

# Cross Pollination

Newsletter of the Halton Master Gardeners



## July Garden To Do List

- ❑ **Keep Blooming** - Cut back early blooming perennials, e.g. hardy geraniums, delphiniums, catmint, after the first flush of flowers to encourage new growth and blooms. Shorten stems of fall flowering plants like asters, mums, Joe-Pye weed and goldenrod to keep them sturdy and compact. Trim just above a set of leaves. Deadhead annuals by pinching or cutting with scissors to encourage blooming. More details [here](#).
- ❑ **Common Milkweed** - Trim back some of your milkweed ([Asclepias syriaca](#)) plant stems the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July to stimulate new, young growth which is more attractive to monarchs. Read [this article](#) for details.
- ❑ **Lilacs** - Remove the old flower clusters as soon after flowering as possible. Prune just above the two new shoots that angle out from the stem that ended with the old flowers.
- ❑ **Wisteria** - Throughout the summer, remove the whippy side-shoots from the main branch framework to about 20 cm from their base (about five leaves from the main stem). Wisteria didn't bloom? Read our [wisteria](#) factsheet for help.
- ❑ **Compost** - Keep adding a mix of 'browns' and 'greens' to your compost pile.
- ❑ **Lawn** - Mow high (3"/7.5 cm) to shade out weeds. Leave the clippings on the grass to return nutrients & water to the soil. WATER LESS and let lawn go dormant in dry hot spells (turn brown). Water dormant grass when: the blades don't spring back upright when you walk on it & when the blades fold to show their lighter blueish green underside. More info [here](#).
- ❑ **Veggies** - Water during dry or hot weather to avoid stressing plants. Do not over fertilize tomatoes as it can lead to [blossom end rot](#)
- ❑ **Water** - spring planted trees/shrubs regularly, avoiding the hottest part of the day. Water existing trees less frequently, but deeply. Water at the base of plants, not foliage, or use soaker hoses. Stop watering garlic 2-3 weeks before harvest. Harvest when tops turn brown (about mid-July)
- ❑ **Invasive plants** - Inspect your garden for invasive plants such as [Garlic mustard](#) or [Canada Thistle](#).
- ❑ **Weeds** - Target removal of seedheads to reduce the seed bank for next year. Watch for bindweed and Creeping Charlie in lawns and gardens.
- ❑ **Pests** - Identify the 'pest' before taking action. That pest may be a butterfly caterpillar or a [beneficial insect](#) which keeps your garden in balance! For problem pests, start with a strong spray from your garden hose to knock them off.
- ❑ **LDD moth (formerly known as Gypsy Moth)** - Continue to wrap affected trees and destroy caterpillars daily. Watch this [1 minute video](#) to learn how.
- ❑ **Enjoy & Assess** - Take a minute to sit and enjoy your garden. Are there any plants that are underperforming, diseased or who no longer work in your garden conditions? Consider replacing them with an ecologically productive native plant which will bring your garden to life.



Orange Butterfly milkweed & blue Harebell are a fantastic colour combo. Photo: C. Sims

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## Our Favourite Plants: *Chelone glabra* (White Turtlehead)

Master Gardener Pam MacDonald

In this, the first of an occasional series on the favourite plants of Halton Master Gardeners, Pam MacDonald discusses *Chelone glabra*.

Three years ago I came across White Turtlehead (*Chelone glabra*) at a garden centre. Having grown Pink Turtlehead (*Chelone lyonii*) years ago I was fascinated to see this species and brought some home.

The erect stems with bright green foliage are topped with white, sometimes pink tinged flowers in dense spikes. The flowers open at intervals beginning at the bottom of the spike. Each bloom has the distinctive turtlehead shape that gives the plant its common name. The botanical name, *Chelone*, is Greek meaning tortoise and was the name of a nymph who was turned into a turtle by a vengeful Zeus.



Native Range of *Chelone glabra*. Image: New Moon Nursery

It typically grows 1 to 4 feet tall and prefers sunny, wet conditions. It has a long bloom period beginning in August and extending to October. An ideal rain garden plant, I tried it in my dry sandy loam garden in two locations. In a part shade, relatively moist bed it reached 6 feet and did not start blooming until late September. In a full sun location with frequent watering and lots of mulch it has stayed between 4 and 5 feet tall and bloomed from late August to the end of September.

*Chelone glabra* is the primary larval host for the Baltimore Checkerspot, a butterfly that was until recently in decline - due to the loss of habitat for its host, *Chelone glabra*. The newborn caterpillars feed primarily on its leaves. Older caterpillars also feed on the leaves of plantain (*Plantago* spp.), a common weed in our area and on ash (*Fraxinus* spp.).

### References:

- [Butterflies of Ontario and Eastern Canada](#) - John Acorn and Ian Sheldon
- [Wildflowers of the Adirondacks](#)



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Photo taken in my garden September 2020 P MacDonald



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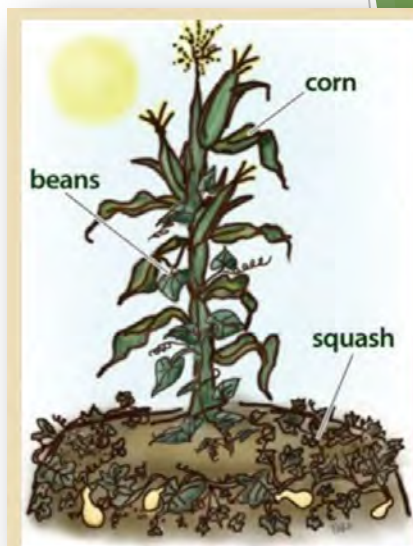
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## The Three Sisters, by MG Isabel Belanger



The Haudenosaunee people are famous for their agricultural tradition known as the Three Sisters, companion planting at its finest. Most First Nations throughout Turtle Island practice varying traditions of the Three Sisters, growing corn, beans, and squash together. The Sisters form a symbiotic relationship, thriving together and supporting each other.

Sister corn provides support for the beans that scramble up the tall corn, the beans fix nitrogen in the soil which fertilizes the corn and the squash, and the squash grows along the ground, cooling the soil and preventing both moisture loss and weeds from growing. This is a very sustainable planting method as it contributes to long term fertility of the soil without the use of chemical fertilizers. According to Indigenous tradition, corn needs to be planted in association with other crops rather than as a monoculture as it is a very heavy feeder.



<https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2012-Diabetes-Traditional-Foods-and-Recipes.pdf>

In a field of the same size, the Three Sisters system yields more food energy and protein than monocultures of its three component crops. The Haudenosaunee planted fifteen different species of corn (blue, red, white and yellow), about 40 species of beans (mainly dry beans), and several types of squash (winter) and melons. At the end of the season they would gather and save seed for the following growing year.



<https://iroquoisgroup24.weebly.com/food.html>

Corn, beans and squash are staples of the Haudenosaunee diet and are a nutritional powerhouse when combined. Corn contains carbohydrates which provide energy; beans provide protein and fibre which help balance the release of sugar into the bloodstream, lower bad cholesterol, and maintain a feeling of fullness; squash is full of nutrients such as vitamin A which helps maintain good eye health. Another benefit of the Three Sisters

is that, depending on the variety, they can be eaten fresh or the seeds can be dried and used throughout the year. Traditionally Indigenous peoples would pound dried corn seeds into meal or flour using a mortar and pestle. Corn meal was used to make bread, hominy and pudding.

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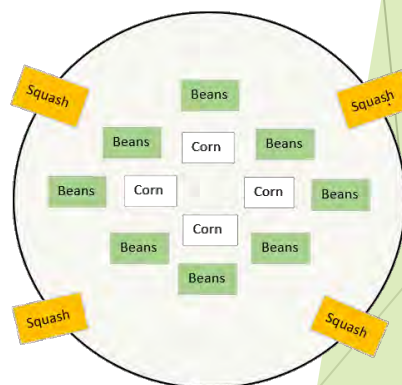


Succotash and corn soup are famous Indigenous dishes - succotash, derived from the Indigenous word 'msiquatash' uses all three of the Sisters. Click [here](#) for a summery succotash recipe. Corn soup is particularly delicious. Click [here](#) for a variety of corn soup recipes, from the traditional to the more modern.

<https://tworowtimes.com/arts-and-culture/woodland-centre-hosts-corn-soup-cook/>

The corn, beans and squash are grown together in mounds. There are many configurations of mounded Three Sisters gardens so use the one most adaptable to your space and growing conditions. Some traditions use several mounds while others, such as the Haudenosaunee, use one large mound. This will be a full sun garden, needing at least 6 hours of sun per day, and should be planted after all danger of frost is past. The corn is planted first, in the centre of the mound; corn needs to be a tall variety. Then the pole or climbing beans are planted around the corn. Beans need to be pole or runner beans (not bush beans) to twine up the corn. Lastly the squash is planted around the outside of the mound. The mound should be at least 60" around and the soil may be amended with compost (traditionally dead fish were buried in the mound the previous year). Level off the top of the mound.

1. Plant about 4-6 corn seeds in the centre of the mound, 1" deep and 6"- 8" apart. Corn seeds should be soaked for about 4 or 5 hours first.
2. Wait until the corn is about 6" high, then plant the beans.
3. Plant 4 bean seeds 4" from the base of the corn stalks, spaced evenly around the corn stalks.
4. Plant 3 or 4 squash seeds evenly spaced around the perimeter of the mound once the beans have grown tendrils, but not at the edge. Rather plant them about 6-8" in from the base of the mound.



### Want to Learn More?

- [Native American Foods and Medicines](#)
- [Meet the Three Sisters Who Sustain Native America](#)
- [Haudenosaunee Confederacy - Food And Hunting](#)
- [Native Seed Search - How to Grow a Three Sisters Garden](#)

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## “What’s Growing On”

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

Fill in our [online contact form](#) if you’re interested in coming to a meeting, joining our group or requesting a speaker for your club or interested group.

We are still answering your garden questions, so send us an email! It’s what we do best! [HaltonMasterGardeners@Gmail.com](mailto:HaltonMasterGardeners@Gmail.com)

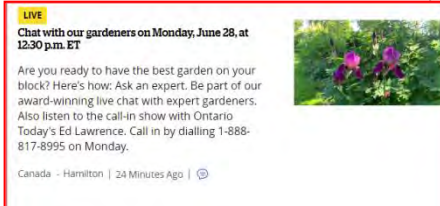


### Ask an Expert! CBC Radio Online Chats are Back

Are you ready to have the best garden on the block? We’ve partnered with [CBC radio Hamilton](#) to answer your garden questions. Our award winning live chat team featuring [Halton Master Gardeners](#) Liza Drozdov, Patty King, Janet Mackey and Claudette Sims, and [Toronto Master Gardeners](#) Tina Cesaroni & Tena van Anandel with Royal Botanical Garden experts Jon Peter & Alex Henderson are there for you.

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Listen to the call-in show with [Ontario Today’s](#) Ed Lawrence while we’re answering your garden questions live, Mondays from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Watch our Halton Facebook page for instructions on how to join or go to [CBC radio Hamilton](#) and click on **LIVE**.



Why don’t you grab a cuppa & join us!  
Every Monday in July from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.



## Shaw Garden Tour

Master Gardeners of Niagara, and HMG Claudette Sims will be on hand in various gardens to answer your questions & greet you.

- September 11, 2021
  - 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
  - Niagara-on-the-Lake
  - COST \$25 / \$20 before July 15
- For tickets, visit [shawguild.ca](http://shawguild.ca)

