

The Watering Can

March 2013

Newsletter of The West Carleton Garden Club and Horticultural Society
P.O. Box 326, Carp ON K0A 1L0



Canadian Organic Growers' *Eco Farm Day*, February 23, 2013:

A Report: By Phil Reilly

Horticulturalists come in many shades. Many of us are hobbyists and others are commercially focused. Some are scientific researchers and others are self-taught dabblers. Some are interested in ornamental flowers and others in growing edibles. And then there are horticulturalists operating on a large scale—our farmers—usually called agriculturalists. And they come in many shades as well, one being those with an organic bent and another with a “pesticides are good” outlook. Common to us all is sharing the same planet and being dependent upon finite supplies of fresh water.

The Eco Farm Day trade and educational show in Cornwall on Saturday, February 23, was an exhilarating experience, attended by about 250 organically minded market gardeners and farmers.

The day's theme was “Water Management in Organic Agriculture.” Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and Chair of the Board of Washington-based Food and Water Watch, kick-started the day with a keynote address “Water – Emerging Issues for the Organic Producer.” Ms. Barlow used her extensive affiliations with international NGOs involved in water rights issues to paint a dire scenario for farmers. She pointed out that better-funded and politically connected interest groups, such as the energy and industrial sectors with deeper pockets, are overshadowing food producers for the right to water for their products. She highlighted the world-wide problems of aquifer depletions, regional surface water reductions due to unpredictable rainfall, and the inhumanity of preferentially allocating water-taking privileges to private corporations at the expense of public rights to the life-giving resource we all require for daily survival.

Throughout the rest of the day, it was a struggle to decide which topical seminars to attend. I chose two of interest to me: one summarizing Canadian research advancing organic agriculture and efforts to support its credibility, meet consumer expectations, and optimize its production; and a second highlighting research on the development of LED (light-emitting diode) lights capable of increasing post-harvest longevity, at the retailers, of vegetables and

florals by reducing pathogen infections. The invisible near-infra-red part of the light spectrum is the light wave length of value in this LED application

LED lighting strips, in 4-foot-long strips (mountable in fluorescent light fixtures) are now being manufactured by combining linear arrays of diodes, each producing red or blue light. The interesting thing about this advancement, for horticultural application, is that each plant variety physiologically responds best to specific light-wave characteristics. By adjusting the chemical mixtures in a diode, specific wave lengths of light can be produced. The result: lights can now be designed specific to requirements of tomatoes, cucumbers, or lettuce. Combine this with the fact that LEDs consume much less electricity, produce less waste heat, and last many times longer than other light source designs, and you've got a product of intense interest to the greenhouse industry. Mass production of these LED units will soon occur and, when that happens, many consumer grow-light stands will have this new LED technology.

COG's [Eco Farm Day website](#) provides overviews of the other programs offered to attendees.

March Meeting:

Tuesday, March 12, 2013, at 7:30 pm

The Wonderful World of Roses

Mark Dallas, Galetta Nurseries



“Morden
Fireglowoy”



“Parkland
Prairie Joy”



“Explorer George
Vancouver”

Please Note: Goodies by A to D:

Members whose surnames begins with letters **A to D** are requested to provide eatable goodies and door prize articles for this meeting.

Celebrating Our Gardening Friends: Mark Dallas

Most of us recognize Mark Dallas as the owner/operator of Galetta Nurseries, a business started in 1991. Not many of us have been invited to travel past the nursery part of his property, but beyond the parking lot and greenhouses is his historic 1830's log house on the banks of a bend of the Mississippi River. The hydro dam, seen from the Galetta Side Road as you enter the village of Galetta from the east, has created a narrow lake in front of the house site that provides a beautiful south-facing vantage point to the seldom-used, architecturally interesting railway bridge crossing the Mississippi River.

Mark recalls: "My first garden, if we can call it that, was when I was about five years old. I vividly recall how pleased I was to be able to grow marigolds in the odd climate of Calgary. My interest is, I think, based largely on genetics: my mom is from the south of England, and all of her kids have huge gardens of one sort or another."

Mark continues, "Once I got past my marigold phase, I spent much of my younger life getting an education. Until age 30, I didn't do much gardening. That all changed when I bought the property, with one of the oldest log houses in the area, on the outskirts of Galetta. It's a lovely house, but the property surrounding it was an abandoned gravel pit." Mark recalls "there were a few trees near the house, but the remaining 50 acres had only two, a huge dead elm, and one lonely hackberry. More trees were needed so, in 1981, Mark started to plant trees. Given the soil conditions, he decided that pine trees were the most suitable. In went 35,000 pine seedlings. After about 10 years they started to show above the weeds and Mark began to think that growing trees would be a worthy business – and possibly a way to indulge his passion for growing large green things.

So began Mark's venture into the nursery business. In 1991, he opened Galetta Nurseries, specializing in trees that were hardy in our area: nearly 50 different varieties of trees, ranging from local species to the more exotic. Among his favourites—Korean maple and Kentucky coffee tree.

A decade passed and the business climate for small nurseries started to change radically as the big box stores captured much of independent nurseries' business. Mark

decided to re-focus on one particular niche that wasn't well served: hardy roses. Says Mark, "Ottawa is the second-coldest capital city in the entire world, but the roses most commonly sold here were only suited to much warmer conditions. Many roses that grow well in Kingston, Toronto, or Montreal won't thrive here – our winters are much colder."

It's taken more than a decade of research and experimentation for Mark to find the varieties that will survive Ottawa's bitter winters without special protection. He learned a lot from the research and development of winter-hardy roses here in Ottawa (the Explorer roses) and near Winnipeg (the Morden roses).



Opening colours of 'Morden Sunrise'.

To truly test the hardiness of the many rose varieties, Mark decided to grow them all on his farm. "That was the only way I could truly guarantee that a particular rose would thrive," he says. There has been a lot of trial (and much error, too), but he has finally settled on a selection of about 75 rose varieties.

Mark observes that "of course, it's possible to grow less hardy varieties of roses in Ottawa if you're willing to go to the trouble of protecting them for the winter. But, with my goal of growing all my own roses, the more tender roses just weren't an option. I don't have the energy to protect 3000 roses every fall!"

So, what's necessary in the way of training and background to operate a specialty rose nursery? Mark confides that "in my case, nothing, except a passion for plants. I have no formal training in horticulture or landscaping – all I have learned is through reading, talking to other gardeners, other nursery owners, and most of all, through making mistakes and learning through (often bitter!) experience. I have a Ph.D. in psychology, and my non-gardening career has been in telecommunication technology. I teach a university course at the University of Ottawa on statistical analysis. None of these have been of any value in understanding plants."

There is a lot of information growing hardy roses on the Galetta Nurseries' website: <http://www3.sympatico.ca/galetta/>.

As well, Mark directs those wanting information about the remaining 30,000 non-hardy rose varieties of the world to check out <http://www.helpmefind.com/rose/index.php>

If you ask Mark, "What's your favourite rose?" he'll answer "I'm not allowed to say. It's like having children: they're *all* my favourites."

Things Horticultural

By Phil Reilly

In this column, you'll find some reminders of local sources of seeds, community events, and snippets about vegetable garden-related issues.

- **Seedy Saturday** is a great place to get your gardening juices flowing again. The 2013 edition of **Seedy Saturday**, takes place on Saturday, March 2, 10 am to 3 pm, at the Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, Britannia Beach, 102 Greenview Av. This marks the 20th anniversary of the event. Bring your own seeds to exchange with other gardeners, purchase available seeds, or attend offered lectures. Food is available on-site.

The day's organized events are:

10:30 am "10 Meter Diet: Introduction to Backyard Organic Food Production" by Tom Marcantonio
11:30 am "Seed Saving" by Dan Brisebois
12:30 pm "Permaculture" by Permaculture Ottawa
1:30 pm "Worm Composting" by Gerrie Baker

- **Local seeds need saving!** is a great "why and how-to" article from the Food Security Network of Newfoundland & Labrador. While on their page, check out their seven other articles on food growing, processing, and cooking.

- The **Reel Food Film Festival**, Thursday, March 14, is a semi-annual film series dedicated to food. It occurs at the Ottawa Public Library Auditorium, [120 Metcalfe Street](#). Doors open at 6 pm, screening at 6:30 pm. Free Admission (\$5 suggested donation).

Two films are being shown. Trailers for the films are on the [Reel Food Film Festival website](#).

Tapped, a 90-minute 2009 U.S. film by Stephanie Soeching and Jason Lindsey, considers the question: "Is access to clean drinking water a basic human right, or a commodity that should be bought and sold like other items on the market?" **Tapped** is a documentary exploring an industry that aims to privatize and sell one resource that everyone should have access to: water. This shocking documentary sheds light on the bottled water industry and the communities that they tap.

The second film, a 2012 12-minute documentary, follows Tim Baker (lead singer of Juno-nominated band **Hey Rosetta!**) on a visit to Honduras where he discovers that food is much more than food.

- The **Canadian Organic Gardeners (Ottawa, Saint Lawrence, Outaouais Chapter)** has a new initiative: "Senior Organic Gardeners." The program objectives are to offer gardening opportunities to seniors in their homes, apartments, retirement residences, and long-term-care facilities to engage in organic vegetable and herb gardening, and to benefit from the healthy

activity, productive pastime, and restful therapy that gardening can offer. For more on this program, [see their website](#).

- Indoor worm composting has again begun in the Reilly household. My last venture into worm composting proceeded successfully for about 18 months. Then a sudden die-off of my worm population, due to allowing the worm's environment to become too moist, brought my operation to an inglorious halt. From the compost saved at the time of the worm disaster, I've had enough compost to make worm compost tea for about a year. I use it, about every 10 days, to fertilize over-wintering plants and salad specimens (lettuce and radishes). Noting that I had finally depleted my compost reserves and, having just attended a Canadian Organic Gardener conference where red wiggler worms were available at The Worm Factory display booth, I am again supplied with red wigglers to renew my quest to be a successful worm manager. For those keen to try indoor worm composting (it does not result in offensive odours!), Gerrie Baker, owner of The Worm Factory, will be at Seedy Saturday and have Red Wigglers for sale.

An extensive downloadable fact sheet on worm composting equipment and techniques is available on [Vesey's website](#).

- **A Viable Food Future**, a monumental two-part report from Norway's "The Development Fund," is available for downloading by [clicking here](#). The report's aim is to provide scientifically based facts, arguments and ideas on what is needed to meet some of the most important societal challenges in the world today. The future of humanity depends on how food is—and will be—produced and provided.

The report considers the following questions: What kind of food production can:

- drastically reduce poverty,
- reduce climate change and cool the planet,
- restore biodiversity, soil fertility and water resources,
- improve livelihoods and provide employment for billions of people and,
- produce enough good and nutritious food for 9 billion people or more...?

- **Children's Gardens: Design, Participation and Behavior For Environmental Competence**, a 2010 Masters Thesis is [available on the Cornell Univ. website](#). Ashley Louise Miller studies 12 children's gardens within an ecological framework, to evaluate whether their mission statement themes foster participation, natural contact, diversity of play, and usability.

Reminder For the March 12 Garden Club meeting.

Our greeter is to be Anne Crosley and speaker/thanker is to be Adeline Colley.

“Clickables”

by Phil Reilly

This month's focus is on organically grown small fruits: strawberries, grapes, and blueberries. Strawberries and grapes are happily growing in our gardens and in 2013 I'll add the blueberries.

Our clay soils, like many in the Ottawa Valley, are derived from limestone and have an alkaline pH. Our three wells produce water whose pH ranges from 7.2 to 8.0 (i.e. mildly alkaline to very alkaline). I, like many readers, will have to create a raised planting area and acidify the soils preparatory to planting the blueberries and acidify irrigation water to keep them alive and productive. Enjoy exploring the following links and contemplate the rewards of home-grown fruits.

Strawberries:

[Strawberries for Home Gardens](#), from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), is an excellent all-round source of information. My second suggestion is [Strawberries: Home Garden Cultural Guide](#) from New Brunswick's Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries. Cold-tolerant strawberry varieties are better covered in this document. A third suggestion, from the University of Minnesota, is [Strawberries for the Home Garden](#). It has additional information suited to Ottawa-area gardeners.

Plant sources: local nurseries/garden centres in May/June.

Grapes:

The University of Minnesota has an extensive fact sheet, [Growing Grapes for Home Use](#), which evaluates grape varieties according to their hardiness, potential uses, (wine, table, or preserves) and growth/pruning/training requirements.

Plant source: [Corn Hill Nursery](#) near Sussex, N.B. (place order early for available bare-root stock.) I can vouch for their stock - it's also a great nursery to visit!

Blueberries:

[Blueberries for Home Garden](#), from OMAFRA, is an excellent source of information on growing blueberries.

Plant source: [Corn Hill Nursery](#) near Sussex, N.B. (place order early for available bare-root stock.)

[Wild pollinators of eastern apple orchards and how to conserve them](#) is an excellent 18-page publication from Cornell University on wild bee's habitat and food source needs. While it has an apple orchard focus, the contained info and photos is of value for all gardeners; we all have a huge dependence on the pollination services of wild bees for our food crops.

[The Online Gardener's Handbook 2010, Chapter 5: Fruit. Insect and Disease Control on Fruit.](#) This OMAFRA reference document should be a regularly-consulted source of gardening information. This link takes you to Chapter 5, but do become familiar with the other chapters too.

Green Barn Nursery, on Île-Perrot just west of Montreal, specializes in cold hardy dwarf fruit trees, fruiting vines, and some tender fruit trees best grown indoors during our winter conditions. Variety descriptions and online ordering are available from [their website](#) or order a catalogue from Green Barn Nursery, 1860 blvd. Don-Quichotte, Notre-Dame-de-Île-Perrot, QC. J7V 8P6.



“Explorer John Cabot”

West Carleton Garden Club

Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings of the West Carleton Garden Club begin at 7:30 pm the second Tuesday of the month (September to May) at the Carp Memorial Hall, 3739 Carp Road, Carp.

Website: <https://sites.google.com/site/westcarletongardenclub/>

Facebook: Search: 'West Carleton Garden Club'

Club Contacts (2012–2013)

President - Donna Caldwell (839-2079)
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Hospitality - Mary and Roy Reynolds (832-0408)
Flower Show - Nancy Argue (622-1122)
Membership - Brenda Baird (839-3094) and Anne Crosley
Yearbook - Lorraine Jeffrey (839-7355)
Members at Large - Laurie Lord (839-6596)
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