

CROSS POLLINATION

Halton Master Gardeners Monthly Newsletter
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Halton Region
Master Gardeners



Hepatica *Hepatica americana*

By Isabel Belanger, Halton Master Gardener

A favourite spring flower of mine is Hepatica. It is one of the first flowers to bloom in spring and puts on a spectacular display for at least a month. Two species are native to Ontario: *H. acutiloba* and *H. americana*, also known as *H. nobilis* var. *acuta* and var. *obtusa* respectively. The main difference between the two species is the shape of the leaves. *H. acutiloba* has pointed leaves; *H. americana* has rounded leaves. Hepatica is not ephemeral like many of our native early spring plants, but rather remains evergreen even into late winter. Here it is on January 5th of this year. (see photo next page)

In the Halton area Hepatica flowers around mid-April. Flowers appear before new leaves emerge, rising on pedicels (stems) covered in dense hairs that help protect early buds and flowers from frost. After blooming, new leaves emerge and the old leaves die back.

Hepatica is a clump forming perennial, 6"-9" (15-22 cm) tall and wide. Flowers have a light fragrance, are star shaped, radially symmetrical, and range from ½" to 1" wide. Flower colour is variable and includes white, pink, blue, mauve and purple. If you want a specific colour then it is best to get the plant when it is blooming.

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Hepatica (CONT'D)



Hepatica americana on January 5th, 2023.
Hamilton ON. Photo: Isabel Belanger

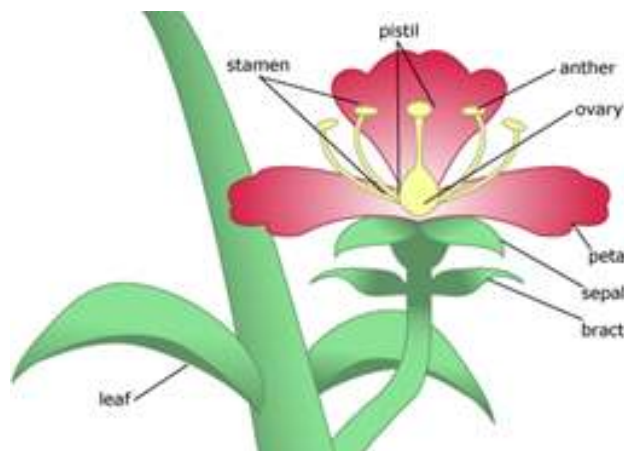


Hepatica americana April 13th, 2022. Note the hairy stems of the flower buds.
Hamilton ON. Photo: Isabel Belanger



April 21, 2022 in full bloom. White stamens are tipped with yellow anthers in the centre of the mauve sepals. Note the old dried-up leaves.
Hamilton ON. Photo: Isabel Belanger

The flowers actually consist of 5-20 oval, oblong, petal-like sepals rather than petals. The sepals surround numerous central stamens tipped with yellowish / white anthers. There are numerous pistils and about 10-30 stamens. The stamens have white or light-yellow anthers. Below and surrounding the flowers are 3 green, hairy, sepal-like bracts with either pointed or rounded tips.



Note the bract below the sepal.
Image: [University of California, Berkeley](https://www.berkeley.edu/).

Blooming is over a long period of about a month or more, however the flowers close at night and on cloudy days (to preserve their pollen for when early pollinators are out and about). The flowers produce pollen but no nectar.

New leaves emerge once the flowers finish blooming and are hairy, light green, unrolled and appear frosted or silvery. The leaves are basal, 3-lobed, about 2-3 inches long and wide, and are leathery and smooth when they mature; they are dark olive-green with blotches of brown, bronze, and maroon on top, and are purplish below; but leaf colour can be variable: either plain or mottled green. The leaves are thought to be shaped like the human liver, hence the common name liverleaf. The leaves were used in numerous colonial health remedies thought to alleviate liver ailments (since proven untrue – in fact *Hepatica* can be poisonous if ingested).

Continued on next page

Hepatica (CONT'D)

Indigenous peoples also had medicinal uses for the plant. Hepatica is pollinated by early bees, flies, and beetles, but most often by small carpenter bees, *Ceratina spp.* and sweat bees *Lasioglossum spp.* It can also self-pollinate. Once pollinated, ants will disperse the seeds, much like they do with last month's featured plant, bloodroot. The seeds (achenes) have a fat rich elaiosome, (a small, fleshy appendage) that attracts the ants who bring them back to their nests. They feed on the elaiosome and discard the seeds.



One of the small carpenter bees in the genus *Ceratina*.

Photo by Gary McDonald University of California, Santa Cruz.

<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/small-carpenter-bees>

What's in a Name?

Hepaticas are members of the *Ranunculaceae* family which also includes buttercups, anemones and meadow rue. What complicates matters is that *Anemone acutiloba* and *A. obtusa* are also [synonyms](#) of both *Hepatica americana* and *H. obtusa*. Not only that, Hepaticas also have European and Asian cousins including *Hepatica nobilis var. nobilis* (Europe) and *Hepatica nobilis var. japonica* (Asia).

Wikipedia has a list of all the [hepatica](#) species. Be sure to look for *acutiloba* or *americana* in the name in order to build your North American native plant garden and help support our native pollinators / insects. The native species are every bit as beautiful as their exotic cousins.


Growing Conditions

Hepatica prefers a deciduous woodland location with rich humus soil. They like a dappled sun / part shade location. *H. acutiloba* is found in rich creek bottoms and in sandier soils, while *H. americana* generally occurs on more acidic soils at the tops of slopes in mesic woodlands. Occasionally both species occur in the same woods and may even hybridize.

Plant Partners

Hepatica pairs well with other woodland plants such as wild geranium (*Geranium maculatum*), Dutchman's breeches (*Dicentra cucullaria*), Trilliums, Woodland Phlox (*Phlox divaricata*), Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*), Foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) and many others. It makes a stunning punctuation point in the woodland garden and is impressive when planted in groups of three or five.

Further reading:

- [Sharp-Lobed Hepatica](#) - Cornell Botanic Gardens
- [What makes a petal a petal?](#)
- [Hepatica](#) - Wisconsin Horticulture 



See hepatica [blooming at the RBG in April!](#)

APRIL 'TO-DO' LIST

by Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

- Nature-Friendly Spring Tasks** – Cutting back plants or removing dead leaves is largely an aesthetic consideration-most plants don't benefit from it. Most stems or leaves will slowly decompose as the temperatures warm. If you must cut plants back, wait until temperatures are above 10°C for about a week. Leaving leaves & stems allows native bees & butterflies time to emerge, & gives them places to hide.
- Invasive Plants** – This is the perfect time to spot & remove invasives like [periwinkle](#). Remove [garlic mustard](#) seedlings as they appear to stop them from producing chemicals that kill the beneficial soil fungi which provide critical food to maples & other native plants.
- Pruning** – Use clean, sharp tools to remove dead, damaged, diseased wood & prune overgrown vines or shrubs. Prune to improve air circulation & appearance in shrubs & trees. Cut back branches to just above another branch or a bud. Keep a sharp eye out for cocoons and chrysalises when pruning. Keep in mind that if you prune spring flowering shrubs now, you will sacrifice blooms. [Lavender](#): When new growth starts to appear, use secateurs to prune back dead or overgrown stems to a vigorous bud. Do not over prune.
- 'Chop & Drop'** – When pruning or cutting back plants use the ['chop & drop'](#) method to return organic material to the soil & provide nesting material for birds. Prunings can also be stacked up against a fence or in a corner.
- Oak Wilt** – Prune oaks before bud break to reduce the risk of [oak wilt](#). If you absolutely need to prune your oak when it is in leaf, treat cuts with pruning paint. Note: This is the only situation where pruning paint is recommended.
- Spring bulbs** – Blood meal or chicken manure pellets sprinkled around emerging tulips **may** help to deter deer and squirrel grazing.

Spongy Moth Patrol!

“Spongy moths start hatching as the weather warms. The caterpillars can defoliate entire trees in summer. Locate egg masses & scrape them into a container of soapy water to control populations. Read this [excellent blog](#) from the RBG for more information and details.”



Look for these brown wooly egg masses on trees, sheds & garden structures. Photo: Town of Richmond Hill

- Dahlia, calla, canna** etc. – If tubers start to sprout, pot them up and grow in your sunniest window. Otherwise, continue to check them weekly. Pot up bulbs from late April to May.
- Lawn** – Remove leaves or debris only if walking on the lawn leaves NO footprints. This reduces soil compaction. Wait for warm weather before overseeding
- Seeds** – Time to start your tomato seeds if you haven't already done so. Start tender annual flowers [indoors](#) for mid- to late-May planting. Seed cool weather crops like peas, spinach, lettuce, beets, radishes directly in the garden as soon as the ground can be worked.
- [Divide or transplant perennials](#) – as growth resumes and soil is workable.
- Check out our [March newsletter](#) for any garden jobs that you may have missed.
- Celebrate **Earth Day** by planting a tree, adding native plants, using sustainable garden practices.



GIVE YOUR GARDEN TIME, NOT MONEY

By Bev Wagar, Halton Master Gardener

Is your favourite shrub looking sad? Is your rock-hard soil growing a bumper crop of weeds? Are you determined to finally *do something*?

It's natural for keen gardeners to tackle problems head-on. We want to fix them fast before they get worse. And, like helicopter parents, we want to help our plants along, even if they appear healthy and happy. We buy bagged soil products, the ubiquitous yellow polka-dot dress that suburban driveways wear in April. Arising from the best intentions, persuasive advertising, and the neighbourhood bandwagon, those bags contain the hopes and dreams of springtime. But can we really *spend* our way to garden success?



A non-gardening friend of mine wanted a "better" front lawn. Living in an older part of the city, she has mature trees providing shade and roots, and a nearby ravine providing deer, skunks, and squirrels. Armed with a fuzzy, benevolent desire to "put something on the grass", she consulted the local sod mogul and brought home a trunkload of "black earth" and a bag of fertilizer. When I told her that she should simply have topdressed lightly with compost and overseeded, she was a little distressed. Her lawn—and back—will recover, but what a waste of time it was.

For people who don't start seeds indoors, loading up on soil amendments is among the few garden-related activities possible in April. But that's no reason to do it. Sunshine and warm breezes may beckon, but please resist the urge to dump black stuff on unsuspecting plants!

What's in those bags?

What is actually in those bags anyway? Here's what one company's web site says: "black loam, peat loam, very-well-decomposed manure and a touch of mineral soil." Of course I had to phone them for details.

"Black loam" is the anaerobically decomposed remains of ancient grasses and ferns removed from the bottom of deep-water bogs. This is what gives the product its dark colour. "Peat loam" is partially decomposed sphagnum moss from peat wetlands. I did not ask where they obtained the "well decomposed manure." I noted the use of "decomposed" not "composted", which suggests that the manure is not from a managed thermophilic process.

The last ingredient, the tiny "mineral soil" portion, comes from the sod-farm side of the business. So, it's clear why the product is virtually weed-free. And, although it would likely support microbial life should it encounter any, it is pretty much dead.

This "loam" is really just various forms of peat. And we have to talk about peat. It's a finite resource and, despite what the marketers say, it cannot be harvested in a sustainable way. Once a wetland has been destroyed by excavators, there is no going back. The producer may plant trees but an ecosystem that took Nature 10,000 years to make is gone forever.

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GIVE YOUR GARDEN TIME, NOT MONEY (CONT'D)

For soil amendment, replace peat with compost. Whether you make it yourself or buy it in bags or in bulk, make sure it's [good quality](#). All compost from municipal yard-waste programs in Ontario meets quality and safety standards, so you can be reasonably sure it's free from pathogens and [jumping worms](#).

Moving water

But let's return to our black earth product which, having been lovingly shoveled onto the garden, is now plotting to overthrow the back yard. The problems begin with water.

Water, whether from rain or hose, will completely saturate the upper layer before slowly percolating into the lower layer. It's simply the physics of the [way water travels in soil of different textures](#). The effect is similar to what can happen when we put a raised bed on top of clay: a soggy saturated planting layer perched on the native soil at grade.

Being almost entirely organic matter, the new "soil" will be soft and friable, ready to cuddle those new plants and seedlings. But when the descending roots hit the original soil layer (the compacted stuff you're trying to fix) they can't push through. They just go sideways, taking the path of least resistance, forced to soak in a bathtub of peat.

Can this situation be fixed? Yes—by creating a transition layer between the native soil and the top soil. Remove all but two or three inches of the new top layer and dig it into the native soil with a garden fork. Then add the rest of the product. And yes, digging is bad for soil. But it's necessary—once only—to allow plant roots to penetrate, to do the work you hoped the bagged products would do.

Let Nature do the work

If you allow organic matter to remain on the surface, nature will make soil. Let the leaves rot where they fall. Resist the urge to clean up and allow branches, stems, and stalks to break down, through the action of weather and soil microorganisms, and eventually become humus, the irreducible outcome of decay.



From *Water Movement in the Soil*, a video about the principles governing water flow. <https://youtu.be/ego2FkuQwxc>

Soil microorganisms (affectionately known as the *microherd*) are powerful, diverse, and short lived. While alive, microorganisms excrete organic matter and, when dead, *become* organic matter. They cause tiny spaces to open up in the soil, which fill with air and moisture. In natural systems with healthy soil (and yes I'm oversimplifying things here) they [feed plant roots](#). We can't fake these systems. Neither can we buy them. But by providing the right materials, encouraging the right conditions, and practicing patience, we can help Nature create garden soil—at her own pace.

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GIVE YOUR GARDEN TIME, NOT MONEY (CONT'D)

Slow soil

How do we provide what Nature needs to make soil? It's not difficult. In fact it's downright lazy. The following guidelines require far less work than the polka-dots do.

Do not disturb the soil. Tillage and digging invert soil layers and churn up the microherd's habitat. It recovers quickly, but constant tilling eventually takes it toll in the form of degraded soil structure.

Put the organic matter (OM) on top. If you're growing an annual crop that depletes soil nutrients, add OM such as well-rotted manure, compost, kitchen scraps, or crop residues. Incorporate these lightly into the top few inches of soil—don't bury them deep. The microherd needs air and moisture, which are near the surface.

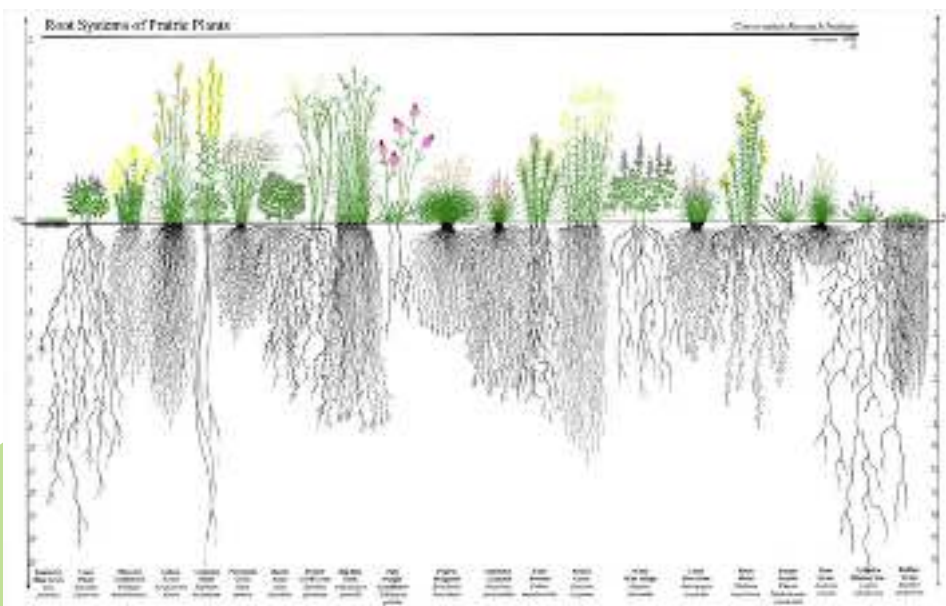
Cover thy naked soil—with plants. Nature will fill a void, but you can help, simply by getting something growing. Use a "green manure" or "living mulch", especially over winter. Soil-covering plants not only suppress weeds, prevent erosion, and contribute OM, many of them—those with powerful, deep root systems— accomplish what shovels can't.

In response to changing environmental conditions, plant roots constantly expand and contract. They slough off feeder roots that become food for the microherd and make channels for the movement of water and air. Over time, these processes create what we call good "tilth" – friable, loose soil with sticky crumbs that gardeners love to touch.

Sometimes you need to keep an area plant-free. For these situations, arborists' wood chips are a good choice for mulch. So are straw, hay, and grass clippings. Not all organic matter is appropriate, though. Mulch made of shredded or chipped wood bark, as well as any mulch made of cedar, resist decay, and decay is what we want to encourage.

Our culture pushes quick-and-cheap solutions to almost everything. But gardens, no matter what we shovel on them, are not consumer items. Instead of shopping we should observe, analyze, research, and understand what's happening in our gardens.

We need fewer products and more time. Time, along with Science, shows us how plants function in an ecosystem, how the complex interaction of sunshine, rain, air, soil, organic matter, and soil-dwelling organisms, both microscopic and visible, create the conditions for life on earth. Biologists call it the *carbon cycle*, but we can call it a healthy garden.



Roots go where shovels can't—and are directly responsible for healthy soil structure creation <https://extension.sdstate.edu/power-living-roots>



OUTDOOR PLAYSCAPES FOR CHILDREN - PART ONE

by Janet Mackey, Halton Master Gardener

Individuals and communities continually change in response to new innovations, increasing needs, and an innate desire for knowledge, enjoyment, and novelty. Our choices in homes, vocations, travel, and leisure all reflect these changes. Children however, have not really changed dramatically over the years.. As I write, I'm reflecting on the growth of my first grandchild over the past couple of years—and 33 years as an educator. Yes, there are different experiences (new technology, remote work, and play cafes come to mind) but essentially "little ones" haven't changed that much.

Kids are curious, adventurous, and creative beings who constantly seek out experiences to expand their understanding of the world. What better way to meet this need than outdoor play in backyards, parks and gardens. Children can explore using all their senses and muscles to run, crawl, jump, and roll over different surfaces.

What *has* changed over time is how children interact in this outdoor environment. For thousands of years most children experienced the work of gathering food, either watching while swaddled or helping directly. This strong connection with nature changed with the onset of the industrial revolution. Home and work life split apart. Children in cities, often sent away to work, became disconnected from green spaces, nature, and food production.



As the modern age emerged during the twentieth century, a new middle class in western culture began to have leisure time, as well as the opportunity to own homes with a surrounding landscape. Homes no longer necessarily had the front porch to entertain neighbours or spend leisure time. It was at this time that the backyard was born. Backyards required an *invitation* to socialize with neighbours. People wanted privacy, a place to entertain and of course, a large swath of green turfgrass—the larger, the better. With stable household incomes, food became something to purchase, not grow. The grassed area might be used for a game of badminton, catch, or croquet, but most of the time the lawn became an angst-inducing maintenance chore. To learn more about the downside of lawns, read [Your Yard Is a Stealthy Fossil Fuel Guzzler—Give It a Climate Makeover](#) and [How to Put Your Yard to Work for the Climate](#).



The birth of the backyard in western culture was a phenomenon of the Modern Age during the 20th century.

Image: [TV Ontario](#)



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OUTDOOR PLAYSCAPES (CONT'D)

In my neighbourhood I do notice how infrequently backyards are used. A family get-together on the patio or a visit to the play structure might happen once in a while, but generally the great indoors prevails. Backyards can't seem to compete with indoor interests, program commitments, and screens.

In this two-part series I'd like to propose that we, individuals and communities, reflect on the purpose and use of green spaces whether backyard, parks or planned public gardens. Who are they for? What is their purpose? How is the space used? I believe it's useful to look at different types of planned landscapes and purpose-built children's gardens. They are springboards to child-focused places within our gardens and, perhaps more importantly, have the ability to restore a connection to the natural world.

Until the 18th century in Europe, planned landscapes and gardens were very formal, full of straight lines and rigid symmetry. [Lancelot 'Capability' Brown](#) changed that. Believing that gardens should reflect nature, he created elaborate settings for the estates of British nobility. He diverted streams to establish serpentine-like lakes and moved mature trees to create naturalistic groupings that framed a view.

Public gardens, especially those dedicated to the enjoyment of children, can also be a source of inspiration. One exceptional garden for children is the Huntington Children's Garden in San Marino California. Children can splash in whirlpools, play amongst topiary animals, and make music by dropping pebbles through a maze of metal. The garden includes a tunnel illuminated by prism-diffracted sunlight. Plants are chosen for their interesting textures, colours, or scents.

Closer to home is the Franklin Children's Garden on Toronto Island (view a tour [HERE](#).) Children can explore a winding 'snail-trail' and arrive at the highest spot on the island. They can play inside a vine tunnel and explore a wheelchair-accessible treehouse. Of course, there are also bronze characters from the Franklin storybooks scattered throughout the garden.



[Children's Garden at Kew](#)

The well-known Children's Garden at Kew is divided into the four elements that plants need to grow: earth, air, water, and sun. The goal of this design is to help children "develop a lasting relationship with and love for plants and nature". You may want to view the video [HERE](#).

These gardens are unique and undeniably child friendly. But they're *static*—they don't change much over time. As well, they've been designed by landscape architects who see beauty through the eyes of an adult. Sometimes we lose sight that, to a child, the simplest of objects can be fascinating. A basket of pebbles, a boggy piece of earth, or small creatures discovered under a log—all can stimulate an afternoon of exploration.

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OUTDOOR PLAYSCAPES (CONT'D)

Long before the pandemic moved learning outdoors for children in our province, there were well-established programs in other parts of the world known as [Forest Schools](#). Originating in Scandinavia, these programs prioritize children's connection to nature with daily outdoor experiential learning.

You may have noticed in recent years that schoolyard playgrounds have begun to change. Highly organized and expensive play structures have been replaced with open-ended spaces that can be used for a variety of purposes including climbing, dramatic play, or as a spot to linger and enjoy the day.

Next month I'll share suggestions for meaningful backyard play spaces that encourage inquiry, exploration, and discovery—ideas that can work in both existing and planned landscapes. In addition, I will review safety considerations, plant choices, and hardscape materials such as stone, wood, mulches, and ground covers. ❁



The Industrial Age changed the lives of children within cities.
Image: [Fine Art of America](#)



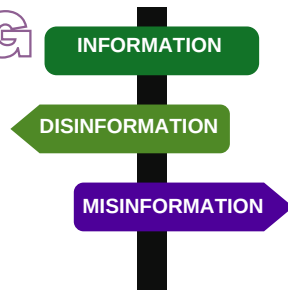
Forest Schools are flourishing in the United Kingdom
Image: [Positive News](#)

Additional Resources

- [The American backyard as we know it developed after World War II](#)
- [Frances Griscom Parsons and New York's Children's Garden Movement – The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#)
- [How did Industrialization Alter the Family, University of Wisconsin Green Bay - Foundations of Western Culture:](#)
- [History of the North American Backyard](#)
- [1960s Backyard Video](#)



GARDENING Myths



UNDERSTANDING FACT FROM FICTION

By Kirsten McCarthy, Halton Master Gardener

Myth: Plant potatoes on Good Friday

As the Easter holiday approaches, many people might be tempted to run out and grab some seed potatoes to plant on the long weekend. By doing a little research, you will find this garden myth everywhere! As the legend goes, people believe they should always plant their potato crop on Good Friday, and the crop will produce lots of great potatoes. Many say the roots (haha) of this practice come from Ireland when the potato famine was in full force. At that time, people looked to the heavens for help with their potato harvest.



There are some facets of this garden myth that make sense. Potatoes do better when planted in cooler weather. And, generally, Good Friday does fall during the coolest temps of springtime. However, as the Easter calendar moves, so does Good Friday. So, in reality, it is much more of a myth than any planting truth.

In truth, potatoes are a popular choice in any vegetable garden. They are fairly easy to grow and the versatility of containers available for people with limited space makes it possible for everyone to have their own potato crop. If you've never tried growing potatoes, make this gardening season the year to try something new. Here are some quick facts to get you started:



- Buy disease-free seed tubers from a certified grower or seed distributor.
- Plant seed pieces as soon as the soil warms (40F/4C), not Good Friday.
- Once the green shoots emerge, plan to hill the soil up along the plants as they grow.
- Potatoes require more fertilizer than other vegetables.
- You can dig new potatoes about seven to eight weeks after planting.
- Harvest mature tubers after the foliage has yellowed and dried.
- Potatoes need a sunny location to grow well.
- Potatoes grow best in well-drained, sandy soil. A poorly drained soil is more likely to produce diseased tubers.
- The addition of manure or compost can add micronutrients and organic matter to the soil.



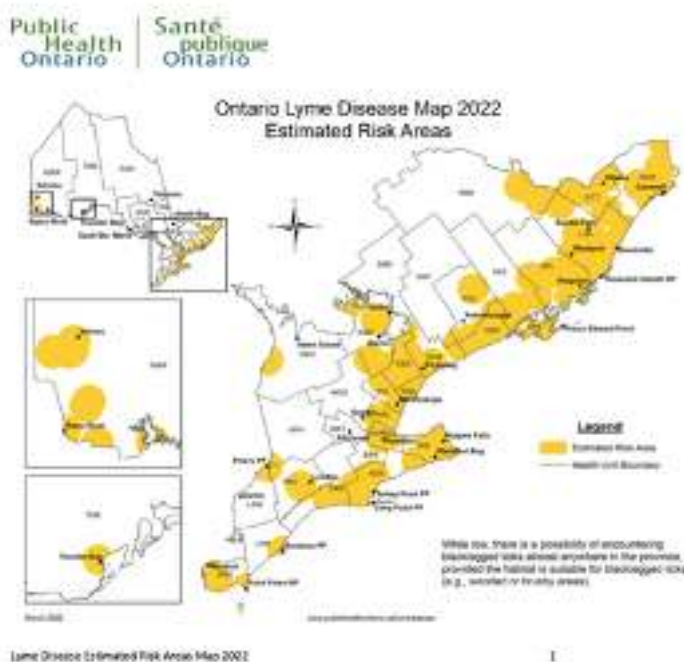
Learn more:

[Growing potatoes in home gardens](#)
[Potatoes - University of Saskatchewan](#)

Q & A

By Hariette Henry, Halton Master Gardener

The best thing you can do to protect yourself from Lyme disease is to avoid being bitten by a tick. Most species of ticks can be active in temperatures near the freezing point. With a changing climate, Canada's tick season now begins early in spring and ends late in the fall, with 75% of Lyme cases reported in June, July, and August. Using tick surveillance data from Public Health Units across the province, Public Health Ontario produces a Lyme Disease Estimated Risk Area Map each spring. The map highlights the Ontario regions where the risk of Lyme disease is higher due to the establishment of blacklegged tick populations.



Lyme Disease Estimated Risk Area Map, 2022
Source: Public Health Ontario



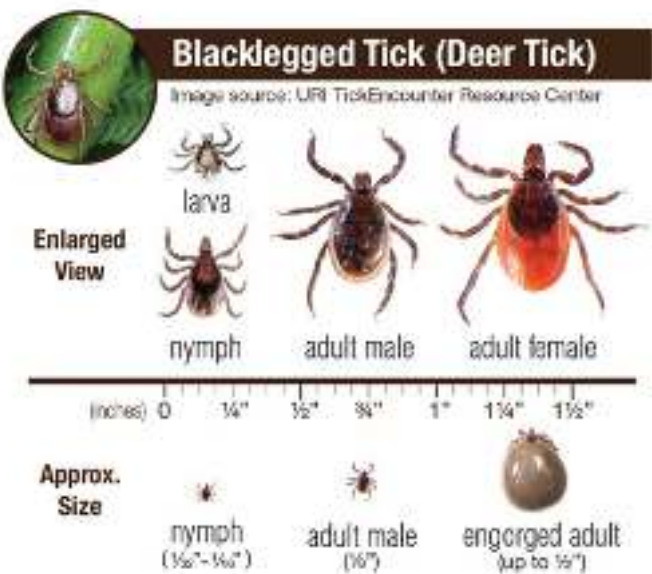
As avid gardeners and outdoor enthusiasts we are anxious to know how to protect ourselves, our pets, and our garden from ticks and Lyme disease.

Blacklegged ticks (also known as deer ticks), *Ixodes scapularis*, are not the most abundant species found in the region, however they are the Lyme disease carriers. This bacterial infection is spread by the bite of an infected tick which is usually present in wooded, brushy or tall grassy areas. Ticks at all life stages can bite humans, but nymphs (size of a poppy seed) and adult females (size of a sesame seed) are most commonly found on people. The best defence for avoiding infection is to make it difficult for ticks to bite you. Here are some steps you can take:

- If possible, avoid known tick areas and stay on trails when outdoors.
- Cover up by wearing long-sleeved, light-coloured clothing with tightly woven fabric.
- Tuck your shirt into your pants and your pant legs into your socks to keep ticks away from your bare skin.
- Wear shoes that cover your entire foot; avoid sandals or open shoes.
- Spray clothing and exposed skin with an insect repellent containing DEET or Icaridin.
- Check your clothing and body for any ticks after spending time outdoors, especially around the groin, armpits and scalp/hairline. Showering can wash away any ticks that may be on your skin, and it's a great opportunity to check for bites.
- Check your pets regularly for ticks as they can become infected or carry ticks inside your home. Ticks most often attach to dogs and cats on the head, neck and ears. Effective preventive medications are available from your veterinarian to help repel ticks on your pet.

Q & A (CONT'D)

If you find a tick that is not attached you needn't worry. If it *is* attached and you've found it early, you should be fine as it usually takes at least 24 hours for a tick to transmit the germs that cause the disease. In any case you will want to remove the tick as carefully as possible, making sure you get as much of it as you can. Save the tick to identify what species it is as only blacklegged ticks transmit Lyme disease. Etick.ca is a public platform that provides information about tick species and where they are currently being found. You can also use this platform for image-based identification.



Relative sizes of blacklegged ticks at different life stages. Image source: Public Health, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph.

To remove a tick, use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp it as close to the skin's surface as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure. Don't twist or jerk the tick; this can cause the mouth-parts to break off and remain in the skin. If this happens, remove the mouth-parts as best you can with tweezers. Then thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol, an iodine scrub, or soap and water.

[See video: How to properly remove a Tick!, Canada.ca!](#)

Typical symptoms of Lyme disease include fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic skin rash that looks like a bullseye. If left untreated, the infection can spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system. For more information on Lyme disease symptoms visit [Halton-Lyme Disease](#).

When it comes to making your property tick resistant, be aware that ticks prefer humid, shady, and overgrown wooded areas. They like stonewalls, woodpiles and are also found in grassy or brushy areas. Ticks don't fly, jump, or drop on you from above. They are hitchhikers, using a behaviour called questing to latch on when you brush against vegetation on which they are lurking.

Knowing a tick's behaviour and favourite habitat can help you make your property less hospitable to them. Create three-foot wide paths of woodchips, gravel, or stone through the garden and between lawns and wooded areas. Increase sunlight by pruning trees and shrubs near walkways. Place children's playground sets, as well as patios and decks, in sunny locations away from yard edges. Discourage unwelcome animals such as deer and raccoons. Add deer-resistant plantings ([Rutgers Deer Resistant Plant Lists](#)). Remove Berberis spp, such as Japanese barberry, (*Berberis thunbergii*) which have been found to [encourage ticks](#), especially those that carry Lyme disease. By taking these control measures you should be able to manage your risks and have an enjoyable summer. ✿

For More Information!

[How to protect yourself from ticks](#)

[Creating a Tick-Resistant Garden](#)

[Create a Tick-safe Zone to Reduce Blacklegged Ticks in the Yard](#)

[Halton-Lyme Disease](#)

GARDEN INSPIRATION AND HUMOUR

ME CHECKING ON THE SEEDS I JUST PLANTED!



Photo: Home and Garden Trends

A MAGNIFYING GLASS ALSO BUILDS KIDS SCIENCE SKILLS!



Photo by Agenturfotograf / iStock

[How a Magnifying Glass Builds Kids' Science Skills](#)



Illustration: Jean Morin

What's Growing On?

Spring is an excellent time to explore waterfalls!



[Learn more here](#)



Conservation
Halton



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About Our Newsletter

Cross Pollination is published monthly from February to December and is written and prepared by our dedicated volunteers. Halton Master Gardeners are experienced gardeners who have studied horticulture extensively and continue to upgrade their skills through technical training. We strive to provide science-based, sustainable gardening information to the general public. The information in our newsletter has been verified by our volunteers to the best of our abilities, but given the scope of horticulture and science some concepts may not reflect current knowledge.

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