

The Watering Can

September 2013

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



The President's Podium

from Donna Caldwell



This past year was a very successful and rewarding one. I want to thank each member of the executive for their hard work and other club members for their volunteer contributions on club initiatives. We should all be very proud. First I'll summarize what we achieved over the past year. At

the end of this column, I call on club members to participate on three new committees to make the coming year as eventful as the past one.

Some highlights of the past year:

- A very, very successful garden tour.
- Santa Claus Parade entitled "We're Bloomin' Crazy."
- Denise Burnham won a well-deserved Horticultural Service certificate.
- Ted Barnicoat took over the maintenance of the Reading Garden.

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September Meeting

September 10, 2013, 7:30 pm

David Hinks, *Master Gardener*

speaks on

"Garden Design

to Attract Birds to our Gardens"

Meeting Reminder:

This is also our **Fall Fruit & Vegetable Show**. Please come early to place your entries. Guidelines are in the 2012-13 WCGC yearbook distributed at the April meeting.

Refreshments by T to Z.

Members whose surnames begin with letters **T to Z** are requested to provide refreshments and door prize articles for this meeting.

September is membership renewal month: \$20/family and \$15/single. Please advise us of email or address changes.

Celebrating our Gardening Friends: Val Collins

by Val Collins



Val and her two grandkids

Everyone has a story. I was a curious child and have grown to believe that is one of my strongest assets. In primary school I remember climbing a tree so I could see into the garden next door. I've always been fascinated by how gardens influence our living spaces.

My parents found each other as people did after the war. My father a recent immigrant, my mother an orphan from the Ottawa Valley, I came along and made them a

family. From an early age, I saw myself as an artist but lacked the conviction to play it out. I have since learned that passion is the main ingredient necessary to succeed in anything you do. I eventually discovered my talent to organize people and became a project manager.

I was blessed to have found a soul mate early in life. Young and inexperienced, we learned about life together. Together we explored the world, first at our doorstep and eventually select parts of the world. At the tail end of the hippy movement, we were idealistic and in a hurry to learn the skills of the past. We bought a half-finished log cabin in the middle of Lanark township and quickly achieved "enlightenment" or something like it – reality has a way of making one pragmatic. Our only child was born into this place of natural splendor and spent her first four years there. I have a photo of her with the tulips towering over her. Feeling she needed society her own age, we moved back to the city. Graham still misses the sound of the peepers each spring.

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(Val Collins Profile cont'd from page 1)

Life has always happened to me while I was making other plans. I stumbled into a job introducing a project approach to museum development and fell in love with constructivist learning. Quickly I proved my worth in the cultural field evolving a “team” approach to development, building complex, interpretive programming aimed at lifelong learning. With a curious nature comes boredom if not challenged. So, with an inherent imperative to change, I left a tenured job at the National Museums to work for International Cooperation in the Caribbean providing infrastructure support expertise to Caribbean governments. A tough job, but someone had to do it. Project Management turned into Cultural Management and higher-paying jobs, first in England where Graham brought with him his trusty steed – an 1150 BMW motorcycle and commenced writing about his road adventures while I met luminaries in my field, sat across from Jane Goodall at dinner, joked with Sir David Attenborough and produced academically acclaimed work. There was some free time allowing us to explore landscapes I had only dreamed of seeing. Through Graham’s determined explorations, we experienced as much of Europe as was physically possible in an “empty nest” period when our parents were in good health—it was heaven. But the most exciting aspect of England that will hold fast my heart forever was that society’s love of gardening. Our neighbours became dear friends and our tutors on the English way of life. Their profound love of the earth, of gardening, and of English gardens was contagious. They brought us to their favourites almost every weekend. But, as we were only in July ‘Ole for three years, we barely scratched the surface. Family called and we answered. Life again shifted our plans.

Following lofty ideals to learn more about cultural collaborations, I found another strength – teaching, or should I say teaching found me – a profession I was born to, will never completely master, and will provide me with enough thirst for knowledge to keep my curious nature sated. I was fortunate to work as a teacher of project management in Ghana, Africa, near the City of Accra, where I experienced the jungle in all its glory and with it developed a determination to save what little natural habitat the planet has left.

With the family back on an even keel, we were able to extend the search for work further afield and this time we relocated to Edmonton where I was employed as Vice President of Programs for the Edmonton Space and Science Foundation. In spare time we



explored Western Canada with all the curiosity of a tourist on Graham’s trusty steed, touring the Ice Fields Parkway in all conceivable weather (making the journey North to South and South to North), travelled from Jasper to Banff, to Kananaskis to the Kootenays, from Mount Robson to Vancouver Island, from Waterton Park to Alaska, observed buffalos at Elk Island National Park and witnessed Fort Saskatchewan and the oil fields first-hand. I was so moved by the awe-inspiring beauty of this fragile ecosystem that I volunteered, in Edmonton, to Chair a Mayoral Committee on Local Environmental Initiatives for Community Action in my spare time. Alberta strengthened my resolve to protect the environment.

Those interests lead me, when we moved back to Ottawa in 2009, to Kanata’s Julie Gourley, a tireless, profoundly committed environmentalist. She and I became fast friends and together took up the banner of Food Not Lawns. In the process, Julie introduced me to another extraordinary woman, Sarah Dehler—a Kanata community leader and a specialist in sustainable development. Together we found a common love for science engagement and Science Café Kanata was born, as too was a dream to build a Science Centre in Kanata. I met Phil Reilly at the first Science Café at Zak’s in Kanata North and knew he was a kindred spirit.

Today I am retired ... and busier than I have ever been. Sarah and I continue to work towards our goal of a science-engaged society in Ottawa West. With Graham’s help, we built some raised beds on our front lawn in Kanata South and invited our neighbours to grow food. We are in our third year and have 8 beds with 7 neighbours and their children learning and exchanging knowledge about gardening methods. We have a garden specifically for passersby and invite them to pick and taste locally grown food. The extras go to the Kanata Food Cupboard or to the local children waiting for the bus. I’ve found a teaching outlet with this younger set and have some great stories about kids who plant spinach eating spinach. I’m also advising the Kanata Chinese Seniors Group, who have just received a City grant to build a community garden. And I am about to embark on the new role of newsletter writer for the West Carleton Garden Club. Please bear with me through this learning curve.

Because I’m an advocate of peer learning, I would like this to be my first call for your stories and ideas on topics of interest for the newsletter for the coming year. All ideas and advice welcomed.

See you all at the September meeting.

Book Review by Phil Reilly

Decoding Gardening Advice: The Science Behind The 100 Most Common Recommendations

by Jeff Gillman & Meleah Maynard
Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 2012.

Gillman and Maynard, in this very current 223-page book, have provided a great service to both gardening advice-givers and their advice-takers. Gillman is an associate professor of Horticultural Science at the University of Minnesota and Maynard is a journalist and master gardener—two gardening advice-givers from very different backgrounds. This book is broken down into eight chapters (Soil, Water, Pest/Disease and Weed Control, Mulch, Annuals/Perennials and Bulbs, Trees and Shrubs, Vegetables and Fruit, and Lawn Care). The authors have assembled an interesting array of *Good Advice, Advice That's Debatable, and Advice That's Just Wrong* and have provided scientific background supporting their assessments.

The book begins with the exhortation that gardeners ought to understand their site's soil as a basis for evaluating advice advocating soil conditioning or nutrient additives. Few gardeners have the practical experience to visually judge their property's soil's inherent moisture-holding capacity, existing nutrient parameters or how to determine its microbial biodiversity. Various levels of soil analyses options (from do-it-yourself kits, available at garden centers, to analytical laboratory testing services, available in major cities and sometimes at universities/agricultural colleges) exist, so determining your soil's various parameters is easily at hand. The authors emphasize that, without an understanding of your soil, it is easy to be lured into unnecessary, and/or unwise gardening practices and inappropriate plant purchases. Advice suited to sandy soil is not always appropriate for clay soils, that for well-drained soils is not necessarily suited to water retentive soils, and plant-choice suggestions differ for acidic or alkaline soil conditions.

Some tidbits of general advice from the authors include: "stay away from fertilizing in hot conditions"; "discarding potting soil annually is probably overkill ... unless talking about reusing seed-starting soils"; on the use of urine as a fertilizer, "we do not recommend trying it on edible crops so don't add it to your compost pile if you use the compost for everything in your garden"; and, on when to fertilize, "best to fertilize perennials in autumn and annuals in spring." The science-based rationales for their advice make interesting reading.

In the chapter on Perennials, Annuals and Bulbs, there is one often-heard piece of gardening advice that caught my eye: "Add phosphorus to increase bloom and stimulate rooting." This advice is often on packaging of fertilizers.

The authors response: "Unless you have a phosphorus deficiency and can prove it with a soil test, stay away from high-phosphorus fertilizers. In general, you do not need them and they can cause severe environmental damage if they get into lakes and streams."

Decoding Gardening Advice: The Science Behind The 100 Most Common Recommendations was an enjoyable and informative read. I highly recommend it to beginning gardeners, those who think they've absorbed all that's needed to be a good gardener, and garden advisors.

Ottawa-area gardeners have a full-service analytical laboratory facility available: see Exova Accutest Laboratory's [web site](#) for information. They are located at 8-146 Colonnade Rd., K2E 7Y1 and can be reached at 613-727-5692 ext 317 or by email at lorna.wilson@exova.com.

Selection of mosaiculture creations seen on our club's Montreal Botanical Gardens bus trip, June 25, 2013.



West Carleton Garden Club Contacts (2013–2014)

President - Donna Caldwell (839-2079)
Vice President - David Hinks (839-2248)
Treasurer - Lorraine Jeffrey (839-7355)
Secretary - Denise Burnham (839-7316)
Newsletter - Val Collins (435-5154)
Program - Anita Murray (839-0220)
Website & Facebook - (open)
Plant Sale - Mary Reynolds (832-0408)
Hospitality - Mary and Roy Reynolds (832-0408)
Flower Show - (open)
Membership - Brenda Baird (839-3094) and Anne Crosley
Yearbook - Pat Buchannan (435-7419)
Member at Large - Laurie Lord (839-6596), Pam Leeks (839-1928)
Past President - Anne Gadbois (256-7161)

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 June) at the Carp Memorial Hall, 3739 Carp Road, Carp.

Website:

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

Facebook: Search: 'West Carleton Garden Club'

“Planting Trees,” an extract from *Decoding Gardening Advice: The Science Behind The 100 Most Common Recommendations*.

Editor’s Note: The authors advise “... spreading the word as much as we can” (see last paragraph). This extract also serves as an example of the style of the book and the information contained in it.

Good Advice: Do Not Plant Trees Too Deeply

Most gardeners know that you should place plants in the ground at the same depth they are planted in their containers, rather than plopping them way down in the bottom of a hole. But recent research has shown we all (even arborists) have been planting trees too deeply for years and years.

What Happens If You Plant Trees Too Deeply

Burying trees deeply used to be considered a good idea because it was thought to protect young trees from being blown over by wind and to protect the roots. But thinking this was wrong.

Ongoing research on the effect of planting trees at various depths, including a nine-year study by the University of Minnesota, have shown that it is best to plant trees so the root flare (or root collar) is at, or just above, the soil. The root flare is where the main stem transitions to the roots at the base of the trunk. When trees are planted this way, rather than deep in the ground, their roots are close to the soil surface where they can easily get the air, water, and nutrition the tree needs. Although it may take 10 to 20 years, when trees planted too deeply their roots will grow upward in an attempt to get closer to the soil surface where they can find more air. As they grow, these roots encircle the base of the tree. Eventually, they girdle the tree, essentially strangling it as if it has had a noose around its neck.

How To Do It

Spreading the word about how to plant trees correctly should be at the top of every gardener's to-do list because the problem is still widespread. One reason the problem persists is that most trees purchased from nurseries are still being planted far too deeply in their containers. Most homeowners don't realize this; they just plant as they would any other potted plant.

Before you plant a tree, gently remove it from its container and use your hands or a trowel to scrape away



the top layer of soil until you expose the root flare. Because balled-and-burlapped trees are usually bigger than containerized trees and have loose root balls, use a wire (such as a straightened coat hanger) as a probe to help find the root flare. Keep the tree wrap on while you do this. Once you have established how far down you will need go to get to the flare, subtract that number of inches from the depth of the planting hole you will be digging. Believe it or not, depending on the size of the tree and the nursery that planted it, you may have to dig down as far as 12 inches. Once the tree is in the hole, remove the soil from the top, taking care that the flare can be seen aboveground once you are finished.

The Real Dirt

It’s sad that so many trees will lead shortened lives because we planted them incorrectly. But now that we know how to plant trees to promote their long-term survival, we need to spread the word as much as we can. This includes talking to managers at garden centres and the owners of nurseries when we see trees in containers planted too deeply.

Ken Hranchuk

Our deepest sympathy goes out to Donna Christie and her daughters, Kieva and Alexis.

Ken Hranchuk, Donna's husband of 36 years passed away on August 3rd.

Both Ken and Donna contributed to our club in many ways. Their beautiful gardens were opened for the garden tour last July and again this past July.

They have lived in Carp, on Old Coach Rd., for many years. Their beautiful brick home is filled with antiques that Donna and Ken collected together.

Ken was a behavioural psychologist who helped many people over his career. He always had a happy smile and a friendly word for everyone he met.

He was a good husband, father, friend and neighbour.



Book Review by Phil Reilly

Eating on the Wild Side: The Missing Link to Optimum Health by Jo Robinson (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2013)

Since closing our nursery, I've renewed my interest in vegetable gardening, and (in some people's mind) even gone a bit overboard initiating a high tunnel to grow food, well beyond traditional gardening times, for our table. I am trying (as in any gardening, it does require physical effort) to recapture some of our family's control over the quality of foods that we eat. My education on which fruits and vegetables offer us the greatest nutritional benefits has recently taken a quantum leap forward with the arrival of a new book, obtained from the Ottawa Public Library, titled *Eating on the Wild Side: The Missing Link to Optimum Health*. Jo Robinson, through historical summaries of how vegetable breeding selections have favoured sweetness over nutritional value, has forever changed my quest for home-grown nutritious crops to be grown in our garden.

Let's consider today's mainstay corn crops as an example of the information presented in Robinson's book. Historically, she says, the Mexican precursor to modern corn varieties had a scant five to seven kernels, in a single file, on a five inch bushy grass-like plant. Nutritionally this corn, Teosinte (*Zea mexicana*), had twice as much protein as our modern corn and significantly less starch. Over about seven thousand years, teosinte has become our ultrasweet food favourite—providing about 25% of the calories consumed by the world's population. Robinson follows some of the more significant breeding efforts of geneticists and reports that our softer, juicer and bigger cobs now contains about 40% sugar, bringing a new meaning to *candy corn*. However, modern corn varieties are much lower in phytonutrients than that produced by the earliest farmers.

Phytonutrients are amongst the most nutritionally-important components of our foods—components that confer on us, amongst other benefits, anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory, anti-obesity, anti-aging, cholesterol-lowering, immunity-boosting and weight-loss stimuli benefits. Robinson outlines which vegetable varieties to grow, purchase and consume to benefit from the phytonutrient components (called phytochemicals) of varieties available to us—if we search them out. For corn, as an example, she suggests that coloured kernels (not the modern white and cream “sweeties”) are indicative of increased nutritional value. Cobs with deep yellow, blue, purple, and red kernels should be our quest—those with varietal names such as “Blue Jade,” “Double Red Sweet,” “Floriant Red,” “Golden Bantam,” “Seneca Red,” and

“White Eagle.” These are the nutritional winners, she advises.

Once we have the corn in our kitchens, Robinson provides further guidance on how to temporarily store, cook and/or preserve the produce to capture its phytonutrient contents. Like so many foods, eating corn fresh from the field is the ideal. But how you store, until cooking time, and how you cook it is important for preserving any food's bounty of available nutrients. Robinson suggests microwaving or barbecuing corn cobs in their husks (a form of steam cooking) as an alternative to traditional boiling the cobs in water. The nutrients stay in the kernels rather than leach out into the cooking water. Microwaving two cobs for about four minutes at a high setting (microwave cooking powers do vary by model so some experimentation may be required) and adding about a minute for each additional cob is her suggestion. Also, she advises, let the cobs rest in their husks for about five minutes before peeling and serving.

With this abstract of one of her chapters on a food type, I highly recommend reading Robinson's book for similar information on salad green varieties, alliums, potatoes, carrots, beets, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, beans, peas, lentils, artichoke, asparagus, avocados, apples, blueberries, blackberries, strawberries, cranberries, raspberries, peaches, grapes, oranges, and melons (to mention just a few!). Many of Carole and my food choices and handling techniques have been forever altered with our newly acquired information.

WCGC 2013/2014

Program Schedule

Oct. 8, 2013. “*Rainbow Heritage Farms and a focus on Heirloom Garlic*” featuring a market table of heritage veggies for sale. Kylah Dobson & Zach Loeks

Nov. 12, 2013. “*Festive Decoration Workshop*.” Denise Burnham.

Dec. 10, 2013. Holiday Potluck and silent auction.

Jan. 14, 2014. “*Gardens of Cuba*.” Mary Ann Van Berlo.

Feb. 11, 2014. “*From Plants to Hardscaping - It All Starts with a Solid Design*.” Trevor Cullen.

Mar. 18, 2014. “*Garden Design to Suit Your Personality*.” Phil Tuba.

Apr. 8, 2014. TBA

May 13, 2014. TBA

June 10, 2014. TBA



The above patio stone raised-bed vegetable planter, seen at Brenda Baird's gardens, appeals to Val Collins. Available from Lee Valley Tools for \$74, the steel mounting bracket kit (for up to a 4' x 8' planter) secures patio stones to 2" x 4" bottom and top rails. Additional brackets are also available for longer or L-shaped planters.

It's Hellebore Transplanting Time.

by Phil Reilly

In 2006 I was given a few hundred hellebore plants (consisting of 14 varieties/hybrids) at the conclusion of the Perennial Plant Association's annual conference in Montreal. Club members may remember our nursery's hellebore bonanza provided by Pine Knot Farms of North Carolina. Dick and Judith Knott Tyler could not, due to cross-border plant health restriction, take their plant stock back across the U.S. border. They magnanimously gave them to us with a simple request: help them determine which varieties were hardy around Ottawa.

Now, eight years later, three of their hellebore varieties are merrily self-seeding in our heavy clay soil gardens. *Helleborus foetidus* (stinking hellebore—named after the musky smell of their crushed leaves), *Helleborus argutifolia* (Corsican hellebore), and *Helleborus xhybridus* (Lenten Rose) have produced variable amounts of seedlings—the Lenten Rose being the most prolific and the Corsican hellebore producing but a few seedlings. Two-year-old plantlets (about 1.5 inches tall) are now ready for transplanting to other garden locations where they will become quite dense groundcover-like plantings. The seedlings have yet to mature to blooming age so, with hellebore's reputation for cross-pollination, we may get variable bloom colours in coming spring times.

If club members relay to me successes with other hellebore varieties/cultivars, I will pass this info along to the Tylers.

P.S.

Hellebores: A Comprehensive Guide (by C. Colston Burrell and Judith Knott Tyler, Timber Press, Inc., 2006) has everything you want to know (and much more) on hellebores in their well-illustrated 296-page book.

The President's Podium (cont'd from Page 1)

- Phil Reilly took our monthly newsletter in a different direction. Topics included vegetables, profiles of garden club members and meeting speakers, and a column of instant "clickables" to online gardening topics.
- Nancy Argue made additions to the flower shows including a photography section and a vegetable show for September.
- Lorraine Jeffrey's yearbook received numerous compliments. It was a joy to read.
- Mary and Roy Reynolds continue to make goodies and break time a favourite part of the monthly meetings.
- Pamela Leeks took over the treasurer's position and did a great job.
- Laurie Lord placed many ads in our local papers to promote the events of the club.
- David Hinks applied for money through the City of Ottawa Beautification Project in collaboration with the Carp Agricultural Society and the Huntley Community Centre. The village is looking beautiful with hanging baskets, barrels of flowers and flags. This is in preparation for the 150th Carp Fair.
- Our plant sale was a huge success with donation of plants and many volunteers.
- Membership grew this year to 90. Brenda Baird did a great job in updating the membership lists and sending out reminders for dues.
- Thanks to Anne Gadbois, our Facebook and webpage have both been updated. Our meeting programs for the year were both varied and interesting.
- The Memorial Hall has never looked better. New plants were bought, planted, watered and the garden was weeded.
- At the entrance to the village of Carp, Denise, Nancy and Donna planted flowers in the red wagon.

This year the West Carleton Garden Club celebrates its 25th anniversary. Three new committees have been set up to undertake new initiatives. Please consider signing up for one on them.

1. **Carp Fair Booth**, chaired by David Hinks,
2. **25th Anniversary**, chaired by Nancy Argue, and
3. **District 2 Ontario Horticultural Society's Flower and Vegetable Show**, in August 2014, chaired by Denise Burnham.

Donna Caldwell
President