

The Garden Master News

Newsletter of the Atlantic Master Gardeners Association

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AMGA



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AMGA NEWS



Have you visited **your** AMGA website lately? Check it out at :

<http://www.atlanticmastergardeners.com/>



- Watch for MG Volunteer opportunities. Requests to AMGA for MG Volunteer services will be posted on the website



- Have a look at the Gardening Questions Section and check out the **Atlantic Region Garden Calendar** for info on gardening jobs to do this month. January is a great month to plan those gardening jobs to make the gardening season chores a little more manageable.



- Anyone wanting copies of brochures for the Master Gardening Training Program please contact Carol Goodwin at:

CGOODWIN@nsac.ca

- If you have something to contribute to the next Newsletter don't wait til the Spring deadline send it NOW to:

suestuart@accesswave.ca



THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

Book Review

- By Ann Buck



This is a review of a book that has gardening themes and not an outright gardening book. The Victorian language of flowers has intrigued me for an very long time, so while this book is not the type I would normally read, a number of circumstances lined up to drop it in my lap. I was truly captivated by the story. The author grabs you and carries you along from one page to the next. Time just slips away while caught up in the story.

The Language of Flowers by Vanessa Diffenbaugh is the story of Victoria. She has no knowledge of her birth parents or exactly how or when she ended up in the child welfare system, but the story is about her quest to find a home and the love she has always craved. Because of the frustrations expressed by her social worker and rejections from families who were not ready to deal with her, Victoria

never feels worthy of happiness - to the point where she becomes unable to recognize and grab it when it is near. As an adult, she carries with her the guilt of something she did as a child that sabotaged her one shot at the life she longed for. When she meets some - one from her past, she is sure that the event will surely become her second undoing. She was taught the language of flowers by Elizabeth, the woman who was the closest to a mother Victoria ever had. Victoria manages to use this knowledge and her ability with plants and flowers to communicate her feelings and the feelings others want to express.

The author included a copy of the flower dictionary that Victoria uses at the end. It was neat to read through and see the different meanings of the

Cont'd on Page 3

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS

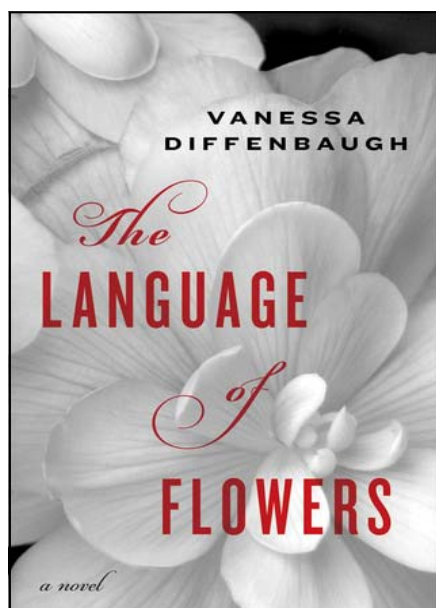
Book Review

- By Ann Buck

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different flowers and even different colours of flowers.

This was the author's first novel and I have to admit, I am looking forward to see what her next offering is. She is a gifted storyteller.



Replacement of Lawns with Groundcover Plant

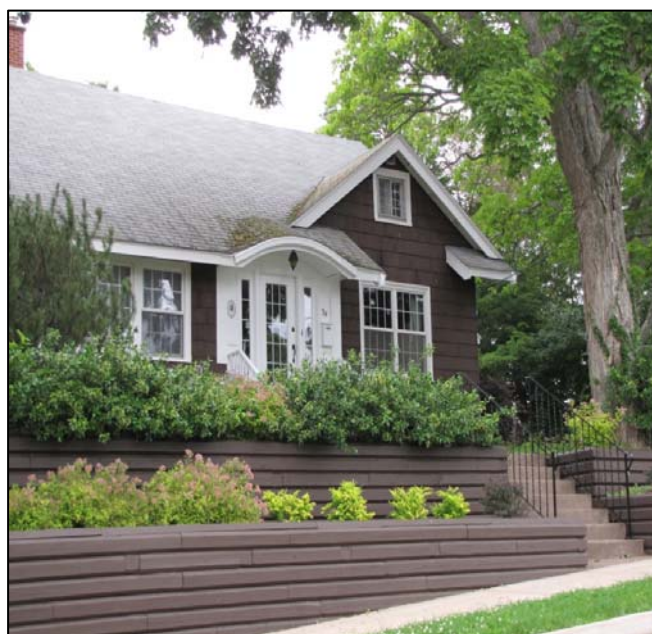
- by Carol Goodwin

Nova Scotia's Pesticide ByLaw banned pesticide use on ornamental plants in April, 2011. Leading up to that, a group of volunteers gave a series of workshops for residents of the town of Truro on:

- The cultural control of insects and diseases
- Feed the soil, not the plant
- Pruning of young trees and shrubs
- Organic lawn care and use of ground cover plants.

As a result of these workshops, several home owners in the town started replacing their lawns with landscape planting and groundcover, and the trend is catching on.

Some people replaced difficult to mow areas with other plants, others replaced the entire lawn.



This home on Douglas Street was ahead of the trend, and removed their front lawn many years ago as the owners became older.

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Replacement of Lawns with Groundcover Plant

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The front garden at this Victoria Street home is a joy to all who pass.

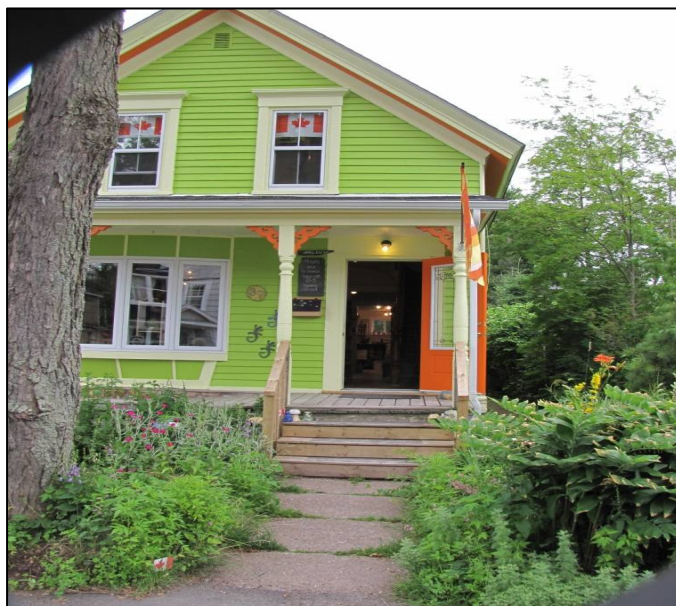


Owners of these properties report that passersby ask them questions about their front gardens:

- Is it expensive to replace the lawn?
- Is there a great deal of care required to maintain them?
- Does de-icing salt affect the plants?

This downtown Pottery Studio and Gallery participated in the DownTown Truro Partnership's Facade Improvement Program, and gave their building a bright

facelift that matched their well established front garden .



Cont'd on Page 6

REPLACEMENT OF LAWNS WITH GROUNDCOVER PLANT

Cont'd from Page 5

Garden owners are happy to answer their questions and all of them tell us they encourage their neighbours to do the same.



The real problem that is challenging organic garden and lawn care in HRM is the lack of soil in new developments. Stone is dynamited to level the site, the rubble is dozed until it's smooth, and a few centimeters of soil is thrown on top.

After that a couple of trees and shrubs are levered in amongst the rocks and sod is laid. You know from what you learned in your Master Gardener program and from your own experience that there is nothing sustainable in the practice.

The use of pesticides on these sites in the past has helped to keep the pests and diseases at bay, but in the long run the end result of applying pesticides or not was the same – the plants struggled and slowly died.

I suppose we need to have a workshop and discuss design solutions that could actually see gardens succeed on these sites. If you're interested, contact Sue Stuart. The AMGA executive will get something put together!

Carol D. Goodwin
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Winter Sowing

- By Sue Stuart



We Gardeners who like to "sow" seeds often have to resist the temptation to start seeds too early indoors. Tall, weak, spindly plants are not the quality product we want to set out in the garden when ready.

By "stratifying" seed, using soilless medium in trays with clear domes and artificial lighting systems we can simulate a greenhouse to get the plants growing! With care, attention to watering, temperature, amount of light, etc. we should have plants by spring to harden off and hopefully make it to the garden and beyond!

If you're a vegetable gardener there's information out there now that can keep you growing 365 days a year! Look for "The Year-Round Vegetable Gardener" by Niki Jabbour (Storey Publishing). This knowledgeable lady is a Halifax area gardener, garden radio host as well as author. Her book went on sale this January.

But, what's that?

- you don't have space inside or a coldframe outside to start seeds.
- you would like a simple low-cost way to start plants?

Try "Winter Sowing" - (containers of seeds placed directly out into the winter elements.) I read about it and tried it last winter. I am doing it again this winter - this time inside my deer fence!

Rather than go into detail there are several websites that have very detailed information on winter sowing from beginning to end product. Check them out and enjoy!

http://wintersown.org/wseo1/DirtySC8_WS.html

<http://www.wintersown.org/wseo1/How to Winter Sow.html>

http://www.ehow.com/how_4552115_sow-winter-seeds-outdoors.html



The Paper Garden

– Mrs Delany Begins Her Life's Work at 72

Book Review – by Janet Elsie

January and February are wonderful months for reading. If plants and gardens are part of the essential character of the book, all the better. "The Paper Garden - Mrs Delany Begins Her Life's Work at 72" by Molly Peacock is such a book.

This title was voted best non-fiction book of 2010. So if you have not discovered this gem of a book as yet, give it a try.

Mary Delany (1700-1788) was a remarkable 18th century woman. Girls, of gentry families, at this time were educated in the fine arts and crafts popular and appropriate for young women of this century; drawing, painting, penmanship, music, dancing lessons, embroidery, sewing as well as cutting and creating silhouette pictures. Mary was a very creative and energized woman who worked at these arts and crafts her entire life. This creative flow gave her life purpose and joy throughout. She had a great observational eye and an appreciation of beauty at all levels.

It was during her second marriage to

Dr. Patrick Delany that she became interested in garden and plants as they built and expanded the gardens at Delville their home outside Dublin. Over this 25 year period she became very interested in botany and was continually looking for new plants on her daily and extensive walks. She would then recreate these floral designs in her embroidery.

At the age of 69 she became a widow for a second time.

The next seventeen years, during the spring and summer, she spent with the Duchess of Portland at her estate. It was here that Mary learned a great deal about plants and flowers. The duchess was a plant enthusiast. She had botanists, horticulturists, plantsmen, gardeners and even botanical artists at her disposal. The estate had large gardens, greenhouses and conservatories for learning and enjoyment.

Already having lived a very full life, it was not until the age of 72 that Mary began a body of work that was to become an incredible creative accomplishment. She

The Paper Garden

- A Very Good Read

(Cont'd from Page 8)

picked up scissors and paper to create a new art form - collage. She began to create a botanically accurate depiction of a flower. She did not include the root systems as did the botanical artists but all other parts of the flower, stems, leaves and vines were accurately recreated and mounted on a black background. These are astounding creations of papers and colors layered for the perfect effect. One picture "Cactus Grandiflorus, Melon Thistle" has 190 parts and 399 individual spines protruding from the stem which itself is composed of 12 shades of paper.

Can you imagine doing a botanically correct paper recreation of a double clematis



or a multi toned tulip?

There are 985 of these beautiful 'mosaics'. She referred to her collection as her 'Herbal' or 'Hortus Siccus' which is a collection of dried flowers or 'dry garden'. It later became known as "Flora Delanica".

Ten large volumes of botanical creations, nine with one hundred each, and the tenth with seventy-two. Each volume is indexed with botanical and common names written in her own hand. Some of the others were given as gifts.

This huge volume of work was created over a 10yr period from the age of 72 to 82

The Paper Garden

- A Very Good Read

(Cont'd from Page 9)

when her eyesight would not allow her to continue.

These volumes actually still exist and can be viewed by appointment in the Prints and Drawing Study Room of the British Museum.

The author of this book - Molly Peacock is a poet with several books of poetry to her credit. She tells this story of Mary's life brilliantly, using 10 of her beautiful floral pictures. Using them for inspiration and reflection as she tells the story of Mary's life as well as reflecting on her own and the process of creativity. This is far from a dry historical biography but a reflective depiction of this woman and her creative art.

Molly Peacock writes: "Seventy-two years old. It gives a person hope. Who doesn't hold out the hope of starting a memorable project at a grand old age? A life's work is always unfinished and requires creativity till the day a person dies. Even if you've managed major accomplishments throughout your life and don't really need a model for making

a mark, you do need one for enriching an ongoing existence."

I found this book a great read and I'm not usually a fan of biographies.

Molly Peacock's treatment of the subject made it one I couldn't put down. I was attracted by the title 'The Paper Garden' and landed hook, line and sinker rushing to the checkout by the sub-title 'Mrs Delany begins her Life's work at 72'. I hope you find this book as enjoyable as I.



REMEMBERING CATHY

- BY DIANA SMITH

On Monday Nov. 28, 2011 my world changed, again. I was nearing the second last page of our most recent *The Garden Master News*. Not having read the table of contents - I often do this, not paying attention to detail as I dive in to get to the good stuff - and there it was, on page 11: first, her name (I wonder what she's up to?) then the old wedding photo (oh, that's nice) then, at the top...the word "*Obituary*" punched me in the gut. My friend Cathy whom I knew to be so energetic, strong, kind, witty and smart would no longer be a part of my life.

We met at "Summer School 1", the on - campus option folks usually choose when they've got a few courses under their belt. I believe Cathy had completed "Plant I.D." and was already at work on "The Science of Gardening" like the disciplined scholar she was - having been exposed to the rigours of veterinary college she'd been here before. Unlike me who hadn't yet read *a thing* and was just eager (again) to dive in, to "be with my people" as I often explained when fellow students looked puzzled as to why

I hadn't yet grasped the nuances of dichotomous keys. Cathy and I hung out together that week. Like so many others I was attracted to her scientific brain, quick wit, and friendly, generous nature. We enjoyed trying to identify various conifers.



Remembering Cathy

(Cont'd from Page 11)

and had a great time planting the woodland garden with “rabbiting spades”



under the tutelage of the grandmaster himself, Bernard Jackson.



We connected again the following year at Summer School 2, sharing a wheelbarrow as we mixed Lana’s hypertufa recipe. Cathy’s two pots with perfect sides and bottoms turned out better than mine; my large one had this immense base, no less than 4” thick and was

heavy as all get out. We dutifully signed our work so we could retrieve it later but as fate would have it, Cathy had to leave unexpectedly the next day to visit a sick uncle in Newfoundland. She asked if I’d take her pots home with me – I did and we later made plans for me to get them to her. The next summer she was due to graduate so I brought her pots with me to Summer School. For some reason she wasn’t at the ceremony so I took them back home and promised to drop them off the next time I was over to the island.

They say if you want God to laugh, tell Him your plans. I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer the following June so was unable to fulfill my pot return duty; Cathy had e-mailed me some time prior to say, *“Just keep them for now”* so I did. I planted the large one with succulents, PEI sandstone, and some bamboo sticks for a little Zen-like feel; the wee one became home to a beautiful big semp with large overflowing leaves. Both have now found a permanent home underneath my “Wine and Roses” weigela and I enjoy them from the kitchen window in all four seasons.

Remembering Cathy

(Cont'd from Page 12)

You see, unlike terracotta, which, if left to the elements, succumbs to the energies of the freeze-thaw cycle and breaks into little pieces, hypertufa is strong and able to withstand anything mother nature can throw at it. Which is how I will remember Cathy – strong, facing everything with her trademark wit, wisdom, and unbreakable spirit.

As nature nurtures us in our grief, may we all hold within us a fond remembrance of this fine woman and Master Gardener who blessed us with her many gifts.



Remembering.... Remembering.... Remembering.... Remembering.....



Message from the President

Winter 2012

- by Carol Goodwin, President ,AMGA

This winter has been a roller coaster ride – up and down – I’m practically dizzy! I can’t even imagine what spring will bring, but I’m getting more concerned as each week goes by. It’s great for dog walking, and happily I have that as my other love, but the garden tends to come first. My border collie (Rudy, the wonder dog) is very sympathetic to my muttering when we take a turn around the garden. He stared in wonder as I examined unfurling buds on my Daphne and tucked in a newly planted shrub (for the second time).

The winter workshop was a great success. We were hosted by Lakeland Plant World, who couldn’t have been more supportive. Members of the public came by to watch (and in a few cases, offer to buy), so it served as an information session at the same time. Some made wreaths, but some made winter table arrangements and others, porch arrangements. We had a wide range of species to work with – thank you to those who brought material from their garden to share! Everyone was really pleased with their creation – and we enjoyed getting to know one another better. A plate of lavender shortbread appeared – that was a real treat!! Since I can’t remember just who brought it, I can’t say, but I think the recipe

may have to show up on these pages in future. By the time you get this, you’ll have received an email from me regarding the Association logo. If you haven’t responded yet, please do so. We want you to feel the logo represents YOU.

I’ve had NO feedback about the Master Gardener rose idea, so I’m going to take that as a 'no' vote and put that idea to rest.

Take a look at the web page – you’ll see a few new things there. Under **Activities** I’ve put a link to free web-based workshops being put on by Horticulture magazine. You’ll find a range of reasonably priced ones there as well. I have to admit I haven’t done them yet (!) but I trust Horticulture to provide something of high quality.

You’re probably wondering WHERE the membership directory has gone – every time I think I’m finished, a new member joins. It’ll be in the mail as you read this, I promise!!

Throw a log on the fire and grab your parka (or rain coat, depending on the day). It’s a beautiful season no matter what, and it’s great to be outside!

Carol