

Composting and Soil Conditioning – November 6, 2013

At our November meeting Marcel Beauchamp spoke on the topic of “Soil Conditioning and Composting”. Marcel is a member of the Russell and District Horticultural Society where he speaks frequently on various topics of horticultural interest. During the 1970s, he was responsible for tropicals, annuals, and the Chrysanthemum Exhibition in the greenhouses at the Central Experimental Farm and from 1981 to 1988 he was foreman of the Dominion Arboretum where he introduced large scale composting to produce quality compost for use in the shrub and flower beds. He lives on a five acre property near Morewood where he has extensive gardens specializing in trees and hostas.

Marcel talked about soil as a living organism and the importance of compost to maintain the "life" in soil and as an additive to feed plants. He addressed soil texture, soil structure and the importance of a healthy soil. Soil texture relates to whether your soil has more sand, silt or clay which can be determined by a simple “shake-in-a jar-test” (see <http://www.organicgardening.com/learn-and-grow/evaluating-soil-texture>) and soil structure refers to the arrangement of soil particles into larger aggregates. Marcel brought a sample of a good soil structure for us to see and to feel.

The key to having a healthy soil and good soil structure is an adequate supply of organic matter. Marcel talked about how to amend the soil with compost and other organic matter and discussed the various types of mulches and their application. Although 'soil and compost' could be difficult subject to make entertaining, Marcel did an excellent job and presented a very informative talk interspersed with questions from the members.

