

Grimsby Garden Club Trillium Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Grimsbygardenclub.ca

1. Q. What kinds of gardens are included in the Trillium scope?

A. All front gardens and balconies of residential, commercial, condominium, rental and town house properties. Excluded are buildings located on private lanes and roads, not accessible to the public. Condominium complexes are on private roads and are accessible to the public, so are included. These all must be located within Grimsby boundaries. Please note that the criteria for residential and non-residential are separate.

2. Q. Do the judges walk around the residence's front garden to view it?

A. The judges do **not** walk around the front garden. They view it from the street and front sidewalk. They walk along the street or the sidewalk. The Trillium scope is the front garden viewable from the street/sidewalk. Where there is a long driveway to the house, it can be difficult to complete an assessment of the garden. Judges do not walk up driveways. If the street side garden is significant, then it will be assessed. We try our best to include every garden.

3. Q. Do I need to know the owner's name to nominate a garden?

A. It is not mandatory to include the name in the nomination. It is mandatory for the nominated garden owner to provide their name(s) and give permission for photos and for publishing their name(s) and address. So please consider nominating a garden address, and we will do the rest.

4. Q. Are side gardens included in the judging where there are corner properties?

A. The Trillium scope is a **front garden viewable from the street**. Where the side garden is viewable from a straight-on front street view, it will be included. The judges do not walk around the corner and view the side garden when it isn't viewable from the front street view.

5. Q. How long does it take to judge a garden?

A. Typical viewing/assessment times are between 10 to 20 minutes for a garden. Judges use an assessment checklist and scoring form. They have been trained and are skilled in making an assessment. The checklist for assessment is available on the Grimsby Garden Club website.

6. Q. How do you decide the residence's front garden – it is where the house number is?

A. There are 2 possible front gardens – the part of the house with the number on

it, or the part of the house with the front door. The judges look to see where the front seems most likely and use that for judging. This accommodates newer housing sections where the house number is on one street with the garage and the front door is around the corner.

7. Q. Are artificial plants a detriment in the judging criteria?

A. The presence of artificial plants can be a solution for a porch or balcony situation where there is low light. In particular, artificial boxwood is sometimes used in these settings. Artificial flowers can integrate as accent features in the landscape or the container. However, the use of artificial flowers and plants as substitutes for living garden material is discouraged.

8. Q. Is artificial turf allowed?

A. Artificial turf is discouraged as a major feature in residential gardens. The Trillium program recognizes beautiful front gardens, and recommends natural, living material in a natural environment. When artificial turf is used extensively and is noticeable as a feature on the landscape, it may be considered a disqualification. Like artificial trees, bushes, and flowers, it generally falls outside the program's purpose.

9. Q. How do judges assess different sized properties – particularly small gardens?

A. Judging different sized properties takes skill and expertise. Judges receive training in applying the assessment criteria in a consistent way. One might think that a small garden has a better chance of scoring higher – for example it likely is less effort and time to maintain to high standards. However, in a small plot of say, 15x20 feet, the effect of each plant and element is critical. One plant out of scale has a medium to high impact. This is the case for mismatched or poor colour integration. Each item contributes to balance, unity and harmony. In a large garden, one plant or element out of place would not have a high impact on the design. In this scenario, groupings and flow of plants and elements are evaluated.

10. Q. Can a garden get a Trillium every year?

A. Yes, there currently are no limitations to the number of trilliums a garden can receive. Beautiful gardens can be awarded a Trillium each year.

11. Q. If a house is recently purchased can it receive a Trillium?

A. Yes, there are currently no rules disqualifying a garden because it has been recently purchased.

12. Q. Is there a way for the public to choose the best gardens in Grimsby?

A. There currently isn't a popular choice award. We are looking into the

possibility of a popular vote, and will keep you up to date on any developments.

13. Q. Can I submit a nomination after the deadline?

A. The answer is sometimes. In 2020, COVID-19 caused changes in our processes and submissions. These were special circumstances that caused delays in the mail and did not allow in-person submissions. The deadline may be moved for things like power outages, weather warnings, and other circumstances that affect everyone in the town. Individual circumstances may also exist: this might be a special circumstance like an illness. Typically a grace period of a few days will be allowed.

14. Q. How do I know if my garden should participate?

A. The detailed and summary assessment criteria are published here on the website. The Grimsby Garden Club website and the Facebook page show pictures of some of Grimsby's Trillium recipient gardens, or one can drive around and look at last year's gardens, as the addresses are listed on the website. Contact the chair of the Program if you would like to have input from an experienced Judge.

15. Q. My garden is on a busy road – how do you assess it?

A. The judges will find a place to park so that they can view the garden. Grimsby has a particularly difficult constraint on roads up the escarpment. If the homeowner allows it, the judges will park in the driveway – judges will ask permission first. We want to do everything possible to include every garden in the Trillium Program and want to accommodate all the circumstances of our beautiful surroundings.

16. Q. How do I interpret the assessment criteria and the numerical rating scale?

A. To get a sense of the assessment rating numbers and what they mean, use the following rule of thumb:

5 – excellent to outstanding

4 – very good

3 – good

2 – fair

1 – poor

0 – not present/missing

17.Q. How do I become a Trillium judge?

A. If you are interested in becoming a Trillium judge, contact the Trillium chair, the Grimsby Garden Club President, or email the Grimsby Garden Club. The

contact information is available on our website. An orientation and training session is required for all judges. For 2020 Trilliums, it will take place June 25th 2020.

18. Q. Are professionally designed and/or professionally cared for gardens allowed to be nominated?

A. The Program allows all front gardens to be nominated - regardless of the designer or caretaker. This program recognizes and supports gardeners in all forms.

There is no distinction based on ownership or garden activity. This means that it could be that the front garden has been designed and maintained by the garden owner(s) or tenants or non-residential staff. They may have help from family or friends. They may use a lawn maintenance service for mowing and trimming, or a garden maintenance service for garden bed maintenance. Landscape firms may build or install garden elements such as driveways and garden beds or other landscape features. Tree trimming is often done by professional tree firms.

The program is not similar or comparable to an art competition with static items to be judged and where copyright can be ascertained and should be adhered to. Most garden design/maintenance is not static and not copyrighted. It is a living, moving art.

NEW FAQs 2021

19. Q. Are there requirements for a front garden to have flowers (annuals or perennials) to be able to get a Trillium Award?

A. There is no mandatory requirement for flowers to be in the garden material. The garden design theme sets the context for what materials are present. An “English Cottage” garden will have an abundance of floral material whereas a “Topiary Scape” may have few or no flowers. There is the expectation of plant material of various forms. An example is Japanese Forest Grass and Hostas which create textural elements, with variations on green. Even then, there are “gardens” that surprise the viewer with hardscaping that creates a garden and sculptural effect.

All styles of gardens are encouraged –minimalistic, formal, modern, traditional, Japanese (including Japanese wabi sabi), Rock gardens, Prairie/Meadow. Informal and cottage style, Courtyard, and Country/rural. There is a long and wonderful history of garden styles over the centuries.

20. Q. When is a front yard not a garden?

To start with the definition of a garden:

Dictionary.com tells us that a garden is a plot of ground, usually near a house, where flowers, shrubs, vegetables, fruits, or herbs are cultivated, and that a public garden is a piece of ground or other space, commonly with ornamental plants, trees, etc., used as a park or other public recreation area

The **Cambridge Dictionary** says that a garden is “ a piece of land next to and belonging to a house, where flowers and other plants are grown and often containing an area of grass.”

Wikipedia says: A garden is a planned space, usually outdoors, set aside for the display, cultivation, or enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature, as an ideal setting for social or solitary human life. The single feature identifying even the wildest wild garden is control. The garden can incorporate both natural and man-made materials.

When a front yard is lacking in any plant material, e.g. is only a parking pad, it will not fare well in the evaluation. When the front yard is extremely ‘naturalistic’ – perhaps resembling a wood lot, then the design criteria will identify where the strengths and weaknesses lie.

21. Q. What if my house isn’t as attractive or as new as other houses?

A. This is an important question as people are certainly influenced by the style and size of façade of a house in general.

There are three activities in judging the garden:

- a. We ask the judges to look at the front yard putting their hand over the house and evaluate it
- b. We ask the judges to look at the front yard in context of the house as input to unity, harmony, balance and proportion. Check out these design elements further [HERE](#) (link to the presentation/document)
- c. A third element is at play – the quality of maintenance of a house as part of the property. The front walk way, stairs and driveway should be in good repair, as should fences, gates and other external property features. When things are poorly maintained, a house can appear unattractive and even ugly.

22. Q. How many Trilliums are awarded? Is there a minimum evaluation grade required to achieve a Trillium?

A. Approximately 60 residential Trilliums were awarded in 2020. As Grimsby has grown and more houses have been built, the Trilliums awarded has increased slightly each year.

23. Q. How do structured gardens compare to more casual gardens in terms of judging results?

A. There are some exemplary structured gardens in Grimsby. These have complex plantings of shaped and topiary-shaped shrubs and evergreens. At the same time, there are exemplary casual gardens, native, naturalistic and “English cottage style” that have received Trillium awards.

There is a trend for formal and structured gardens to be neat within in the planting design so that there is ‘space’ between the plants. For casual gardens, plants can ‘spill onto the sidewalk’ or intermingle and create drift effects. This is the difference in the garden theme and style.

24. Q. Are the gardens all judged at the same time? Can my garden be judged earlier or later?

A. The Trillium Program publishes a schedule of the nomination period, the week for first judging, the week for second judging, and then the week of awards announcement. The intent is to stay within that schedule. Nominations were allowed after the published deadline in 2020, due to COVID impacts. If there are similar constraints in 2021, the nomination period may be extended.

25. Q. How do you ensure scoring of the gardens is fair, consistent and repeatable? (Here are two choices:)

A. The process of judging follows these steps:

- a. Judging teams of 2 assigned
- b. Each person judges separately and records the score
- c. A second judging team repeats the above
- d. The 4 sets of scores are averaged

B. The process of judging follows these steps:

- a. Judging teams of 2 judge the property and combine their scores
- b. The overall results are reviewed and second judging takes place where judges request a second look

26. Q. How do you decide on the curb appeal score – is it a personal opinion or are there criteria?

A. There are a few approaches to the curb appeal score.

- a. the “BLINK Test” – Sally Cunningham co-author of *Buffalo Garden Style* describes this as “Look at the space for a few seconds - then close your eyes. What did you see? Describe it. The answer will tell you lots about that space: Is there a focal point? Does it have a frame or a backdrop? What colours dominate? Where was your eye directed? The answers are clues to why a design is or is not effective, interesting or special – as opposed to just blah.” Page 59
- b. The “Wow” moment – this occurs when driving down a street and a front yard garden makes you stop the car to look. It stands out from all around it.

27. Q. Do big houses in newer neighbourhoods have an advantage over other smaller, older houses in older neighbourhoods?

A. It can seem like there might be an over-representation of larger, newer houses nominated for Trilliums. Facades, driveways, gardens are made of newer materials and elements, making them appear very pleasant. At the same time, larger houses are generally on smaller lots, and driveways take up a substantial portion of the yard. This can lead to issues of balance, unity and harmony in the design area. This occurs when more than 1/3 of the front yard is a driveway of paving stones. There is design imbalance that needs to be compensated for.

28. Q. Will my front yard score higher if it takes more effort to maintain my garden – where there are lots of flowers, plants, shrubs and trees, compared to other gardens with far fewer plants, or with a dominant driveway / hardscape front yard?

A. Important question in need of an answer – off to lunch.

29. Q. How important is the condition of the grass in my front yard? Does it have to be completely weed-free, and what about brown spots? What happens when there is a drought?

A. There certainly are some Trillium winners with excellent to outstanding front lawns. This includes perfectly green, weed-free, nicely mowed to a pleasant height, and separated from the garden and hardscape areas with

clear, clean edging. There's a botanic garden sense to outstanding lawn presentation – Butchart Gardens comes to mind.

At the same time, there is an increasing concern for our environment – for managing our water usage, and for reducing pesticide and herbicides to protect our birds, insects and even our pets.

The Trillium Program would wish for a balanced approach to lawn maintenance. There isn't a mechanism to check for herbicide and pesticide-free lawns in the judging so we must leave it with residents to be good shepherds of our natural resources.

The question arises about green vs brown lawns due to drought. This is allowable but has its disadvantages.

There have been summers where droughts have lasted so long that grass has died. Summer dormancy occurs when the grass is stressed out by intense heat and drought. It can stay in this dormant state safely for 3-4 weeks without dying. However intense drought will kill it over time. A gardener should monitor the heat and lack of rain so that the lawn does not die. Grass is a living part of the garden and to be cared for. There are various ground covers that can be used in place of lawns for those who wish to conserve water resources.

30. Q. How do I know the focal point(s) in gardens? Can there be too many?

A. Focal points are typically specimen plants, shrubs, garden ornaments, statues, gates, front doors and objects. It is a plant, container, or object that gives you an attractive visual entry point into the garden. It tells you where to look initially and then smoothly directs you to the surrounding garden. It is a plant, container, or object that gives you an attractive visual entry point into the garden. It tells you where to look initially and then smoothly directs you to the surrounding garden. A focal point can be the place where the eye lands as the final resting point. The rule of thumb is the maximum is 5 to 7 things can be focal points in a landscape. Typically there is a dominant focal point and others are subordinate.

31. Q. Can a garden be disqualified?

A. There are two criteria for disqualification: front yard not viewable from the street, nominated gardener does not give permission to release name, address and pictures of the front garden.

32. Q. Can a garden be too neat?

B. This is an interesting question. When hedges and bushes are clipped and sheared so closely that they get “burn” and are brown, this becomes a detriment in the maintenance assessment. Additionally, where the maintenance is dominant over the garden’s design, the garden’s unity and harmony would be lesser, so a lower score would result.