



the gardener

February 2017

P.O. Box 21032, Stratford, ON, N5A 7V4
<http://www.gardenontario.org/site.php/stratford>

There is hope – Spring is coming!

Snowdrops, Feb. 20, 2017
 Photo by Doug Reberg



Pulmonaria, Feb. 19, 2017
 Photo by Bruce Wilkinson



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President's Message

Mike Matthews

The board has started a project to document what we are doing and how it is being done. A job description is being developed where there is a specific role for an individual such as president, treasurer, secretary, board member, newsletter editor, web master etc. This job description includes the purpose of the position, key duties and responsibilities, authority, accountability and the skill, knowledge and experience required for the position and in some cases the term of office. These job descriptions are based on what the role should do, not necessarily what person currently in the position does. Terms of reference is being written for committees which include most of the information in a job description plus the committee composition and is based on input from the individuals in these positions. The job descriptions and terms of reference are expected to require only occasional changes.

We are also creating "How To" documents that contain the details of how the current person/committee operates and with specific time lines and task details. It also identifies connectors between other roles and committees. The detail of this document is written such that someone with the required skill, knowledge and experience would be able to fill the position successfully. The content of this document is owned by the person/committee and they have the authority to change it as required to reflect their current process.

As we are going through this exercise we will have to establish policies that help us stay true to our purpose as an organization and to ensure we are satisfying the requirements of government agencies and the Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA).

By now some of you may be asking "Why bother with all this, we are just a volunteer organization". This is true but from an administration point of view we are a small company. We have member volunteers (employees), members, the city and the community at large (customers), District 10 & OHA (corporate) and we have to comply with government regulations and reporting schedules. Of the 4,137 volunteer hours reported last year 1,162 or 28% were for administrative activity.

When we are finished everyone will know who to contact for required information, reporting schedules will be easier and faster to assemble and each activity will have a connection to the board through an assigned board member. This will ensure that the board stays up to date and is available to provide timely support when requested. Prospective candidates will be able to see exactly what is expected of the position and how it's currently accomplished.

Succession planning is the thing that keeps me awake at night as most of our positions do not have an identified successor. I have committed to be president through to the end of 2018 so we will have to identify a vice president to fill the position this fall. In the fall of 2018 we will have to fill the vice president's position again. We currently have 1 person who has been on the board for 17 years, 2 at 15 years, 2 at 11 years, 3 at 5 years, 1 at 2 years and 2 new this year. A nominating committee has been formed now so that we have sufficient time to produce a full slate of candidates in the fall. We will be able to use the skill, knowledge and experience required for open positions to identify candidates suitable for the positions.

We will keep you informed as we proceed.



Watercolour, by Allan Murray

SDHS Upcoming Meeting Presentations

February

Getting Started in Bonsai by Robert Trout (*see related article later in newsletter*)

Master Gardeners' Chat: Integrated Pest Management

March

Tropical Fruit grown in Canada by Terry Brook, Canada Banana

Master Gardeners' Chat: Getting Started in the Garden

April

Gardening from a Hammock by Dan Cooper

Master Gardeners' Chat: Xeriscaping

A Drought Tolerant Beauty

Nancy Burnett

One joy of gardening is the discovery of a new plant. Last summer while searching for some portulaca to edge a sidewalk at Churchill Circle, I was introduced to Ornamental Purslane. My previous acquaintance with Purslane was as a weed we removed from our herb and vegetable beds. Ornamental Purslane is a member of the Portulacaceae family as is the better known Portulaca, commonly known as Moss Rose. They share drought tolerance, bright coloured blooms, and succulent leaves. Unlike its better known cousin, the flowers of Ornamental Purslane are single and the leaves are flat and round rather than needle-like. It really thrived in the hot dry weather we had last summer providing a mat of colour and limiting the opportunity for weeds to compete.

As we ponder and plan for our gardens in 2017, it is always fun to make new acquaintances. Consider sharing your new garden discoveries in the next newsletter.



Portulaca 'Happy Hour' mix (top) and ornamental purslane (bottom) in a pot near our sunny and hot driveway. The purslane does better. Photo by Anu MacIntosh-Murray

SDHS February Meeting: Robert Traut on “Growing Bonsai”

Doug Reberg

(Ed. This is a portion of an article written by Doug for the Stratford Gazette; it is his second such piece about the Society.)

Translated from Japanese, bonsai means “tree planting,” but I think most of us would associate it with container-grown miniature trees that can be amazing replicas of full-size versions. I had long thought of bonsai as an art form that I, at least, would find very challenging. However, local bonsai grower Robert Traut has nearly persuaded me that it might be within my grasp.

Robert’s interest has a long history. He remembers first attempting to grow trees in pots at the age of nine, starting with maple seedlings. For most gardeners, maple seedlings are inconveniences when they pop up unexpectedly in vegetable and flower gardens, but nine-year-old Robert saw them as an opportunity, and his bonsai career was launched. His parents encouraged his early efforts, although he also recalls an early effort to use grapefruit shells as containers that was cut short by an infestation of fruit flies. Undaunted, Robert continued to grow miniature trees and his interest continues as it involves three of his major interests: horticulture, design and artistry.



Public domain picture from Pixabay

Robert tends to select hardy varieties, such as juniper and maple, for bonsai growing. He usually grows them outdoors and, as he describes it, “They tough it out in winter like any other tree.” He removes them from pots in the fall and temporarily plants them to overwinter as space becomes available in his vegetable garden. In the spring, he lifts the trees, repots them after pruning, and the cycle continues.

If this sounds interesting, let me call your attention to the next meeting of the Stratford and District Horticultural Society on Monday, February 27, where Robert will be the featured speaker. Society meetings are held at Griffith Auditorium which is part of the Spruce Lodge Complex. If you arrive at 6:30, you will be able to join Master Gardeners’ informal and informative Garden Chat on Integrated Pest Management. A brief business meeting will begin at 7:30, followed by Robert’s presentation. He promises to bring examples, photographs, and ample opportunity for questions.

SDHS Public Gardens – The Iris Garden

Marg O'Reilly

Our core committee of five, Virginia Macdonald, Steven and Doreen Zurbrigg, Cobe Giroux and Marg O'Reilly, plus many other volunteers have worked hard last spring, summer and fall to build a new Iris Garden on McLagan Drive. Several factors, including infestation of Iris Borer, shady low lying location and crowding of the Iris plants necessitated the move. We have dedicated at least 660 volunteer hours to this project.

We have chosen a beautiful Iris, hybridized by Bob Granatier, which we named Believe in Tomorrow. It will be introduced in 2018 to mark the 140th Anniversary of the Stratford and District Horticulture Society, pending approval by the American Iris Society.

The area (2204 sq. Ft.) was outlined following the design prepared by Ann Granatier of Trail's End iris. Like many things in life we were presented with a few hurdles. The sod removal presented a challenge because of the dry conditions and the area was rototilled several times. We encountered many stones, even asphalt and of course lots of weeds.

Our next steps were to spread several inches of topsoil over the area, move the monument stone and outline the public and maintenance paths. We then had the armour stone placed for sitting areas at each end and in the middle of the garden. While we greatly appreciated the loan of a tractor to spread the topsoil the loss of one wheel caused some chagrin just as we were about to complete the task.

We were excited to begin planting the Iris purchased from Trail's End and completed the first phase at a Seminar conducted by Ann and Bob with 13 attendees on August 22nd. We planted several varieties of Iris in order to prolong the blooming season from late April to mid-July. The Iris salvaged from the previous bed were planted on September 7th.

We have added auxiliary perennials, sedum and grasses, and will complete this planting in the spring of 2017 when we will add lavender. These plants are designed to provide interest when the Iris finish blooming each year.

In spite of the challenges presented by this project it has been an educational and gratifying experience to work with such dedicated and patient volunteers, hardworking mentors and helpful city workers to provide an inviting public space that we trust people will enjoy for years to come.



An iris from 2016 bed. MM



Another iris from last year. MM

SDHS Public Gardens: The Queensland Beds

Darlene Irwin

The landscaped area to the front and left of the Stratford and District Christian School on Queensland Road is usually referred to as the Hort Society's Queensland bed. More accurately, there are two distinct but linked beds, designed at different times by different people.

The front bed with curved path and bench was established for the Society's 125th anniversary in 2003. The background bed was created as a memorial to past president Bonnie Richardson. It was designed and implemented by Greenbelt Farms with funds donated by Bonnie's family and friends. Plantings here are now mature and include native trees and shrubs, as well as perennials.

The "125th" bed was designed with water conservation in mind. After all, the area was a clay field in full sun – a challenge! Choosing native and non-native plants with a reputation for drought tolerance was the start. Sixty-one varieties of plants, including trees and shrubs were planted. Many, both native and non-native did not survive, but there are some lovely plants that continue to delight after 14 years. For example, *Exochorda x macrantha* 'The Bride' (pearl bush) is beautiful in early summer; and *Penstemon digitalis*, or smooth white penstemon, spreads in a pleasing, easily controlled way. *Ligustrum x vicaryi* or Golden Vicary Privet is a showy and compact beauty.

After taking notes on the garden last year, this year I hope we can double up on the success stories while continuing to experiment with new drought tolerant plants. Our successes should provide valuable reference to any Stratford gardener.



Golden Vicary Privet
Source: Wikipedia Commons

Ad or Subtract – Facts about SDHS Advertising

Glen Querengesser – Treasurer

Businesses and companies alike struggle with the question of how much money to spend on advertising. Similarly, the Horticultural Board often questions the amount of money spent on advertising.

Our 2017 budget has \$1,500 of the \$25,000 total budget set aside for advertising purposes. As a member of our organization, you should have some knowledge of where our money goes.

A few years ago, most of our dollars went to the local newspaper to advertise our meetings and inform the community of our events. With the change in advertising venues, we no longer do that but depend on the internet and brochures to get our message to the community.

Presently, here is where some of our allocated dollars go each year.

- We want to promote gardening among our youth, so each year we donate \$200 to the Stratford & District Agricultural Society to use as prize money at the fall fair for youth who exhibit flowers at the Stratford Fall Fair.
- We support the Stratford Library and the United Way Office by decorating the urns in the front of their builds twice yearly. We are fortunate to have a volunteer, Bub Kelly, who does the decorating of the urns free of charge. She is allowed to spend up to \$250 on plant material.
- We support the Royal Botanical Gardens by taking a membership which costs \$150 each year. We get a benefit from that contribution because it allows us some free passes for members to visit if they so wish.
- The last two years the Hort. Board have held their board meeting in the board room at Romeo Court for no cost. As a result, we donate \$100 to their planters at the front of the building each spring as honorarium to them and advertising to us.
- As well, we have been advertising our Society at the mall the last few years through a display for Green Week. Costs for that display do not exceed \$100.
- We do still purchase a display ad in the Huron-Perth Garden Tour magazine. That costs us \$50 each year.
- In 2016, we placed a float in the Stratford Canada Day parade for the first time. While to date we have not considered that as advertising, perhaps it does fall into the same category and we budgeted \$500 for the 2016 float. Dennis Rawe spearheaded this activity in 2016; he will be doing it again in 2017.



A small portion of our 2016 float. MM

We can only hope that as your Board we are exhibiting good stewardship in spending this money each year. But if you have ideas as to how we should do things differently, we'd be pleased to hear from you.

SDHS Plant Sale

Maureen Cocksedge

Saturday, May 27 at The Local, 8 am to 2 pm

Volunteers are always welcome the day of the Plant Sale. If you can only come for an hour or two, that's great, the more the merrier.

Stay tuned for more information in the May Newsletter and at our General Meetings

Plant Sale!



Member Grown Plants

Perennials
Annuals Herbs
Pollinator plants



STEP INTO SPRING AT THE GARDEN FESTIVAL

Thursday, March 2nd to Sunday, March 5th, 2017

Rotary Complex – A Fundraiser for The Lung Association

Once again our Society will have a beautiful display located inside the main entrance to the right. Also featured are many display gardens, presentations, marketplace and much more.

For many years The Lung Association has given us a free space so to show our appreciation do try and attend this great event.

More information: Mary (519) 271-2246
or stratfordgardenfestival.com

Co-Chairs: Ryan Bedford, Mary Hoffman

Did you get to Seedy Sunday?

Dorothy VE in the foreground at the SDHS table; Don Farwell in the background at the Master Gardeners table.



Photo by Nancy Burnett

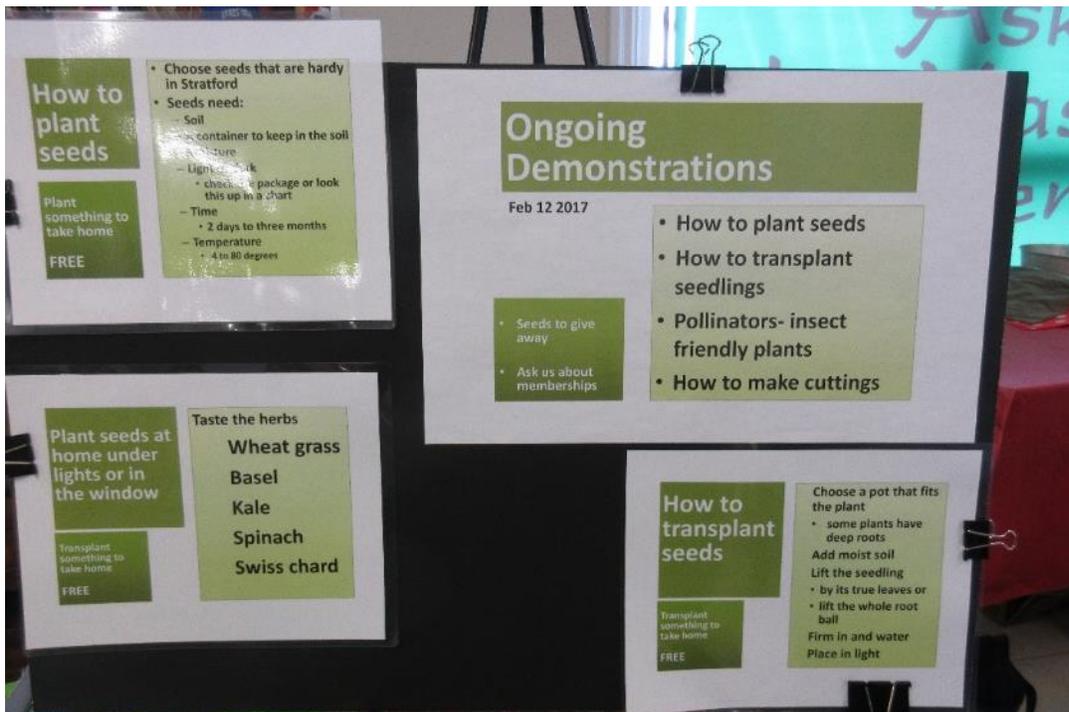


Photo by Michael Murray

Plant Rescue Team

Maureen Cocksedge

We have an active Plant Rescue team and always welcome new participants.

What we do

When a member of the public offers an overgrown garden, we will go identify, lift and divide plants. Sometimes a garden is to be demolished because of construction; other times new owners move in and don't know what they have. .. or perhaps the owner plans to move out and wants special plants preserved.

What happens to the plants?

Some plants are moved into the public gardens; some are donated to charity or group homes; others are potted up for the Spring Plant Sale.

Last spring and this spring

Last year, we were fortunate to receive numerous mature peonies, bulbs, iris, grasses and hostas; most of these were sold at the plant sale. This year, three gardens have already been offered to us, so we will have 2 digs in each of April, May. Digs generally take 1-2 hours and there are usually four to six members who pitch in each time. We are always looking for more members to care for the lifted pots until the Plant Sale Day. In addition, this fall, we will be collecting seeds from public and private gardens.

To join the team, fill in an interest survey, available at every meeting or call 226 921 0885 - Maureen

Seedy Sowers

Maureen Cocksedge

Every spring, a number of members start perennial and annual seeds, then have more seedlings than they can use. They give away the extra seedlings.

They pass information to interested persons by email. The person who wants some seedlings arranges to pick them up. The receiver brings dirt and pots to the givers' home and transplants the seedlings at a convenient time for both parties. Currently on offer are perennials: Campanula (3 kinds), Veronica (2 varieties), Digitalis (white). Also available are scented geranium cuttings. To join the seedy sowers, fill in an interest survey, available at every meeting or call 226 921 0885 -Maureen

Two emails from Mary Gouker – Do you feel envy? Or what?

February 1st

With regard to my membership for 2017--- I moved back to Oklahoma to be closer to my children & grandchildren. I miss you-all (southern version of you) very much & am busy planning my southern garden which I could start mid Feb. Yesterday it was 75 here, but that comes and goes.

February 17th

I am planning my new garden. Since I have limited space here I am planning to attempt a raised bed. Wish me luck. My spring bulbs are coming up as is my garlic.

We had 1 day in the mid 80's last weekend but mostly it is in the low to mid 70's and 40 at night. I have cabbage plants & sweet Vidalia onions ready to plant among the daffodils to save space,

Pretty good for mid Feb.

Have we seen the last of these days this winter? Don't bet on it!



Photo by Bruce Wilkinson

Garden Tools, Part 1

Denis Rawe

I was invited to talk to a group of gardeners on the use and taking care of hand tools, probably because I have spent some years earning my keep working in a variety of gardens. The spade comes first although the most frequently used tool was the hoe. The hoe depends upon a good topsoil condition to develop a tilth whereas the spade prepares the land for growing.

Spadework

The hardest work comes with 'double digging', usually for a new vegetable or flower bed. Double digging is where the topsoil of the first dug rows is set aside so that the second depth can be removed and good manure placed in the bottom. As the second depth is turned and placed on the manure it is broken up, this is hard work that requires a system. The spade needs to be sharp for this job and the tougher the soil is the thinner the slices cut and turned. If the grass and weeds are not too long they are turned in - upside down to decompose. By setting aside the top layer the good soil is not lost, the bed is aerated and well drained.

Raking

Once the entire bed is dug over and the larger lumps broken up the rake is used to level the bed and further break up the smaller lumps. At this stage the bed may be 'shaped' or mounded so that the roots of plants have a chance to be above the water level after a deluge, that is, the root area drains quickly. The actual planting strip can be raked into a fine tilth now. The soil is ready for planting when a hand full doesn't form a ball, again depending on the soil. If seeds are to be directly sown the rake is used to give an even finer tilth and to groove the bed.

Hoeing

It takes several seasons of working the land, adding dressings of humus, before a good workable bed is achieved. In the meantime the ground can easily form a crust hard after a good rain. This is where the hoe comes into use. The hoe is used mainly to topple weeds without disturbing the ground too much, just enough separate the weed from its root, for this reason the hoe too must be sharp. The movement of the hoe breaks up the soil surface enabling the essential movement of air and water. Note that as the roots develop so too will the micro-organisms and other soil dwellers so shallow hoe work is needed.



*Tools that could use some attention.
Photo by Anu MacIntosh-Murray*

NEXT ISSUE: Edging, Sharpening, and Points to keep in mind when buying tools.

Gardening Workshops at The Local

The Local will be offering FREE gardening workshops for seniors (55+) every Wednesday morning during the month of March. Anyone who is interested in joining a workshop can contact Katie McLeod, Garden & Greenhouse Coordinator at katiemcleod@thelocalcfc.org or (519) 508-3663 ext. 1 to register. Workshops take place in the Greenhouse at The Local Community Food Centre from 9:00 – 10:30 am. Participants are welcomed to stay after the workshop to enjoy our Seniors Lunch.



Date	Topic & Presenter(s)
Wednesday, March 1	Growing Root Vegetables with Greg Nafziger of Perth County Roots
Wednesday, March 8	Growing Native Plants with Graham Buck of Nith River Plants
Wednesday, March 15	Community Gardens in Stratford with Bob Currah, Bruce Jackson & Andy Van Wijk
Wednesday, March 22	Working with Seedlings with Sophia Bonnie Wodin
Wednesday, March 29	Community Gardening in Cambridge with Siobhan Bonisteel of the Preston Community Garden & Seed Bank

2017 Membership Renewal Reminder

It is time to renew your yearly memberships if you haven't already. The fee remains the same at \$15.00. Discounts at 9 local merchants. Memberships can be purchased at General Meetings, at Flowers on York and Stratford Blooms, or by Mail. Cheques payable to: SDHS c/o P.O. Box 21032, Stratford, N5A 7V4. Memberships are a great extra gift for family and friends.

Mary Hoffman / Membership Convenor / 519-271-2246 / email: marihoffman@cyg.net

Memberships available at Two Locations

FLOWERS ON YORK, 25-27 York St.

Hours: Mon. to Sat. 9am-5pm

STRATFORD BLOOMS, 52 Albert St. NEW

Hours: Mon. to Fri. 9am-5pm

Sat. 10am-5pm

Please renew your membership; your support is appreciated!

Newsletter Notes

- **The next newsletter is will be published just before the May 2017 meeting.** Please send me anything you think would add to it...especially pictures (current or past), articles of interest to our members, plans for our gardens, announcements, requests, etc. The addition of content from you will help us reach the newsletter as being "about us, for us, by us".
- You can reach me, Michael Murray, at the *newsletter's* email address: SDHSthegardener@gmail.com Or by phone: 519-271-3937. Or talk to me at any of our meetings.

Social Media



Find us on
Facebook

Please visit the Society's Facebook page and 'like' us!



Stratford and District Horticultural Society - INVITATION

There are many opportunities to **get involved** by volunteering with your Society. Please check areas of interest to you. Please ... print this page and hand it in at a General Meeting / fill one out at the meeting / email sdhs1878@outlook.com

Help at Events

- Seedy Sunday, Feb 12– staff display
- Stratford Garden Festival, March 2017, staff the display
- Green Week -Display at mall - April
- Plant Sale May 26/ 27
- Garden Tour - July
- Canada Day Parade
- Any

Meetings

- Organize Plant of the Month or
- Door prizes
- Hospitality / AGM
- Welcoming
- Display board
- Program / Publicity

Join an Interest Group

- Floral Design Interest Group
- Plant Rescue team

Behind the Scenes

- Membership
- Education / Workshop Planning
- Facebook Administration
- Website administration
- Newsletter
- Put up posters

Public Gardening

Do you have information or expertise you would like to offer?

What workshops / trips would you like to have?

What topics / speakers would you like at regular meetings?

Can you recommend any speakers? Please give contact details

Do you need a ride to meetings? **If Yes, please give your address:**

Can you offer a ride to meetings? **If Yes, please give your Address:**

Any other suggestions?

Name: _____ **Phone** _____

Email _____

Thank you for taking the time to help us learn more about member wants and needs.