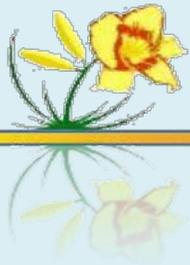
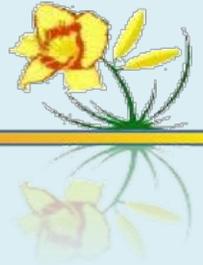


# Summer Sunset Musings



Wilmot Horticultural Society

*Bringing people and gardening together since 1968*



May/June 2020

## Hello WHS Members and Friends,

Well, who would have thunk it! How times have changed! I hope all of you have been able to find comfort, peace, rest, or whatever you need during this pandemic. Gardening has proven to be cathartic for many. Playing in the dirt, designing, weeding, planting, rearranging, mulching and of course, enjoying your gardens can be a healing, calming experience. My husband enjoys gardening and often is seen working outside. For me, it is literally a painful experience. I can help him plan the gardens. I also love to walk around and experience all the beautiful flowers, the vibrant and varied colours, the birds singing, the bees flitting from flower to flower and the critters scampering all over – I feel a deep sense of tranquillity. One of my mantras is to “Just Breathe.” I hope all of you have the time to “just breathe, sit, walk, run or do whatever centres you and, just breathe.”

As you know, all WHS events for now have been cancelled except for gardening. Our wonderful volunteers have created beautiful spaces all over Wilmot. Why not take a drive around the Township and see how many you can find?

One thing that helped me feel productive this month was building a rail fence around our yard with the help of our neighbours. I love it! Technically, it was supposed to be built many, many moons ago. The posts have been in the ground for at least 15 years waiting for the rails to be added. Now it is done...well almost. We have nine more rails to attach plus two arbours to put up and another to build.

All that should take about 10 years on our timeline!



Hope you are enjoying the sweet, delicious, local strawberries. FYI...Koji Nakao from Fukuoka, Japan, holds the Guinness World Record for the biggest strawberry. The strawberry weighed 250g, with an approximate height of 8cm, length of 12cm, and circumference of 25 to 30cm. It is the largest and heaviest strawberry ever recorded.

This record-breaking fruit was a mutation, after multiple berries were grown and naturally fused together to form one giant, super strawberry.

By the way, what do you call a sad strawberry...a blue-berry.

Take care and stay safe.

Until the September/October Edition

*Tammy*



My super strawberry with ice cream...  
Dee-licious!



## A Message from our President

Here we are half way through 2020. I hope this message finds you all well as we cope with our lives being turned upside down with this COVID-19 pandemic. We were staying at home, no interaction with family and friends, practicing social distancing and wearing masks when we leave our homes. With good leadership and dedication from all frontline workers, we are seeing changes that can give us hope for the future.

While being confined to our homes, we were still able to continue Wilmot Horticultural Society business using modern technology. We were allowed to plant flowers at Castle Kilbride while practicing social distancing and our Civic Beautification volunteers were able to plant and maintain the flowerbeds throughout Wilmot Township. It was important to have colour and beauty of flowers in these troubling times. Thank you to all of you for your hard work and dedication. For the avid gardeners there was extra time for planting and for those who did not have a garden, it was a good time to start. A good way to release stress and tension during this pandemic.

As we continue into summer let's remember to practice all we have been doing in the last four months to keep ourselves and loved ones safe. We will have to be patient as we wait to see what the future holds for us and what the new normal will be.

Stay safe, be kind to each other and remember we truly miss seeing you all.

Your President

*Judy Hahn-Utzzi*



# Civic Beautification - The Renewal of Kirkpatrick Garden: downtown New Hamburg By Marlene Knezevich



The lovely garden in Kirkpatrick Park created by previous WHS volunteers and tended for many years by Ruth Zehr was erased when the parking lot was reconstructed last year. Many plants were rescued, heeled in volunteer gardens and replanted in November. Only a partial planting occurred on that cool day and the plants were not even watered in. Mother Nature did that for us in January with the flood! There is a tree now! A Beacon Swamp Oak (*Quercus bicolor* 'Bonnie and Mike') which was researched by Marlene Knezevich. She phoned around to local nurseries

explaining we needed a tree for a flood plain and mid-

size. Perry Grobe of Grobe's Nursery was excited to share the news of a newly discovered oak in 2007 by Michael and Bonnie Dirr during one of their excursions to Virginia and the first ones were arriving this spring. The thing that attracted the Dirrs to this particular tree was its fastigiated growth pattern. The upward branch growth set it aside from the other larger spreading native oaks. WHS was thrilled too as this tree will be a commemorative tree for Ruth Zehr. WHS will have a commemorative ceremony once Covid 19 issue allows it. (To find out more about the [Beacon Swamp Oak](#) control click on the tree name.) (see [www.monarchwatch.org/waystations](http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations) for more information about waystations.)



Marlene picked up the tree in her SUV and it was planted on Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>. The plantings of perennials and annuals had already been completed. Susan Cressman, armed with the suggested pollinator plant list of Monarch Waystation, purchased zinnas, marigolds and verbena online from Colour Paradise. Presently there is a mixture of native and non-native plants with the emphasis on native and nativars. There are ninebark shrubs, little bluestem grass, gray prairie coneflower, purple



coneflower, Joe Pye Weed, Butterfly Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed, zigzag goldenrod, coreopsis, spiderwort and many more. The goal of the garden is to make it a Pollinator and Monarch Butterfly Waystation garden. (see [www.monarchwatch.org/waystations](http://www.monarchwatch.org/waystations) for more information about waystations.)

Because of Covid, the summer students who water the gardens were not available this summer so Susan and Marlene have been hauling water out of the river to water the plants especially with the heat wave we had.

After planting the tree, the garden was mulched. Yvonne Zyma arrived and it was pouring so she and Marlene decided to wait for the rain to stop. But when the mulch arrived after Yvonne left, the rain paused. Susan Cressman arrived and she and Marlene decided to go ahead and plant the tree and start mulching. About hour and a half later, it started to pour and two thoroughly soaked volunteers went home for dry clothing and lunch. Yvonne, Susan and Marlene returned that evening and completed the mulching. The garden looks great and we can't wait to see it in a month when the plants will have matured. Come and have a look! Ruth Zehr would be proud!



# Volunteers Planting Castle Kilbride Gardens While Social Distancing — Photos by Marlene Knezevich



Volunteers in Photo

Back Row: L to R  
Nicole H. Judy H-Y,  
Susan C.,  
Front Row:  
Jane M. Ashely M.  
Behind the Camera:  
Marlene K.



*A huge thank you to our Civic Beautification volunteers who help make a more colourful and attractive Wilmot and help with our Township's carbon footprint. They design and pick out the plants, prepare the soil, plant, water, weed, mulch and clean up the beds for the winter.  
Thank you for your hard work and dedication!*



# Junior Gardeners



The Junior Gardeners are growing in more ways than one. There has been a 33% increase in Jr. Gardeners wishing to grow a garden during this pandemic. The seeds were provided by WHS, bought from the Ontario Seed Company, picked up by Sandra Cressman and distributed by the Youth Leaders. Each Jr. Gardener had a choice of carrots or beets. They also received Indian Blanket Sunflower which has been renamed The Joker and Zinnia Zinderella. According to Ontario Seed Company, The Joker has double and semi-double blooms of reds, lemon and red bi-colours. Branching plants produce multiple blooms and grow to 180 cm (6'tall). Zinderella Zinnia has frilly, crested 5.5cm (2.5") double flowers are loaded with eye-catching layers of petals so thick they are often as tall as they are wide. The odd single flower may exist but does not take away from the beauty of this blend. They mature to 60cm (24"). This year the youth had a chance to sow extra plants in their garden because they had the time and interest! Some even started their own seedlings. Sounds like we will be seeing some more beautiful gardens around the township!

Here is some advice from a non-gardener ... Just carrot on no matter what, your garden will look radish-ing. If you need some peas and quiet, a garden can't be beet!



## Volunteer Opportunity – Newsletter Contributor



Do you:

-  Like to give garden advice, research new/old ways to garden, or impart anything interesting about gardening...then the **Garden Gems** page is for you
-  Like to visit the different WHS gardens and meet the people behind the beautiful gardens...then **Gardens Around the Township** is for you
-  Like to read about plants, gardening or anything to do with looking after the environment...then **Great Reads** is for you
-  Like to surf the Internet for videos, articles, how to, etc. then...**Gardening/Environmental Links** is for you
-  Like to write about the advice or information which was given at the monthly meetings especially for those who can't come to the meetings...then **Monthly Speakers** is for you
-  Like to stir the pot and talk about controversial garden or environmental issues then...**Hot Topics** is for you
-  Have any other ideas, then **volunteer!**

Please consider volunteering for one page or more! I sure could use the help!

Contact: Tammy at [Wilmoths.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:Wilmoths.newsletter@gmail.com)



# Garden Gems

## Garden Myths - Is Compostable Plastic Compostable?

By Robert Pavlis

(Okay, maybe not necessarily about the garden but it is interesting to know and part of our looking after the environment mandate)

Everyone wants to be green and now you see a lot of compostable plastic on the market. Is compostable plastic really compostable? Can I add it to my compost bin? How long does it take to decompose? These are all good questions that gardeners should be able to answer.

My Master Gardener group had a year end party and one member brought some compostable plastic drinking glasses. As I was collecting them at the end of the evening I started to wonder how well they decomposed. I had previously looked into compostable tea bags and was surprised by what I learned. Are these drinking glasses just some more greenwashing?

In this post I'll discuss compostable plastic, compare that to biodegradable plastic, and explain the role of all of these in the garden.

### What is Compostable Plastic Really?

I thought this was a simple question, but it's not. Different organizations use different definitions and the general public has their own idea. As a gardener, I assumed I could drop it into a hot composting bin and it would decompose, but that has nothing to do with the definition.

Compostable [plastic is defined by the standards association ASTM International](#) (ASTM) as “a plastic that undergoes degradation by biological processes during composting to yield carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), water, inorganic compounds, and biomass at a rate consistent with other known compostable materials and that leaves no visible, distinguishable, or toxic residue.”

Note that the time frame, or the condition of composting are not part of the definition.

Many assume that compostable plastic is a new type of plant-based plastic. Some compostable plastic is made from plant material such as [corn, potato, tapioca, soy protein, and lactic acid](#) but others are made from petroleum, including BASF's product Ecoflex.

### Biodegradable vs Compostable

Biodegradable is defined as “a [product that completely breaks down, given the right conditions](#) and presence of bacteria or other living organisms, to its basic components.



The key words here are “the right conditions”, which can be defined for each biodegradable product.

When the right conditions are a composting environment, the terms compostable and biodegradable mean the same thing. When the degradation needs an environment other than composting the two terms are not synonymous.

The term [bioplastics is also confusing, misused and misunderstood](#). Things are further complicated by the fact that there are no labeling standards, at least in the US, for [terms such as biodegradable, degradable, compostable, starch-based or plant-based](#).

### *Will Compostable Plastic Break Down in a Composting Bin?*

The short answer is probably not. If it is labeled as “home compostable” it might, but most compostable plastic does not carry this label.



PLA compostable plastic clamshell container

For example, Polyactic acid (PLA) is a popular compostable plastic used to make [drinking cups, clamshell containers and plastic cutlery](#). It requires 140 F (60 C) to decompose, which is much hotter than a backyard compost bin can maintain long enough and throughout the complete pile.

Commercial composting facilities carry out composting in closed chambers and they routinely reach the higher temperature needed, however, [many of these facilities run on a 30 day cycle, and PLA takes 60-90 days to decompose](#). At the end of 30 days, the plastic is still intact and gets filtered out and sent to landfill.

Many consider [PLA to be biodegradable, but it's not in landfill](#). PLA is also very stable in soil and water. The CBC reports that [“Ecoflex, PLA, and two other kinds of biodegradable plastics all survived a year in either seawater or freshwater without breaking down, a 2017 University of Bayreuth study showed.”](#) A [2019 University of Plymouth study](#) found that “compostable” bags buried in soil were still there after 27 months, and “biodegradable” bags could still hold groceries after three months in the ocean.”

### *Are Tea Bags Compostable?*

I contacted Unilever about Red Rose, a popular tea brand in Canada, to find out what material is used to make their tea bags. They confirmed it's PLA and went on to say, “it's un-bleached 100% plant-based material (corn) that is 100% compostable”. In the same email they also said “home composters may not have high enough temperatures or appropriate moisture content to decompose the tea bags” – at least they were honest about that part.

Many tea bags these days are not home compostable, and neither are compostable K-cups.

**Being “plant-based” does not mean the plastic will decompose like yard waste.**



## Is Compostable Plastic Good for the Environment?

Consumers buy compostable plastic because they believe it is a better option for the environment, but is it really?

Most municipalities in N. America do not have composting facilities. Of the 150 in the US that do composting, most do not meet the requirements for composting PLA. What does this mean? Your [PLA probably ends up in landfill](#) and if that happens it is no better for the environment than other types of plastic.

Recycling regular plastic is a better option for the environment, provided it is actually collected and recycled.

The public is being greenwashed about compostable plastics.

## Which is Better – Regular Plastic or Compostable Plastic

Here is a good example of the value of science.

Plastic made from plants sounds so organic, and when they are labeled with “compostable” they become irresistible to the public who imagine plastic drinking cups melting away in the compost bin. Many manufacturers are quick to enforce that vision. The media also jump on the bandwagon with headlines like “Calgary Co-op to eliminate plastic bags from liquor stores, c-stores as compostable bag program takes off”.

Now science steps in and asks, which option is better for the environment? Testing is still going on, but it appears that traditional plastic might be better, given our current composting capabilities. Much of this however depends on how we handle the waste, not the actual product. If every municipality used 90 day commercial composting, and consumers actually put the material in the right bins, compostable plastic would be better for the environment.

It seems to me that our focus is on appearing to do the right things, and not on actually doing what is right for the environment.

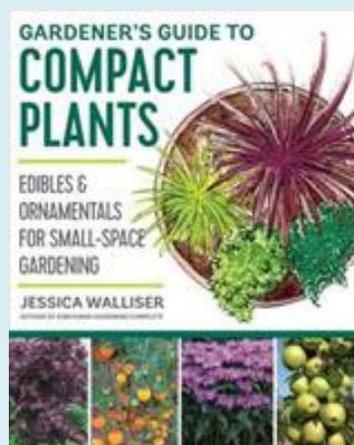
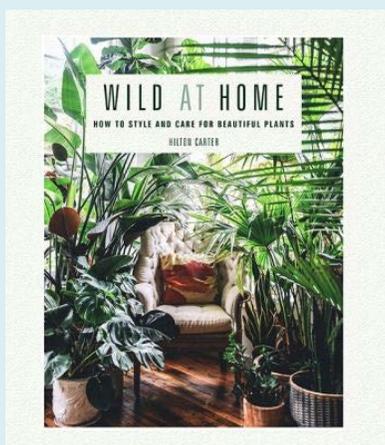
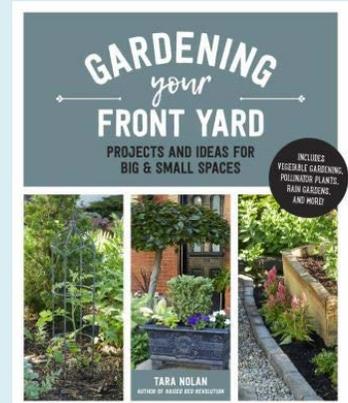
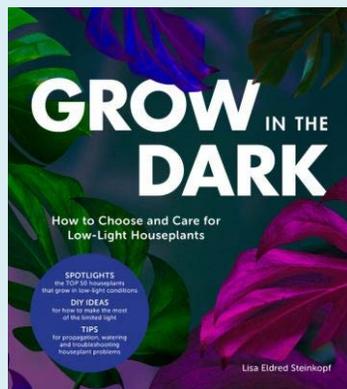
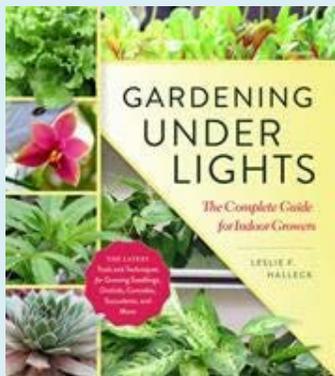
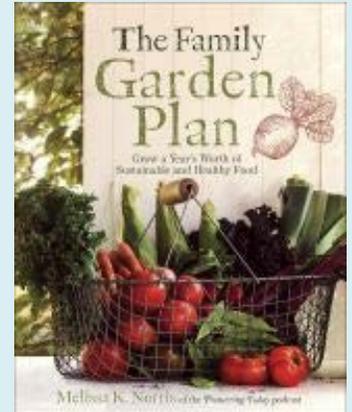
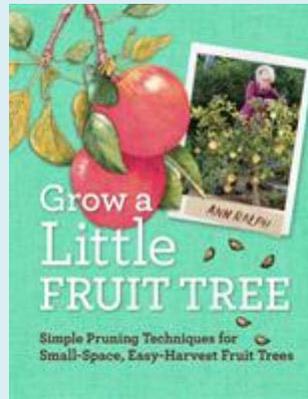
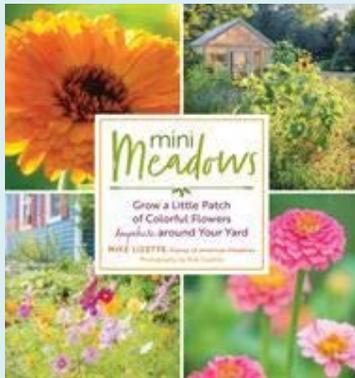
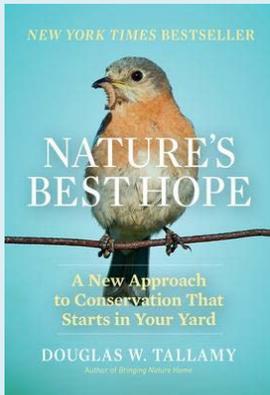
Written by Robert Pavlis,  
author of three books:

[Garden Myths](#) , [Soil Science for Gardeners](#) and [Building Natural Ponds](#)



# Good Reads... find them at your library

There are new gardening books at the library! Wilmot Horticultural Society continues to support gardeners and nature lovers of all ages. By donating to the Region of Waterloo Library and working with staff, WHS is helping to maintain a current and pertinent collection available to the public. Check out these interesting titles! (Control/click on each picture and you will be able to see them in the RWL catalogue)



# Gardening / Nature / Environmental Links

(Control + click titles to follow link)

## [Being in nature has profound health benefits](#)

How gardening and experiencing nature can help keep you well during the coronavirus pandemic. This is a pdf.

## [Single Use Plastic](#)

Five simple ways to reduce single use plastic.



## [Birds' Song](#)

A man made a song using the exact location of these birds sitting on wires as musical notes!

## [Bee Garden Guide](#)

This link will send you to a sign-up page to receive the guide “A Flower Patch for the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee: Creating Habitat and Gardens for Native Pollinators in the Greater Toronto Area” written by Lorraine Johnson and Sheila Colla. By providing your email address, you consent to receive communications from Friends of the Earth Canada but you may unsubscribe at any time.

## [Plant Paradise Toolkit](#) from Hamilton Pollinator Paradise

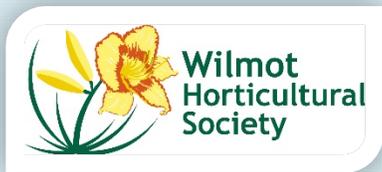
“Looking to create a pollinator-friendly garden, but not sure where to start? ...Use this toolkit as a guide to build a pollinator garden in you own yard, to provide food and shelter for our native pollinators!

**A neighbour suggested I put manure on my strawberries. Tasted horrible! I'm sticking with whipped cream!**



**I feel that I should clean the house so I am heading out to the garden until that feeling passes.**





# Summer Sunset Musings Info



Thank you to our supporters:



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