



Digging It!

August, 2014

Flowering Shrubs: Four Seasons of Beauty

If a low-maintenance garden filled with colour and bloom interests you, look no further than the world of flowering shrubs. With a little forethought and planning, these foundation plants can provide 3 seasons of flower and one of winter interest.

Shrubs, along with trees, provide the 'bones' of the garden. Many gardeners choose to fill the spaces between and in front of the mid-level shrub border with perennials and/or annuals.

The Zone 5 A and B central Ontario climate is ideal for the growing of woody shrubs. Cold winters with adequate snow cover provide the dormant period necessary for the production of flowers. Summers are warm, wet and long enough to allow the shrubs plenty of time to grow, flower and prepare again for dormancy. With such a variety of shrub type and bloom time available now, one could have flowers on display from early spring to fall.

The traditional harbinger of spring is the beautiful, yellow *Forsythia*. They flower best in full sun but will tolerate some shade. A moist, but well-drained soil (not too rich in fertility) will keep them happy. The general rule for pruning an early- spring flowering shrub is to cut it back immediately after flowering.

As the *Forsythia* fades, the Mock-Orange and *Weigela* are setting buds. With its fragrant, large white blooms with pale yellow centres, the mock-orange (*Philadelphus*) grows well in full sun to light shade, this shrub will provide several weeks of spring to early summer bloom.



The *Weigelas* are coming into bloom by late spring. Their tubular flowers, in deep reds to pale pinks, can last for up to 6 weeks and may even bloom again late in the season. Leaf colour varies from bright green to deep purple and the foliage alone offers plenty of visual and textural interest.

The tried and true *Spiraea* (spirea) offers a full range of spring and summer bloom with flower colours in whites through reds and leaf colour from dark to lime green.



As summer moves forward into fall you can count on *Hydrangea* and *Hibiscus* (Rose-of-Sharon). In full sun, both shrubs will bloom plentifully through August and into September. *Hibiscus syriacus* comes in a multitude of colours – 'Aphrodite' -rose pink, 'Blue Bird' – blue with red centres and 'Diana' – white. It is best to just deadhead these shrubs after blooming and leave a more thorough pruning for early spring.

Install some carefully chosen shrubs in the garden and you will be rewarded with bloom and interest from the melting of the snow to the changing colour of the leaves and beyond.

Catherine Waffle,
Master Gardener

August TO DO List

- Reduce fertilization to allow plants ample time to harden off before winter.
- Continue to water during dry spells.
- Deadhead annuals and perennials to encourage new growth.
- Keep an eye open for pests that may be planning to hibernate in the debris around your plants.
- Seed areas of the lawn that are thin or dead. Keep the seed well watered while germinating.
- Propagate from seeds or cuttings.

Tip of the Month:

If you are looking for a plant that blooms all season. *Agastache* 'Blue Boa' is definitely a great contender. Paul Zamit of the Toronto Botanical Gardens recommends this plant. For a long and happy show.

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Newsletter of the Simcoe County Ask a Master Gardener books containing answers to your most common gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for only \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend!

Master Gardeners

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Editor Cherin Harris-Tuck



Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

Where to find us for free gardening advice!

Simcoe County Master Gardener Meeting,

White Pine Board Room, Midhurst, 7:00 pm, September 16,

MG Question and Answers

Saturdays and Sundays

Canadian Tire Centre Collingwood

Saturdays and Sundays

Botanix, Alliston

Texture and foliage keep a garden interesting through the season.

Flowers are just moments of gratification.

- Kevin Doyle

Editor's note: an extra quote this month to get you through your weeding!

The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do.

- Galileo

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For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Tracy Bosley at 705-435-2608 or email her at tvbosley@rogers.com. For more information on Master Gardeners visit mgoi.ca