

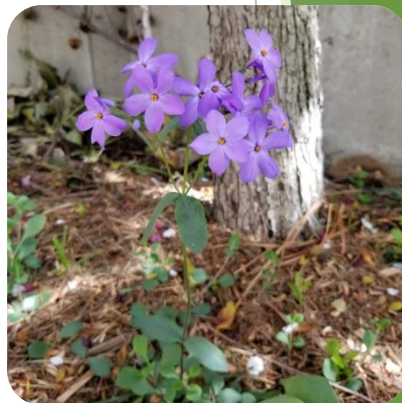
Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



June Garden To Do List

- ❑ **Direct sow** warm season veggies like corn, beans, cukes and squash & flowering annuals like nasturtium, cosmos etc.
- ❑ **Spring Bulbs** - Cut flower stems of tulips/daffodils etc & allow leaves to grow, returning energy to the bulb. Lift, divide & replant spring bulbs if flowers were absent or very small & other bulbs if they are too crowded.
- ❑ **Houseplants** - Gradually bring outside for a 'holiday' to a shady protected area, then move to suitable sun or shade location as needed.
- ❑ **Compost**- Use compost to mulch garden beds and trees. Turn your compost pile and water if dry. Read more about composting [at this link](#).
- ❑ **Lawn** - Feed soil with compost or organic fertilizer. Mow high-3"/7.5 cm. Pull weeds on a weekly basis. For more information on healthy lawns [see this link](#).
- ❑ **Perennials** - Stake & support peonies, delphiniums and other tall plants.
- ❑ **Prune** -spring flowering shrubs after they have bloomed if necessary. Overgrown shrubs may benefit from [rejuvenation](#).
- ❑ **Roses** - Prune laterals of climbing roses to 6-8" after blooming to keep them flowering. Here's a great video on [how to do it!](#)
- ❑ **Veggies** - Stake or cage vegetables like tomatoes and beans as needed. Mound potatoes to maximize production & protect tubers from sun exposure.
- ❑ **Water** - newly planted trees & plants regularly; lawn & existing trees less frequently, but deeply. Potted plants will need more frequent watering. Use soaker hoses for [water wise gardening](#).
- ❑ Remove invasive plants such as [goutweed](#), [periwinkle](#) and [English Ivy](#) and replace with beautiful [native groundcovers](#).
- ❑ **Squash bugs** -all you need is duct tape & [this cool video!](#)
- ❑ **Aphids** -plant Bachelor Buttons or Alyssum near problem plants to attract [hover flies](#) which are basically aphid assassins!
- ❑ **Japanese Beetles** - appear in June. Take necessary steps for control: hand pick, knock into a bucket of soapy water, or use a hand vacuum to suck them up!
- ❑ **Gypsy Moth** - Wrap tree trunks with burlap bands or sticky bands in early June to trap the older gypsy moth caterpillar as it treks from the canopy to hiding places on the ground. Remove trapped caterpillars daily. Watch this [cool video](#) to see how it's done!
- ❑ **Remember** that not all 'bugs' are pests. Most bugs eat other bugs & birds need insects to [feed their young](#). Many plants can survive minor infestations of insects, so avoid reaching for sprays which kill the [beneficial insects](#) that keep your garden in balance.



Phlox stolonifera is an excellent alternative to invasive periwinkle.
Photo: C. Sims

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Pretty Punny Gardening!

"I hope thistle cheer you up."
"I need some peas and quiet."
"Everybody, romaine calm. This is not a dill."
"Time to turnip the page."



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Spotlight on Beneficial Insects

Fireflies / Lightning Bugs (Coleoptera: Lampyridae)

Hariette Henry - Halton Master Gardener

According to a study published in the Canadian Journal of Arthropod Identification (U of Guelph, 2011), Stephen Luk the main researcher, has identified 23 species of fireflies native to Ontario. A lot of research is still being done on this group of insects, including identifying new species. It can be difficult to study fireflies as they are active only after twilight. During the day they are thought to be resting on trees or on tall grasses. Their active season in North America runs from late May to early July.



Image: Guelph Today

Fireflies typically live in the warmer regions of the province, near woodlands and wet areas. In the larval stage, fireflies feed on snails, slugs, worms and other soft-bodied insects. Researchers believe that adult fireflies eat pollen and/or nectar and are therefore pollinators.

How do these insects achieve the fire they are so well known for? The insects take in oxygen and, inside special cells, combine it with a substance called luciferin to produce light with almost no heat. They use these flashes of light to communicate and attract a mate. It is believed that most, if not all, species have their own flash pattern. Some females of some species are known to mimic the pattern of other

firefly species in order to lure males in and then eat them.

Understanding how fireflies make light and researching the chemical components of luciferin enabled scientists to recreate this naturally occurring luminescence in products useful to humans such as "Luminol" used by forensic scientists to solve crimes and "Glowsticks", originally developed by the US Navy in the early sixties as float lights for men overboard.



Pyrractomena borealis larva
Image:- Stephen Luk Pbase.com



Some Light Humour!

- Q. Why did the spider eat the firefly?
A. It wanted a "light" snack.
- Q. Why was Momma Firefly so sad?
A. The children were not very bright.
- Q. Why was the firefly arrested?
A. For flashing in public.



Photinus obscurellus adult
Image - Stephen Luk Pbase.com



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Fireflies Need Your Help!

Fireflies are beneficial insects. Their larvae hunt snails, slugs, earthworms and other insect pests at night. Firefly population is declining, and the main issues appear to be loss of habitat, pesticide use and light pollution. You can help!

1. Grow the perimeter of your yard wild- taller grasses provide firefly habitat during the day
2. Create a water feature- moisture is important during mating season, they thrive around standing water
3. Turn the porch and yard lights out to minimize light pollution.
4. Plant native trees such as pines- they provide blackout light so as not to interfere with mating. Needle drop is also an ideal environment for larvae
5. Avoid pesticides, especially lawn chemicals (including nematodes)-these can kill firefly larvae who live in and at soil level.
6. Add a variety of native plants that are rich in nectar and pollen in your yard.
7. Let logs and litter accumulate- fireflies like to lay their eggs in rotting logs

For more tips visit Firefly.org to make your yard more firefly friendly.

Image: Scientific American



Fireflies in the Garden

*Here come real stars to fill the upper skies,
And here on earth come emulating flies,
That though they never equal stars in size,
And they were never really stars at heart
Achieve at times a very star-like start.*

Only, of course, they can't sustain the part.

by Robert Frost

Additional Reading

- [Beetles of Ontario](#) - iNaturalist
- [Firefly Watch: Resources to Learn More](#)
- [Canadian Wildlife Federation, Fireflies, Lightning Bugs](#)
- Canadian Journal of Arthropod Identification - cjai.biologicalsurvey.ca
- [Lightning Bug](#), Lampyridea (Encyclopedia of Life)
- [The 4 Stages of the Firefly Life Cycle](#)



Firefly resting on a lilac leaf-Hamilton (C. Sims)

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A Woodland Scourge *Vinca minor* (Periwinkle)



Allyn Walsh - Halton Master Gardener

Periwinkle (*Vinca minor* & *major*) is one tough plant! According to Credit Valley Conservation, it is also a [Category 1 Invasive](#) in our region because it is able to exclude all other species and dominate a site, over-running native species. It naturally disperses widely, roots readily from nodes, and, like all plants in this category, immediate removal is recommended. Because it is so ubiquitous, it is very easy to source not just from a garden centre but also from friends and neighbours, oftentimes travelling under a fence. Periwinkle is an extremely popular garden plant in our region because it rapidly spreads across the ground in difficult growing conditions and shady sites. There are two species, very similar although *Vinca major* is larger in size. Primarily it is *Vinca minor* that we find in our region.

Closeup of the ubiquitous *Vinca minor*
Image by jan haerer from Pixabay



***Vinca minor* fact sheet** (adapted from Missouri Botanical Garden)

Type: herbaceous perennial

Family: Apocynaceae

Native Range: Mediterranean region

Height: 20-70 cm

Spread: 1-2 metres

Bloom Time: May to June

Bloom Description: Violet, occasionally white. 5 petals, 2.5-7 cm across

Sun: Full sun to full shade

Water: Dry to medium

Tolerates: Deer, Drought, Heavy Shade, Erosion, Dry Soil, Shallow-Rocky Soil

Alternatives

Prevention is the best way to deal with *Vinca minor* - don't plant it in the first place! There are many attractive and tough native plants which can be used instead of *Vinca minor*. All of the following support the pollinators so vital to our biosphere. Details about each can be found at [Missouri Botanical Garden](#)



Foamflower
(*Tiarella cordifolia*)



Wild Geranium
(*Geranium maculatum*)



Christmas Fern
(*Polystichum acrostichoides*)

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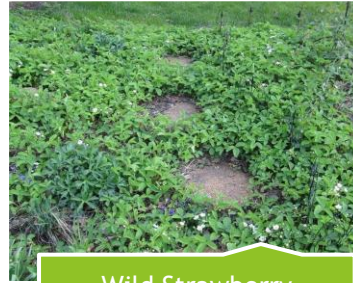
Vinca minor continued



Wild Ginger
(*Asarum canadense*)



Wintergreen
(*Gaultheria procumbens*)

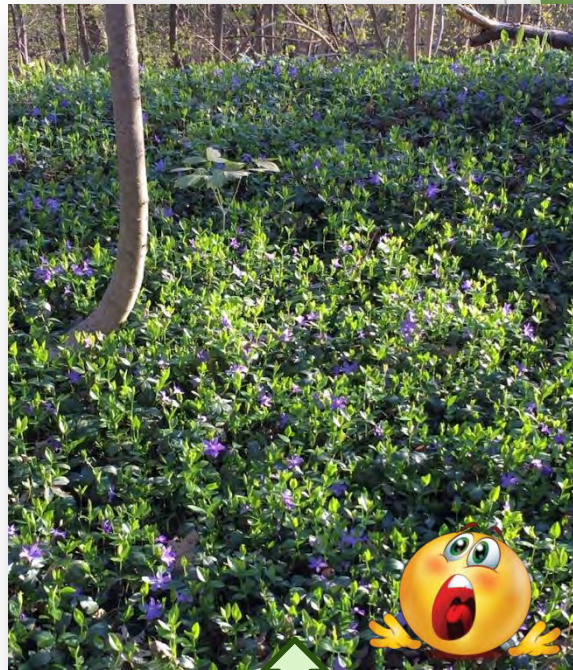


Wild Strawberry
(*Fragaria virginiana/vesca*)

Control & Removal

This is a tough plant to remove and persistence is required. Removal strategy, as with other invasive plants, should begin at the edges of the infestation and move inward. This helps prevent on-going spread during the removal process.

1. Mechanical control through digging and pulling the plants while removing as much of the roots as possible is fundamental.
2. In a level area such as a garden, the stems can be raked up and then mown. All pieces of the plant must be removed and destroyed as even small pieces left behind will generate roots. These efforts will need to be done regularly for several years.
3. In gardens, where patches tend to be smaller than in the wild, solarization can be very helpful. The infested area should be dampened, then covered with clear plastic weighted with bricks or rocks for at least six months including the summer period. The heat generated under the plastic kills the plants.



Vinca minor which has escaped into a woodland in Hamilton



For further reading:

[Ontario invasive plants - grow me instead](#)
[Landowners guide to invasives](#)
[Invasive groundcovers](#)
[Fact sheet on Vinca minor](#)
[Halton MG - removing invasives](#)

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Question of the Month

Help my Hydrangeas!

"For the last few years my Annabelle hydrangeas have been full of leaftier caterpillars. They really contort the flowers and surrounding leaves. I have tried dormant oil and opening up the tied leaf to squish the caterpillars, and still they persist. I'm looking for any ideas on how to get rid of them."



London-Middlesex MGs photo

Hydrangea Leaftier Moth (*Olethreutes ferriferana*) is native to North America. Its population is rising due to the overplanting of hydrangea species. The larvae and moths do support native wildlife so be thoughtful about management techniques. There is only one generation per year. While the damage does not threaten the plant's life, it may cause the flower buds to abort. Dormant oil will kill eggs and larvae of all species, including beneficial insects, butterflies & moths.

When tackling this in late June, peel open the bound leaves to expose the small, green caterpillar and either squish, dump in soapy water or better yet, leave the caterpillar out exposed to the sun for our native birds to eat.

In the late fall or early spring, cut the hydrangea back to 10 cm from the ground and remove debris from the area. This should take out the vast majority of eggs that are laid in the fall on the stems.



Do you find bugs scary?
Try to keep in mind that native bugs feed our native birds!



Leaftier caterpillars make great baby food - like soft sausages that mother bird can stuff down baby throats without damaging them!

Photo: Diagnostic Laboratory, Crop Protection, Ministry of Agriculture



Leaftier moth- trouble or bird lunch?
Buguide.net

For further reading:

[Hydrangea leaf curl?](#)
[Hydrangea Leaftier Oddball Damage](#)
[The Green Pages](#)



Compiled from reading list and Cathy Kavassalis
Halton Master Gardener



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"What's Growing On"

Halton Master Gardener Meetings are **being held virtually** until further notice.

We are still answering your garden questions, so send us an email! It's what we do best! HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com

CBC Radio Online Chats are Back!



Halton Master Gardeners Liza Drozdov, Patty King, Donna Parker and Claudette Sims team up with Toronto Master Gardeners Tina Cesaroni & Tena van Andel & Royal Botanical Garden experts Jon Peter & Alex Henderson to answer your garden questions. Send your own questions to us by Tweet to [@CBCHamilton](https://twitter.com/CBCHamilton) or via email to hamilton@cbc.ca

Grab a cuppa & join us!
Every Monday in June from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.



Royal Botanical Gardens Arboretum is now open!



To celebrate the reopening of this signature attraction, they will be offering discounted admission through June 4th. More info at [RBG](#) link.



**June
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Shelter in Place Gardening Events



Webinars

Garden For Wildlife Series -World Wildlife Fund - Canada:

Episode 1: [Planning your Garden](#)

Episode 2: [Digging In](#)

Episode 3: [Gardening in Small Spaces](#)

Episode 4: [Maintaining Your Habitat](#)

Episode 5: [Become a Citizen Scientist](#)

Streaming Videos

[Joe-Pye Weeds Attract Swallowtails](#)
[Gardeners World episode 7 2020](#)
[Gardeners World episode 8 2020](#)
[Gardeners World episode 9 2020](#)

