



the gardener

October 2015

P.O. Box 21032, Stratford, ON, N5A 7V4
<http://www.gardenontario.org/site.php/stratford>

The Co-Presidents' Messages

From Bernice Barratt

This past summer has brought home to me how much life, and especially a garden, is a balance of contrasts. It is not so much good versus bad but a sense that things just "are".

In spring we coaxed vegetables and flowers from seeds; we cultivated, fertilized and watered them and in the same plot weeds popped out of the soil seemingly overnight without any encouragement! Bugs, bees and butterflies appreciated all of them for nectar and pollen.

The sunny areas and shady spots each have their roles to play. A gardener's challenge and excitement is in choosing plants that thrive equally well in these opposite environments. The one warms your upturned face on a chilly afternoon and the other cools your tired muscles after a "gardeners' workout".

The cycle of life and death in the garden is paramount to its success. It begins with decay and decomposition in my compost heap. That same compost gives life to soil and hungry plants which in turn provides nourishment for my table. The brilliantly beautiful autumn leaves we enjoy this week will soon be raked up and put into that same compost heap – out of sight. They will return again next spring, transformed, to begin the cycle again.

As gardeners, we know all this; and yet, I still feel an excited stirring deep within, every year when the maple tree down the street begins to change from summer's green to glorious orange and glowing yellow with just a hint of red. What bliss!

I'd like to encourage each one of you to stop for a moment to enjoy these fleeting days of fall and really see the beauty of this amazing city we call home.

Bernice



*Burning Bush and Lupin
by MacIntosh-Murray*

From Mike Mathews

As the growing season comes to a close it's time to reflect on our gardening successes and maybe a learning opportunity or two. I have discovered an interesting addition that the birds may have contributed to my garden and I have yet to determine what it is. I always welcome assistance but I'm not sure about this type of help.

We had another successful Garden Tour this year thanks to Penny and her volunteers. Penny is handing the reins over to Glen Querengesser and Marg O'Reilly. Our thanks to Penny for the years she has championed this event and offer our continued support to Glen and Marg in this worthy endeavor.

We have completed the amendments and paths in Churchill Circle. The resting stone will soon be put in place then a layer of mulch/compost will be spread. This will complete the soil amendment phase of this project. We then will be able to concentrate on creating the beautiful garden that Churchill Circle has been in the past which will be easier to maintain and have good weed suppression. Quadrant one is now established and the soil is wonderful to work with. The few weeds are easy to pull and the worms are plentiful.

We were planning on applying for free tulips for a Tulip Friendship Garden sponsored by Veseys. As a result of asking Counsellor Brad Beatty for permission to use the Dutch Memorial for the tulips we discovered that the Community in Blooms committee has already made application and had chosen the same site. As a result both parties agreed to partner in this endeavour. We have agreed to prepare the garden, design the planting of red and white tulips and supervise the planting. We have also agreed to coordinate the message to the local schools to invite student participation in the planting.

The planting will be Saturday November 9th tentatively at 2 pm. There will be another event in the spring when the tulips bloom. If you are interested in volunteering please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] (See Veseys Donates Tulips to Canada *for more information.*)

After several conversations with Brad Beatty, he asked if I would be on the agenda for the Community Services Sub-committee meeting to give the committee members information about our Horticultural Society. The purpose was to form more of a partnership between our two organizations for the advancement of the beautification of Stratford. As a result, a motion was approved to look into supplying water to Churchill Circle. This would be the first step in obtaining water for all the perennial beds.

It will soon be time for our gardens to rest for the winter season and that will give us time to plan for next year.

Mike



*Churchill Circle, Oct. 19, 2015
by Anu MacIntosh-Murray*

Meeting Program

Oct. 26 - Horticultural Therapy, with Jennifer Grant

Jennifer Grant is a Therapeutic Gardening Instructor at St. Joseph's Health Care in London where she delivers Horticultural Therapy at the Mount Hope Long Term Care facility.

Master Gardener's Chat at 6:30: "How did your garden grow?" What kind of gardening season did you have? What grew well or poorly? Did something work particularly well for you?

Plant Exchange: The idea is to share a plant and take home a plant. Please bring in plants you would like to share, and peruse the tables in the auditorium for one you might like. If there are leftovers at the end of the evening please give them a good home!



Some of the Editor's tomato crop.

Nov. 30 - Seasonal Arrangements, with Cate Blowes from Designs by Cate

Cate Blowes has more than 20 years of experience decorating wedding, homes, and retail stores. She has opened a retail location to show all of her beautiful eclectic designs. Take a look at some of her floral designs on her Facebook page; search for Designs-By-Cate.

January 25 – Our Gardens.

Civic Beautification team presentation on the annual and perennial gardens maintained by the Horticultural Society. Louise Spandler & Mike Matthews

February 29 Monarchs, with Barb Hacking.

Barb Hacking taught hundreds of kids about butterflies during her 30-year career as an elementary school teacher. During her tenure at Avon Public School, she was instrumental in creating awareness of the monarch's story in the classroom and the wider community. She was the first winner of the Ted Blowes Community Service Award in 2015 here in Stratford.

And more to come!



Please visit the Society's Facebook page and 'like' us!



Veseys Donates 105,000 Tulips to Canada

Mike Mathews

Every spring, Canada's capital city, Ottawa, bursts into colour with hundreds of thousands of tulip blooms. The festive floral display is an annual celebration born of courage, sacrifice, loss and of a friendship that blossomed between Canada and Holland more than half a century ago, during the dark days of the Second World War.

Resulting from the Ottawa birth of Dutch Princess Margriet in 1943, the Dutch Royal family gave a gift of 100,000 tulips to Canada, in 1945 as a recognition of our country's cooperation during the Royal family's stay in Canada and the major role played by the Canadian Forces during the liberation of the Netherlands.



As Canada's major importer of Dutch Bulbs, Veseys recognized that a celebration of this very special 70th anniversary was incredibly important and should not pass by without their involvement. Commencing with discussions that began in the fall of 2014, Veseys worked closely with the Canadian Garden Council, The Canadian Tulip Festival, the Canadian Nursery Landscape Association and the National Capital Commission, to see how it could be possible for them to replicate the original gift of 100,000 tulips to the Canadian people.

As described in Mike's Co-President Message, Stratford did receive part of the gift.

Mark your Calendar!

The **Stratford Garden Festival** is being held March 3-6, 2016 at the Rotary Complex.

If you have suggestions for speakers or topics, please contact Deedee Herman at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

March 2016 seems like a very long time away, but the winter will go by quickly.

You can reach the newsletter editor, that's me, Michael Murray, at the *newsletter's* email address: SDHSthegardener@gmail.com. Or by phone: [REDACTED]

The Global Perspective on Soil Degradation

Leslye Glover



2015
International
Year of Soils

We are all in this together. Dust from the Bodele Depression (ancient lakebed in the southern Sahara) blows across the Atlantic and fertilizes the poor soil of the Amazon with iron and phosphorous. Dust from the Colorado Plateau and central US Great Basin travels to the snow covered mountains. Dusty snow absorbs heat more quickly than clean snow, so it warms and melts faster than clean snow.

Soils are a finite resource and non-renewable on a human time scale. Martin Entz, agronomist at the University of Manitoba, has stated that the earth as a whole is losing soil at twice the rate it is being formed. Worldwide, one third of soils have been degraded by unsustainable land management practices. This includes: erosion due to logging, removal of other plant life, compaction, pollution, soil-sealing (paving, building), depletion, salinization (usually by poor irrigation techniques), over use of chemical fertilizers, acidification and water-logging.

Soil is not only essential to growing food, but is vital to ecosystems since it purifies water, sequesters carbon, and improves toleration to floods and droughts. Soils with high organic content can hold carbon at a higher rate than depleted soils, and are an important tool in the fight against climate change, which is caused by increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

The United Nations declared 2015 The Year of the Soils. The FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN) has implemented more than 120 soil related projects around the world. It has partnered with many other organizations, including, but not limited to GSP (Global Soil Partnership), and ISRIC (International Soil Reference and Information Centre).

Here are a few of the ideas being put into practice, and/or being developed, world-wide:

- Use of perennial grasses for grazing
- Adding mulch to surfaces
- Use of cover crops and crop rotation
- Planting trees as wind breaks
- Use of natural fertilizers and compost
- Use of native plants

Let's look at the first point more fully, just for fun. Dr. Jerry Glover is an Agroecologist at The Land Institute in Salina, Kansas. (Photo of Dr. Glover with one of his projects.) The goal of the Institute is to develop an agricultural system based on perennial crops which will provide grain yields comparable to annuals such as wheat. Here is a quote from Dr. Glover, referring to plant systems of the far past, before agriculture as we know it. "... natural plant communities ruled the earth and kept ecosystems in perfect balance. How? Those plants were *perennials*, alive year-round and incredibly efficient at regulating processes like nutrient cycling and water management that protect ecosystem health. Their roots stretch deep below ground, controlling erosion



and improving soil quality. Perennial plants are uniquely equipped to efficiently capture and use sunlight, nutrients, and water to nourish large landscapes.”

Closer to home, here is the effect of wind erosion on an Ontario farm.

“The increase in extreme weather events predicted with climate change will magnify the existing water and wind erosion situations and create new areas of concern. Farmland must be protected as much as possible, with special attention to higher risk situations that leave the soil vulnerable to erosion.” OMAFRA Factsheet, 572/751



Lots more information is available!

www.fao.org/globalpartnership

www.isric.org

www.un.org.au/campaigns/international-year-of-soils2015/ UN Information Centre, Canberra

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/bios/jerry-glover/>

“The Local” Flowerbed

Maureen Cocksedge

The Society agreed in May 2015 to help the Local Community Food Centre improve its front flowerbeds in exchange for using the venue for the plant sale at no charge. I was the liaison with the Local. Over the summer, Mike Mathews and Ryan Bedford supervised the installation of an archway, extensive weeding, 4 yards of composted mulch and plantings of kale and bull’s blood beets.



The garden plan, prepared by Ryan Bedford, calls for pollinator plantings and herbs. To date, Society members have helped the Local members plant thyme, marjoram, chives, golden oregano, agastache, rudbeckia, buddleia, fennel. Future donations of tarragon, perennial sage would be appreciated.

This fall, Society members spent time with the Local members tidying up the beds. Mostly, Society volunteers helped identify weeds!

The Local has requested an ‘advisor’ for their “Shovel to Spoon” program on Tuesday mornings. Anyone interested should contact Noel Dhingra, Garden/Greenhouse Coordinator, at the Local directly (519-508-3663 ext 3).

They would also like to have a "Seedy Saturday" (or Sunday) event in Jan-Feb. in collaboration with vendors, the Society and Master Gardeners. Anyone willing to help organize should contact Noel at the Local directly or call Maureen at [REDACTED].

And as a result, kudos!

Dear Mike and the Stratford and District Horticultural Society,

I'd like to thank you for all the hard work and effort that went into beautifying our front gardens at the Local Community Food Centre this year.

What a transformation!

Please see attached photos, we couldn't be more delighted with how this project has turned out. From the "Two-Door-Tudor" gable that welcomes everyone coming through the path, to the edible landscaping in the gardens, to the lovely reclaimed stone sitting area, everything is so beautiful, functional and communicative of our values as a place where people can feel comfortable and respected.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks for being such amazing partners, we look forward to hosting your plant sale again next spring and working with you to make Stratford a wonderful, green place to live!

Sincerely, Steve Stacey, Director, Local CFC



Whatever happened to that “Plant of the Month”?

Anu MacIntosh-Murray

At the March 2012 SDHS meeting I won the “Plant of the Month”: a pair of unfamiliar plants labeled “Haskap ‘Berry Smart Blue’” and “Haskap ‘Borealis’”. The small bushes survived our care indoors (barely) until May of that year and they grew very little in 2013 and 2014. But this past June, both shrubs had a major growth spurt and we harvested our first 1 ½ cups of tart, purple berries.

Lonicera caerulea – known as blue honeysuckle or honeyberry – is a deciduous shrub found in boreal forests of Northern Japan, Russia, and northern Canada. In Japan, where the berry is very popular for its purported health benefits, it is known as haskap. Haskap is a relatively new commercial crop in North America. Dr. Bob Bors and the University of Saskatchewan Fruit Program have developed and introduced new haskap varieties by breeding sweeter Japanese stock with the more cold-hardy Russian plants. Our ‘Borealis’ is one of his varieties. Haskaps are self-incompatible, so two different varieties are required to produce fruit; one “pollinizer” for every five shrubs.



The plants are very cold hardy and ripen very early. They can be grown in zone 2; they survive winter temperatures of -47 C, remain dormant through mid-winter thaws, and the flowers remain viable through -7 C. The berries can be picked by mid-June in Saskatchewan (and Stratford!), providing an early crop which is ready before Saskatoon berries ripen. After three or four years a transplant will produce berries, an average of three kilos per shrub at maturity. The varieties can taste quite different, bland to very tart to a sweeter flavour described as a cross between blueberry and raspberry (although the plants are not at all related). High in antioxidants and vitamin C, they can be used in preserves, baking, juice, and even wine. (Now if only we could grow enough to try making that wine...)

For more information about haskap berries:

1. Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs. Special Croppportunities. Haskap. Retrieved in 2015 09 30 from http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/CropOp/en/spec_fruit/berries/hask.html

2. Bors, B. *Growing haskap in Canada*. Retrieved on 2015 09 27 from <http://www.fruit.usask.ca/articles/growinghaskapinCanada.pdf>