



Greely Gardeners Group

Newsletter

May 2009

GREELY GARDENERS 2009 CALENDAR

Next meeting...last one before the "Summer break"

Wednesday, June 3:

Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT BEES. Guest speaker: Greely beekeeper Brent Halsall. Come and find out why bees are vital to our gardens – and much more.

Saturday, June 20:

ANNUAL MEMBERS GARDENS TOUR. The tour starts at 9:00 a.m. from the Community Centre parking lot and lasts about four hours. We are still looking for one or two more gardens to complete the tour. If we don't have enough gardens we don't have a tour, so let's have one or two more volunteers.

Saturday, July 25: For our annual outing this summer we're suggesting the Heirloom Garden Tour at Upper Canada Village. If you've never visited the village this is a great opportunity to take in a unique historical site that will keep you coming back time and again. The cost is \$22 per person and in addition to the guided tour that includes a full day at the village and the adjacent Queen Elizabeth Gardens. We will car-pool to the village, which is near Morrisburg, about a one-hour drive from Greely. Full details will be available at Wednesday's meeting, or call Bob at 821-1847. To learn more about the village go to <http://www.uppercanadavillage.com/>

Saturday, August 8: The GGG's Annual Barbecue – a tradition since 2008. This year the BBQ will be bigger and better than ever, and best of all, the food will be free! More details at next week's meeting, and in your July newsletter – meanwhile mark that date on your summer calendar!

Wednesday, September 2:

Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: MUSHROOMS. Guest speaker: Michel Corbeil.

Wednesday, October 7:

Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. Topic: A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE. Guest speaker: John McKenzie.

Wednesday, November 4:

Greely Community Centre, 7:00 p.m. NEW AND UNDERUSED PERENNIALS. Guest speaker, the always popular and very knowledgeable Suzanne Patry of Whitehouse Perennials.

Wednesday, December 2:

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!

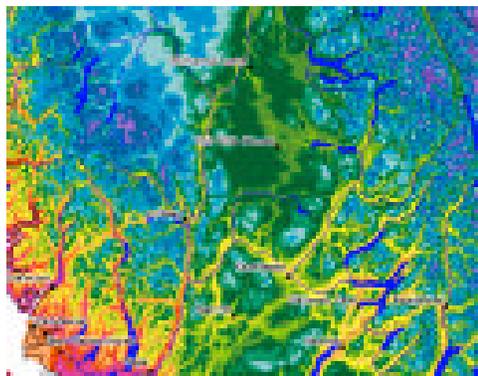
OTHER GARDENING EVENTS

Osgoode Garden Club meets on the third Wednesday of the month in the Fred Alexander Room of the Osgoode Community Centre, 5660 Main Street. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. There is a \$2.00 charge for non-members.

Russell and District Horticultural Society meets on the third Monday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at the Legion Hall, corner of First Street and Legion Lane.

Manotick Horticultural Society meets on the second Monday of the month at 7:30 in the RCMP Club House off Nicholl's Island Road (off River Road. For information contact Margot Belanger (President) at 613-692-1575.

TIP OF THE MONTH...



WHAT CLIMATE ZONE ARE WE IN? The question was asked at last month's meeting, and the answers were mixed. The official "Plant Hardiness Zones" map produced by Agriculture Canada (that's part of it on the left) says that Ottawa is in zone 5A. But not everyone agrees with that. Experienced gardeners will tell you it's closer to a 4B, which is colder than 5A. And they're probably right, at least some of the time, because that 5A rating covers a pretty large area, including towns such as Cornwall and Brockville, that benefit from being on the shores of Lake Ontario. The lake has a moderating effect on temperatures – both highs and lows. Technically, we are in the same boat but I'm betting that there are plants that survive in Cornwall but would never make it through an Ottawa winter.

Are you confused yet? You should be, because this whole issue of climate zones is a lot like weather forecasting – more art than science! So for starters let's look at what Agriculture Canada says about its map:

"The Plant Hardiness Zones map outlines the different zones in Canada where various types of trees, shrubs and flowers will most likely survive. It is based on the average climatic conditions of each area. The first such map for North America, released by the United States Department of Agriculture in 1960, was based only on minimum winter temperatures. In 1967, Agriculture Canada scientists created a plant hardiness map using Canadian plant survival data and a wider range of climatic variables, including minimum winter temperatures, length of the frost-free period, summer rainfall, maximum temperatures, snow cover, January rainfall and maximum wind speed.

"Natural Resources Canada's Canadian Forest Service scientists have now updated the plant hardiness zones using the same variables and more recent climate data (1961-1990). They have used modern climate mapping techniques and incorporated the effect of elevation. The new map indicates that there have been changes in the hardiness zones that are generally consistent with what is known about climate change. These changes are most pronounced in western Canada.

"Natural Resources Canada, Canadian Forest Service is now 'Going Beyond the Zones' and trying to develop potential range maps for individual species of trees, shrubs and perennial flowers by collecting species specific information. Check out more about this project at <http://planthardiness.gc.ca/index.pl?&lang=en> and see how you can get involved. Maps for hundreds of individual species are available."

The key phrase there is "the average climatic conditions of each area." The problem is that very few gardens are "average" because most have their own microclimate. A microclimate is nothing more than the climate of a small area, such as your garden, or mine. Microclimates can vary over very short distances due to variations in the site's topography. A simple example: the south side of your garden will receive more direct warming sunlight than the north side. As a result, the snow will have melted there, while in shaded areas it is still on the ground. By the same token, a wall, a tree or even a rock can make a difference to the temperature. Rock, concrete or brick collect heat from the sun during the day and slowly release it at night. Don't get me wrong, it is not going to give you a 10 degree difference, but it can be enough to help tender plants make it through the winter.

So here are a few tips on how to get tender plants through the winter. First, make sure you know how hardy a plant is before you buy it. If you're buying from a nursery, the label should indicate the hardiness zone. If not, ask someone. There's no point in even trying to nurse a zone 10 plant through one of our winters. Buy it if you must, but treat it as an annual! Second, pick a sheltered spot if your plant is "iffy" for this area. Look for one of those "microclimate zones" in your garden to give the plant a fighting chance. And as winter approaches make sure your plant is protected. Hard frost and wind are a plant's worst enemies, a burlap wrap or a covering of mulch can make the difference between survival – or not. Straw or leaves are good too. Also, forget about tidiness and don't cut your plants back in the fall. No one will be interested in "inspecting your garden" when it's 25 below and besides, what is there to see? By leaving whatever is left of the leaves on a plant, you help protect them from the harshest of conditions. And don't forget nature's own winter protection, a cozy coating of snow – a wonderful insulator – does wonders.

Greely Gardeners Group, Executive Committee:

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

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