



The Ladyslipper

Perth & District Horticultural Society

www.perthhortsociety.com



Est. 1984

June 2026

President's Pen

Happy June, everyone!

What a wonderful time of year, everything is freshly green and starting to push upward.

We had a successful plant sale was on Saturday, May 16, 2026, at the Crystal Palace. We made \$1,482.00. Kudos to all the volunteers who helped organize the plant sale, and thank you to the members who visited us during the sale.

It's a busy time of year for gardeners as well. I along with other community gardening volunteers have been not only putting in our own garden but also getting the community gardens started around town.

I recommend checking out the Round Garden, also known as the Garden for the Blind, located near the Lanark County Building at 99 Christie Lake Road. This is a new program that we have taken on, led by VP Catherine Stephen-Dunn, to support the playgroup there.

The Flag Garden has been planted up, thanks to many PDHS volunteers, and we are fortunate to have the Town take care of the watering this year, phew!



This Wednesday morning we will be planting some native shrubs and a tree in Last Duel Park and in the Wendy Laut Pollinator Garden there. We received a grant from the OHA along with a donation to honour Margo Fulford, a lifetime member of PDHS. We will have a plaque installed to mark this commemoration.

We have a lot of things to look forward to this summer. Starting with the D2 Flower & Edibles Show, June 13 in Kanata, followed by our trip to the Governor General's gardens on June 23.

Watch your email for details on garden tours of members' gardens happening this summer.

Happy gardening!

Robin

Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

I am over the moon! Finally I found (and bought) this beautiful native bush/ tree and planted it in my front garden.

Hamamelis virginiana has been my favourite native tree/bush for a long time. Even more so after I saw a bunch of them with their beautiful yellow spider-like flowers at the end of Autumn on one of our Bruce trail walks. It was in the Niagara escarpment area.

Most deciduous trees had shed their leaves and while walking under a canopy of large trees all of a sudden there were many Witch Hazel specimen, from very large tree-like to underbrush bushes. I was stopped on my walk by a sweet smell before I saw them. And I was surprised!

Why were they blooming at the end of Fall? I remember back in Holland where I grew up, these trees/bushes were flowering at the end of winter, early spring. On further research the *Hamamelis* specimen in Holland must have been *Hamamelis mollis*, which is actually a Chinese Witch hazel.

In the southern US the *Hamamelis vernalis* or Ozark Witch hazel is the early spring blooming species. It comes with deep purple-red flowers. I am not sure if this species can survive our cold winters.

The *Hamamelis* name has Ancient Greek roots. “Hama” means at the same time and “Melon” means apple or fruit.



This makes sense because the flowers and the fruits are on the tree at the same time. The fruits grow in clusters (hard capsules) along the stem while at the same time the flowers bloom with their spidery threads on other branches. It takes about a year for the fruit to ripen and then an amazing thing happens. The seed pods open and shoot 2 black seeds violently away, maybe 20 to 30 feet far. That explains why we saw many smaller bushes around the area where probably the mother tree had done her propagating. Of course wildlife will enjoy the seeds too.

The trees can grow up to 20 -30 feet but the bushes stay smaller and you can trim them into the shape you want. But still a multi-stemmed Witch hazel can grow up to 15-20 feet. So I will trim mine and try to keep it up to maybe 10 feet.

Medicinal Action and Use

Hamamelis v. (Witch-hazel) is used as a Homeopathic remedy often for cases of haemorrhage and disordered blood-vessels; for burns, prickling and stinging varicose veins and burning painful haemorrhoids.

As a herbal medicine it was already used by North American native people as poultices for painful swellings and for nose bleeds.

First Aid: to treat scalds and burns, insect bites, to ease bruising, ease painful varicose veins and haemorrhoids and as a skin cleanser you can buy Witch Hazel tonic in drugstores.

But to make it yourself: For an astringent decoction boil 1 teaspoon of powdered leaves/twigs per cup of water for 10 minutes. Strain and cool. Apply directly or mix into an ointment.

You can harvest the leaves and twigs anytime and dry them.

From: “The Healing Herbs. The ultimate guide to the Curative Power of Nature’s Medicines”, by Michael Castleman.

I am looking forward to see my Hamamelis virginiana develop and surprise me every Fall with its beautiful flowers.

Phyllis De Ruyter, PDHS board member
Retired Homeopath and Heilkunst practitioner

September 8 Meeting

The Benefits of Medicinal Plants

Our Speaker, Marcin Padlewski N. D. is a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine. Marcin follows a holistic approach toward wellbeing. He will talk about the benefits of medicinal herbs and plants.

Weeds Be Gone

Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County Master Gardeners

The most effective way to keep weeds out of your gardens is to combine prevention-focused strategies rather than relying on one single method. Research shows that the integrated approaches—mulch, dense planting, soil preparation and seed bank reductions provide the strongest long-term results. The following are the top strategies that work.

Mulch is your number one defense. A 5-10 cm layer of organic mulch can suppress weed emergence by up to 95%. Mulch blocks sunlight, prevents weed seed germination, reduces watering needs and improves soil structure over time. Good options are shredded bark, composted mulch, straw and wood chips. Often, arborists have an abundance of wood chips and are happy to dump a load in your yard. Do not use coloured mulch. In the fall or spring, when you are raking your leaves, rake them into your gardens.



Prevent weeds from going to seed. A single lamb’s quarters plant can produce up to 57,000 seeds that can remain in the soil for years. If you remove weeds before they flower, you drastically reduce next year’s weeds.

Plant densely. Close spacing of your plants shades the soil and leaves little room for weeds to establish. This works very well in both ornamental and vegetable gardens. If you are starting a new perennial bed, your plants are often not full-size, so you leave room for them to grow. This is a great

opportunity to fill the gaps with annual plants or add more mulch, rather than leaving the space bare for weed seeds to take hold.

Use natural weed barriers to block light and smother weed seeds. Cardboard and newspaper are often used to start a garden bed. They smother everything under them. I find them less useful with established beds. You can plant through these for your perennial plants. Moisten them well. Straw is a great addition around your plants. It helps keep the soil moist and prevents light from reaching it. Take care to keep the straw slightly away from the plants, as it uses nitrogen to decompose, reducing the nitrogen needed by the plants to grow. I have always recommended against using landscape cloth. It does provide shade to the weed seeds, but over time, soil accumulates on it, and weeds grow. If you plant through the landscape cloth, it becomes difficult to remove. There are natural fibre landscape clothes available. Likely worthwhile to use in a vegetable garden. Not sure how well it would work in an ornamental garden.

Improving soil structure by aerating or loosening soil makes it harder for weed roots to anchor. Healthy soil with good tilth favours your plants over opportunistic weeds.

Water strategically using drip irrigation. This reduces weeds by 50-70% compared to overhead watering. Only water where your plants are, not the whole bed.

Cover crops for vegetable gardens or fall preparation reduce early-season weed pressure by 60-90%. Cover crops are non-harvested crops grown during the off-season. Common types and their benefits include:

- Legumes (clover, vetch)—fix nitrogen in the soil.
- Grasses (rye, oats)—protect the soil from erosion.
- Brassicas (radishes, mustard) —break up compacted soil.



Cover crops contribute significantly to climate change mitigation. They help to capture atmospheric carbon and store it in the soil as organic matter, turning the fields into carbon sinks. They reduce greenhouse gas emissions by fixing nitrogen in the soil and improving soil health, and reduce the need and expense for synthetic fertilizers. By improving soil structure and water retention, they withstand extreme weather events such as heavy rains and droughts.

Hand-pull weeds when the soil is moist and remove the entire root, especially for perennials such as dandelions or thistle.

If it is very difficult to get the entire taproot, a better approach is to slice the plant slightly below ground level. The root will have nothing to feed it. It will put up a new plant, but repeated below-ground-level slicing will weaken the plant until it can no longer reproduce. Works well for many invasive plants, BUT you must be persistent.

What not to do!

- Do not leave bare soil. Mother Nature wants to protect the soil, and weed seeds love open ground.
- Do not till repeatedly, as this will bring buried weed seeds to the surface. It also damages soil structure.
- Do not rely on only one method. Even mulch, the number-one weed protector, is only partially effective on its own.