



Trowel Talk

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Rose pests: European Rose Sawfly and Rose Plume Moth

Amanda Carrigan

I like roses but grow only two hardy kinds – cinnamon rose (*Rosa majalis*) and rugosa rose (*Rosa rugosa*). Neither is affected by disease, yet every year my roses get attacked by caterpillars. Two different types turn up in May and June and wreak havoc on the rose buds and leaves. I was curious to learn about them –even if I was planning on squishing them – since they didn't look like the common rose slugs and others that my garden books describe.

The first type has a jarring, distinctive appearance: aqua green and orange-yellow with black spots. They hatch in late May or early June and, by mid-June, are easily seen. I discovered these are the larvae of a European rose sawfly (*Arge ochropus*). Their first North American sighting was in Ontario.

The adult looks rather like a fly but with a yellowish abdomen. However, it is most closely related to ants and wasps, not flies. The common name, sawfly, comes from their saw-like ovipositor. They use it to make slits in the young rose canes, and then lay their eggs in the slits. The eggs hatch into caterpillar-like larvae that feed in groups and can quickly defoliate a rose bush. The larvae may grow to an inch long and have a characteristic back-bent C or S

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Online Plant Sale!



Preview available: Starting June 23 at noon
Sale starts: June 26 at 10:00am
Sale ends: June 29 at 4:00pm
Payment method: e-transfer
Pickup date: July 3 (10:00am-3:00pm by appointment)
Pickup place: EY Centre parking lot, Uplands Drive

Sale Link: [Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton Plant Sale | 32auctions](#)

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-shaped defensive pose – like they're doing a headstand on the edge of the leaf. They pupate in cocoons in the soil before emerging as adults. They may have two generations per year with a second generation of adults emerging in July with their larvae causing damage in late summer through fall. One infestation of sawflies usually won't kill a plant. Repeated rounds will weaken and perhaps kill it. Of course, the defoliated rose looks awful.



Sawfly larvae
Amanda Carrigan

You can look for the slits in the canes then scrape out the eggs or prune off the infested tops of the canes and treat it in time. If, like me, you only remember when the leaves start vanishing, the best remedy is probably to check the roses regularly, then squish or remove any caterpillars you find. Insecticidal soap spray can also be used but needs to come in direct contact with the larvae to work. Some birds and ground beetles may eat sawfly larvae, however they do have chemical defenses that will deter most predators from eating them.

As if the sawflies weren't enough, pests known as rose budworms or leafrollers turn up on my roses as well. These caterpillars are the larvae of the non-native rose plume moth (*Cnaemidophorus rhododactyla*). They also like eating my rosebuds. They are hard to spot at a glance as they use webbing to keep a flower bud covered with nearby leaves. Pull open that leaf packet and you see little black dots of frass (caterpillar excrement), webbing, a partly eat-

Ask a Master Gardener

Compiled by Amanda Carrigan and Ann McQuillan

I noticed recently that the leaves on my Physocarpus opulifolius (Ninebark) shrubs look like they were burned and the bark is falling off. I removed the dead branches and added some black soil. Do they have a disease or could it be soil-related?

Exfoliating bark is a feature of *Physocarpus*, and is likely unrelated to the problem. The leaves that look burned could be a sign of fire blight, although this is not a common issue with ninebark. If what you are seeing is twigs with new leaves that look almost ashy, and last year's leaves blackened and clinging to a dead branch or twig, what it may have is powdery mildew. This is fungal disease which on most plants is cosmetic, but can weaken your shrubs over time. Prune out any growth that shows these symptoms, and make sure the shrubs are getting enough water and maybe some extra compost. You could also apply an anti-fungal agent such as sulphur, but these are generally most effective as a preventative rather than a cure, so begin using it early in the season before symptoms start showing.

I'm having a hard time with cucumber beetles. I have a plot in an allotment garden, so the strategy of hand-picking them does not work for me, as I am not there often enough. Row covers also do not work well, as the beetles have been a problem for a few years now, and the eggs are likely in the soil. Do you know any way to get rid of them?

Cucumber beetle control is a common problem in our area. There is no one good answer to solve the problem, and you may want to use multiple strategies. Handpick the beetles when you can. Row covers are commonly recommended, and I would still encourage you to use them, although you will

Continued page on 3



Rosebud worm
Amanda Carrigan

en rosebud, and a small, greenish caterpillar that blends in with the leaf.



have to remove them when the plants are flowering so pollinators can do their work. Yellow sticky traps among the covered vines may also be useful, but you run the risk of trapping beneficial insects as well, so it's not an ideal strategy. Some organic growers keep the beetles from eating too much leaf by applying kaolin clay or diatomaceous earth to the leaves, but you will have to re-apply them after a rain. Thorough clean-up of debris and cultivation of the soil in fall may decrease the overwintering population of pests. And finally, you could avoid cucurbit crops for a few years to decrease the resident population of beetles and larvae, and then start growing them again with protective measures. ♻️

If you catch them early and kill them, you may still get a slightly tattered rose out of that bud. Squishing them is probably the best control technique, since they are nicely wrapped up in their leafy hideout where it's hard for either predators or sprays to reach them. Happily, there is only one generation per year.

Since both my problem pests are non-native, I feel I can kill them without harming the ecosystem. So, in May, I start monitoring the rose bushes for caterpillars. When the roses bloom in June, I enjoy them with a clear conscience. ♻️

How to Be a Water-Wise Gardener

Rebecca Last

Why bother to save water?

In my house, water bills are a big motivator. Like many municipalities, Ottawa has graduated water bills. Like graduated income tax, the marginal cost of water increases with usage. A cubic metre (m³) is 1,000 litres of water – roughly equivalent to 28 showers or 13 baths. If you use less than 6 m³ per month, you only pay \$0.83 per m³ for water, plus another \$0.75 per m³ for storm water infrastructure for a total of \$1.58 per m³. However, the next 18 m³ will cost you nearly double this amount. After that, prices continue to mount.

Add environmental challenges like the extreme weather events brought on by climate change and the overall depletion of ground water, and there are plenty of reasons to save water.

For this avid gardener, water wise gardening means:

- Preventing run-off rainwater,
- Harvesting rainwater,
- Using best watering practices,
- Conserving soil moisture, and
- Designing according to hydrozones.

Prevent Run-off Rainwater

Our first step in being water wise is to make the most of rain we get. This means analyzing where rainwater runs off our property and then redirecting it to keep it in our gardens. Two principal techniques to prevent rainwater run off are:

- Redirecting downspouts away from hard surfaces and onto permeable surfaces, like lawns and garden beds; and
- Building a rain garden to capture and store rainwater run-off.

Many municipalities, including Ottawa, offer water saving advice to homeowners. There are also lots of DIY sites where you can learn how to design your own rain garden.

Harvest Rainwater

When it comes to harvesting rainwater, many homeowners already use water barrels but have you considered also collecting household grey water? Grey water is surplus household water, including wash water. It is distinct from black water – another term for sewage. During the winter, I keep a watering can in the basement utility sink. A small hose feeds the condensate from our gas furnace into this watering can, collecting 2-3 liters every day. My indoor grow-op is right next to the room where the sink is located. As the furnace condensate is essentially distilled water, it is ideal for my delicate seedlings. (Note, our furnace is natural gas. If you have propane furnace, check the acidity of this condensate before using it on plants.)

During the summer, we run a dehumidifier in the basement. One of the mysteries of Ottawa weather is that months when it is most humid inside are also times when we often experience droughts outside. The 6-8 liters of water from my dehumidifier are a welcome addition to an outside side raised bed

Folks who live on well water can be creative with their grey water saving techniques but there are risks. Robert Pavlis' Garden Myths website (<https://www.gardenmyths.com/gray-water-safe-garden/>) identifies three main issues – grey water chemistry, bacterial content and pH. Common ingredients of

soap include sodium, boron and bleach, all of which can damage plants, especially plant leaves. Grey water used for washing may also contain bacteria, including fecal matter, so it's best not to use this water on food plants. Those chemicals in soap tend to make the water more alkaline, sometimes to the point of harming or killing plants. It's definitely not a good idea to use grey water on acid-loving plants.

Best Practices

What do we mean by “best practices” for watering? We mean watering at the right time of day – preferably early morning, and not at midday when more water evaporates. Also, many plants go dormant during the heat of the day, so can't use water then. Watering deeply but less frequently encourages plants to send their roots deep into the soil, which generally makes these plants more able to withstand drought.



Pop bottle and watering spike irrigation, water barrel in background

Rebecca Last

It's also worthwhile investing in precision watering technology. The cheapest of these techniques is to buy watering spikes and attach them to old pop bottles with the bottoms cut off. I've tried them but they didn't work well in my sandy soil. Either the little holes in the watering spikes clogged and didn't drain

properly, or they drained so well the pop bottles emptied right away. Drip irrigation hoses and “snip and clip” precision irrigation systems are more expensive but more effective options.

Conserve Moisture

The first step in preserving soil moisture is to amend your soil. I garden on what is essentially beautiful white sand – the beach-goer’s dream but a nightmare for gardeners. Even with all the organic matter that I’ve added over the years, my garden still has “excellent drainage” but almost no water retention. I plant densely, so groundcovers form a ‘living mulch’. I use organic mulches in areas where the plants need more spacing and, on hot days, I sometimes put up a sun umbrella to provide shade to crops like lettuce that don’t like the heat.

At this point, you may be thinking that being water wise means planting only sedums, cactus and yuccas. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Linda Chalker Scott, an adjunct professor of horticulture at Washington State University, points out that xeric plants have evolved, like camels, to use whatever water is available. As a result, studies have shown that many well-meaning gardeners who implemented xeric plantings used more water.

Hydrozones

The key is to plant the right plant in the right place, making sure each new addition gets the care it needs to become well established. Dividing your garden into “hydrozones” will help you pick the right spot for each plant. The idea is to map out your garden according to areas that are naturally dryer or wetter, or have readier access to water, and plant accordingly. This approach will save you time and money, and help you conserve water.

You can still have a lush-looking garden while saving money and feeling virtuous about your minimal water consumption! 🌱

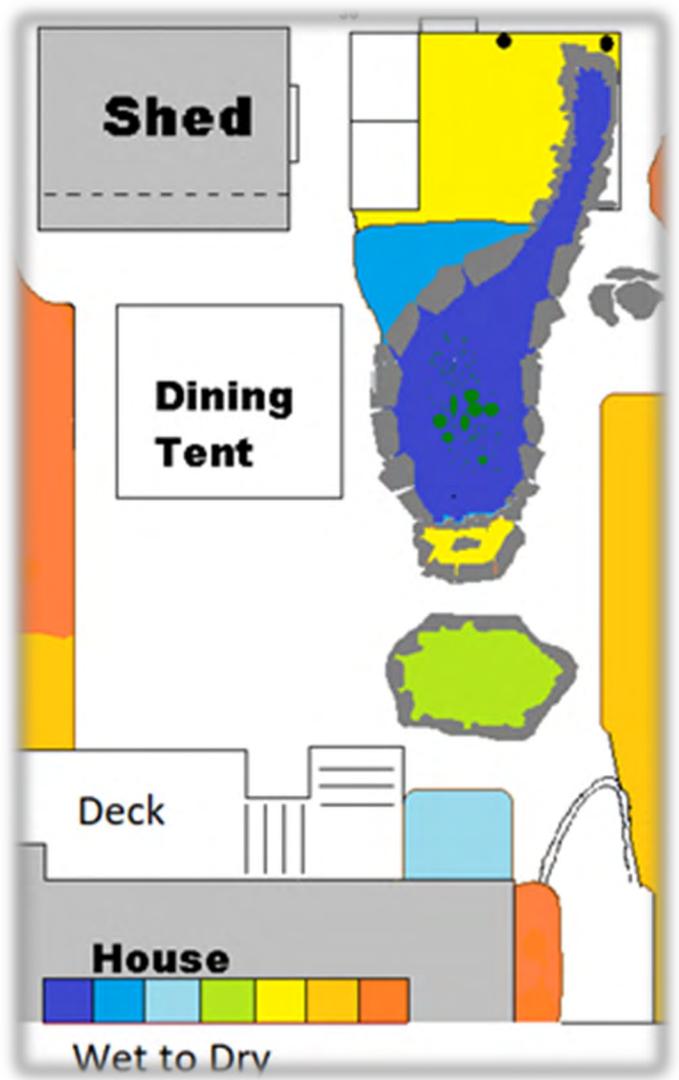


Diagram showing hydrozones of a back garden
Rebecca Last

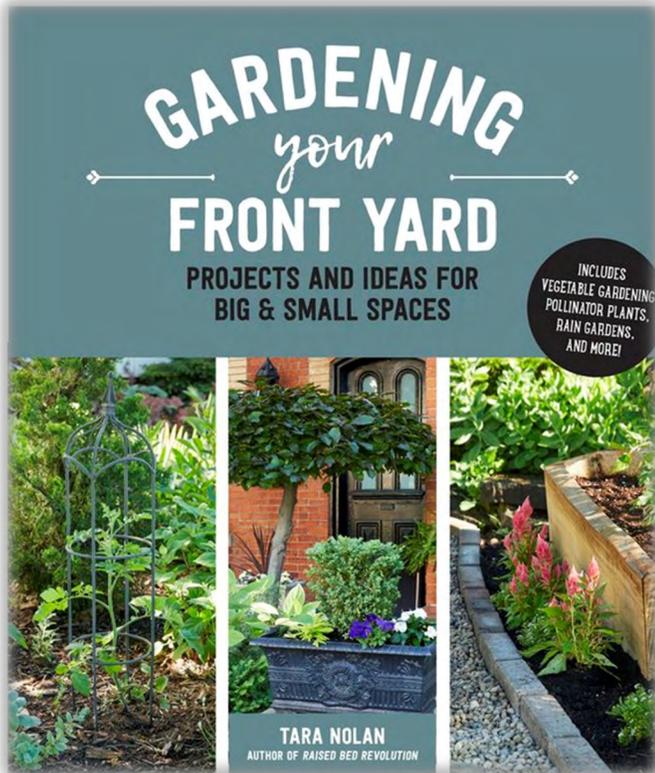
Tip: *Plants purchased in garden centres are often very dry. Once home plunge the pot in a bucket of water up to the rim. More often than not the pot will float indicating that it is dry. Leave the pot in the water until sinks, this could take a couple of hours, lift out and allow to drain. Leave the plant overnight and it should be nice and turgid for planting the following day.*

Tip: *When planting into a dry garden, after digging the hole, fill with water one or more times and allow the water to soak into the soil. Plant the plant, water until the water puddles on the soil surface. Mulch.*

Book review:

Gardening Your Front Yard: Projects and Ideas for Big & Small Spaces, by Tara Nolan

Julianne Labreche



Quarto Publishing Group USA, 2020

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**Available: Ottawa Public Library
Hardcover & Kindle**

A few years back, I decided to retire the lawn mower and plant a front yard pollinator garden instead. The project involved some work, for sure, but the job eventually got done. Hours were spent removing turf grass and replacing it with native and non-native flowers, grasses and herbs. In the years that followed, not only did it attract many different species of butterflies, bees and other pollinators but it also attracted lots of interest from neighbours by offering a different kind of curb appeal.

When it comes to the front yard, the meaning of curb appeal in recent years has taken on a whole

new meaning. “Curb appeal has evolved beyond a standardized aesthetic,” writes author Tara Nolan in her new book **Gardening Your Front Yard**. Like clothing or interior design in which choices are made freely, front yard gardens these days offer more individual options too.

While traditional turf grass remains perfectly acceptable, some homeowners are re-purposing their front yards. They’re becoming more adventurous, experimenting with a host of creative ideas that reflect different values and interests, along with a diversity of tastes.

With the trend to healthy, local eating, some gardeners are turning to front-yard vegetable gardening. They’re adding raised beds or inter-planting edibles with their ornamentals and some are experimenting with driveway gardens. Other gardeners are growing vertically, planting string beans, peas or tomatoes up obelisks or planting more vegetables in their side gardens. As long as local bylaws are respected, edible front yards are quite do-able and offer some real advantages. Often, they provide sunnier spaces than backyards and extra room too. Gardeners can share harvests and knowledge with passersby if they wish because more people see these edible gardens from the driveway or street.

Nolan also discusses ways to make the front yard friendlier and a little more social by adding patios, benches or even a little free library. Her book is full of weekend-warrior projects for the handy do-it-yourselfer. Suggested tools and materials usually are included. She shares ideas about how to assemble a pollinator palace, make a rain barrel out of a trash can, save space with a staircase planter or make a rolling planter. There are many inventive designs.



Bench in front garden

Tara Nolan



Pollinator palace

Tara Nolan

Thank you, Tara Nolan for permission to reproduce the above photographs

Gorgeous photos of wildflower meadows, lush and overflowing containers, herb gardens and rambling garden paths inspire the reader to re-think the conventional lawn and the work that goes into fertilizing, watering and mowing grass. There are endless possibilities for a gardener's creativity to shine in the front yard garden, including more eco-friendly ways of dealing with rainwater using swales and creating rain gardens.

Of course, there is no good reason why many of these ideas couldn't be tried in the back yard too. What's interesting about the book, however, is the various ways that gardeners are transitioning beyond turf grass in the front yard, trying new ideas, experimenting, daring to be different and creating beauty.

This is an invaluable resource for gardeners, one that certainly will help to inspire hope for anyone dealing with tired or weedy lawns or lawns lost to grubs. While she concludes that there is no right or wrong answer to having a traditional lawn, she adds: *"I do think the days of every homeowner having a picture-perfect emerald-green lawn with nary a weed or hint of clover are waning."*

Traditional lawns can waste water and sometimes do create a barren wasteland, offering little back to nature, especially pollinators. This book offers a fun romp for any gardener, no matter the size of your front yard, your gardening style or skills. It's a fine book to add to your shelf of handy, innovative gardening books. ♻️

Tip: *If your front garden is small and joins with next door's consider cooperating with the neighbour and planning a joint project. As well as a lovely garden you may end with a new friend who will share the maintenance.*

A lawn is nature under totalitarian rule. — Michael Pollan, writer

Invasive plant: Battling Buckthorn

Gail Labrosse



Buckthorn berries in spring

Gail Labrosse



Buckthorn berries in autumn

Gail Labrosse

Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) was introduced to North America in the 1880s as an ornamental shrub for windbreaks and fencerows in agricultural areas. Since then, it has spread aggressively throughout the continent. Also called European Buckthorn, it is one of Ontario's most unwelcome invasive plants.

Buckthorn tolerates a wide range of soils, moisture and light conditions. It is also a prolific seed producer. This dioecious plant has male and female flowers on different plants. Birds eat the black berries on female plants but these have a laxative effect so birds derive little nutrition while widely dispersing the seeds.

Buckthorn forms dense thickets which crowd and shade out native plants. It creates favourable conditions for its own growth by altering soil nitrogen levels, depressing native species growth. It is a host of oat rust and soybean aphid, both of which seriously affect agricultural crops. Consequently, Buckthorn is listed as a noxious weed under Ontario's Weed Control Act.

Effective control measures include manual or mechanical removal, both quite effective if followed up one year later by a prescribed burn. Prescribed burns alone are ineffective. Remove fruit producing female trees, then follow up by pulling all seedlings that regenerate. Mowing is effective if continued for two or three years.

If you see this invasive species in the wild, report the sighting to **The Invasive Species Hotline** at 1-800-563-7711. 🌱

Gardens have deep meaning when they are created and managed to benefit other species, even other humans — Benjamin Vogt, writer



Gardener beware: Ditch lily - *Hemerocallis fulva*

Gail Labrosse



Ditch daylily in a private garden

Mary Ann van Berlo

Hemerocallis fulva, or the ditch daylily, is a flowering, edible, perennial native of Asia. It was first introduced to North America by pioneers in the early 19th century as an ornamental plant, planted around many farmhouses.

We are all familiar with this old orange daylily that is still seen in private gardens but also along roadsides, explaining why it is often called ditch lily. How did it get into ditches? In most cases, because a gardener did some clean up and threw away the waste. This daylily grows vigorously. It spreads by stolons – stems that creep along underground and send up new shoots several centimetres away from the mother plant. In time, it forms a colony rather than a clump, rarely producing seeds.

When established in a natural area, this daylily can displace native vegetation and alter ecosystems. Gardeners should not choose this plant for their garden.

Note: Modern hybrid daylilies rarely have the running trait so will form a clump. They are not native but are safe to plant in your garden. It is never a good idea to discard parts of any plants over the fence – put them in the yard waste instead.

Native alternatives:

Michigan Lily - *Lilium michiganense* - suitable for meadow gardens or grasslands; tolerates a variety of growing conditions. It attracts hummingbirds and butterflies.

Pale Purple Coneflower - *Echinacea pallida* - suitable for prairie or meadow gardens; thrives in full sun, average to dry soil and is drought tolerant. It attracts birds and butterflies.

Black-eyed Susan - *Rudbeckia hirta* - full sun to partial shade, well drained soil; drought tolerant; attracts pollinators.

Find more information about the many native plants in the Ottawa area by googling "[City of Ottawa Native Plants](#)". 🌱

No risk is more terrifying than that taken by the first root. A lucky root will eventually find water, but its first job is to anchor -- to anchor an embryo and forever end its mobile phase, however passive that mobility was. Once the first root is extended, the plant will never again enjoy any hope (however feeble) of relocating to a place less cold, less dry, less dangerous. Indeed, it will face frost, drought, and greedy jaws without any possibility of flight. The tiny rootlet has only once chance to guess what the future years, decades -- even centuries -- will bring to the patch of soil where it sits. It assesses the light and humidity of the moment, refers to its programming, and quite literally takes the plunge.

—Hope Jahren, (*Lab girl*) author

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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](#)

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[Garden Activity Calendar](#)
[Vegetable Growing Calendar](#)



Clinics

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Talks and Events

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. .

Tuesday, June 15, 7:30 pm

Julianne Labreche

Going Grassless – alternatives to grass lawns

[Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society](#)

Wednesday June 16. 12:00 pm—**French**

Claire McCaughey

Jardinage en contenants

[Ottawa Public Library](#)

Wednesday, July 7, 12:00 pm

Judith Cox

Scented Gardens

[Ottawa Public Library](#)

Wednesday, July 14, 12:00 pm

Judith Cox

The Garden at Night

[Ottawa Public Library](#)

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton present:

Invasive Plants – June 15 **Japanese Beetle - June 22**

Big Bold and Beautiful - June 29 **Weeds – Friends and Foes - July 6**

Water: Source of Life - July 13



You are invited to **Learn over Lunch** with Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton.

Each Zoom session will include a presentation on the topic of the week followed by Q&A – 25-30 minutes total.

Registrants will receive a confirmation email with the Zoom link and a weekly email reminder with upcoming topics. If you have questions on these topics, send them to mgoc.ttl@gmail.com. And remember, we are always happy to answer any gardening questions on our email helpline: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca.

Click [here](#) to register for these talks –
There is no charge. You are welcome to attend as many as you'd like