

September 2019 Newsletter

Like a plant that starts up in showers and sunshine and does not know which has best helped it to grow, it is difficult to say whether the hard things or the pleasant things did me the most good.

Lucy Larcom



Upcoming

Oct. 8 - European Gardens.

Speaker: Brian Carson

Nov. 19 - Christmas Potluck and
AGM - 6:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Jamie Roy, Acanthus Florals, Almonte, speaking on "Creating a Plant Terrarium."

Editor Needed

After 21 years of producing the PDHS newsletter, the current editor would like someone else to take on the task. There are 8 editions a year and you would be collecting articles that you feel would be of interest to the membership and any upcoming events and then producing a 4-page newsletter as well as sending the files to be photocopied. If you can pick them up and take them to the meeting that would be a bonus. You should be familiar with some sort of page layout software. If you would be interested, please contact Linda Bartlett or Madeline Archer.

August Tour

Submitted by Lynda Haddon

On Tuesday, 20th August, PDHS members were treated to a tour of the Perth Museum gardens coupled with an hour and a half tour of

the Museum itself. The Matheson house/Perth Museum was built in the 1840s for the Honourable Roderick Matheson, wealthy merchant and a senator in the Canada's first parliament after Confederation. The Mathesons owned the home for 90 years and the property took in the whole block back to Drummond St. (a large portion of which is now a public parking lot), along Drummond to Foster St. and then down Gore St. to the far side of the house. The business of Matheson & Shaw was set up and carried on in the building which is now fondly as Shaw's.

The Museum tour was ably given by Debbie, a long-time Museum staff member. As we were treated to the history of each room, Debbie pointed out which pieces belonged to the Mathesons and which were period pieces. We were delighted to hear how local history was entwined with the Mathesons and the impact of many other locals not only on local history, but also on provincial history as well.

The Museum has offered us another garden and house tour next year if we so desired. A generous offer indeed.

This was a fascinating, historically laden tour and thoroughly enjoyed by those in attendance.



Co-Presidents: Linda Bartlett, Madeline Archer • **Newsletter:** Irene Hofmann



Lanark Orchid

Renals

Perth & District
Horticultural
Society

P.O. Box 494
Perth, ON, K7H 3G1
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District #2 of the
Ontario Horticultural
Association

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October Flower Show

Section I: Horticultural Specimen

- Class 1** Last rose of summer – single boom
Class 2 Any perennial – 3 stems
Class 3 Any annual – 3 stems
Class 4 A collection of gourds – minimum 3
Class 5 Squash – 2 – same or 2 different cultivars – named if possible
Class 6 Pumpkin – 1

Section II: Design

- Class 7** Everlasting – a miniature design using dried material only
Class 8 Beauty of Black – a design
Class 9 Pik'n Plunk – fall flowers and grasses arranged in a vase

Celebrating Monarchs

Julianne Labreche

Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton

There is joy in small things, including watching a monarch butterfly flutter past on a hot summer's day. I've been seeing quite a few monarchs in my pollinator garden this summer, busy with bees, birds and butterflies.

For now it seems, the monarch is no longer in decline. For the second year in a row, this year their numbers are increasing. The monarch is becoming a story of hope. For many years, its numbers were down, both in its wintering grounds in Mexico where the butterflies migrate each year in the fall and in parts of Canada and the United States where they return every summer. It could just be pure luck or the weather – a few good years to celebrate – but maybe it's more than that. Maybe gardeners and wildlife enthusiasts really are making a difference. Whatever the case, numbers are way up according to volunteers who track the monarchs' progress through Monarch Watch, a non-project cooperative of teachers, researchers and volunteers based at the University of Kansas.

This summer, I volunteered to help plant a butterfly garden at our nearby park. It's impressive to see neighbours pitching in to help with the project, donating their time, equipment, skills and labour. School children came by earlier in the spring to plant annuals and learn about pollinators, assisted by teachers. Adults are willing to carry water and to weed. Everyone, it seems, is watching to see when the first butterfly arrives in the park, a place normally busy with tennis

and baseball players, children on swings and dog walkers. We are a small part of a continental movement. In different parts of North America, wildflower corridors are being created to help the monarchs on their journey.

Through Monarch Watch, literally thousands of ordinary people with different sized city or country properties in Canada and the United States have registered their garden as a Monarch Waystation. The guidelines for certification are clear. No matter its size, a Waystation must be located in an area of at least six hours of sunlight a day. There needs to be shelter, with the plantings fairly close together. There has to be nectar plants with plentiful annuals, biennials and perennial plants that flower through the season, from early spring until late fall.

Most important, there must be milkweed – at least ten plants, ideally with two or more species. This is critical because milkweed is the host plant for the monarch. Females lay their eggs on its leaves. Caterpillars depend on the plant for food. Adult butterflies rely on it during their migration. Without milkweed, there will be no monarchs. It was once thought to be a noxious weed, sprayed or destroyed. Now it is blooming in gardens, including my own.

I have two certified monarch waystations. The first, I created a few years back at the family farm in the Gatineau Hills. In hindsight, it was a good learning experience but there already was lots of milkweed, wildflowers and some monarchs on the property. The second monarch waystation was created a couple of years ago, a project that involved getting rid of our front lawn in west-end Ottawa and replacing it with different pollinator plants. Last fall, I put up my metal sign from Monarch Watch, received my certificate number and started to watch the monarchs arrive. It took awhile but ultimately, as the saying goes, if you build it they will come.

"It must be so much work," people sometimes say while admiring it the endless rotation of blooms. Not at all, I reply. Maintaining it is far more interesting than grass, costs less, takes less time and is more useful too. It is providing habitat, food and water not just for monarchs but many other beneficial pollinators as well.

There's a lot more to gardening than just growing pretty flowers, lettuce and tomatoes. Together, gardeners are learning that we can do something to make the world a better place, including protecting rare and endangered species like the monarch.

The journey begins on our own doorstep.

September Gardening

*Leonard Perry, UVM Horticulturist
and Charlie Nardozzi, Garden Consultant*

Acclimatizing houseplants, dividing daylilies, and controlling slugs are some of the garden activities for this month.

Gradually condition or "acclimatize" indoor plants that have spent the summer outdoors to lower light conditions. Move them to a shady spot outdoors for a week, then move them into the sunniest spot indoors for a couple of weeks before moving them to their permanent locations. Dunk them in soapy water to clean the foliage (a sink or bathtub is handy for this), and spray with insecticidal soap if insects are a problem. Do they need repotting? Now is a good time before bringing them in. Make sure if they're still outside to not expose them to early frosts or near-freezing temperatures.

If daylilies are getting too large, perhaps not blooming well, it may be time to divide them. Daylily clumps are so dense that you'll need to slice through them with a shovel or spade. Or you can just divide off half, or a chunk, leaving the rest. Separate large clumps into smaller divisions, leaving at least three groups of leaves or "fans" per clump. Trim leaves to about six inches long and replant. Keep them well-watered if it doesn't rain sufficiently, and they will settle in by winter and bloom again next summer.

Legumes, such as beans and peas, have the ability to take nitrogen from the air and use it for their own benefit. Rather than pulling up the spent plants and adding them to the compost pile, why not keep that nitrogen where it's needed by chopping up the vines and tilling or digging them into the soil.

Fritillaries are less common spring-flowering bulbs that you plant in the fall as you would the more common daffodils and tulips. Their flowers come in a range of colors, and are generally bell-shaped, either in clusters or single. Plants range from six inches to the three-foot-tall crown imperials. The 12" tall checkered lily, so named from the generally purple checkered bell-shaped flowers, is one of the few bulbs that can withstand wet soils.

If slugs have been a big problem, consider raking leaves off your garden beds and leaving them bare for the winter so the cold will kill any exposed adults and eggs. You can trap slugs in rolls of moist newspaper left in the garden, then discard. Or place small boards where they

hide under by day and you can find them. Other controls include bands of egg shells or similar crushed and sharp materials, copper products, diatomaceous earth or coffee grounds sprinkled around plants, or traps with beer.

When the first frost blackens the foliage of dahlias (or if a hard freeze is predicted), cut off the stems about 6 inches above the tubers. Carefully dig the clumps with a spade or fork, and let them dry out of direct sun and wind for a day (not too long or they'll begin to shrivel). Store the tuber clumps whole (you'll get larger plants), or make more plants by carefully separating the tubers from the stem, making sure to include any "eyes" (small, raised nubs near where the tubers attach to the main stem) with each tuber. These are the future sprouts. Store tubers in cardboard boxes or mesh bags filled with peat moss, vermiculite, or sawdust. Keep them in a dark, 40- to 50- degree (F) location.

(Charlie Nardozzi is a nationally known horticulturist, author, gardening consultant, and garden coach; gardeningwithcharlie.com).

Just Barely Perennial

By Larry Hodgson, The Laidback Gardener

If you're tearing out your annuals because they bloom only once and replacing them with perennials "because they live forever," you may be making a mistake. Perennials (planted in appropriate conditions, of course) do live longer than annuals (1 year) and biennials (2 years), but not always that much longer. Some perennials live only 2 or 3 years, others twice that, others a little more, but very few will still be around in 40 years! If I had to estimate the average lifespan of a perennial, I would say 7-8 years.

This is much better than an annual, but you must still be ready to replace perennials from time to time: for the most part, they are not as long-lived as woody plants (trees, shrubs and conifers), most of which will probably outlive the person who planted them.

Short-lived Perennials

There is a particular group of perennials gardeners call short-lived perennials. They're not exactly biennial, as the latter are monocarpic: they only bloom once (the second year), then die. Short-lived perennials have the ability to bloom more than once, and are often quick to bloom. They then flower a second year to prove they're not annuals, but often die after that. The third year remains a question mark and as for

the fourth ... forget it!

The problem for the novice gardener is that they don't come with an "I'm beautiful but short-lived" label. When a "perennial" disappears after only 2 or 3 years, the disappointed gardener feels guilty and wonders what they did wrong. Yet disappearing after 2 or 3 years is normal for these plants: it's not your fault.

When you know in advance that a perennial is short-lived, you can take precautions to prolong its existence. For example, taking cuttings or divisions or multiplying it by seed. If you do this every two years, your short-lived perennial can return year after year.

Renewed Life Through Self-Sowing

Many of these short-lived perennials redeem themselves, at least partly, by reseeding spontaneously. Okay, they don't grow back exactly where you wanted them, but if you are open to the concept of an English-style mixed border, where plants mingle freely, you may come to find these ephemeral beauties quite interesting. And what a joy they can be for the laidback gardener: they require no care whatsoever, showing up here and there as if by magic!

Although they may not live forever, short-lived perennials still have an advantage over their long-lived cousins: they generally bloom profusely the first year you plant them (many indeed will even bloom the first year from seed if you sow them indoors in early spring), which is certainly not the case of most long-lived perennials, most of which take at least 3 years before giving their best show.

A Few Short-lived Perennials

Here is a list of perennials that are generally short-lived. Those marked with an asterisk (*) tend nevertheless to come back year after year by self-sowing.

Agastache (*Agastache* spp.) (some species self-sow*)

Baby's breath (*Gypsophila paniculata*)

Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)*

Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium angustifolium*)*

Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia trilobata*)*

Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)

Columbine (*Aquilegia* spp.)*

Coral bells or heuchera (*Heuchera* spp.)

(some cultivars are short-lived)

Dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*)*

Delphinium (*Delphinium* spp.) (longer lived in cool climates)

Echinacea (*Echinacea* spp.)

(some cultivars are short-lived)

English daisy (*Bellis perennis*)

Gaillardia or *blanket flower*

(*Gaillardia* × *grandiflora*)

Garden mum (*Chrysanthemum* × *morifolium*)

(some newer cultivars are long-lived)

Gloriosa daisy or *black-eyed Susan*

(*Rudbeckia hirta*)*

Hybrid tulip (*Tulipa* spp.)

Iceland poppy (*Papaver nudicaule*)

Knautia (*Knautia* spp.)*

Lupine (*Lupinus* × *russellii*)*

Maltese cross (*Lychnis chalconica*)*

Mauve (*Malva* spp.)*

Orange jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*)*

Painted daisy (*Tanacetum coccineum*)

Perennial flax (*Linum perenne*)*

Perennial wallflower (*Erysimum linifolium* and others)

Pincushion flower (*Scabiosa* spp.)

Pinks (*Dianthus* spp.) (some species self-sow*)

Rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria*)*

Shasta Daisy (*Leucanthemum* × *superbum*)

(*'Becky'* is long-lived)

Tickseed (*Coreopsis grandiflora*)*

White corydalis (*Corydalis ochroleuca*, now

Pseudofumaria alba)*

Honey As A Rooting Hormone

By Larry Hodgson

You may have seen the advice bouncing about the Internet that honey can make a good rooting hormone for plant cuttings. The concept is certainly simple enough: when you take a stem cutting, you simply dip the cut end into honey before you insert it into your favorite growing medium, likely potting soil or vermiculite. This is supposed to stimulate better and faster rooting. While no one pretends that honey actually stimulates rooting, the concept is that it has antiseptic and antifungal properties and thus protects the young cuttings from pathogens, giving them more time to produce their natural rooting hormones that will stimulate root production.

In most comparative studies, commercial rooting hormones give the best results, but in some plants, honey does beat out simply inserting cuttings in growing medium with no special treatment at all. And in other cases, the cuttings root fine on their own, as well as those treated with rooting hormones or honey. A very mixed bag of results!

Still, it would be fair to say that honey has a "certain positive effect" on rooting the cuttings of some plants.