

Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



May Garden To Do List

- ❑ **Perennials** - [Divide & transplant](#) overgrown fall blooming perennials on an overcast day. Add wire supports/stakes around tall perennials as needed.
- ❑ **Lawn** - Lilacs are blooming, so perfect time to over-seed & enhance the general vigour of your lawn. Feed soil and lawn by top-dressing with ½ inch (2 cm) fine textured compost/manure. Areas with moss indicate soil has been compacted and nutrient level is likely low. Learn more [about moss here](#).
- ❑ **Prune** roses now that the forsythia are blooming. Here's an introductory video about [rose pruning](#).
- ❑ **Trees** - **New research** recommends pruning trees from April to August, to allow cuts to heal. EXCEPTION: Oak trees should NOT be pruned April 15 to July 15 due to [oak wilt disease](#). Inspect trees for scale, fungus or other disease. Check these links for [fruit trees diseases](#), [Black knot fungus](#) and [magnolia scale](#).
- ❑ **Tomatoes** - Transition seedlings to the garden slowly, starting with a sheltered location, 1-2 hours day 1, and increasing each day to full sun. Plant in garden when about 6" high when all danger of frost is past. Plant deeply, right up to bottom leaves.
- ❑ **Corn** - Sow corn seeds when oak leaves are the size of a squirrel's ear!
- ❑ **Spring garden** - Take photos of your spring garden so that you remember which bulbs are crowded/producing small blooms & divide when foliage has died back using a garden fork. Consider adding these gorgeous [native spring flowers](#) for next year.
- ❑ **House plants** - Increase watering & feed, preferably with a dilute organic fertilizer. If the soil is drying out quite quickly between watering, it may be time to repot, one size larger. Note: Hoya & Nile lily (Agapanthus) flower when slightly pot bound, so repot these less often.
- ❑ **Hummingbirds & Orioles** arrive early May, so clean & put out your feeders. Even better, add **native plants** that support food webs for breeding birds & [berry producing shrubs and trees](#) needed for fruit loving birds once babies have fledged.
- ❑ **Weeds** - Remove flowers to reduce seed bank. Hoe weed seedlings, e.g. Garlic mustard, to prevent new plants from growing. Control tap rooted weeds, e.g. bindweed, dandelions, [Canada thistle](#) (which is non-native), by cutting the root just below ground level with a sharp spade. Repeat as growth resumes to starve out weeds.



Image: Worldbirds.org

A Berry Good Idea

Plant berry-producing bushes such as serviceberries, nannyberries, dogwoods, cherries, blueberries, blackberries and elderberries for fruit loving birds like orioles, cedar waxwings, robins, cardinals & blue jays. Find out more ways to attract orioles to your yard [here!](#)

May
2021

Cross Pollination

Goldenrods: The gold standard for our gardens

By Pam MacDonald Halton Master Gardeners

"The fragrance, color, and form of the whole spiritual expression of Goldenrod are hopeful and strength-giving beyond any others I know. A single [golden] spike is sufficient to heal unbelief and melancholy."

- John Muir, naturalist and 'father of the US national parks'



Photo by Unknown Author licensed under
CC BY

Like many, I long viewed goldenrod as a weed and believed it was the plant that made me sniffle and sneeze in the fall. I now know it to be neither. In fact, I am developing a great respect and a budding affection as I learn more about goldenrod's important place in the food web and see it featured in many beautiful pollinator gardens.

In Doug Tallamy's seminal book, *Nature's Best Hope*, he lists goldenrod as one of the 'keystone plants' with the greatest impact on supporting abundance and diversity of other species in an ecosystem. A hundred and twenty-five species of butterflies and moths have been identified as using goldenrod as a source of food. The caterpillars of butterflies and moths, which feed on goldenrod, are an especially important food for young birds - high in the proteins they need to develop and easy to swallow, unlike hard shelled insects. Bees drink the nectar of goldenrod and the hollow stems make perfect nesting sites for some of our native species of bees.

Many birds that migrate through, or over winter in southern Ontario, rely on the seed heads of goldenrods and other late season plants for fall and winter food. These include American Goldfinches, Black-capped Chickadees, Cardinals and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Historically goldenrod was also consumed by both First Nations and European settlers as a medicine and a beverage. Though never a politically fraught drink in Canada, its consumption did in one instance, make a political statement in the USA. After the Boston Tea Party rebellion of 1773, colonists brewed tea from goldenrod leaves, betony and red clover, christening it "Liberty Tea" as a substitute for imported black tea. With recent data revealing seven times the antioxidants of green tea, goldenrod's use as an herbal infusion is making a comeback. And a hint as to goldenrod's efficacy as a healing herb is found in its Latin botanical name, *Solidago*, meaning "to make whole". How poetic that the return of goldenrod to a forest destroyed by wildfire is a sign that the forest is healing itself.



Photo by Unknown Author is
licensed under CC BY-SA



May
2021

HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com

HaltonMasterGardeners.com

Cross Pollination

Goldenrod - Continued

By MG Pam MacDonald

In Ontario, there are about 30 species of goldenrod that variously grace wetlands, meadows and forests. As native plants adapted to the local climate and a diversity of conditions, there is one or more that could equally grace any garden.

For gardeners who are new to native plant gardening, goldenrods are a pleasing place to start. Young plants of several species are available from local native plant nurseries and some garden centres. Like many wildflowers they are easy to propagate from seed by sowing directly into the ground in fall or spring or they can be started indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost date. Once established goldenrod requires minimal care and will spread by rhizome and seed. If you are looking for an easy to grow, low maintenance, beautiful and beneficial plant, goldenrod is hard to beat.

Here are four that are native in southern Ontario and that are available from a number of native plant nurseries. And in case you are wondering what to plant with goldenrod I have included Mother Nature's suggestion for each – a native aster that grows in the same conditions and will often be found close by in the wild making its own contribution to the bird, bee and butterfly buffet.



Zigzag Goldenrod (*Solidago flexicaulis*)

Light - Part shade to shade

Moisture - Average to dry

Soil - Sand, loam or clay

Height - 3 feet

The Zigzag in the common name refers to the interesting zigzag form of the stem. Pairs well with big leaf aster (*Eurybia macrophylla*)

Ontario wildflowers *S. flexicaulis*

Bluestem Goldenrod (*Solidago caesia*)

Light - Part shade to shade

Moisture - Average to dry

Soil - Sand, loam, clay

Height - 3 feet

This one has distinctly purple-blue stems that arch gracefully. Pairs well with blue wood aster (*Symphotrichum cordifolium*).

Ontario wildflowers *S. caesia*



May
2021

Cross Pollination

Goldenrod - Continued



May
2021

By MG Pam MacDonald

Showy Goldenrod (*Solidago speciosa*)

Light - Full sun
Moisture - Average to dry
Soil - Sand, loam, clay
Height - 3 feet

The common name speaks for itself. Smooth blue aster (*Symphotrichum laeve*) or New England aster (*Symphotrichum novae-angliae*) would make a good companion. Little blue stem grass with its red autumn tones would also pair well.

Ontario wildflowers *S. rigida*



Photo courtesy of Prairie Moon Nursery

Stiff Goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*)

Light - Full sun
Moisture - Average to dry
Soil - Sand, loam, clay
Height - 5 feet

Stiff goldenrod performs best in lean, dry soil. In rich, moist soil it can be floppy. It is a big plant topped with large clusters of yellow flowers that would be a good choice at the back of a border or perhaps in the centre of an island pollinator garden.

Ontario wildflowers *S. rigida*



Photo ©Saxon Holt / PhotoBotanic



Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC](#)



Further reading

[Goldenrods for Ontario Gardens](#)

Native nurseries in Ontario

[Halton MG native nurseries listing](#)

Cross Pollination

Native Bees of Ontario

By Halton MG Hariette Henry

Leafcutter bees are members of the family Megachillidae, genus Megachile. There are approximately 18 species of leafcutter bees in Canada. Two species that are commonly found in southern Ontario are *Megachile frigida* and *M. latimanus*.

They are medium sized bees, roughly the same size as honeybees. The females carry pollen on hairs on the underside of the abdomen rather than on the hind legs like other bees. When a bee is carrying pollen, the underside of the abdomen appears light yellow to deep gold in colour. Leafcutter bees can usually be found on flat, open flowers. They are generalist foragers and will gather nectar and pollen from a wide variety of flowers.



Leafcutter bees have been busy cutting pieces from fireweed, Corner Pollinator Garden

Leafcutter bees are solitary bees who like to build their nests in pre-existing cavities found in fallen trees, stumps, old stems or manmade materials. They get their name due to the fact that they cut nearly perfect ovals and circles from leaves, to construct tubular shaped cells, beautifully formed, in which to house and feed their developing young. The pieces leafcutters snip from plants tend to be nearly uniform in shape - oval for constructing the bases and walls of their egg cells and circular for covering cell openings.

The cells are sequentially constructed from the deepest portion of a tunnel outwards. The female puts a supply of food, usually pollen, sometimes mixed with nectar (called bee bread) in the cell and lays an egg on top. She then builds a cup and walls off the end of the cell.



The leaf cutter bee's handiwork, leafcutters are extremely talented craftswomen, Wikipedia

What you can do to help native bees!

- [Helping Ontario's Pollinators: Things you can do](#)
- [Selecting Plants for Pollinators](#)
- [Help Native Bees](#)
- [BEES OF TORONTO](#)

- continued on next page....



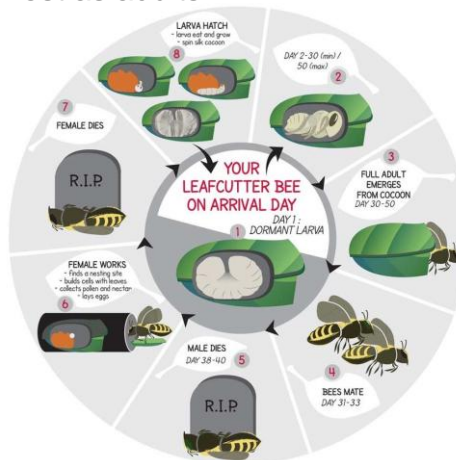
Cross Pollination

Native Bees of Ontario

By Halton MG Hariette Henry

Within each cell larvae hatch from the eggs, consume the food, molt a few times then spin cocoons and pupate, (after several months of hibernation as pre-pupa). They then emerge from the nest as adults.

Males are typically smaller than females and emerge first. Their main goal as adults is to mate, after which they die. The females survive for another few weeks to build nests and start the process all over again.



Lifecycle of Leafcutter bee, Backyard Pollinator

Their nests can occasionally be attacked by parasitoid cuckoo bees. These cuckoo bees will enter a nest when the leafcutter is out foraging. It will use its bee abdomen to pierce the pollen ball and insert and hide its own eggs. When the cuckoo bee eggs hatch, they will eat the leafcutter larvae and pollen.



Megachile frigida, frigid leafcutter bee on bellflower, a long tongued bee, John S Asher, Discover Life



Megachile latimanus, Bees of Niagara Region



Megachile rotundata, alfalfa leafcutter bee, Inaturalist

The introduced species, alfalfa leafcutter bee, *Megachile rotundata* is managed for crop pollination. They pollinate fruits and vegetables and are used by commercial growers to pollinate blueberries, onions, carrots and alfalfa.



Cross Pollination

Question of the Month - Wildflowers in Your Lawn?

What is this plant growing in my lawn and how do I get rid of it? I think my mother planted it as a wildflower. Adrienne

I'm sorry to tell you that is Creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederacea*), a very difficult lawn weed to deal with. While it does have a pretty mauve flower, it is more likely to have arrived via seeds from another garden than planted by your mother. Creeping Charlie (AKA Ground ivy) was introduced from Europe, likely in the 17th century, as an ornamental, medicinal and food plant (salad greens). Although it has been used by humans for thousands of years, the species is reported to be toxic to many vertebrates, particularly horses.

The square stem identifies it as a member of the mint family (Lamiaceae) & when crushed, the leaves emit a distinctive minty odour. Like all members of the mint family, it is an aggressive spreader & can quickly produce thick mats via the stems that grow at the soil surface (stolons). It also spreads via seeds.

Glechoma thrives in moist shaded areas, but also tolerates sun very well. Because it is a perennial, it does not die back in winter which makes it difficult to control. It is considered invasive in many areas of the U.S. where it displaces native plants.

Control Options

Mechanical

- When dealing with weeds, soaking the area beforehand or pulling after a rain makes it easier to remove entire plants.
- Hand pulling: Find where the plant is emerging from the soil. Use a garden fork to carefully lift the plant. Pull slowly but firmly to remove the entire plant from the soil. Dispose of all plant parts in garbage or solarize in a clear plastic bag.
- Raking: Rake the area in one direction (north to south) and then rotate to rake again at a 45 degree angle, e.g. east to west. Remove as much plant material as possible.
- Overseed bare areas and cover with a light compost or lawn dressing.
- Repeat removal on a weekly basis until the area is under control. While this process takes a while, it's an eco friendly way of dealing with the Creeping Charlie.

Cultural

- Creeping Charlie loves moist soils, so watering the lawn less often, but deeply, can help.
- Follow healthy lawn practices so your lawn can fight weeds, e.g. mow high - 3", water less frequently but deeply, leave clippings on the lawn.

Chemical

- Use chemicals as a last resort & follow instructions carefully. An iron-based weed control product such as SCOTTS ECOSENSE WEED-B-GON can be used as a spot treatment.

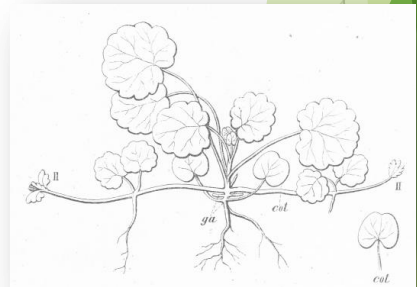
Want to know more?

- [Ground Ivy](http://Invasive.org) (Invasive.org)
- [Ground Ivy](#) Invasive Plant Atlas (range)
- [Glechoma hederacea](#) (Wikipedia)
- [Healthy Lawns](#)

Claudette Sims
Halton Master Gardener



Creeping Charlie can take over a lawn
Image: Rasbak - Wikipedia Commons



The creeping stolons of Ground Ivy
Image: Eugen Warming
Wikipedia Commons



May
2021

Cross Pollination

Lunch & Learn with Halton Region Master Gardeners!

Halton Region Master Gardeners

Present our very first Webinar Series

A Fresh Look at Gardening!

Our webinar series has been a great hit and we've added some extra tickets!

Thanks to everyone who attended our April events.

Don't miss out on our last 3 presentations!

All webinars are on Fridays from

Noon – 1:00 p.m.

- May 7th - Garden Facelift - Do the Renew!
- May 14th - Beneficial Insects- Managing Pests in an Eco-friendly Way!
- May 21st - Your Nature Friendly Garden Throughout the Year!



Register on our website

HaltonMasterGardeners.com



**May
2021**

HaltonMasterGardeners@gmail.com

HaltonMasterGardeners.com