



Trowel Talk

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Successive Planting

Judith Cox

Vegetable gardening is often a gamble, so it is ideal when you have a way to increase your odds. Successive planting will increase your yield and the length of time you can enjoy your crop.

According to Merriam-Webster, successive planting is “*sustained seasonal production of a particular crop either by repeated sowings or by selecting varieties maturing at different times*”.

Lettuce is a great crop for using this technique. It can be grown as soon as the soil is workable and doesn't mind the cool spring temperatures. After you plant a row of seeds, in two weeks you can plant another row.

Lettuce has two to three good pickings and then it starts to become bitter. It starts out bright and tender and then you can cut it right near the base of the plant and it will regrow. After doing this a few times, it starts to get bitter. Pull it and plant new seeds. The second row should give you enough until new plantings in the first row are ready. This can continue until the end of May.

Lettuce does not germinate well in the heat. To continue having fresh lettuce, start seeds in a pot or garden in the shade and that should work well until

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Black seed Simpson
Judith Cox

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September.

Successive planting can be applied to most early spring crops including peas, radishes, chard, spinach, and others. Plant every two weeks from the first seed sowing until the end of May. Often, these vegetables can be planted again when the weather is cooler in early September.

Root crops also work very well with successive plantings. You can start root crops like carrots or turnips in mid-May and seed to the end of June. They do not mind a nip of frost in the fall.

While carrots can be planted in the second week of May without a problem, I wait until the beginning of June. Baby carrots arrive around the same time as baby earwigs and planting them later makes them less susceptible. On the plus side, carrots taste sweeter if they get frosted and can stay in the ground for a longer time. Start planting carrots the first week of June and continue planting them every few weeks until mid-August.



Carrot harvest

Judith Cox

For vegetables such as zucchini, cucumber, beans, melons, squash and pumpkins, starting your plants indoors around the beginning of May is a good idea. Plant out your seedlings at the end of May along with a seed. This will give you the advantage of both an early and late harvest.

Tomatoes and eggplants, as well as more tender vegetables, have a set growing period. They do not

Ask a Master Gardener

Compiled by Amanda Carrigan and Ann McQuillan

Master Gardeners answer helpline questions

I've noticed over the past few years that my variegated green and white euonymus shrub has more and more plain green leaves in it. How do I keep it from becoming all green?

A number of variegated-leaved plants have a tendency to produce stems that revert to plain green. Besides euonymus, you may also see this happen in hostas, sedum, maple trees, or Japanese forest grass, to give a few examples. Because an all-green leaf has more chlorophyll and can photosynthesize more effectively, it is generally more vigorous than the variegated portion, and can take over the plant eventually. The solution is the same in all cases: remove the green portions (prune, pinch, or dig, as appropriate), to let the variegated portion thrive. If your euonymus has a lot of green in it already (more than a third of the plant), you may want to spread the pruning out over a few months or longer, to reduce the stress on the plant and keep it looking nice in the process

Help!, I have creeping bellflower coming up and spreading in my lawn and garden! I pull it, but it keeps coming back. How do I get rid of it?

You have a problem, indeed! Creeping bellflower (*Campanula rapunculoides*, see Sept 2020 TT) is difficult to get rid of, due to its root system. It does have much better-behaved and attractive garden cousins, which are also bellflowers. In *C. rapunculoides*, though, the aboveground leaves and flowers are connected to a white, carrot-shaped taproot by smaller, stringy roots, so pulling it will usually break the smaller roots and leave the taproot in, and the plant can regrow from root fragments as well as the taproot. Some strategies for attacking the problem:

- A) Dig up as much of the bellflower as possible. Dig deep and try to get as much of the root as you can out of the soil.

continued

appreciate cool spring mornings or the crisp autumn air. To be sure you get the best yield from these crops, it is best to plant seedlings in late May.

We do not want to forget the pollinator plants that can help increase the yield of your vegetable garden. Plantings of seeds and seedlings of borage, calendula, marigolds, and flowering herbs can be staggered throughout the season.

Why not get a head start on spring with a successive planting of flower bulbs? Take a large container and fill one third full of good earth. Place a layer of late flowering tulip bulbs, cover with about 12 cm of earth, and place a layer of small daffodils. Cover these with earth to the top and plant scilla bulbs. Protect this pot with branches and netting so it will get an insulating blanket of snow. It should be quite a treat in the spring, and you will have flowers to brighten your vegetable garden.

This year try successive planting and increase your vegetable harvest. 🌱

- B) If it is inside plants in your garden, dig them up if possible, and remove all the bellflower roots from the plant root ball and the soil around before replanting. You may even want to temporarily pot up the plants and observe both plants and garden for bellflower regrowth for a month or so before replanting.
- C) Mow areas of lawn (or cut down/dig out plants in garden space) where the bellflower is growing, water the area, then cover it with heavy plastic (clear, black, or a tarp) and leave it there with the edges sealed down for a season (during the hottest weather is best) to kill the plants underneath. You will, of course, need to replant this area afterwards with grass or garden plants as appropriate. And there is some doubt as to whether this is really effective with deep-rooted plants like the creeping bellflower.
- D) Anytime you see a leaf of the bellflower coming up, remove it right away, with the root if possible. If it's somewhere you can't remove the root or tarp the space, like in the roots of a tree or hedge, removing the leaves constantly and consistently should eventually starve the roots, but it will take time.. 🌱

When is My Garlic Ready to Harvest?

Dale Odorizzi

Garlic is a wonderful crop. You plant it in October, mulching it well to help the soil stay warm enough for roots to form and to keep it cozy all winter long. In early spring, you pull the mulch back a bit to watch the garlic sprout but leave the mulch in the bed to help suppress weeds and to keep the soil moist. That is about all it takes to grow great garlic.

The big question is: **“when can I harvest it?”** Garlic has three opportunities for harvest.

First, when the shoots appear, you can use garlic much like you do green onions. When the leaves are 10–15 cm high, you can pick them and add to salads or stir-fries. Remember, if you pick a clove and use the leaves, you end the growing of that clove. The only time I do this is if I have missed



Garlic that has been in the ground too long
Dale Odorizzi

harvesting a bulb or two the previous fall.

You can tell which bulbs were missed by the four to six new plants growing, all clumped together. These plants will not develop properly as they are too crowded. Sometimes, I have dug up these missed bulbs, separated, and replanted them. This is not always successful, but one hates to waste a garlic!

The second harvest takes place when your garlic plants start to develop a curl on top (see photo). These curls are known as garlic scapes and only occur on hard-necked garlic. The scape should be cut off near to where it comes out of the leaves. The scapes are great in stir-fries and make a wonderful pesto sauce. If the garlic scapes are left to grow, they become the garlic flowers and bulbils will form from the flowers. These bulbils are clones of the mother plant and can be planted like garlic cloves. However, it will take two to three years for these bulbils to produce full garlic cloves.



Garlic scapes

Dale Odorizzi

Even if you do not plan to eat the scapes, you should remove them from the plant, unless you are planning to plant the bulbils. The development of flowers and bulbils takes energy from the mother plant and the cloves will not be as large as those that have had the scapes removed.

The final garlic harvest, and the one you have been waiting for since that cold day in October when you planted your cloves, occurs sometime between the first week in July and the middle of August, depending on the variety. If you lift the bulbs too early, they will be undersized and not store well. If you lift them too late, they will lack the protective paper-like wrapping around the bulbs.

So how do you know when it is just right? Watch the leaves. The green leaves start to die from the bottom up. When the bottom three to four leaves are dead and the top five or six are green, it is time to lift the bulbs. If you are not sure, dig up a bulb or two and check. A mature bulb is fully swelled, well-sized and has some partially decomposed wrappers.

Garlic is very fragile and should not be bumped, bounced, or dropped as even the smallest bump will bruise it, causing early decay and loss of quality. Pick a dry day for harvesting. Carefully lift the bulbs with a garden fork and take them, green leaves and all, for cleaning and curing. Don't leave garlic in the hot sun but move it quickly to a shady spot to avoid 'cooking'. If your soil is a sandy loam, any dirt can be gently brushed off. Clay soils tend to adhere to the bulbs and may need to be washed off with a gentle spray of fresh water. Trim roots to one centimetre and carefully remove any dirt from the roots.

Garlic needs about two weeks to cure to prepare it for winter storage. To cure garlic, either hang it in bundles of 10-12 or place it on mesh racks in an airy, ventilated drying area. Ensure a good airflow and protection from direct sunlight and rain or other moisture. Once your garlic is cured, trim it to remove stalks. When trimming your garlic, if you notice any that have been damaged in the harvesting and curing process, store them separately and use them first. If your cloves have started to separate, use them as soon as possible or in October for planting because they do not store as well as a nice compact head of garlic.

Garlic bulbs are best stored at room temperature, 18 to 20°C, and at low humidity. Never store garlic in the refrigerator as too low temperatures will start

premature growth. Different strains and varieties of garlic have different storage lives, varying from six months for 'pickling' garlic up to 11 or 12 months for some soft-neck strains.

The beauty of garlic is that if you are careful, you only need to buy it once. You can use garlic from this year's harvest to start next year's crop. ♻️

Creating your own urban farm is as simple as planting your flowerbeds with edibles. - Greg Peterson, farmer



Garlic drying on trays
Gerda Franssen

Solving Garden Questions

Rebecca Last



Helena at the Byward Market

Josie Pazdzior

It's a beautiful Saturday at the farmers' market. Two of us are at a table to answer gardening questions. A customer approaches and we welcome them. "I've got this plant," the questioner starts, "It's green..."

"That's usually a good sign," I say encouragingly. "Tell us more," says Jill, my shift partner. The questioner fidgets. "I think there's something wrong with it..."

Jill and I exchange rueful glances. As Master Gardeners, we're trained to ask probing questions so we can provide accurate advice. This one may take our combined detecting skills. Our questioner may not be an experienced gardener, but they pay enough attention to have noticed a change in this particular plant. Our job is to help them help us better understand the problem. Ideally, questioners bring a photo or sample of their plant or bug (in a sealed bag or jar to prevent the spread of diseases or pests). In this case, we are plant detectives on the trail of a potentially sick plant. The questioner is our star witness.

Jill takes the lead, "What makes you think there's something wrong with your plant?" She asks gently. "It's just not happy..." says the questioner. Not much to go on.

I try another tack. "Is it an indoor or outdoor plant?" I ask.

"Indoors." they confirm.

"Does it have a tag saying what it is?" I ask. No, no tag.

Asking a series of questions with two possible answers helps to narrow the plant's identity. Does it have a woody stem and branches, or is it all green

and fleshy? There's no wood, so it's not an indoor tree or shrub. I could ask about the shape and texture of the leaves. Are the leaves round, oval, weirdly shaped with lobes or long and thin like grass? Are they smooth or hairy? How about texture? Are they thin and supple, or are they fat and fleshy? The way leaves are attached to, and arranged on the stem, plus details of flowers or fruit can all offer helpful clues. These questions don't require any particular gardening expertise but do require close observation.

Since our questioner is going from memory, it's not helpful to ask detailed questions about things they may not have observed. Instead, I ask about the overall shape of the plant. Does it stand up on its own, or does it trail over the edge of the pot like a vine? It's not a vine but a plant that cascades up and over from a central point. The leaves are long and grass-like. *"Sounds like it might be a spider plant,"* we agree. We have a plant tentative ID.

Jill asks a series of questions aimed at diagnosing common problems with indoor plants. Is there any sign of webbing around the plant? No, so it's probably not spider mites. How about any signs of flying insects? No, so it's probably not whitefly. How about distortions, puckering, or any stickiness on the leaves? A *"no"* to this question means it's probably not aphids. We could ask about the leaves. Yellowing might indicate under- or over-watering. But since the plant is green, watering is not likely the issue.

"So what are you seeing?" Jill asks again. *"It's weird,"* says our customer, *"It kind of looks like it's growing a new stem."* Jill and I exchange smiles. *"I don't think your plant is ill,"* Jill says gently. *"Unusual new growth can indicate reproduction,"* I add. *"We think your spider plant is having a baby!"*

Our customer smiles for the first time. To confirm the diagnosis, we suggest they send a couple of photos to the Master Gardener Help Line or Facebook page, then off they go. They have an answer to their question and, hopefully, a better idea of how to ask their next gardening question. 🌱



Master gardeners at the Friends of the Farm plant sale

Unknown

If you enjoy watching butterflies and other beneficial insects, consider making a butterfly bath. It's a great weekend project, especially with children. Butterflies and other insects benefit from mud baths to collect minerals. To make a butterfly bath, you will need a birdbath or flat saucer, some sand, a handful or two of compost or manure, perhaps some chunks of fruit, a few stones and water. Here are the steps to making a butterfly bath:

1. Fill the birdbath with sand, flattened beneath its ledge.
2. Mix in a handful of compost or manure to provide the insects with essential minerals.
3. Combine water into the mixture until it is moist but not wet.
4. Add a few stones for landing spaces.
5. Consider adding a small dish with a few chunks of old fruit, such as grapes, apples or bananas. Butterflies enjoy rotting fruit, so leave it in the summer sun for a few days.

Pollinator Tips for Summer Gardeners

Julianne Labreche



Bee on globe thistle (*Echinops bannaticus*)

Julianne Labreche



Black swallowtail butterfly visiting monarda

Julianne Labreche

Hot, lazy July days bring busy pollinators to visit our orchards, flower and vegetable gardens. These small garden visitors are critical to human survival. They help to put food on our tables by pollinating many plants that provide us with edible fruit. Pollinators, which include many beneficial insects, face many threats these days and need our support. Here are some ways you can make your summer garden more pollinator-friendly:

Plant for Bees - Because of how they see, bees are attracted to yellow, blue, purple and white blooms. In my pollinator garden, I like to plant for continuous bloom, starting from early spring and stretching the season late into the fall. The garden includes not only a variety of perennial and annual flowers, herbs and shrubs but flowering trees too.

Plant for Butterflies - Butterflies prefer flat, clustered blooms that provide a good landing pad. There are many butterfly-friendly plants but some favorites include scarlet bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), blazing star (*Liatris*), New England aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*), Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), non-invasive goldenrod such as Ohio goldenrod (*Solidago ohioensis*) or stiff goldenrod (*Solidago rigida*) and tickseed (*Coreopsis*).

Plant for Hummingbirds - The ruby-throated hummingbird visits gardens in our region. These tiny, jeweled birds migrate here each year from Mexico and parts of Central America. Hummingbirds use their sight to seek out nectar-rich flowers. They prefer bright red and orange tubular-shaped flowers that suit their long tapered beaks and grooved tongues. In my garden, they gravitate towards red cardinal flowers (*Lobelia cardinalis*), butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), and Maltese cross (*Lychnis chalconica*), among others.

Rethink the Manicured Lawn - Turf grass offers little to pollinators, except perhaps if clover is combined into the seed mix. Of course, it's important to

avoid pesticides or herbicides if you want to attract pollinators. Each year, I've reduced the amount of turf grass in my front and back yard. It's less work and I've enjoyed watching the diversity of birds and insect species that visit the garden each summer.

Provide Water - Like all creatures, insects require water to survive. Small containers with pebbles and fresh water provide safe places for insects to land. Butterflies enjoy mud baths that provide salt and other mineral requirements. Hummingbirds are attracted to misting sprays that they can fly through. I have a variety of water features for wildlife in my garden, including a new solar mister to try out this summer.



A butterfly bath
Julianne Labreche

Offer Bare Ground - Most native bees neither bite nor sting and need bare ground for nesting. As plants grow larger, less mulch is needed and there are fewer weeds to pull. It's easy to leave some open empty spaces for nesting pollinators, especially in back of the garden away from footpaths.

Go Native - Native bees are attracted to native plants, so it's good to add many to the garden. Some favourites in my own sunny front yard garden include Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*), black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), obedient plant (*Physostegia virginiana*), and dense blazing star (*Liatrix spicata*). Non-native bees are attracted to non-native plants so herbs and non-native perennials can fill those empty garden spaces.

Be Messy - Small mason bees make their nests in hollow cavities of plant stems, decaying logs and fallen stems. Commercial 'bee houses' provide education about the benefits of bees but unless they are maintained and cleaned regularly, they can become breeding grounds for mites and diseases that kill bees. An easier way to help pollinators is to simply to be a slightly messy gardener and leave areas for burrowing insects to raise their young.

Mix it Up - Vegetable gardens need pollinators too so plant herbs and flowers to attract them. Squash bees, for example, are important in vegetable gardening. Cucurbit plants such as cucumbers, pumpkins, squash and watermelon rely on squash bees that look like honey bees, just a little larger. In flower gardens, I've had good success mixing in kale, Swiss chard, chives, and pots of tomatoes, basil and other herbs to provide food for the table while supporting pollinators.

Leave Fall Leaves - As summer fades and fall approaches, don't rush to tidy up the garden, cut back plants and rake leaves. Except for those large oak leaves, many leaves will break down naturally in time and become nutrients for the soil. They also create a warm blanket for pollinators, helping them to overwinter. I spread leaves over the garden beds or put them in the compost. Leaves should be raked from the lawn as they will compact and damage it.

Certify Your Garden - If you're interested in certifying your garden as pollinator friendly, check out the Canadian Wildlife Federation website. Consider qualifying your garden under their Backyard Habitat Certification Program and learn more about becoming a citizen scientist. 🌱



Gardeners Beware: English Ivy—*Hedera helix*

Gail Labrosse



English ivy

Tena van Andel

Hedera helix, commonly known as English ivy, is a woody evergreen perennial grown as a climbing vine or a sprawling ground cover. The young foliage has dark green triangular leaves with 3 – 5 lobes. This is the climbing and spreading stage. Mature foliage is shrubby with lobeless, dark green, oval shaped leaves on stems that produce greenish white flowers in early fall and then blue-black berries.

As a climbing vine, one plant over time can grow 15 – 30 metres in height. As a ground cover, it can grow 2 – 3 metres high but can spread 15 – 30 metres. This plant is considered an invasive garden

plant so it is not recommended for planting in gardens – especially if close to a natural area.

Invasive plants can be defined as non-native plants that cause environmental or economic harm. How do they do this? They reproduce and spread rapidly, forming dense patches of vegetation that choke out both native plants and the insects that feed off them. Some types of invasive plants are still being sold in Ontario. The safest way to avoid being part of the problem of invasive plant harm is to become part of the solution. Buy native. There are so many wonderful native plants to choose from in Ontario.

One possibility as a ground cover for sunny gardens is *Fragaria virginiana*, commonly known as wild strawberry. It is drought tolerant and prefers part shade to full sun with alkaline soil. Plants will yield sweeter berries with full sun. 🌱



English ivy on stucco wall

Tena van Andel



English ivy invading greenhouse

Tena van Andel

Tip: Putting an edge on garden beds and borders in a lawn makes a garden look neat and tidy and helps keep weeds from the lawn creeping in. An edge can be as simple as cutting down with a spade or half-moon tool along the edge, or installing a vertical barrier at edge or laying bricks or pavers which a mower can run along. Regular trimming with shears or strimmer will keep the edge looking sharp.

I appreciate the misunderstanding I have had with Nature over my perennial border. I think it is a flower garden; she thinks it is a meadow lacking grass, and tries to correct the error —Sara Stein

An appeal to my fellow Master Gardeners across Ontario for photos of English ivy yielded these photos and this anecdote from Toronto MG Tena van Andel:

“Some might be surprised to learn that the beautiful English ivy, the same plant that enhances garden arbours, is not as pretty as it looks. Fifteen years ago, a dear friend gave me a tiny slip. I thought it would be a lovely way to hide the ugly stucco on our new house.

I have been at war with it ever since.

In the past, I have kept some ivy and used it for decorations at various graduations and weddings. This year, I want to get rid of it all. If only it were that easy. It has grown into my greenhouse and into any window left open a crack. One day you might read that it grew into the bedroom and smothered me in my sleep!

I hope to repaint to hide the marks left by the attachment roots, but most likely I will have to re-stucco. In hindsight, stucco doesn't look so bad anymore. Those roots do not come off with water, scrubbing or scraping. Often, bits of stucco fall off in the process. Why, oh why, did I ever plant that first tiny, innocent-looking little slip?”



Vegetable combo

Judith Cox

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Helplines - are monitored daily
Send questions and photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for Identification.

Trowel Talk can be found on the [Lanark County Master Gardener's blogsite](#) and [Ottawa Carleton Master Gardener's Website](#)



Clinics

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For information on gardening in and around the Ottawa valley:
<https://gardeningcalendar.ca/>

Talks given by Master Gardeners for garden clubs and horticultural societies using Zoom or other virtual meeting software. If you wish to attend please contact the host organization.

Article suggestions box

This is your chance, as a reader, to suggest an idea for an article you would like to see in Trowel Talk. Click on the button.



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Letters to editor: mgottawaeditor@gmail.com

Banner Photograph: Forever Susan lilies, Susan Bicket .

Wednesday August 11, 12:00 pm

Rebecca Last

Preserving the Harvest

[Ottawa Public Library](#)

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton present:

Container Cultivation 2 – July 20 Create Daylilies - July 27
Balcony Bounty - August 3 Plant Propagation - August 10



Tuesdays, 12:30pm – Live on Zoom

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