

CROSS POLLINATION

Halton Master Gardeners Monthly Newsletter
JULY 2023 | VOL. 16 ISSUE 06

In this issue:

Wild Strawberry
Page 01

July Garden 'To-Do' List
Page 03

*Naturalized Landscapes &
Municipal By-Laws Part 2*
Page 04

The Gardening Splurge
Page 07

Garden Journeys - Open Days
Page 09

Gardening Myths
Page 10

*Question of the Month - Black
Walnut*
Page 11

Garden Inspiration - Small Trees
Page 12

What's Growing On
Page 13



Halton Region
Master Gardeners



Wild Strawberry - *Fragaria virginiana*

By Janet Mackey, Halton Master Gardener

"Is that wild strawberry?" At a recent 'Open Garden' event in the city of Hamilton, this was one of the most common questions asked when visitors were touring around our garden. This beautiful groundcover (my photo above) sits in partial shade along the edge of a pathway underneath the arbour, just like I planned it...however, I didn't. It just appeared one day and I decided I liked the look and let it flourish. Often gardeners are frustrated when wild strawberry begins to fill gaps in their lawn. It's very adaptable to a variety of soil types and moisture levels. It's not fussy about light conditions, with the exception of deep shade, where you'll have to switch to woodland strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*. So yes, it can be opportunistic in a lawn, just like other ground covers.

Wild strawberry functions as part of the local ecosystem and supports biodiversity, so it's a better choice than other heat tolerant groundcovers, some of which are invasive (i.e., thyme, stonecrop). Pollination ecologists recognize its ability to attract large numbers of native bees and butterflies including the gray hairstreak. It also attracts predatory and parasitoid insects that prey upon problematic pests.

At five to eight inches tall, it is a beautiful groundcover, but it is not one that withstands regular foot traffic. In areas beside the stepping stones in my garden, where people sometimes tread, the plants are small in size, growing close to the soil level. *Continued on next page*

WILD STRAWBERRY (CON'T)



If you decide to include wild strawberry in your garden and you're looking for it to densely cover the area, it will be important to first remove any existing vegetation and weeds. If you'd like it to cover the area within a year or so, place seedlings six to ten inches apart. Once it gets going and produces offsets, you'll find that you can use it in other locations by re-planting the new growth.

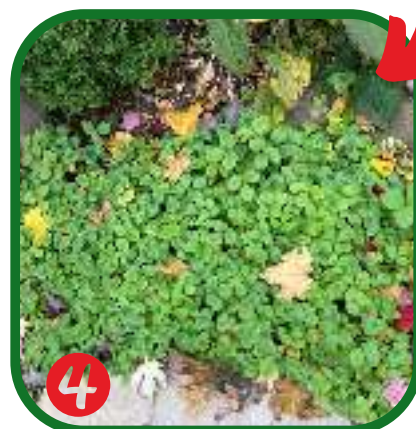
Another amazing feature of wild strawberry is that once it's established it requires no watering. It will also remain green into the fall and through the winter. Brighter green new growth will be noticed in early spring.

The fruit of wild strawberry is small and tasty. An interesting fact is that our cultivated strawberry was developed in France from a cross between this plant, *Fragaria virginiana*, and a similar wild strawberry from Chile.

I'm off to pick a few strawberries to enjoy, still warm from the afternoon sun. The rest of the crop will be left for the birds and other small mammals nearby.

Resources:

- [Indicator Fact Sheet](#) - Wild Strawberry University of Maine
- [Fragaria virginiana](#) - Ladybird Johnson Wildflower Centre - Plant Database
- [Wild Strawberry](#) - Friends of the Arboretum



Clockwise from top left: 1. Wild strawberries forming on plants along the path. 2. Wild strawberries are small but sweet. 3. The flower of wild strawberry. 4. A photo taken in later November shows the over-wintering green leaves. 5. Wild strawberries can make a nice path edger but is not a good ground cover for regular foot traffic 6. The gray hairstreak is one of the short-tongued butterflies that visits wild strawberry. (All photos Janet Mackey (except #2 and #6 - Canva)



JULY 'TO-DO' LIST

by Claudette Sims, Halton Master Gardener

- Keep Things Blooming** – Cut back early blooming perennials, e.g., [hardy geraniums](#) and delphiniums 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 spent flowers](#) by pinching or cutting with scissors to encourage blooming & branching.
- Common Milkweed** – Trim back some of your common milkweed ([Asclepias syriaca](#)) stems the 2nd or 3rd week of July to stimulate new, young growth which is more [attractive to monarchs for egg laying](#).
- Lawn** – Mow high (3"/7.5 cm) to shade out weeds. Leave the clippings on the grass to return nutrients & water to the soil. Let the lawn go dormant in dry hot spells (it may yellow) by watering only every other week. Water dormant grass if the blades don't spring back when you walk on it or if they fold to show their lighter blueish green underside. Do not fertilize in July. Learn more about [summer care of lawns](#).



“ Monarch butterflies prefer younger milkweed stems for laying eggs. “Renew” your milkweeds by cutting some of them back to encourage rich new growth. By cutting plants back in July, they’ll be ready for prime egg-laying in early August. ”



- 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).
- Weeds** – Target removal of seedheads to reduce the seed bank for next year. Check this [Ontario Weed Photo Gallery](#) to help ID weeds & find management options.
- Veggies** – Water during dry or hot weather to avoid stressing plants. Do not over fertilize tomatoes as it can lead to [blossom end rot](#). Snip herbs to encourage new bushy growth. [Add these plants](#) near your veggies to attract beneficial insects.
- 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. Others can be knocked into a bucket of soapy water.
- Enjoy & Assess** - Grab your favourite drink and immerse yourself in the sights & sounds of a living space. Congratulate yourself for creating a garden whose beauty isn't just "petal deep, but goes into the soil and back into the air for miles around on the backs and legs of insects". ([Benjamin Vogt](#))



Naturalized Landscapes & Municipal Bylaws - Part 2

by Janet Mackey, Halton Master Gardener

Creating Gardens in the Municipal Right of Way

Adding a garden in the [municipal right-of-way](#) can be tricky. The rules generally are more strict, since it's not your property but belongs to your municipality. If you don't have an up to date survey, you can roughly locate where the municipal property begins by locating the water service. Generally it's 3 m from the edge of the street.

Something to consider: If the municipality needs to do construction on this part of the property, it will only replace pavement or turf grass.

Possible solution: Having had our boulevards torn up for utility upgrades over three successive seasons, we have had good results by speaking to the site foreman. We requested that they let us know where they needed to dig which allowed us to remove plants, if necessary, before digging began.

Each municipality is unique in its standard of care of municipal property. As a property owner you are required to maintain the municipality's portion. As with any landscaping projects, be sure to have site locates done prior to any digging.

The City of Burlington's bylaw is quite specific:

3.6 Every owner of property, other than public property, shall maintain the adjoining boulevard at their expense, and shall cut vegetative growth on the boulevard whenever the height of the vegetative growth exceeds 20 centimeters in height or length and shall keep the boulevard free of all [noxious weeds](#).

[City of Burlington Bylaw 49-2022](#)

If you decide to replace turf grass on the municipal portion with this type of bylaw wording, it would be advisable to choose a drought/salt-tolerant, low-growing (< 20 cm) groundcover that will green up quickly in spring.

In the Town of Oakville, residents used to have to obtain a permit for boulevard planting, however this requirement has recently been changed. [Here is a link to the updated guidelines for sustainable lawns in Oakville.](#)



Image: [Credit Valley Conservation 'Your Green Yard'](#)

A look at the text from the Town of Oakville shows the commitment to sustainable gardens.

"Boulevard gardens beautify our roadsides and well-chosen, non-invasive plants that are designed to retain moisture can reduce water usage and therefore the need to use mowers and fertilizers. Introducing native and diverse plant species can also improve the health of our ecosystem. For these reasons, the town encourages residents to plant gardens on their boulevards, provided they do not obstruct the vision of drivers or prevent them from viewing traffic in all directions.

Boulevard gardens also need to be designed to prevent soil from washing into the street (and ultimately into rivers or lakes), and the plants chosen must be able to survive the harsh roadside conditions.

[Oakville Sustainable Living: Lawns & Gardens](#)



*Two low-growing perennial species suitable for the municipal right-of-way, Silverweed (*Argentina anserina*) and Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*). Note that they will take one to two months to 'green-up' in spring.*

Photos: Sharon & Wayne Brandt

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NATURALIZED LANDSCAPES & MUNICIPAL BYLAWS PART 2 (CONT'D)

Creating Gardens in the Municipal Right of Way (cont'd)

Note to Self: Be VERY conscious of plant choice and location on municipal right-of-ways:

- Request site locates for underground services through [Ontario One Call](#)
- Plants must not obscure the visibility of pedestrians, cyclists or cars when travelling on sidewalks, roads or driveways
- CHECK my local bylaw
- Ensure plants don't create a hazard for young children, or those with mobility or vision impairments
- Keep taller plants away from the edges and trim if necessary



I did find advice from the Town of Oakville for property owners to avoid altering the grade (slope), particularly near a neighbouring property or a drainage swale. ([Property Drainage & Grading - Town of Oakville](#)).



Swales are often located between homes. When planning a garden next to your neighbour's property, care must be taken to NOT alter the slope as it can affect water drainage
Image: [Reddit for Landscapers](#)

Front Yard Gardens in Oakville and Milton

Within the town of Oakville there are few references to the type of landscapes homeowners can create on their property. Other than keeping grass and weeds trimmed (less than 20.33 cm or 8" in height) and removing toxic plants (i.e.hogweed, poison ivy), residents are advised to keep landscapes "neat and tidy, free of garbage".

4 (1) Ground Cover (1) Any Owner shall ensure that their Lot is graded or provided with Ground Cover, as appropriate, so as to prevent: a. Unstable soil conditions; b. Soil erosion; or, c. Accumulations of dust or dirt from spreading to neighbouring properties

[Town of Oakville Bylaw 2017-008 Lot Maintenance](#)

Note to Self:

- Maintain the garden, show that you care
- Inspect the garden for invasive or problematic plants
- Work with the existing grade/slope



Pearly Everlasting in the front garden Image: Janet Mackey

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NATURALIZED LANDSCAPES & MUNICIPAL BYLAWS PART 2 (CONT'D)

Frontyard Gardens in Oakville and Milton

The town of Milton has very specific guidelines for homeowners who wish to add gardens to their frontyard. These include:

- Keeping grass and weeds on your front lawn, back lawn and boulevard shorter than eight inches (22.3cm)
- A one-metre buffer strip must be maintained and cut adjacent to neighboring properties (for rural properties this would be a 10m wide strip)
- Removal of weeds according to the [OMAFRA Weed Control Act](#)
- Ensuring that plants do not become overgrown affecting safety, visibility, and passage of the general public
- Keeping a tidy yard (see attached text from the bylaw)



Looking for something positive you can do to support the environment? Try gardening with native plants - Lorraine Johnson, Toronto Star July 19, 2021

4.4 Every owner of a property shall ensure that:
(a) all lawns, shrubs, vines, hedges, bushes and vegetation other than weeds and turf grass be kept trimmed, and shall not be overgrown and/or unsightly

[Milton Community Standards Bylaw](#)

Resources:

- [It shouldn't be illegal to re-wild your yard - Rewilding Magazine](#)
- [Native Gardens - City of Guelph \(design samples\)](#)
- [Resources/Guides & How To - In Our Nature](#)
- [Going Wild for Native Plants - Ontario Nature](#)
- [Native Prairie and Meadow Landscapes - Credit Valley Conservation](#)
- [Blooming Boulevards](#)



The City of Guelph has prepared garden designs. They're a great starting point.



New Jersey tea and lanceleaf coreopsis in the author's front garden June 2023

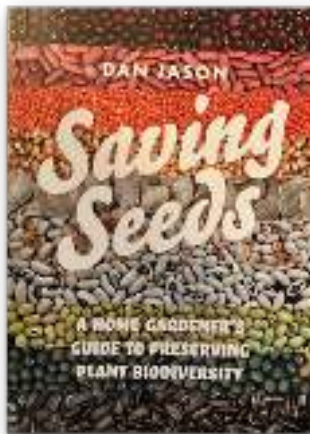
The Gardening Splurge

by Olga Marranca, Halton Master Gardeners



If you're like me, you find it extremely difficult to pass by a garden centre. So many flowers, herbs, trees, trellises, new shiny tools, fancy gloves, aprons and, yes, clothing. Garden centres are a one-stop shop for beauty and innovation. Sadly, most of us do not have the budget

to regularly splurge. Here are some tips to help you satisfy "The Gardening Splurge".



Grow from Seed: Rather than buying seedlings from the nursery, buy seeds. It is extremely satisfying to watch them germinate. Compare the price of a package of seeds to seedlings. Most seeds are viable for a few years. Also, sowing seeds directly into the soil skips the transplanting from the flat stage. Win-win! Find a local seed swap. You will meet like-minded people, get some real bargains, and even find the odd free envelope of a unique plant you may not have. This will inevitably encourage you to start saving your own seeds. This book is a good reference: [Saving Seeds: A Home Gardener's Guide to Preserving Biodiversity](#), by Dan Jason.

Propagate by Cuttings: I'm rather proud of my daughter-in-law. She loves lavender (*Lavandula*). On her recent move, she propagated eight little plants! Each one has tiny little flower buds growing. Most perennials, trees, shrubs, and vines can be propagated this way. See a plant you like? Perhaps the owner will allow you to take a few cuttings. [Propagation Techniques](#) from the Royal Horticultural Society includes a section on vegetative propagation.



Photo: Olga Marranca

Repurpose Hardscapes: Keep your eye out for curbside castoffs that might make great decor items in your garden. A wrought iron bed frame can become an attractive trellis. Cracked pottery can be inverted to create a base for a birdbath. Rocks can edge the garden. Be selective in your choices to keep your yard looking tasteful but intriguing. Nature also has an abundance of items you can use. Expertise is free at the library and online. Look for do-it-yourself books and articles on garden planning, native plants, and advice for growing plants and vegetables.



Image: Facebook Re-Scape Inspired Recycling

THE GARDENING SPLURGE (CONT'D)

Leave your Leaves: Mulched leaves are like gold for your soil. They decompose over winter and turn into beautiful black earth, saving you money on yard waste bags and bagged soil products. Leaves left on your lawn may damage turf, so rake them into garden beds or run them over with your lawnmower. If you have too many leaves to use in your garden, consider [making leaf mold](#) by placing shredded leaves in a pile in a corner of your garden, in a composter or bin, or in plastic bags.

Compost and Arborist Mulch: Most cities offer free compost and some tree-cutting companies make their wood chips for mulch available to the public. Better still, learn how to compost yourself: [How to Build a Compost Pile](#)



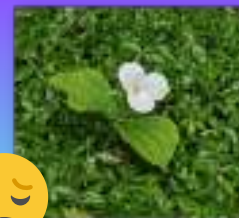
[Arborist Mulch](#)

Neighbourhood Garage Sales: Empty nesters downsizing will have a plethora of quality garden tools available. Know your prices and learn what a well-kept quality tool looks like. No matter how old, a tool that has been properly maintained is usually a great buy. *



Beware of "Free" Plants

When browsing online marketplaces and free plant giveaways, be aware that some sellers unknowingly offer high-risk invasive plants. Because they spread so quickly, they seem like ideal plants to share. In fact, invasive plants harm our natural lands by crowding out native plants and harming biodiversity.



A lone trillium choked out by invasive periwinkle (CCIPR FB: Inglis Falls Conservation Area)

Garden Journeys Open Days—new, inspiring, and nature-friendly

by Allyn Walsh and Bev Wagar, Halton Master Gardeners

Gardeners everywhere have begun journeys towards bio-diverse and nature-friendly gardens. Some people are well on their way and others are just getting started. Some have not yet heard about how gardens and residential landscapes can help mitigate the crises of climate change and collapsing ecological food webs. Gardens can be places that support life—not just the birds and animals we enjoy having around, but also the complex, interdependent networks of life we call [ecosystems](#).

A local response to these overarching concerns is [Garden Journeys Open Days](#), a new open-gardens event that celebrates and encourages the growing number of gardeners who are not only consciously doing things differently but also inspiring the community to follow their lead.



Jean Jacobs' Dundas garden
photo: Jean Jacobs ©



Jamie Hunter's Dundas garden
Photo: Jamie Hunter CC BY-NC-ND

Participating gardens, whether we call them ecological, sustainable, pollinator-friendly, re-wilded, or naturalized, have a lot in common. Native plants, for example, are indispensable. They're often the first step in a gardener's journey from traditional to nature-friendly.



Holly Tasker's Hamilton garden
Photo: Holly Tasker CC BY-NC-ND

Supported by the Halton Region Master Gardeners, the event takes place in the City of Hamilton over seven days in mid-August (August 10-12 and 17-20). The schedule offers flexibility for hosts (who choose among 17 three-hour time blocks) and convenience for visitors (who use an interactive map). Because gardeners want to learn from and connect with others, hosts (or their designates) will be home during open times, to answer visitors' questions. The event is free for both hosts and visitors.

Other actions include: removing invasive plants, managing rainwater, composting on site, and supporting wildlife responsibly. No step is too small. From the first tiny steps to ambitious treks, all journeys are welcome.

No matter where you live, you're warmly invited to visit these special gardens during the event. No tickets are necessary—just drop by the gardens of your choice on the posted days and times.

Check the web site for details: <https://haltonmastergardeners.com/garden-journeys-open-days/>



GARDENING

Myths

INFORMATION

DISINFORMATION

MISINFORMATION

UNDERSTANDING FACT FROM FICTION

By Kirsten McCarthy, Halton Master Gardener

MYTH: Using coffee grounds in your soil can reduce the number of diseases, lower the pH and fertilize your plants.

When I started gardening almost ten years ago, I read on many popular websites and social media groups that adding spent coffee grounds to your soil would help your plants grow. As a newbie gardener, that's what I wanted more than anything. Then I learned that coffee grounds were also said to repel cats, lower the pH in the soil, and improve drainage. I was excited to have what seemed like a *cure all* and the simplistic wisdom of gardeners with more experience. I enthusiastically sprinkled a week's worth of coffee grounds onto the soil and waited for the "magic" to happen. As we all know, there is no magic when it comes to gardening and the more we learn through science (and a little trial and error) to improve our habits, the happier our plants will be.



Although coffee grounds have small traces of micronutrients, they are not a large source of overall nutrition for your plants (1-2% nitrogen). Adding nitrogen to your soil by using grass clippings or composted animal manure with coffee grounds can help. Fresh coffee grounds should not be directly added to the garden as they can be phytotoxic to some plants and reduce health. Adding the grounds to compost is preferred. Coffee grounds should not be used in areas where you are seeding as they can reduce germination.



It is also a myth that coffee grounds are acidic and can lower the pH of your soil. After coffee is brewed, coffee grounds are close to pH neutral, between 6.5 and 6.8. Whatever benefits coffee grounds have on plants to lower the pH is short lived. Plants that love acidic soils (azaleas, rhododendrons, gardenias and blueberries) will need more than coffee grounds to create the acidic environment to thrive.



While some sources on the internet claim that coffee grounds can be used as a spray to repel slugs or other pests, peer reviewed articles indicate that there is no research to support this.



Read More

[Using coffee grounds in gardens and landscapes.](#)
WSU Extension Fact Sheet





By Hariette Henry, Halton Master Gardener

Black walnut trees (*Juglans nigra*) are beautiful native Ontario shade trees that are an excellent source of food and habitat for wildlife. Gardeners have heard that black walnut trees contain a toxic chemical called [juglone](#) that will kill other plants growing nearby. This phenomenon called allelopathy is thought to be a protective response by the plant to assure its survival. Many [other species](#) (e.g., sugar maple, hackberries, sycamore, black cherry, red oak, American elm) also produce allelochemicals to enhance their ability to survive and reproduce.

It seems that the research on this subject (spanning many years) [has been inconclusive](#). More recent studies have revealed that the allelopathic qualities of black walnut are not as problematic as once thought, and that the suppression of growth of under-story plants has more to do with the typical competition for moisture and nutrients in the soil.

The best recommendations for gardeners wanting to create beds beneath black walnut trees are to:

- Provide good irrigation for landscape plants, particularly during drier, warmer weather.
- Improve soil drainage with the addition of organic matter.
- Use dry shade and juglone tolerant species which are the best choices under walnut trees.
- Mulch well with arborist wood chips to retain soil moisture and to nourish beneficial soil life.




Photos: Emma Murphy

“I would like to create a pollinator garden under my black walnut trees. They seem to emit a substance that plants can't tolerate. I would like to have blooms all season.”

If you need further inspiration to attempt a garden under your walnut trees read; [TRUTH OR FICTION? ARE BLACK WALNUTS TOXIC IN MY GARDEN?](#) by Emma Murphy, Master Gardener (Peterborough Region). Emma describes starting a bed beneath a 140-year-old walnut tree in 2007. How she thought it wise not to disturb the tree's roots. That she put down good topsoil and compost making sure to minimize tearing up the existing soil and roots. She planted and watered diligently. By fall 2008, she had a well-established bed with many native plants. **It should be noted that the invasive ditch lilies, [Hemerocallis fulva](#), in the photo below have been removed from Emma's garden.**



You mention that you would like to plant a pollinator garden under the walnut trees and have blooms throughout the season. To select the most appropriate plants for your new garden I would suggest consulting the [native plants section](#) and the [native plant nurseries map](#) on our website, Halton Region Master Gardeners. There you will find advice on gardening with natives, native plant garden plans for small beds, and native plant nurseries that sell shade tolerant plants including some that are identified as juglone tolerant. While making your selections you can choose plants according to their bloom time to give you consistent flowering throughout the season.

Good luck with your project! *



Garden Inspiration!

Small Trees for Small Spaces



White fringe tree - *Chionanthus virginicus*

Ht: 15' Spread: 15-20'

Image: [Facebook](#)



Blue beech - *Carpinus caroliniana*

Ht.: 20-35' Spread: 20-35'

Image: [Greening Canadian Landscape](#)



Alternate leaf dogwood - *Cornus alternifolia*

Ht.: 15-25' Spread: 20-30'

Image: [Iowa State University Extension](#)



Eastern hop hornbeam - *Ostrya virginiana*

Ht: 30-50' Spread: 25'

Image: [Great Plains Nursery](#)

What's Growing On?

Garden Events



Secret Gardens of Milton Tour

Saturday, July 9th (10 AM - 5 PM)

[Learn more here](#)



Native Plants in Rockwood Gardens

Saturday, July 22nd (9 AM - Noon)

[Learn more here](#)

Summer Blooms Garden Tour Mississauga



Monday, July 10th (9 AM - 10:30 AM)

[Learn more here](#)



Goodbye Lawn

Free Webinar



Tuesday, July 11th (10 AM - 11:00 AM)


[Learn more here](#)




Trails, gardens, summer workshops, wildlife and more.

[Learn more here](#)


What's Growing On?




Royal Botanical Gardens




[Rose Garden](#)



[Little Sprouts](#)



[Pollinator Power](#)



[Junior Gardeners](#)



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Check our [calendar](#) for events



Happy World Firefly Day!
July 2

Help fireflies & moths by keeping lights off in your garden during summer!

 www.wfs.org

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.

Your [donations](#) support our work!

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