

The Greenleaf Newsletter

Oshawa Garden Club



January/
February
2025

Contents

President's Message ..	2
Upcoming Meetings and Events:	3
January Zoom Meeting	3
February Zoom Meeting	4
Donations to Settlement House	5
New! Coffee Club Social for OGC members	5
Why Plant Native?	6
Benefits of Volunteering	9
Gardening in All Forms	10
The Joys of Gardening	11

Cover photo (frosty
snapdragon) by Rose
Mary Mason

**Submission deadline
for Mar/Apr
newsletter: Feb 15**



The Oshawa Garden Club (OGC) is an active member of District 17 of the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA)



President's Message

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Wonderful New Year.

The first three months we will be having Zoom meetings. I know there are some people who don't really like meeting on Zoom but Robin has some great speakers lined up, so please join us. And of course, Anne still has prizes to draw. So, snuggle in your PJs and tune in. No need to slide your way to LVIV in snow and ice... We will meet in person in April.

If you want more gardening chat join Michelle (mbenn2369@gmail.com) at her coffee dates at Tim Hortons. The Board has lots of fun stuff planned and the return of some golden oldies like the December pot luck.

Take this as a reminder to contact Anne at 905 243 9166 and renew your membership if you haven't already done so.

Until zoom on January 13, enjoy this magical time of year.

*Jill Snape,
Oshawa Garden Club President*

The Greenleaf Newsletter

Oshawa Garden Club

The Greenleaf is a newsletter of the Oshawa Garden Club.

President:
Jill Snape

Newsletter Editor:
Cecile Willert

**Winter meetings on
Zoom (Jan/Feb/Mar)**

Regular meetings:
38 Lviv Blvd, Oshawa
Doors open at 7:00 pm
Meetings start 7:30 pm

E-mail address:
info@oshawagardenclub.ca

Web address:
oshawagardenclub.ca

Facebook:
"Friends of the
Oshawa Garden Club"



Photo (frosty catmint) by Rose Mary Mason

January Zoom Meeting

Nifty Native Plants
with Sean James

Monday January 13, 2024, 7:30 p.m.

Why do we think that going native means a sacrifice in beauty? It does **not**! We'll discuss various desirable ornamental natives, including some you may not know as native, and their benefits to birds and pollinators. Location suitability will be dealt with, including addressing difficult soils and situations. We may even get into the debate on 'Nativars'! One of the most popular speeches!



Sean James owns 'Sean James Consulting & Design'. Named by Landscape Ontario as 2020 and 2021's Garden Communicator of the Year, gardening has been Sean's passion and profession for over 40 years. A graduate of Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, a Master Gardener, writer and teacher, Sean focuses on eco-gardening techniques. He has spoken at events from the Maritimes to Seattle and landscaped from Switzerland to California. Sean had the honour of being part of creating the new Ontario Landscape Tree Planting Guide, the Grow-Me-Instead guide, the Ontario Horticultural Apprenticeship Curriculum, the national Red Seal Occupational Standard, and the Master Gardeners Reference Manual. He has chaired the Environmental Stewardship Committee for Landscape Ontario and the Environmental Committee for the Perennial Plant Association and been featured on radio and television, including filling in for Paul Zammit occasionally on CBC's 'The Gardening Show'.



Photo (frosty Lambs Ear) by Rose Mary Mason

Upcoming Meetings and Events:

January 13 Zoom meeting: Sean James, *Nifty Native Plants*

February 10 Zoom meeting: Gary Lewis, *Hellebores - Jewels of the Winter and Spring Gardens*

March 10 Zoom meeting: Derissa Vincentini, *Invasive Plants*

April 14 in person at LVIV Hall: Mike Gibbs, *Spring Flower Design Workshop & Presentation*

February Zoom Meeting

Hellebores - Jewels of the Winter and Spring Gardens
with Gary Lewis

Monday February 10, 2024, 7:30 p.m.

Known for his beautiful, information-packed yet accessible talks and his award-winning nursery, Phoenix Perennials, Gary Lewis is a plantsman that will excite and inspire gardeners of all levels and professionals across the green industry. His new encyclopedia, *The Complete Book of Ground Covers*, is a textbook for the temperate gardening world on this most useful and important group of plants.

Hellebores: Jewels of the Winter and Spring Garden - Phoenix Perennials has become famous for its annual Hellebore Hurrah! Weekend each February which draws hundreds of gardeners from around the province and beyond to one of the largest selections of Hellebores offered in North America. In this presentation, you'll learn about the botany, ecology, and distribution of hellebores as well as their history in western gardens and the complex breeding required to arrive at the stunning array of modern forms. Gary will tour you through the best of what's available today and speak to new directions in breeding.

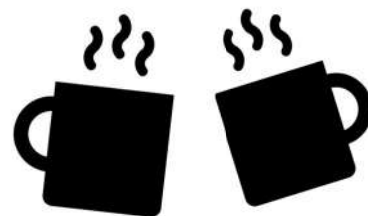


*Gary will be joining us from
Richmond B.C. (one of the
advantages of Zoom meetings!)*

New! Coffee Club Social for OGC members

Article by Michelle Benn

To enhance the socializing and sense of community for our members, the Oshawa Garden Club has started a "Coffee Social Club".



The Coffee Social Club offers a weekly gathering of small groups (up to about 8 people) at a Tim Hortons location from 10 am - noon, and 1 - 3 pm. You can come for the whole 2 hours, or pop in for part of it. For now, meetings will be every week, but if people feel they are getting too busy in the summer months, it can be changed to every other week.

There are currently two meeting times/locations (started Nov 18th):

- Monday morning 10-noon at Tim Hortons Ritson & Adelaide = 251 Ritson Road North, Oshawa; and,
- Tuesday afternoon 1-3 pm at Tim Hortons King & Wilson = 560 King Street East, Oshawa

Additional days/times/locations can be added as the number of people increase.

If the days and times don't work for you, please pass on your preferences to Michelle and she will use this information to suggest an additional gathering.

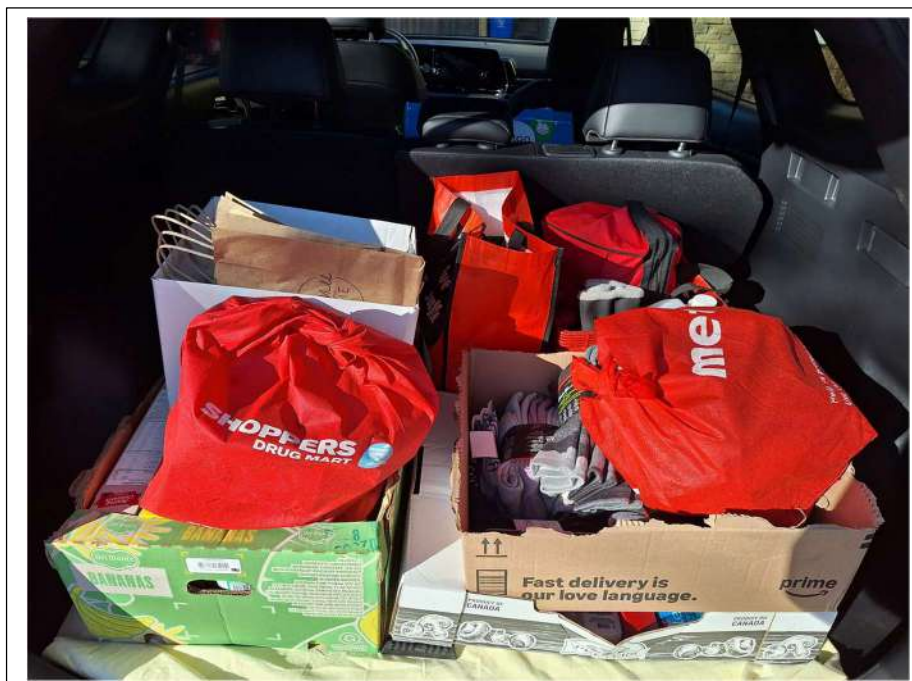
If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns, please don't hesitate to email (mbenn2369@gmail.com).

Looking forward to getting a chance to talk to everyone!

Donations to Simcoe Hall Settlement House

Article by Alison Babin

At our November AGM, we collected items for Simcoe Hall Settlement House. We donated some food, socks, a lot of toiletry items and a cheque for \$275! All of which will be put to good use. Thank you to our members for your generosity!



Why Plant Native?

Article by Alison Babin, photos by Cecile Willert

If something is not eating your plants, your garden is not part of the ecosystem.

Why plant native? Cultivation

Native plants have evolved with certain growing conditions over hundreds (or thousands) of years. This means once established there isn't a lot of effort to maintain them in the ecoregion to which they belong. Thinning out some of the more aggressive ones is all you need to do. You will not need to fertilize them, or water them (except during droughts) once they are established. There is no fall clean-up; leave the leaves for the insects, eggs and pupae that overwinter in leaf litter and stems of the plants. Also, no dead-heading, this provides seeds for next year's growth and feeds the birds during the winter. Overwintering insects in the stems and leaves will emerge in the spring and feed the birds again. Fertilizing native plants may cause them to grow tall and spindly, and flop over. Eventually even weeding is a non-issue as your native plants take over and prevent non-natives from getting established.



Coneflower



Pollinators

Why plant native? Insects and Pollinators

Adult and larval insects will often not eat non-native plants, so without native plants, insect populations decline. Most of our bird species (even seed eaters) supplement their diet with insects. More importantly they raise their young on a diet which consists almost entirely of insects. Research indicates that chickadees cannot successfully fledge a nest of babies unless at least 70 percent of the plants within its territory are native species. Doug Tallamy reported on a study showing it takes between 6000 to 9000 caterpillars to fledge a single clutch of baby chickadees! There has been a huge decline in recent years of bird numbers in North America, in part due to the disappearance of native plants necessary for the insects they feed on. Caterpillars are soft bags of food, unlike crunchy beetles, and they are significantly larger than aphids - it takes 200 aphids to equal the weight of 1 medium caterpillar. And caterpillars are more nutritious than most other insects. They are high in protein and fats and are a great source of healthy carotenoids which stimulate immune systems, improve colour vision and sperm vitality and are antioxidants that protect proteins and DNA from damage. They are also a major component of colourful feather pigments (think flamingos, they get their pink-orange colour from the tiny crustaceans they eat). Most of North America's terrestrial bird species (96%) rear their young on insects, most of those are caterpillars or adult moths. And without caterpillars feeding on our native plants, we won't have butterflies or moths either.

Why Plant Native? (continued)

Why plant native? Insects and Pollinators

There are around 400 species of bees in Ontario; 16 are species of bumblebees. European honey bees are non-native. Most of our native bees are solitary and live in the ground or in plant stems. Most bees are not important prey species in food webs; they are pollinators. And then there are all the flies, beetles, bats (8 species, 7 are endangered), butterflies and moths that act as pollinators. Insects pollinate 87.5% of all plants, and 90% of all flowering plants. They are also the primary way that food created by plants is delivered to animals, they provide protein and fat that feed vertebrates. They also provide pest control in the form of predators and parasitoids that keep food webs balanced. They decompose dead plants which releases nutrients back to the soil for more plant growth. And by maintaining plant communities they help maintain the watersheds we depend on. This keeps our water clean, and minimizes the frequency and severity of floods. Plants sequester enormous amounts of carbon in their bodies and within the soil around their roots. Mostly insects are harmless and beneficial, though there are some that bite and sting.



Pollinators



Swamp milkweed



Spotted Joe-Pyeweed

How to plant native: Keystone Species

These are species that are food for most of the butterflies and moths that feed the food webs. Native plants are far superior to introduced species in their ability to sustain caterpillars. Oaks (*Quercus*), Cherry (*Prunus*) and Willow (*Salix*) each host hundreds of species of caterpillars. Some fall keystone species for bees include asters and goldenrods. They are both late summer - fall bloomers, providing important nectar and pollen when the summer plants have finished flowering. The goldenrod has an ideal pithy stem for nesting sites for mason bees, carpenter bees and small resin bees. If the larva develops early in the summer, the young adult will emerge by chewing a hole to the outside. If the larva matures at the end of the season, it will stay in the stem all winter, complete its development early in the spring and emerge as an adult as soon as flowering plants are in bloom. Then there are the woody stem nesters who use soft wood (dead or decaying wood, branches or logs in your garden). Other species choose existing cavities for their nests. And don't forget night flowering plant species, for the nocturnal feeders like bats and moths. There are specialist and generalist pollinators. Specialist bees can only feed on pollen from specific plants (though they may take nectar from several), for example squash bees. These emerge from their nest when the flowers come out. No flowers mean no food. Generalists can use pollen from many types of plants. Plant for the specialists, and the generalists will come. If you want the specialists that only feed on goldenrod, or those that need asters, or evening primrose, then you need those plants. The generalists can feed on them as well, like adult monarchs. However, if you only have milkweed that the monarch larvae need you will not be feeding the specialists that need those other plants.

Why Plant Native? (continued)

How to Plant Native: Why not just let nature take its course?

Plants are moving around the planet, surely it is inevitable that the insects and those that eat them will learn to adapt. Here are two examples why we need to maintain native plant populations and try to eradicate invasive non-natives. After moving to north America 500 years ago, the non-native and invasive phragmites (*P. australis*) supports only 3% of the number of insects it supports in its native land. And it aggressively outcompetes the native species of phragmites. So no, native insects do not necessarily adapt to “new” plants quickly. And non-native plants bring with them their own diseases, and pests. The Tree-of-Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) (which is restricted under the Invasive Species Act 2015 in Ontario) was introduced in the 1700s from China as an ornamental tree. It is fast growing, and spreads quickly. It also changes the soil chemistry to stop competition from other plants by killing them. And it is a host species to the spotted lanternfly. This pretty winged insect is a sap sucker. As adults they particularly like Tree of Heaven, as nymphs they will feed on a wide range of hardwood and fruit trees, and swarms seem to especially like grapevine. They have not yet been spotted in Ontario but are present in Buffalo and Pennsylvania. The US is having to invest heavily in mitigation efforts for the spotted lanternfly as it will take a heavy toll in the horticulture, tender fruit and grape product industries.



Cardinal Flower



Mixed woodland garden with native ferns

How to plant native: Conclusion

All of this does not mean you can't keep your beautiful non-native plants (as long as they are not on the invasive list). Just plant some native ones to go along with your established garden. An unofficial rule of thumb is to aim for 70% native, 30% non-native. But even just adding in a few native plants will make a big difference. So, build your beautiful garden and take the time to get outside and enjoy it along with all the wildlife it supports!

Benefits of Volunteering

Article and photos by Rose Mary Mason

I was tasked with collecting volunteer hours for the club this year. OGC members have provided over 4,200 volunteer hours in 2024! These hours are part of the criteria to receive grants.

There were community events, such as the Peony Festival, fundraisers like the Plant Sale, community garden projects including Hearth Place, Parkwood, Giving Gardens and St. Anne's School. There were hours logged from our bakers, tech team, flower shows, garden tours, newsletter, website, Facebook as well as board and membership meetings.

Some opportunities require a couple of hours a month, or a couple hours a week, or an intense period of planning leading to the completion of an event. Some could be done sitting at a computer and others involve getting down in the dirt. There are leadership as well as team member roles. There are many opportunities throughout the year to help the club and the greater community.

Many studies have been conducted on the benefits of volunteering. They range from a sense of pride, satisfaction and achievement to improved physical and mental health. Volunteering improves our community, allows us to develop new skills, utilize our talents or make new friends and connections.

Volunteering reduces stress and depression; the act itself is low stress and flexible. Your self-confidence can be boosted, you can choose to exercise your mind, your body or both. Studies show that volunteers are less likely to develop high blood pressure and more likely to live a longer life.

And it's fun being around others with a common goal, preferably out in the fresh air, creating joy in knowing you are helping others. As the new year starts, think about how and why you might volunteer and watch for those sign-up sheets in the spring!

If you have any questions about volunteering with your club, please contact:

Rose Mary Mason

Rmmason@sympatico.ca



Peony festival volunteers - Patti Becker, Ann Couch, Catherine Hilge



Tech team volunteers - Patti Becker, Bob Kerr, Merle Cole, Denise Duggan

Submission Deadline for March/April Newsletter: February 15th.

Gardening in All Forms

Introduction by Rose Mary Mason, story by Debi Foster

At the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA) 115th Convention held this July in Guelph, there were Creative Writing, Photography, Arts and Flower Competitions. Our Past President and current Director of D17, Debi Foster, entered and won ribbons in all!

When asked what inspired her to enter her artworks into the OHA show, Debi replied that she wanted to contribute to the show and to challenge herself. Her competitive nature (competing against her past wins) was also a factor. Her love of writing, painting, photography and gardening shine through her entries.

Debi's keen eye for shapes, textures, composition and lighting are evident in her photographs. Working only with a few words for inspiration Debi submitted the following photos:

(Class 3) Shapes in Nature, Black and White

(Class 4) Tears of Joy - 2nd place

(Class 5) The Heartland, a Rural Landscape - 3rd place

(Class 7) Frosty Morning - 2nd place

(Class 8) He Shed She Shed, a Garden Shed

In the creative writing department, the following narrative with the theme of "The joys of gardening", won 2nd place!



(Class 4) Tears of Joy - 2nd place, by Debi Foster



(Class 3) Shapes in Nature, Black and White, by Debi Foster



(Class 7) Frosty Morning - 2nd place, by Debi Foster



(Class 5) The Heartland, a Rural Landscape - 3rd place, by Debi Foster



(Class 8) He Shed She Shed, a Garden Shed, by Debi Foster

The Joys of Gardening

A short story by Debi Foster

There was just a hint of winter in the light breeze. Pussy willow puffs decorated the branches of a *Salix* by the stream. A chickadee flit-flap-flitted from one echinacea seed head to another in hope it might find a hidden morsel. In the sunny corner of the garden, the red tinged rhubarb leaf fringes had just started to emerge. Droplets glistened as they slipped from the dwindling pile of snow into the upright green tendrils. Beckoned by the warmth of the sun, through the layer of decomposing litter, the small green shoots provided us just a hint of what might be yet to come.

Hidden in the shade, the spring ephemerals were peeking out. It was like a fairy kingdom. We gazed at the regal trilliums and the delicate bloodroot blossoms curled up in their leaves, like dainty ladies with shawls to protect them from the cool breeze. The Canada anemones danced gently. We laughed at the pixies' pantaloons hanging along the stems of the *Dicentra cucullaria*. Reverend Jack stood in his pulpit awaiting the arrival of his congregants while the Solomon's Seal bells called the sprites together. The *fothergilla*'s ivory blooms resembled tiny bottle brushes and the small white blossoms on the serviceberry lit up the edge of the garden. The Virginia bluebells nodded along to a tune all their own. Splotches of colour popped up above the verdant foliage and exploded into full bloom, exuding the heady scents of hyacinth and narcissus.

Seemingly, out of nowhere, interesting insects appeared, attracted by the flush of flowers. Some crept, others leapt and then there were the bees! All sizes and shapes, bees frantically buzzed and zubbbed from blossom to blossom, globs of pollen on their legs. They zigged and zagged towards an unknown goal line. Robins hopped among the blooms, cocked their heads, and listened for worms. Occasionally they reached down, pecked once or twice and popped a worm out of the rich



Bleeding heart (*Dicentra*), by Rose Mary Mason



Soloman's Seal, by Rose Mary Mason

The Joys of Gardening (continued)

loam. We watched the ebb and flow of activity from the stone pathway as we made our way to the compost pile to deposit the weeds we had pulled.

Neat squares of feathery carrot tops, glossy green chard and ruffled red lettuce filling the raised vegetable bed whispered back and forth in the gentle wafts of summer air. The branches of the tomato plants bowed down with their heavy burdens. The plump pea pods and beans begged to be picked. A hummingbird hovered by the scarlet runner bean vines flirting with the vermillion flowers. Beyond the veggies, a butterfly floated over the drifts of echinacea, monarda and spikes of *liatris* as they billowed back and forth. We sat quietly in the generous shade of the oak and enjoyed cool lemonade while gnawing on carrots just pulled from the garden.

Swatches of yellow, orange and red spread across the landscape. The scattered clumps of golden rod with pink, purple and cerise asters added depth to the fields behind the house. Most the tender vegetables had been harvested, eaten or shared with the community. The ripe tomatoes and herbs had simmered into sauce, while a few green tomatoes remained on the counter to ripen at their leisure.

Honking vees of geese flew south throughout the day. We basked in the warm glow of the late afternoon and talked about the funny faces we would carve into the pumpkins at Hallowe'en. A minute of silence passed and a small hand reached over to hold mine.

"Nana, I love gardening with you!" was all she said.



Lettuce, by Rose Mary Mason