



**APRIL 2020**

**SARNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER**

The purpose of a Horticultural Society is to increase interest in horticulture by encouraging private and public gardens, by holding meetings, exhibits, plant sales and field trips.

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Marilyn Rawson**

I am writing this note the last week in March and as I look out and walk around my yard, my thoughts are that nature does carry on. Amidst the ups and downs of our weather and the uncertain situations around us, nature and life do carry on.

Spring is here and there is new growth. The strong little snowdrops have been in bloom for over a week, and the crocuses and tulips are pushing through the ground. Some trees are in bud.

A good saying is that nature does not hurry, but everything gets done. I've seen baby cardinals and blue jays.

John DeGroot had an excellent article posted last week about gardening. This is the time to think about planting seeds, rooting plants, transplanting and cleaning your yards (weather permitting). Gardeners can keep busy in these times of uncertainty.

I trust everyone is safe and healthy. In times of isolation and social-distancing, a phone call or email means a lot. Keep in touch with people. We don't know how long these conditions will last. We have to make adjustments with scheduling. The March presentation will be next year. Events are listed but subject to change. We will keep you posted with cancellations. Life does go on and we celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

A friend gave me an excellent little book at Christmas entitled "Word for Gardeners to Live By". It is illustrated by Mary Englebreit.

Take care, Marilyn Rawson.

**SOON TO BE SPRING AGAIN** by Sheila Smith

Tis flower time again

Time to think of bulbs and seeds

And potting soil and pesky weeds

Tis flower time again

After weeks of ice and snow

And boots and parkas, hats and gloves

Tis flower time again

The lilac buds will swell anew

And daffodils are peeping through

And all our dreams are coming true

Tis flower time again



## **HAPPY ANNIVERSARY !** by Heather Ashe

This year we are celebrating our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary: the Sarnia Horticultural Society became a member of the Ontario Horticultural Association on April 9, 1920. Back then there were only 125 OHA members; there are now 278.

Many changes and events have taken place during those 100 years. From the beginning and throughout history, the Society aimed to contribute to the growing City of Sarnia. Flower beds were planted and tended at hospitals, churches and various local associations and on Ferry Dock Hill to welcome visitors arriving to the city by boat. That desire to contribute continues today as the Society donates to local schools, Habitat for Humanity and others, and to communities such as Leamington and Goderich when they were devastated by tragic events such as tornadoes. Presentations to share horticultural skills have been given after most meetings since 1920. When there were few nurseries in the area, the Society imported many plants from Holland for its members. As well, for many years seedlings were grown for members and the city in a greenhouse located in the College Avenue Garden.

A book describing the Society's history has been published. It details the history in pictures and written word and will be available soon. It has 64 pages and its cost will be \$10.00

## **WHAT IS A BULB?** by Martin Borrow

What is the difference between bulbs, corms, tubers, tuberous roots and rhizomes? As a group, these perennial plant parts are commonly referred to as bulbs. The function of all these plant structures is to store food over the dormant period and to start growing when conditions are right. But bulbs can be divided into five distinctly different categories depending on how they are formed and how they grow.

A true bulb is a thickened fleshy bud with scales that store food and are joined at the base where the roots grow out. The leaves and flower stem grow out of the crown. When you cut open a bulb you can clearly see the scales and sometimes the start of the flower stem. Some examples of common bulbs are: Amaryllis, Onion, Tulip and Oxalis.

A corm is a thickened stem with growing point on the crown and base that grows roots. If you cut a corm open you will see a continuous mass of tissue, no scales. Gladiola, Calla Lily and Crocus are a few examples of corms.

Tubers are storage structures that grow off the plants roots. Tubers do not grow roots from the base. Rather tubers have growing points commonly called “eyes.” As the eyes start to grow, new roots will grow from the sides of the new stem. Caladium, Potato and Anemone are a few examples of tubers.

Tuberous roots on the other hand are thickened roots where the plant stores food which is used to start growing the following season. They may or may not display distinct “eyes” and will grow new feeder roots out of the tuber itself. Sweet Potato, Dahlia and Tuberous Begonia are examples of tuberous roots.

And lastly, Rhizomes are branching thickened stems that grow horizontally under and sometimes along the surface of the soil. New shoots grow out from the tips of the rhizome with feeder roots growing out from the sides and bottom. Canna Lily, Lily of the Valley and Bearded Iris are a few examples of rhizomatous plants.

### **HEALTHY SOIL AND THE (RYZOSPHERE) ROOT ZONE**

Getting your garden ready for spring planting usually involves tilling the soil and adding soil amendments such as: organic matter, compost, well rotted manure, peat moss, and/or sand and gypsum in heavy clay soils. You may even turn in some slow release fertilizer to improve the overall fertility of your soil. But you’re not done yet. For those gardeners who have used pea and bean inoculants (*Rhizobium leguminosera*) you know that plants benefit from the microorganisms in the soil.

In fact, there are a number of growth enhancing, biofertilizers, and mycorrhiza fungi - products that may be applied to the soil at seeding or when transplanting to improve plant growth and productivity. These microorganisms work with your plants roots by making nutrients and water more readily available to your plants. This symbiotic relationship between plants and soil organisms has been going on for millions of years.

But specifically how do these organisms work? Fungal mycorrhiza works by growing into the host plants roots as well as into the soil surrounding the roots. The fungus breaks down organic matter and absorbs nutrients from the soil,

which it transports to the plants roots. Inside the roots the mycorrhiza exchanges nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus and other micronutrients with the plant for carbohydrates which it uses to grow. In addition to providing nutrients, the mycorrhiza can increase the plants ability to resist environmental stresses and some strains of mycorrhiza help their host plant fend off root diseases.

Biofertilizers or soil stimulants work in the narrow region of soil immediately adjacent to the plant roots. Specific species of Bacillus and Pseudomonas bacteria are known to benefit plant growth. When applied at seeding or transplanting these naturally occurring organisms multiply and grow along with the plants' roots. Here the beneficial organisms convert minerals in the soil into easily absorbable nutrients. Some of these organisms work by breaking down organic matter; some release enzymes that free up iron, phosphorus, and zinc; while others fix nitrogen from the air into the soil solution, where it can be absorbed by the plants roots. The plants in turn release products into the area surrounding the roots that the bacteria use as food. Both biofertilizers and mycorrhiza also improve the plants ability to withstand drought and resist some plant diseases.

So why add these naturally occurring microorganisms if they are already in the soil? Well depending on how your soil has been treated over the years the abundance of these organisms may have been reduced to the point where there are not enough to benefit your plants. Also by adding these organisms to the seed row or planting hole, the plants roots will immediately partner with them and your plants will grow a larger root system.

\*Martin Borrow contributed this article for the newsletter. His intentions were to give away samples of Myke and Soil Activator at the Sarnia Home Show, which was unfortunately cancelled, but will give members samples at the next meeting.

## **HOSTAS**

Many of us grow Hostas in our garden as they are hardy, reliable perennials that are easy to grow. They are perfect for shade and long-lived. There are so many sizes, heights, textures and colours. The colourful foliage is appealing. There are thousands of different kinds of Hostas with 83 new Hostas for 2020 alone in various sizes. Dancing Queen is hosta of the year for 2020. It is bright yellow with large leaves.

Breeding each flower can be quite simple. A hosta typically has one female organ (the stigma) and several male organs or antlers (often 6) which surround it. The stigma is longer and thicker than the stamen which bears a remarkable resemblance to long eyelashes curling up at the tips.

In the spring of 2018 we had Glen Watson from Hosta Choice in Appin as a speaker. A recent email from the Southwestern Ontario Hosta Society reads as follows: "Whether you are a current member, a past member or a Hosta lover, we would love to have you join us. Join us in group activities where members share their gardening knowledge as well as learn what's new in the Hosta world. Join us to learn more about growing these tough, versatile and above all beautiful plants. This is your chance to come together with others to learn, to discuss and to share the love of Hostas. To learn more look at the web page or follow on Facebook. SWOHS

### **NATIVE PLANTS**

The Aamjiwnaang Greenhouse is located at 1972 Virgil Road in Sarnia. Their slogan is "A Place Where Plants are Grown". It started in 2016 as a project with the First Nation and Return the Landscape groups working together to develop a native plant nursery. Shell Canada funded construction of the greenhouse. They supply native plants to DeGroots and sell directly at the Maajiigin Gumig greenhouse. It is a work in harmony with nature and growing native plants. Check out their website and Facebook for times and events this spring and summer, [www.returnthelandscape.com](http://www.returnthelandscape.com).

### **ARE YOU AWARE THAT SARNIA HAS AN OFFICIAL FLOWER?**

Yes, Sarnia does have an official flower, which is not a well known fact. The Sarnia Horticultural Society, upon its founding in 1920, attempted to adopt a flower to be a symbol for the city, but due to little interest or difficulty in finding a unanimous choice, was unable to do so. In 1988, the Society held a competition amongst school pupils to select a suitable flower. A Grade 8 student, Brandee Mackey, won the first place prize by promoting the Snapdragon, *Antirrhinum Magus*, which was thereafter designated as Sarnia's official flower.



### *Snap dragon chosen official city flower*

Andy Langis, president of the Sarina and District Horticultural Society, adjusts the snap dragon corsage of Brandise Mackey. Ms Mackey, a Grade 8 student at Our Lady of Mercy, was presented the first-place award in the

contest to select a flower for the city. The award was presented Monday at the city council meeting. Ms Mackey selected the snap dragon because it shows complexity and strength like the city and commands attention.

Observer Photo

Apr 19/85

Snapdragons bloom profusely in cool weather in almost every colour, fall back in the heat of summer, and can rebloom in early fall. Deadheading can extend the blooming period. A.majus means "like a snout," referring to its resemblance to a calf's nose. When blossoms are pressed on their sides they look like opening mouths. The alternate leaves are arranged in a spiral around the stem. The plant grows 6"- 48", depending on the variety, likes full sun to partial shade and neutral well-drained, moist soil. The colourful blooms form a good backdrop to shorter less vivid plant varieties.

Snapdragons, native to Europe and North America, are usually grown as annuals; however they may self-sow. Many diseases, such as bacterial leaf spot, botrytis, damping off, powdery mildew, and several pests like aphids, cutworms, leaf miners and spider mites, can affect the plant. To propagate, the seeds may be tossed on top of the soil in late fall or tamped gently into the soil a few weeks

before the last expected frost. The colourful display in spring will be a welcome joyous sight. (Submitted by Barb Toye)

**BUTTERFLY EFFECT** by Mike Tanner from his blog of the January 15 meeting

There is a fascination listening to an expert wax lyrical about their passion, and this evening, gardener Eve D'Amico held the rapt attention of the Horticultural Society meeting in her paean to butterfly gardening. To most, the redoubtable Monarch is the foremost ambassador of the Lepidoptera class, but Eve opened our imagination to the huge variety fluttering in plain sight. Her evocative pictures of Hairstreaks, Sulphurs, Baltimore Checkerspot, Coppers, Tortoiseshell and Admiral had me primed for the annual butterfly count in June. There is an almost lyrical quality, especially when paired with sympathetic habitat. Locate a strand of Mustard cabbage and you may spot a doting White Marble Wing. Milkweed is toxic to other species, but the Monarch's only friend. Sheep Sorrel and Bronze Copper are as inseparable as Bonnie and Clyde, and if you are seeking Satyrs, find yourself a comfortable patch of Sedges to study. Backyard gardeners can improve their count by judiciously planting Asters, Goldenrod, Joe Pye Weed and Ironweed and the aptly named but temperamental Butterfly Bush. Eva mentioned the butterfly's nocturnal cousins in the moth family, whose life is measured in hours rather than the long lived days to months of their daylight relatives. She also explained the enigmatic road signs I've noticed on Highway 40 "Prairie Passage", which refers to habitat developed along the road to support bird and butterfly flyways. She also threw in the odd fact that Possum pee is toxic to horses! Who knew? Sadly as habitat is threatened and the environment degraded, numbers are on the decline. The moth population has declined by 80% in the past 50 years, and the Karner Blue has been extirpated in our area due to the demise of wild lupine. Still there is hope - Monarch numbers are on the increase. The citizen science project "Journey North" website tracks the annual Monarch migration from Mexico. Two summers ago, cycling along the North shore of Lake Superior I occasionally explored the roadside forest, and it was alive with fluttering butterflies. The red and blacks abounded. That such fragile, ephemeral creatures can bring hope and joy, is the other effect of butterflies.



## **OHA CONVENTION**

The convention is being held in London, Ontario on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. District 10 is sponsoring it this year and it will be held at the Lamplighter Inn and Convention Centre. The theme is “Inspired by Nature-Learning, Growing, Blooming”. Will Herman is the keynote speaker. To learn more go to the webpage: <http://www:gardenontario.org>.

## **WORKSHOP**

The workshop to make Hypertufa pots will be held on Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup>. This will be held at Cromity Gardens in Dorchester at 2 pm. They have a large barn on premises where we will be making the pots. The cost varies from \$25.00 and up, depending on the size of pot and succulents you choose. Anyone wishing to register, contact Marilyn Rawson at 519-344-6360 or [mrawson1@cogeco.ca](mailto:mrawson1@cogeco.ca).

## **EVENTS**

Wednesday April 15<sup>th</sup>, meeting cancelled

Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>, College Park cleanup cancelled

Monday April 20<sup>th</sup>, board meeting cancelled

Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>, District 11 annual meeting in Windsor cancelled

Wednesday May 20<sup>th</sup>, bbq & potluck at College Avenue Garden 6pm

Saturday May 30<sup>th</sup>, bus trip to Goderich, lunch and tour of town, visit 2 greenhouses and a berry farm

NOTE: There may be further cancellations for the above events.

Planting of Horticultural Society Centennial tree at Canatara, date to be announced

Saturday June 6- Sunday 7th, open house at Cuddy Gardens in Strathroy

Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup>, Hypertufa workshop in Dorchester

Summer garden tours to be announced later

Friday July 17-18-19<sup>th</sup>, OHA convention in London

Monday August 17<sup>th</sup>, board meeting

Hobbyfest, date to be announced

Wednesday September 17<sup>th</sup>, public event at Sarnia Library auditorium 7pm  
speaker is Carson Arthur.

Wednesday October 21<sup>st</sup>, meeting 7pm, speaker Rosemarie Szalich

Endorsement of October, District 11 fall advisory meeting

Clean up at College Park, TBA

Monday November 16<sup>th</sup>, board meeting 1-3

Wednesday November 18<sup>th</sup>, meeting with annual social

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter. We welcome  
submissions of articles and garden tips and ideas.

Articles can be sent to: Mary Rastall [rastalls@gmail.com](mailto:rastalls@gmail.com),

Jackie Spearman [jackiespearman018@gmail.com](mailto:jackiespearman018@gmail.com), or

Marilyn Rawson [mrawson1@cogeco.ca](mailto:mrawson1@cogeco.ca).

### **THOUGHTS**

Sow good services; sweet remembrances will grow from them.

Earth laughs in flowers.

Just living is not enough; one must have sunshine, freedom and a little flower.

If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere. I think this is what hooks  
one on gardening; it is the closest one can come to being present at the creation.

## MEMBERSHIPS

Memberships can still be obtained. Call Jan Casbourn at 519-337-9139 or email her at [jcas@cogeco.ca](mailto:jcas@cogeco.ca). For new members please fill out the following form.

### SARNIA HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP 2020

Jan. 1, 2020 – Dec. 31, 2020. Single membership \$12, double membership \$20.  
Please complete the following information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please include your email to receive e-newsletters, updates and meeting reminders.

Submit to: Jan Casbourn, 559 Lakeshore Rd., Sarnia, ON, N7V 2S6  
519-337-9139, [jcas@cogeco.ca](mailto:jcas@cogeco.ca)

If you would like your membership card mailed to you please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.