



# Greely Gardeners Group

## *Newsletter*

September 2008

### GREELY GARDENERS CALENDAR:

**Wednesday, October 1**, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: MULCHING AND EASY CARE GARDENING. Guest speaker: the ever-popular Patti Pokorchak from Down-to-Earth Gardens.

This evening also includes our annual general meeting and election of a new executive for 2008-09. Gill Toll will be stepping down after serving as president for the past four years, but we're happy to say she will remain on the executive as past-president. So far we have one nomination for the position of president – Shelagh Heatlie, one of our founding members, has offered to take on the job. All the remaining members of the executive are willing to serve for another year, but of course we are open to nominations from the floor if any member wants to throw their hat into the ring, or to nominate another member. Just be sure before you nominate anyone that they are actually willing to take on the job!

**Wednesday, November 5**, Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: ENGLISH COUNTRY HOUSE GARDENS. "Guest" speaker: our very own Heather Clemenson with her personal slide collection from some of England's most glorious gardens to brighten up a November night.

**Wednesday, December 3**: Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. ANNUAL CHRISTMAS POT-LUCK DINNER, where our members show that they are not just great gardeners but great cooks too. Don't miss it!

### WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU

Just three more meetings this year, but your executive already has nearly a full programme planned for 2009. As always you can enjoy speakers on a wide range of topics including ponds, peonies, summer bulbs, mushrooms and more. Watch for details in future newsletters, and remember that we always welcome your feedback and suggestions for programming ideas.

We need to hear from you if we're to put together a programme that you will keep you both entertained and informed, and that includes not just topics for meetings, but ideas for tours, workshops and other events. So don't be shy, let us know what you'd like more (or less) of in our programme.

### OTHER GARDENING EVENTS

**Manotick Horticultural Society** usually meets on the second Monday of the month at 7:30 in the RCMP Club House off Nichols Island Road. For more information call Margot Belanger at (613) 692-1575 or email [rbelan1575@rogers.com](mailto:rbelan1575@rogers.com).

**Osgoode Garden Club** meets on the third Wednesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. in the Fred Alexander room of the Osgoode Community Centre.

**Russell & District Horticultural Society** meets on the third Monday of the month, 7:00 at the Russell Legion. For information call Lindley McPhail at 613-445-0754.

## TIP OF THE MONTH...



THERE REALLY IS A BIRD called the Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker, even if the name does sound like something right out of a Warner Bros cartoon. It's a small woodpecker, similar in appearance but a bit larger than the downy woodpecker. The big difference is that it has – you guessed it – a yellow belly. The other part of its name refers to the bird's habit of drilling holes in trees in order to tap their sap. And that makes this little bird a tree killer.

You'll often hear that woodpeckers only attack trees that are already infested with some kind of pest? that it's the insects they're after. That may be true of other woodpeckers, but not our yellow-bellied friend.

About half of the bird's diet actually consists of sap and sapwood. So the bird doesn't drill just one or two holes, but dozens in neat rows around the tree trunk or large branches. And it supplements its diet with insects that are attracted to the oozing sap, as well as with wild berries and fruits.

Birch, mountain ash and fruit trees are favourites of the little suckers. Once a pair has made its summer home in your garden they will return year after year to continue feasting on your trees? at least until the trees succumb to the repeated onslaught. The only good news there is that the birds are very territorial and will chase off any other sapsuckers that try to move in! What to do? Put aside all thoughts of baseball bats, slingshots, pellet guns or other implements of destruction you might wish to visit upon our little feathered friend: this bird is protected by law! You are strictly forbidden to kill or capture it, or even to destroy its eggs should you be able to find them. But don't despair, there are some things you can do to foil your feathered foe.

If you have sapsuckers in residence, you may be able to discourage them by wrapping affected trees with burlap, small-mesh hardware cloth, or several layers of chicken wire in early spring when the birds are most active. But it's probably better to remove the wrap during the summer months when the tree is growing. Hanging "frighteners" such as pie plates or strips of tin foil in the trees may also help repel sapsuckers. Another suggestion is to place a few rubber snakes (available at your local toy store) in the trees. Apparently the birds, like most people, have a fear of snakes. A decoy owl perched in the tree may also keep them away. Then there's prevention. If you want to prevent sapsuckers from taking up residence in the first place, it's worth noting that they prefer to nest in holes in dead trees. Removing any potential homesites within 300 feet may encourage them to look for homes farther afield.

Assuming that your efforts are successful, trees that are not too badly damaged will probably survive. You can help them by cleaning out all the holes you can reach? use a sharp knife to remove any hardened sap and debris. Then seal the holes with pruning paint, available from your favourite garden centre.

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FOOTNOTE: Know that, if you succeed in banishing sapsuckers from your neighbourhood, you can almost certainly say goodbye to visits from ruby-throated hummingbirds. You see, hummingbirds arrive here in spring before most flowers are in bloom, and they depend for their survival in those critical early weeks on guess what? Right, sap from the holes in your trees drilled by sapsuckers. Sap that is very similar in nutrient and sugar content to flower nectar. If it weren't for the sapsuckers, hummingbirds probably couldn't breed this far north. Sigh. Isn't nature wonderful!

### **Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee:**

President - Gill Toll 821-6123; Vice-President - Anita Snelgrove 821-0447;  
Treasurer – Melissa MacDonald 821-9680; Secretary – Shelagh Heatlie 821-0816;  
Melody Tomka 821-1985; Shelley Piercey 821-1120; June MacDonell 821-1949;  
Past-President/Newsletter Bob Stanley 821-1847