

# Notes on Native Plant Gardening in the Golden Horseshoe – March 2015

Paul O'Hara  
Blue Oak Native Landscapes  
Hamilton, ON  
(905) 540-9963  
blueoak@sympatico.ca  
www.blueoak.ca



*"If suburbia were landscaped with meadows, prairies, thickets or forests, or combinations of these, then the water would sparkle, the fish would be good to eat again, birds would sing, and human spirits would rise."*  
– the late Lorrie Otto, Native Plant Gardening Pioneer

- Hamilton and Halton Regions are located at the extreme northern edge of the Deciduous Forest Region (Carolinian Canada)
- Carolinian Canada is the meeting place of 3 biomes making the flora of Southwestern Ontario richer than anywhere else in Canada
  1. Boreal Forest Region of northern Canada
  2. Deciduous Forest Region of the eastern United States
  3. Prairie or Great Plains Region of the Midwest
- In Carolinian Canada, 25% of Canada's population live on 0.25% of Canada's land mass. Sixty-five percent of Canada's rare and endangered species occur in Carolinian Canada. About 25% of which are restricted to the region occurring nowhere else in the country.
- Historically, 80% of Carolinian Canada was forested, the remainder being wetlands, savannas and prairie. Approximately 11% forest cover remains, in some regions (i.e. Chatham-Kent, Windsor-Essex) less than 4% remains. Most remaining urban and near-urban woodlands are of poor quality with highly compromised shrub and ground layers and invasive species like Buckthorn, Tatarian Honeysuckle, Dog-strangling Vine and Garlic Mustard.
- Creating a 'Web of Green' across Southern Ontario – The larger community goal of native plant gardening.
- Elements of landscape design: balance, rhythm, repetition and winter interest.
- Winter interest is achieved through:
  1. Evergreen plant material – conifers i.e. Hemlock, Red Cedar, White Pine; broadleaf evergreens i.e. Bearberry
  2. Grasses and Sedges that stand up through the winter
  3. Rocks – armour stone, mossy boulders, pebbles, beach rock
  4. Hardscapes – tumbled paver pathways, flagstone, retaining walls, fences etc.
- Making the connection: Habitat observation to landscape design
  1. meadow habitats = perennial borders
  2. thicket habitats = screening and foundation plantings
  3. forest habitats = gardening under shade trees

### General Landscape Design Rules

- Gardens can be formal (i.e. straight garden lines with block and line plantings; a more stiff look) and informal (i.e. curving garden lines and plantings in sweeps and drifts; a more natural look).
- Preserve desirable views. Use plantings and structures (i.e. fences, lattice) to block unsightly views.
- Choose design elements (i.e. plants, rocks, patios, walkways) that match the scale of your property i.e. smaller property = smaller design elements, larger property = larger design elements.
- Conifers can be used to soften building corners.
- Plant trees at least 1.5 metres from foundations. Weak-wooded or trees with aggressive roots (i.e. Silver Maple) should not be planted close to structures.
- Gardening in layers (ground, shrub, sub-canopy, canopy) creates more niches for wildlife.
- Water features (ponds, bird baths) greatly enhance gardens for wildlife.

### Good Native Plant Gardening Books

1. American Woodland Garden, Rick Darke
2. The Colour Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses, Rick Darke
3. The Living Landscape, Rick Darke and Doug Tallamy
4. Native Trees, Shrubs and Vines, William Cullina
5. Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada, William Cullina
6. Gardening with Prairie Plants, Sally Wasowski
7. Grow Wild! Native Plant Gardening in Canada, Lorraine Johnson
8. Bringing Nature Home, Doug Tallamy (makes the plant-insect connection)

### Some Local Native Plant Nurseries

1. Kayanase (Oshweken at Six Nations)
2. Native Plants in Claremont (Claremont, ON north of Pickering)
3. Grand Moraine Growers (Alma, ON north of Guelph)
4. Wildflower Farm (Coldwater, ON north of Barrie)
5. Not So Hollow Farm (Mulmur, ON southwest of Barrie)
6. Nith River Native Plants (New Hamburg, ON west of Kitchener)
7. St. Williams Nursery (near Long Point) – a wholesale nursery, but they have an annual retail sale each spring.
8. South Coast Gardens (near Turkey Point)
9. Many conventional nurseries like Connon, Humber and Sheridan carry a range of native plants but often the plants are not from local genetic sources.

## Native Plants for Golden Horseshoe Gardens - Paul O'Hara, Blue Oak Native Landscapes

Evergreens	Notes
White Pine ( <i>Pinus strobus</i> )	Ontario provincial tree. Great tree for medium to larger sized gardens.
Balsam Fir ( <i>Abies balsamea</i> )	A northern conifer. An ideal choice for a cool corner in part sun.
Hemlock ( <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> )	A graceful evergreen. Tolerates deep shade.
Red Cedar ( <i>Juniperus virginiana</i> )	Our native juniper common in fields/roadsides. Berries a favourite of birds.
Red Pine ( <i>Pinus resinosa</i> )	A drought tolerant tree that thrives on well-drained sands in full sun.
White Spruce ( <i>Picea glauca</i> )	A tough conifer able to withstand drought and heat stress.
Large Deciduous Trees	
White Oak ( <i>Quercus alba</i> )	The king of our native oaks. Slow growing and long lived.
Bur Oak ( <i>Quercus macrocarpa</i> )	The toughest of our native oaks. Thrives on sands and hard pan clays.
Red Oak ( <i>Quercus rubra</i> )	A fast-growing oak common to local woodlands. Attractive fall colour.
Hackberry ( <i>Celtis occidentalis</i> )	A tough tree on a variety of soils. Seeds eaten by birds.
Kentucky Coffee Tree ( <i>Gymnocladus dioica</i> )	A tough tree with large compound leaves. Tolerant of urban stresses.
Bitternut Hickory ( <i>Carya cordiformis</i> )	One of our most common native hickories. Nuts feed wildlife.
Basswood ( <i>Tilia americana</i> )	Feeds a variety of insects. A favourite of bees. Tolerant of urban stresses.
Sugar Maple ( <i>Acer saccharum</i> )	The most common tree of our tableland forests. Brilliant fall colour.
Red Maple ( <i>Acer rubrum</i> )	Our native Red Maple, unlike the non-native 'Crimson King' Norway Maple.
Black Cherry ( <i>Prunus serotina</i> )	A large cherry for full sun. Prefers sandy and loamy soils.
White Birch ( <i>Betula papyrifera</i> )	Our native white barked birch. Seeds eaten by a variety of wildfie.
Tuliptree ( <i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i> )	A great specimen tree for any medium to large sized backyard. Prefers sand.
Small Deciduous Trees	
Serviceberry ( <i>Amelanchier canadensis</i> )	A small tree or multi-stemmed shrub for early spring colour.
Downy Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus mollis</i> )	Hawthorns are great wildlife trees for insects and birds. Full sun.
Blue Beech ( <i>Carpinus caroliniana</i> )	Attractive ridged bark. Pefers moist soils in shade to part sun.
American Plum ( <i>Prunus americana</i> )	Beautiful spring flowers. Good addition to the bird thicket in full sun.
Wild Crab Apple ( <i>Malus coronaria</i> )	Pink flowering fruit tree. Fruit good for jams and preserves.
Witch-hazel ( <i>Hammamelis virginiana</i> )	A multi-stemmed shrub. Prefers part sun. Flowers in autumn.
Nannyberry ( <i>Viburnum lentago</i> )	One of our native Viburnums. Tolerates medium to moist soils.
Alternate-leaved Dogwood ( <i>C. alternifolia</i> )	An excellent small tree for birds. Plant in shade to part sun.
Redbud ( <i>Cercis canadensis</i> )	Showy pink flowers in spring. Plant in area protected from wind.
Shrubs	
Purple Flowering Raspberry ( <i>Rubus odoratus</i> )	Attractive bold foliage and flowers. Will sucker. Tolerates shade.
Bush Honeysuckle ( <i>Diervilla lonicera</i> )	Tough rounded, thigh high shrub. Great planted in masses. Suckers freely.
Red Osier Dogwood ( <i>Cornus sericea</i> )	Red twigs look great planted in masses near evergreen trees.
Oak-leaved Hydrangea ( <i>H. quercifolia</i> )	Attractive bold foliage. Native to northeastern U.S.
Chokecherry ( <i>Prunus virginiana</i> )	The most common native shrubs in our forests. Berries relished by birds.
Fragrant Sumac ( <i>Rhus aromatica</i> )	Tough shrub tolerant of urban stresses. Full sun.
Gray Dogwood ( <i>Cornus foemina</i> )	Excellent wildlife shrub. Suitable for backyard bird thickets.
Chokeberry ( <i>Aronia melanocarpa</i> )	Tough shrub with rounded form and wine coloured leaves in autumn.
American Hazel ( <i>Corylus americana</i> )	Prefers sands in full to part sun. Beautiful fall colour.
New Jersey Tea ( <i>Ceanothus americana</i> )	Low rounded shrub. Best planted in groups. Excellent butterfly plant.
Carolina Rose ( <i>Rosa carolina</i> )	Our native rose. Great for bees. Needs no fungicides.
Ninebark ( <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> )	Medium sized shrub with showy flowers that feed a variety of insects.
Shrubby St. John's Wort ( <i>H. prolificum</i> )	A tough, rounded, knee high shrub for full sun. Summer yellow flowers.
Elderberry ( <i>Sambucus pubens</i> )	Berries relished by birds. Shade to part sun.
Bearberry ( <i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> )	A broadleaf evergreen groundcover for full sun.
Vines	
Virginia Creeper ( <i>Parthenocissus inserta</i> )	Tolerates shade to part sun. Attractive fall colour.
Bittersweet ( <i>Celastrus scandens</i> )	Attractive orange fruits in autumn. Plant in part to full sun.
Virgin's Bower ( <i>Clematis virginiana</i> )	Our native Clematis. Grows well in moist soils.
Wild Yam ( <i>Dioscorea villosa</i> )	Attractive spade shaped leaves. Grows well in moist soils in part sun.
Ferns	
Maidenhair Fern ( <i>Adiantum pedatum</i> )	A delicate native fern for the shady woodland garden.
Marginal Wood Fern ( <i>Dryopteris marginalis</i> )	Semi-evergreen fern. A good grower for most gardens.

Christmas Fern ( <i>Polystichum acrosticoides</i> )	Semi-evergreen fern for shade to part sun. Prefers moist soils.
Lady Fern ( <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i> )	A thigh high lacy fern for woodland gardens.
Ostrich Fern ( <i>Matteucia struthiopteris</i> )	The familiar fern with large fronds and fiddleheads in spring.
<b>Grasses and Sedges</b>	
Fringed Sedge ( <i>Carex crinita</i> )	A graceful knee high sedge for moist soils in part sun.
Gray's Sedge ( <i>Carex grayi</i> )	Attractive mace-like seed heads. Tolerates moist to wet soils.
Plantain-leaved Sedge ( <i>Carex plantaginea</i> )	Attractive wide leaved sedge for woodland gardens.
Broad-leaved Sedge ( <i>Carex platyphylla</i> )	Another wide leaved sedge. Prefers part sun.
Early-fruiting Sedge ( <i>Carex pedunculata</i> )	An excellent sedge for the woodland garden in shade to part sun.
Pennsylvania Sedge ( <i>Carex pennsylvanica</i> )	A turf forming sedge for woodland gardens in part sun.
Prairie Dropseed ( <i>Sporobolus heterolepis</i> )	Tufted, prairie grass for full sun. Plant in masses.
Little Bluestem ( <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> )	Knee to thigh high grass for full sun. Prefers sandy soils.
Big Bluestem ( <i>Andropogon gerardii</i> )	Chest high prairie grass for full sun. Tolerates clay soils.
Switch Grass ( <i>Panicum virgatum</i> )	An excellent stand-up native grass. Many cultivars available.
Tufted Hairgrass ( <i>Dechampsia caespitosa</i> )	Knee to thigh high grass for moist soils in full to part sun.
<b>Wildflowers</b>	
<b>Spring Flowering</b>	
Solomon's Seal ( <i>Polygonatum pubescens</i> )	Arching stems with hanging white flowers.
False Solomon's Seal ( <i>M. racemosum</i> )	A hardy perennial for the woodland garden.
Wild Columbine ( <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> )	Our native columbine. Good for the rock or woodland garden.
Smooth Beardtongue ( <i>Penstemon digitalis</i> )	Waist high perennial for moist, part sun to full sun. A favourite of bees.
Hairy Beardtongue ( <i>Penstemon hirsutus</i> )	Knee high blue-flowered perennial for full to part sun. Tolerates dry soils.
Pussytoes ( <i>Antennaria neglecta</i> )	Host plant for the Painted Lady Butterfly. Good groundcover species.
Early Meadow-rue ( <i>Thalictrum dioicum</i> )	A woodland flower with attractive lacy foliage.
Prairie Smoke ( <i>Geum triflorum</i> )	A small perennial suitable for rock gardens in full sun.
Wild Geranium ( <i>Geranium maculatum</i> )	Wonderful woodland garden perennial. Prefers part sun.
Moss Phlox ( <i>Phlox subulata</i> )	A good groundcover species for full sun.
Foamflower ( <i>Tiarella cordifolia</i> )	Low growing spring flowerer. Best planted in drifts.
<b>Summer Flowering</b>	
Woodland Sunflower ( <i>Helianthus divaricata</i> )	An aggressive native sunflower. Ideal under trees in part sun.
Spikenard ( <i>Aralia racemosa</i> )	A great architectural plant for a shady corner. Flowers feed many insects.
Wild Bergamot ( <i>Monarda fistulosa</i> )	Pink flowering. A great perennial for bees and butterflies.
Bee-balm ( <i>Monarda didyma</i> )	Scarlet red flowers for the summer woodland garden. Prefers moist soils.
Upland White Goldenrod ( <i>S. ptarmicoides</i> )	An uncommon white flowering goldenrod.
Early Goldenrod ( <i>Solidago juncea</i> )	An early flowering goldenrod for full to part sun.
Harebell ( <i>Campanula rotundifolia</i> )	A small blue flowered perennial for full to part sun.
Sweet Ox-eye ( <i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> )	Sunflower like flowers in high summer. Tolerant of clay soils.
Virginia Mountain Mint ( <i>P. virginiana</i> )	A high-nectar plant for the sunny, perennial border.
Sneezeweed ( <i>Helenium autumnale</i> )	Showy yellow flowers for the perennial border in full sun. Prefers moist soils.
Ironweed ( <i>Vernonia</i> spp.)	Tall perennial with deep, purple flowers in flat-topped clusters. Full sun.
Pale Purple Coneflower ( <i>Echinacea pallida</i> )	Our native coneflower. Purple coneflower ( <i>E. purpurea</i> ) suitable as well.
Black-eyed Susan ( <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> )	Attractive yellow flowers in high summer. Full sun.
Dense Blazing-star ( <i>Liatris spicata</i> )	Wands of pink in high summer. Full sun.
Common Milkweed ( <i>Asclepias syriaca</i> )	Our common roadside milkweed. A favourite of bees and butterflies.
Butterfly Milkweed ( <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> )	Drought tolerant. Full sun. Great for butterflies and other insects.
Swamp Milkweed ( <i>Asclepias incarnata</i> )	Tall, pink flowering milkweed loved by Monarchs. Tolerates wet soils.
<b>Fall Flowering</b>	
Stiff Goldenrod ( <i>Solidago rigida</i> )	A chest high goldenrod for dry, full sun conditions.
Gray Goldenrod ( <i>Solidago nemoralis</i> )	Knee high goldenrod for full sun and well drained soils.
Zig-zag Goldenrod ( <i>Solidago flexicaulis</i> )	Woodland goldenrod for shade to part sun. Can be an aggressive self-sower.
Blue-stemmed Goldenrod ( <i>Solidago caesia</i> )	Knee high arching golden flowers for the woodland garden.
Large-leaved Aster ( <i>Eurybia macrophyllus</i> )	A white flowered woodland aster. Can be aggressive.
Smooth Aster ( <i>Symphotrichum laeve</i> )	A tall, blue flowered aster for the sunny perennial border.
Heart-leaved Aster ( <i>S. cordifolium</i> )	Showy, knee to thigh high aster for the woodland garden in part sun.
Sky Blue Aster ( <i>S. oolentangiense</i> )	Knee high aster for part to full sun on sandy and loamy soils.