conveniences behind, a friend asked me if I missed the dishwasher. Not at all! We have a large window above our kitchen sink looking west and, while washing dishes by hand, I soon succumbed to the charm of many winged visitors passing by.

Initially birds came to our garden because of existing trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses and we were content with a few feeders and watering spots to lure birds to even more windows on all sides of the house. However, time changed that and we wanted our gardens to attract all manner of species that may choose to visit.

We also wanted to create a habitat to entice birds every day of the year. We began to plan, researching the needs of the birds that

frequent our area during all seasons. Like all successful recipes demand, we needed the right ingredients – food, shelter/cover, places to raise young and water.

A few things were important to us before we started. Mowing would be done at 3 ½ inches and the clipping left for mulch. We set up collection areas for rainwater, as our well would not be used for watering. Rain troughs along the roofs of several out buildings were set up to fill barrels and also a rectangular cement tank, which once was used to soak split hoops for barrels. (5 goldfish make their home in the tank for the summer months). Three wooden composters were built and placed where they would be out of site but still get enough sun to provide heat for the process. All the wood shavings sawdust started soft safe walking paths through the woodland area, which gradually pine needles would cover

We surveyed our 4-½ acre property, chose & prepared a site for the vegetable garden, adding applications of storm tossed seaweed & well-rotted manure.

The biggest, sturdiest plants, the shade trees and evergreens were already present. The spruce and pine among the deciduous maple and birch that edge our property to the north and west provide cover, nesting and food. The birds of prey, the Merlin, Red-tailed hawks and Sharp-shinned hawks also use these for viewing places. The old crab-apple tree, lilac, mock orange, hedge of rugosa roses and common flowering quince provide cover and food around the perennial gardens. For insect-eating and nectar-feeding birds, the honeysuckle vine and many of the perennial flowers attract insects, helping us avoid using pesticides. Seed eaters, like finches and sparrows, lingered because many perennial plants were left

to go to seed and some areas were left wild with dead standing trees, fallen trees and limbs as well as brush in the forested area. As we reclaimed many of the native & heritage plants, we also began to develop areas of our garden and yard to attract more wildlife.

Much of our research suggested we consider the following points:

1. Create vistas and views and take care not to block views selecting plants most desirable to native songbirds.
2. Create varied heights of vegetation, choosing an assortment, mixing taller and shorter. Think in levels: trees 15-40ft, small trees and shrubs 5-15 ft, flowers 2-5 ft, ground covers and grasses 2 in-1ft.
3. Diversify the leaf type (deciduous and evergreen) and food (fruit berries, nuts and seeds). Keep in mind, some birds that eat seeds, as adults require insects to feed their young.
4. Get more than one of a plant to create a natural effect -use odd numbers ex. 3, 5, 7.
5. Create year round plantings. Remember evergreen trees, shrubs and groundcovers for beauty, colour **and** shelter for birds in winter.

We used the following as our guide:

**Fruit, nut or seed bearing trees and shrubs** which

attract blue jays, robins, nuthatches, chickadees, pine grosbeaks, common redpolls, pine siskins, rose breasted grosbeaks and more.

Hawthorne – *Crataegus flabellate*

Elder – *Sambucus Canadensis*

Black Cherry – *Prunus serotina*

Witchazel

– *Hamamelis virginiana*

Eastern hemlock

– *Tsuga Canadensis*

White pine – *Pinus strobus*

White ash – *Fraxinus Americana*

Sugar maple – *Acer saccharum*

Mountain ash – *Sorbus spp.*

Choke cherry

– *Prunus virginiana*

Serviceberry – *Amelanchier spp.*

Dogwoods – *Cornus spp.*

Paper birch – *Betula papyrifera*

(Birches are especially important for American goldfinches, common redpolls and pine siskins. These birds are light enough to hang on but not to break off the fine branches as they feed on the small seeds produced in catkins.)

**Shrubs and conifers that attract insects provide shelter and nesting areas**

for birds such as Baltimore orioles, hummingbirds, cardinals brown creepers, swallows, red crossbills, mourning doves, cedar waxwings and nuthatches.

White pine, red pine,  
black spruce, balsam fir.

**Perennials and annuals that provide seeds and nectar sources** for hummingbirds,

purple finches, pine siskins, sparrows and American goldfinches (the goldfinches nest in mid-summer as they feed their young mashed seed):

Purple coneflower

(*Echinacea purpurea*)

Joe pye weed (*Eupatorium sp.*)

perennial sunflowers

(*Helianthus sp*)

Foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*),

Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*),

Common Milkweed

(*Asclepias syriaca*)

**Vines for cover, food and**

**nesting sites** for woodpeckers,

hummingbirds and many more:

Virginia creeper

– *Parthenocissus quinquefoli*

American bittersweet

– *Celastrus scandens*

Goldflame honeysuckle

-*Lonicera x heckrotii*

“Goldflame”

**Grasses and ground covers**

for robins, chipping sparrows, fox sparrows, white-throated sparrows, crows, flickers and hummingbirds (white throated sparrows build their nests on the ground, hidden among fallen leaves under the shelter of shrubs or dense ground cover.

(cont'd from pg 7)

The winter flocks of these and fox sparrows forage on the ground in wooded properties and gardens with plenty of shrubs and other low cover:

**Brush piles and fallen leaves for shelter, nesting, foodsources (insects) and protection**

for woodpeckers, white-throated sparrows and ring necked pheasants.

**Water for bathing and drinking** for all birds:

Reuse non-aluminum frying pans, plant pots filled with rocks and their saucers on top, a simple bowl.

I awoke one morning around 5:00am to several choruses of songs chiming around me. For breakfast, I had the added pleasure of watching the spring courtship of robins and downy woodpeckers. A swallow busied himself checking out one of the nesting sites while the trees behind him gleamed with goldfinches and purple finches. On the ground, the fox sparrows and white-throated sparrows scratched feverishly for overwintering seeds.

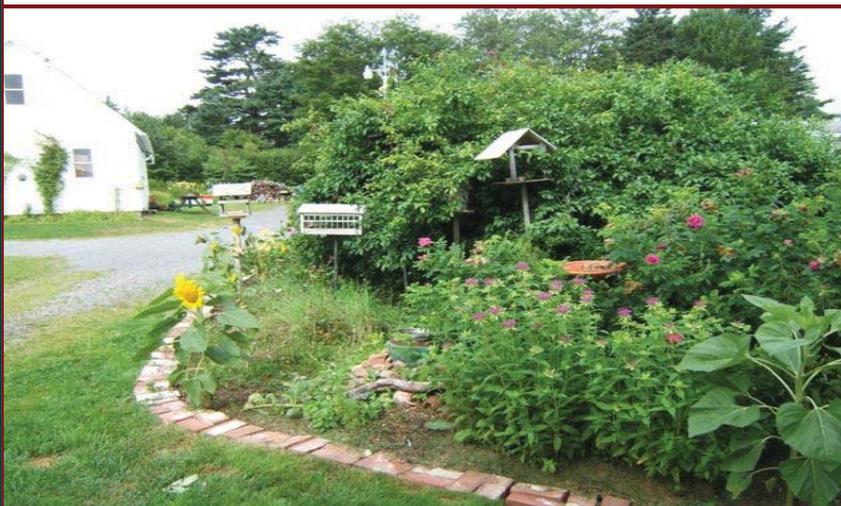
We continue to mow less, build gardens & add trees and shrubs that hold their seeds and berries well into the winter and others that produce them in early spring, supplying food for overwintering birds and early returning migrants. The reward promises to be many hours of pleasure with our own select group of bug hunters. "I wonder if I can find any more dishes to wash."



August /'07



Facing West towards house Aug/07



Kitchen view West, Aug /07

## What's In The Logo

### AMGA LOGO



### Ocean & Earth (Atlantic region)

Larger world outside the Community - brown /green earth surrounded by water. Atlantic Master Gardeners volunteer to help members of their Community to learn and apply Gardening practices that provide beauty and benefit to their Communities that will in turn assist Nature to maintain a Healthy and Active Environment.

- Sue Stuart

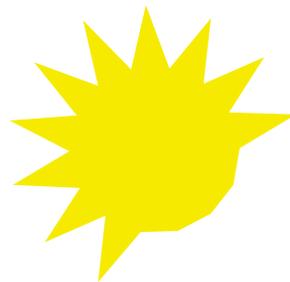
### Helping hands

- Master Gardeners assisting members of Community (small world) helping Nature locally.

### AMGA LOGO SYMBOL MEANING

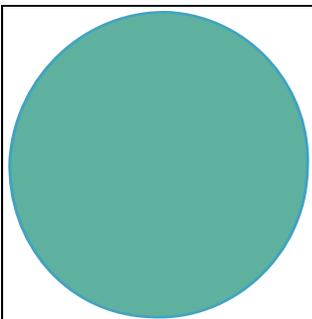


**Mother Earth  
(Mother Nature)**  
Nurturing environment



### Sun Rays

- Sun shining on the earth and water to warm soil and assist growth.



**Fresh water**

## Garden Tidbits

### BENEFICIAL INSECTS

Don't pull all the parsley, carrots, celery or herbs from your vegetable garden this fall! Leave a few in the ground and they will develop flowers that attract beneficial insects to protect next years crops.

### GARDEN TOOL CARE

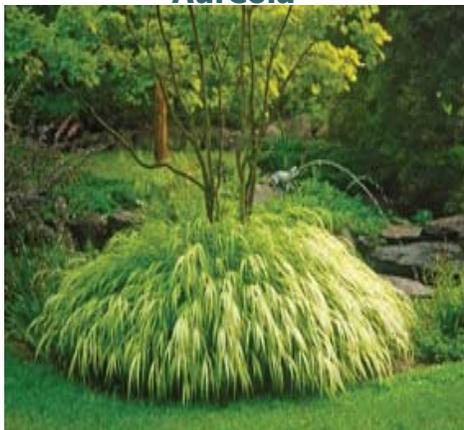
Don't forget to clean up your garden tools before putting them away for winter. Clean off any dirt. Immerse the tools in a mixture of sand and motor oil, wipe clean and store in a dry place. until

### BULBS

As cold weather nears remove tender bulbs from soil. Store them in old pantyhose or onion bags to allow good air circulation. KEEP DRY! Plant hardy bulbs for spring bloom before mid-November so they have more time to develop roots.

### 2009 PLANT OF THE YEAR

The Perennial Plant Association (PPA) has announced the 2009 Perennial Plant Of The Year:  
**Hakonechloa macra**  
**'Aureola'**



**Hakonechloa macra Aureola'** features a graceful, flowing form and golden foliage of this ornamental grass. The color can vary depending on where the grass is planted.

In partial shade, the foliage will appear almost all-yellow, with narrow green stripes near the margins.

In full sun, the foliage can bleach to a parchment yellow, and in full shade, it becomes chartreuse.

Aureola' will maintain its graceful, cascading habit throughout the season. In late summer, seed panicles will appear above the foliage. When the weather gets cooler, the foliage turns a reddish-pink hue.

Aureola' can grow up to two feet tall and is hardy in Zones 5-9, and has been known to overwinter as low as Zone 4.

### AMGA EXECUTIVE



(L > R)

Cyndy McCormack- *Mem. at large*  
Sue Stuart - *Mem. at large*  
Annette Hodder- *VP / Webmaster*  
Anita Sulley - *President*  
Ann O'Donnell - *Secretary*  
Emily Miller- *Volunteer Coordinator*  
Brenda Hiltz - *Treasurer*

### Your Newsletter

If you have questions, comments, contributions or suggestions for the Newsletter please contact Sue Stuart:

[suestuart@accesswave.ca](mailto:suestuart@accesswave.ca)