

The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- by Heather Connors-Dunphy
AMGA President

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Hello, Master Gardeners.. as someone said... if winter comes, can spring be far behind. It has been an interesting winter so far. We were plowed seven times in December and so far not at all in January. We had quite a thaw here and very little snow left in some places. It is surely the time for seed catalogues and plans for the summer's gardening delights. We are having two sessions here in February and March on new shrub and herbaceous perennial introductions.

I attended a session on mosaiculture the other evening. Mosaiculture is defined as the art of composing a motif, an image, a picture or a sculpture using carefully selected and pruned plants. The presenter was part of the Niagara Parks student construction team for the International Mosaiculture Expo in Japan several years ago. His group toiled for three weeks to build a display called, "The Man Who Planted Trees". If you follow this link you can see for yourself .

<http://www.mosaiculturesinternationales.ca/en/2013/05/1855/>

I have seen structures like these in the Montreal Botanic Garden. They really are works of art . They are generally presented with annuals and grasses and often have watering mechanisms built in. They are densely planted and are sheared to keep their shape. Most last several months and often the underlying steel structures are reused.

Your Executive met by phone in December. We made some good progress on a couple of issues. Carol has put thought into the composition of a Landscape Design Course. This looks to be of a three day duration. Keep posted for more details soon. We have had a lady offer to do a half day course on Latin for Gardeners. We would like to have the course as part of a fall workshop.

Level I Summer School will be July 7-11 and the AMGA Annual General Meeting will be July 9 at Saltscapes restaurant.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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We will likely follow a format similar to last year's AGM. Please mark these days on your calendars!

There seems to be confusion around when dues are to be paid; this year Johanne, our Treasurer will be issuing an invoice to each member for yearly dues. We hope this will make it easier for people to remember. We also hope not to have to call people to remind them that their membership is due.

I know that you all work hard on your volunteer /community work. We are all part of a organization. As members we need to contribute to the betterment of the AMGA too. Your contribution can be in promoting the organization, writing an article for the newsletter, participating in the discussions on the Facebook page, attending meetings and educational offerings. 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 2014 to contribute to the AMGA.

Your Executive meets next on February 9. We welcome your ideas and inputs.

In the meanwhile....
time to order some seeds!

Heather



NEW

MEMBER AT LARGE

Hello all.

I'm Jane Plant and I'm your new Member at Large for HRM for the next two years. It is my pleasure to be able to represent you on the Executive. I'm encourgaing all Master Gardeners of HRM to feel free to get in touch with me with any ideas, questions, comments or concerns that you might have. Please think of me as "your Messenger" to the Executive. I'm here to channel your thoughts and concerns while helping the Executive become as effective as possible. This is your Executive ... help us become even better by telling me how we can do things differently while representing the Atlantic Gardeners Association.

Jane Plant

cotaras@ns.sympatico.ca



Notes From the Secretary

- by Aileen Reid

Winter is a fantastic time of the year for gardeners. It's a time to reflect, and it's a time to plan for the coming growing season. Your executive has been busy planning as well. Planning for Summer School, Planning for a workshop, Planning for growth of our organization.

I, unfortunately, could not participate in the December Executive meeting and I thank Carol Goodwin for stepping in and keeping the minutes in my place.

Summer School:

Summer School is scheduled for July 7 through 11. Our Annual General Meeting will once again be held at Saltscapes. Put July 9th in your calendar.

Plans are still in development for Summer School Level II. Although several topics have come under the radar, Landscape Design has been by far the favorite request by our membership. We will share more details with you as Summer School Level II plans shape up.

Dues and Memberships:

We are introducing electronic billing and Paypal. All members will receive an electronic invoice for their 2014 dues and you will be able to pay your dues by Paypal if you wish to pay electronically. This will be linked from our website, and once this is all set up, members can purchase aprons and any other items we have for sale right through our website, using Paypal as a method of payment.

Attention all members from Newfoundland:

We will be reaching out to you, asking for articles for our newsletter on the challenges of gardening in that very special Newfoundland climate. We can't wait to hear from you.

Namus Rememberus:

Can you guess what one of the topics will be at the planned Fall Workshop. All details about the fall workshop yet to be finalized, but we are planning a Fall workshop. One of the subject may be a review of our Botanical Latin.

If you have other ideas to include in a 2 day fall workshop, your executive would love to hear them. I regularly use a website <http://howjsay.com/> to help me with some of those tricky pronunciations. The speaker is British, so I am developing a bit of a British accent when it comes to my Botanical Latin. But, it is a fantastic website.

Respectfully submitted,

Aileen Reid, secretary



WHEN THINGS GOT ROTTEN AT PRESTON STREET

- by Jane Plant



"I've got something well, icky, to deliver to you today." said the post carrier. "It's a small package. Will you be home so I can deliver it to you at about 1pm today?"

"Sure," I said. "Is it by chance worms?"

"Yes. Ughh. No comment", Terry, the postal worker said as he turned on his heels and walked away shaking his head while resuming his route.

Oh! Great. My worms had arrived safe and sound in the mail. I had ordered them in October from a supplier in Ontario and they took only a couple of days to arrive. I was off to a good start. It felt good.

I ordered ½ pound of worms to start my worm farm in the basement. I had fallen in love with using worm castings in my garden earlier in the summer. Now I could look forward to using my *own* castings next summer.

It all made sense to me. I would close down the two outside compost bins and open up my worm casting factory in the basement. Compost from the kitchen would continue to be used, but this time by the worms. Even better the worms needed a replenished bed of shredded newspaper to keep things dry and dark. Wow. I was doing my environmental bit ... recycling kitchen vegetation, reusing newspapers and fertilizing my garden at the same time!

Within hours of receiving my worms I got to work. Following directions that came with the package I purchased a large plastic container with a tight fitting

lid. This would be worm headquarters. I drilled the required holes on the top and bottom of the container for air circulation. Next I placed a small amount of soil in the bottom of the container. Then I added the worms leaving then intact ... a writhing tangled mess. I placed shredded newspapers in the container to about two thirds full and added a little bit of water to keep things moist. Finally I added a small amount of kitchen organic waste for the worms to consume placing it in a corner about mid-way down in the container. When all was completed I tightly closed the lid and placed the farm in a cool, dark spot in the basement.

I checked on the farm every two to three days to see if more food was required. It seemed that everything was going as planned. The worms were munching and crunching their way through the food and I had proof. Worm castings were appearing as were a few fruit flies! Not a problem to see flies I dismissed with a wave, some decomposition brings fruit flies. Go with the flow.

Meanwhile, upstairs from the basement we were slightly annoyed by the small number of fruit flies found in the kitchen since August. This year was no different than the last year and the year before so we would ride the time out and the flies would eventually disappear. We knew the drill. October turned into November and then November turned into December. The worms were doing fine. It was the doggone fruit flies that were disconcerting.

WHEN THINGS GOT ROTTEN AT PRESTON STREET

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Usually with temperature drops in the fall the fly population of all types disappear. Not our fruit flies. We had them in the kitchen, upstairs in our bathroom and even in our bedrooms. One night while reading in bed, my husband and I noticed two of the suckers fly by our noses as we turned book pages. Even our boys commented on how fruits flies were doing fly passes while they studied in their bedrooms. Houston we had a problem. Our house was rotting!

I had to admit defeat. The fruit flies emanating from worm headquarters won over. We couldn't stand it any longer. The multiple fruit fly traps we set up everywhere in the house were useless. It was time to close down the farm early in December and empty all the contents of the farm, worms and all into the outside compost bin. The freezing temperatures took care of the fruit flies outside, but it took at least one week, not a word of a lie, to get rid of the suckers inside.

So by Christmastime not a creature was stirring
n o t e v e n a m o u s e . . .
Or in our case not even a fruit fly was in our house.

Cheers to 2014! Happy Gardening



WANT TO EARN CERTIFICATION POINTS ?

*Following is the Job Description
for the position of*

"Events Coordinator".

*If interested in this position
please contact Carol Goodwin at:*

goodwin.carol56@gmail.com

The role of this position is to:

1. Survey membership for desired workshop topics
2. Choose two topics in consultation with the Association executive
3. Find qualified workshop presenters for desired topics
4. Calculate profitable attendance goals for events
5. Organize two events per year among the three Maritime provinces
6. Notify members by email of upcoming events 2 months in advance, and then send out two reminders, the last one two weeks before the event
7. Provide workshop information for the Events page on the AMGA web page
8. Decide, in consultation with the Association executive, whether events should be cancelled



Oh Deer!

- by Anita Sulley



The war has ended and finally the deer and I have come to an agreement. They get to eat whatever they like in my garden.

The Battle of Kingswood

It's not that I gave up the battle easily . Just ask my neighbours. They'll remember the miles of caution tape strung around our back yard. It was there to alarm the deer (a well meaning garden club speaker assured all of us it would prove effective) but only our neighbours seemed to take notice . I tried the Irish spring soap chips, strategically placed dog hair, bags of human hair courtesy of my hairdresser and I bought a couple of cases of beer and put my husband to work. Nope ...no luck. Oh I gave it a good fight . We trained our dog to mark his territory but the deer only gave him a friendly nod and continued to enjoy their hosta lunch . There was a time when I had a collection of hundreds of named hosta . I knew this was their favourite plant but I thought I could protect my treasures. I offered huge common hosta , further from the house but that only proved to heighten their interest and soon they were eating right up to my door.

The Battle of Basinview

Eventually we moved from our large lakefront property closer into the city . I had hopes I had left the deer behind, but before longthere they were

...large as life . Well this time I took the battle to a new level. We strung a deer fence . It enclosed our whole back yard. We set up a makeshift gate and to me it was all worth it . Oh they still came by grazing on everything in our front yard but the battle of the backyard was won.

We installed the same deer fence when we moved again. This time I felt a new confidence and even started to plant hosta again. I knew the deer here were a tough bunch. Our property borders an Old coach Trail and the deer have been grazing here forever. They were overjoyed when I arrived with all my interesting plants .

The Ravines deer did not give up . They tore the fence down , night after night . They also enjoy many plants that were never of interest to the Kingswood deer. Along with the hosta , they have eaten rhododendron , azalea , yew , holly , roses , grapes (my very first crop) beans , tomatoes, Japanese maples , and day lilies.

The treaty of Bedford

So now I am content to plant things that I like and they do not seem to like. This is my new garden - astilbe , ferns , iris, geranium, chamaecyparis, Cornus kousa and tree peonies. Admittedly the list is short but so far so good , we are at peace and that is all that matters anymore .



NAME THAT PLANT "CHALLENGE"



Our "Name That Plant Challenge" seems to have sparked interest among both the Newsletter readers as well as the AMGA Facebook group. We had a correct guess from Heather Connors-Dunphy on Facebook as well as by email from Rochelle Oxford.

The mystery plant was:

CEPHALANTHUS OCCIDENTALIS



Button Bush, Button-willow or Honey-bells

It is a species of flowering plant in the coffee family, Rubiaceae, that is native to eastern and southern North America. Buttonbush is an easy-to-recognize bush that grows in water or moist soil. It is easy to identify because of its flowers and fruits. They are usually seen in marshes, and bordering streams, ponds, and lakes. They also grow in wet woods, thickets, and ditches. This bush can grow up to 15' tall, but is usually much shorter (few feet). Its leaves are usually between 3-6" long, and are shiny, dark green and pointed. Buttonbush flowers are clustered in white "balls," about 1½" wide (ping-pong ball size). The plant is beneficial to ducks, geese, shorebirds, white-tailed deer, bees and butterflies. It helps control erosion.

The prize for winning the "challenge" is the opportunity to present the **next** mystery plant!

Heather has the opportunity to upload a photo on the AMGA Facebook Group page while we are posting Rochelle's photo pick below in this newsletter.

If you know Heather's plant when it appears on Facebook—post your answer on Facebook!

If you recognize Rochelle's plant, e-mail me at: suestuart@accesswave.ca with your guess!

Here is Rochelle's Mystery Plant photo:



Can you identify this plant?

**GREETINGS FROM:
DALHOUSIE
AGRICULTURAL CAMPUS!**

**2014 AMGA
EXECUTIVE**

Shubenacadie Sam predicated an early spring, but I wouldn't count on it based on the recent weather and forecasts. I hope that as you hone your digging skills with the snow, you are dreaming of the spring flowers and plants in your gardens.

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 2014 Summer School which will be July 7-11. Forms and more information will be on the Extended Learning website by the end of the month. The next intake will be October 1, 2014 (deadline September 15th).

May the New Year bring you fertile soil and positive growth in all that you do.

Respectfully,
Joy Galloway-Jones
Extended Learning
Faculty of Agriculture
– Dalhousie University

PRESIDENT:

Heather Connors-Dunphy
- hmcd53@gmail.com

VICE-PRESIDENT: Lynn Brooks
- lynbrook@eastlink.ca

PAST PRESIDENT:

Carol Goodwin
- goodwin.carol56@gmail.com

SECRETARY: Aileen Reid
- aileen.reid@apreid.com

TREASURER:

Johanne Robertson
- daisyluc@xplornet.com

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
Anita Sulley
- anitasulley@gmail.com

MEMBER AT LARGE (1):
Janet Elsie
- janetelsie@yahoo.ca

MEMBER AT LARGE(2):
Jane Plant
- cotaras@ns.sympatico.ca

NEWSLETTER EDITOR :
Sue Stuart
- suestuart@accesswave.ca