

AUTUMN 2020

THE BLOOMING NEWS

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The storm clouds of the Covid-19 pandemic have brought many disappointments to us all. We have missed our friends and families, our travel, and most of our normal activities. And we have missed the garden club.

But one of the silver linings of the last few months has been to discover and appreciate even more the creativity, talent and generosity of our members. We have pulled together during a very difficult time to share our photos, our stories, and our art. We have turned adversity into an opportunity to get to know each other better.

And we will need to keep pulling together in the months ahead, as all our meetings and presentations have been cancelled for the fall at least. Your executive will continually monitor the situation and keep you informed as to when we think it will be possible for us to meet again.

In the meantime, our plan is to continue to showcase and celebrate our members. We will begin in September with the design skills of Cynthia Hoisak, who will provide a video on creating fall urns and floral table decorations. In October, we will once again feature slide shows of our members' gardens -- city and country, big and small. In November, Felicity Garrard will take us on a virtual tour of the ornamental gardens of the Central Experimental Farm through the seasons. And in December, we are planning a design competition for the best holiday urns and centrepieces.

In addition to all the above, we will have regular *Blooming Updates*, Mary Pratte will continue her wonderful blog, and there will be slide shows, garden links, and other surprises.

Let's keep the Ottawa Garden Club strong!

Heather Brown

HIGHLIGHTS OF WINTER MEETINGS

Botanical Art by Kerri Weller - January 16, 2020

Our January meeting began 2020 with a blaze of beauty and colour as the featured speaker, Kerri Weller, spoke about botanical art, and in particular, her own approach and technique in this exacting field. Kerri trained as a medical illustrator and later began to combine her artistic and scientific skills with a great love of gardens and plants. She illustrated her excellent and amusing presentation with a breathtaking selection of her own botanical paintings.



Parrot Tulips, *Tulipa x hybrida*, Oil on panel, 18 x 13 inches

Botanical art has a very long history, beginning with depictions of plants on the walls of Egyptian tombs. It can be traced from medieval herbals and detailed Renaissance drawings and paintings of plants, to the first illustrated books and the great plant collectors of the 16th to 19th centuries. Despite the invention of photography, botanical art had a revival in the 20th century and Kerri has been among the top practitioners, winning many prizes along the way. She delights in working from life and spends hours studying and sketching flowers in her garden. Her key to the strict accuracy required in botanical illustration is "know your subject!" and indeed Kerri showed that she knows her subjects inside out – from the exquisite detail of a *Helianthus* seed head to the fading beauty of a tulip petal. She tries to

express plant history and symbolism subtly through colour and composition. Although she began with

traditional botanical illustrations in watercolour on white backgrounds, Kerri now works mainly in oils on a black background, sometimes depicting an actual pollinator (a controversial detail for botanists, the final arbiters in juried competitions!).

Kerri is most proud of her prize-winning design for the Mint's Armistice Poppy Coin in 2018. She had trouble finding poppies to sketch from life, so sent a request for help to the Ottawa Master Gardeners. By coincidence, it was one of our own



Donna Shields-Poë, Wendy Sumner, Sally Tindale, Heather Brown and Charlotte Ward pay serious attention to the "Bring and Buy" offerings during lunch.

members, Kelly Noel, who replied, suggesting the Maplelawn Garden, where perfect specimens were found!

This rich and beautiful presentation was inspiring to say the least, and in her thank-you speech, Victoria Hutton summed it up with a quote from William Blake. Kerri had allowed us "... to see the world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower." Check out Kerri's website at <https://kerriweller.ca/>

Helen Clark

Postscript: Kerri's painting *Parrot Tulips* has been included in a wonderful book published by Timber Press called [Botanical Art Techniques](#) by the American Society of Botanical Artists. It is due to be released this August, and might be of interest to those of you who wish to learn more about this fascinating genre. <https://www.workman.com/products/botanical-art-techniques>



German Bearded Irises, *Iris x germanica* - Oil on panel, 14 x 11 inches



Victoria Hutton discusses the finer points of painting with Kerri Weller.

Hooked on Hostas – February 20, 2020

Our February speaker and self-confessed "hostaholic", Ann Frederking, began her talk by warning us that hosta collecting can become a serious addiction! In her case, the compulsion began innocently enough with the purchase of a few plants to furnish an increasingly shady corner of her garden, but it wasn't long before she became completely drawn in by the vastness and variety of the hosta world. She now cultivates more than 180 different types, the number only limited by the size of her garden.

This useful and often taken-for-granted perennial is a native of Japan, Korea, China and some parts of eastern Russia, and there are literally thousands of varieties, ranging from giant plants more than a metre across, to dainty miniatures



"Halcyon"

just centimetres wide. There are innumerable leaf patterns, stripes and borders, shapes, colour variations and growth habits, all of which can be found listed and illustrated in the weighty and wonderfully named

Hostapedia by Mark Zillis, as well as many other specialist publications.

Ann described the botanical features of the hosta in detail; how it can be cloned and hybridized to create new varieties (she has created many of her own, some named after her grandchildren); and the fact that it is genetically unstable and tends to produce

"sports" – parts of the plant that have mutated to produce different coloured

leaves. In terms of cultivation we

learned that hostas like cold winters, and need plenty of water in summer (but not too much). Not all varieties have to be grown in deep shade; many grow best in dappled sunlight, the blue ones especially, and the yellow-leaved varieties actually thrive in full sun. Ann feeds her plants alfalfa tea or tomato fertilizer, and her favourite mulch is composted pine bark, placed away from the crown of the plant so that it doesn't rot.

Unfortunately, the hosta has a number of enemies determined to destroy its pristine beauty, first among them being the slug! Ann recommends applying a drench of one part ammonia to 10 parts of water just as the plant is emerging, and to spray periodically thereafter, especially at night. If there are earwigs, adding soap to the ammonia spray will help to eradicate them. Deer also love to munch on hostas, and voles like to burrow under the crown. There is also a host of diseases and viruses that can affect these plants, causing distortion of the leaves, "ink-bleed" along the leaf veins and other blights. To avoid inadvertently purchasing a diseased plant, Ann recommended buying from trusted Ottawa nurseries such as Budd Gardens, Rideau Woodland Ramble or Whitehouse Perennials, and never from a "Big Box" store. We left with our knowledge and understanding of hostas greatly increased, as well as a new respect for this versatile and beautiful plant.



"Diana Remembered"



"Grand Prize"

Felicity Garrard

WELCOME TO THE OTTAWA GARDEN CLUB

We look forward to meeting the following new members of the Garden Club once we are able to get together in person again post-pandemic:

Marije Biji - Switzerland; Branka Blazhevskia - North Macedonia;
Sarah Harvey - New Zealand; Nezi Kryeziu - Kosovo;
Helena Skracic - Croatia; Dorota Skuseviciene - Lithuania

A VIRTUAL VERNISSAGE

Due to the global pandemic, "Another Blooming Art Show 2020", had to be cancelled. Before long, however, a virtual art exhibition was proposed, and within a week 12 artists submitted photos of their work, from which Kelly Noel produced a brilliant YouTube slideshow. As you will see from the selection on the following pages, the high calibre work included both abstract and representational art in a range of media, including photography, oils, acrylics, pen and ink, collage, fabric jewellery, encaustic, watercolour and conté crayon. Flowers, gardens and landscapes were celebrated, along with cows, kittens, swans, people, and built structures. Then on May 8, 2020, at 6:00pm, the designated hour of the original art show vernissage, the artists and the OGC Executive gathered on ZOOM to chat, laugh and celebrate the art in what has now become the modern way!

Beth Stikeman



"Looking up the River", by Marianne Feaver
Acrylic 18 x 24 in.



"After the Storm", by Heather Brown
Acrylic on canvas 16 x 20 in.



"Rachel", by Dianne Breton
Acrylic on wood panel 8 x 8 in.



"Window Pane Posies", by Mary
Hardwick
Encaustic mixed media 12 x 12 in.



"Watercolour", by Joan Kellett 12 x 12 cm.



"Popsicle Stick" by Marion
Robertson. Acrylic and collage
18 x 24 in.



"Meadow Singing", by Beth Stikeman
Mixed Media 24 x 18 in.



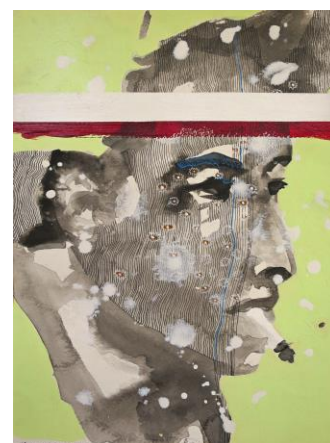
"These Cows Need Names",
by Patsy Fyfe



"Quarantina", by Victoria Hutton
Watercolour, pen and ink



"Maplelawn Garden-A Portrait",
by Barbara Brown. Archival pigment
print on cotton rag 40 x 32 in.



"Hannah Arendt Smokes Another
One", by Marije Bijl
Acrylic ink and acrylic on paper
32 x 24 cm.



"Landscape in Oil" by Bev Hyde



A Zoom toast to the talented artists of the
Ottawa Garden Club!

Return of the foster plants



Pat Sylvester (2nd from right) introduces proud plant foster parents Margo Ledoux, Deborah Seaborn, Donna Chan (picking up for Sonia Rajani) and Linda Russell. Keltie Mierins (not shown) collected her adopted plant later.

At the **November 2019 meeting**, each of our new members graciously consented to 'adopt' a kalanchoe foster plant and care for it until the May meeting. Here are their reports:

Deborah Seaborn:

Well, my plant is alive, but a distinct underachiever. Despite lots of light, water, fertilizer, plant friends and an extremely cute pot, it shows no inclination to bloom again. I am thinking of letting it out of quarantine to enjoy a few hours of sun occasionally to see if that might do the trick. I have enjoyed nurturing it though, and look forward to hearing how its brethren have done.



Margo Ledoux:

Every living thing, be it a person, pet or plant, should have a name. That's what makes them individual. I decided on the drive home from our OGC meeting that this beautiful little red plant would be called Rosie. She was riding shotgun in the front seat and that was when we started our friendship. I told her she would be spending the winter in a sunny window in the country, and I could see that she was already feeling like part of a loving family. I introduced her to the other house plants and she soon found her niche among them. I don't have any snooty plants, thank goodness, and they loved her bright colour, especially in the drab month of November. But we all knew that come mid-December there would be competition once the poinsettia showed up.



Chris Edwards arrived on Christmas Day to check on Rosie to see if I was giving her the proper care, but she didn't make any comment so I guessed all was well. I had no idea that a member of the Garden Club Executive would be sent out discreetly for observation... I explained to Rosie that I had to go on holiday for several weeks in the winter, and that she would be staying with my friend Marcel, who is a member of the Ottawa Orchid Society. I hoped that she would not mind spending her holiday in a climate-controlled room with a bunch of orchids. Now those are

snooty plants! But she survived without me, and we were happy to be reunited. She had flourished under my friend's care – perhaps those magnificent orchids had encouraged her to glow. Maybe it was his state-of-the-art indoor greenhouse that made her radiant. I don't know. Then Covid-19 hit and Rosie was devastated. She lost her lovely red flowers and her leaves began to dry up. I guess that listening to the news on television made her realize that something was not right in the world, and she shut down. She shrivelled up to half her size despite the love I was dishing out.

So now it is May, and although she has not altered her appearance, she is nestled among the new seedlings of herbs and vegetables I have started in that sunny window. Hopefully the arrival of Spring and the departure of the pandemic will give Rosie some renewed energy and she will once again thrive and be a happy, healthy little plant.

Sonia Rajani:

I am sad to inform you that my foster plant did not survive. It struggled during the month of December and gave up early in January. It was a humbling experience as I have been told I have a green thumb!

In order to mitigate everybody's disappointment and attempt to restore my reputation, I have included here a picture of Maria's plant (Embassy of Brazil) which I won in the raffle at the June 2019 gathering. It liked my place from the very start, especially the location in the living room. Within two weeks of its arrival I repotted it, as I could see it needed more soil to thrive, and thrive it did! It has grown to more than twice its original size and has several new shoots. I hope this counts...a bit!



Keltie Mierins:

I wish I could make up an exciting story for our members about this plant's time in my foster care, but it's been quite uneventful. When I was finally able to collect it, it had just finished blooming. I transplanted it to a larger pot with good potting soil and placed it in a south-facing window, where it sat throughout the winter. It was watered about once every seven to nine days, and no fertilizer was given. The foliage is looking very healthy, but there is no indication that it is going to flower any time soon. It was kept in good company with one of my lemon trees and a five-foot gardenia. All survived the winter, and at the time of writing are patiently waiting to be moved to a screened porch, and then a week or so later out into the garden. I will be happy to reclaim my tiny office and view once they have found their outdoor home.

Linda Russell:

To avoid embarrassment by having to show OGC members a sad little plant in May, or worse, an empty pot, I referred to a kalanchoe care website and followed it carefully (re-pot in a good potting soil, place in bright light, water when dry avoiding leaves, fertilize etc.). The plan worked until the plant began to seriously fade around Christmastime. My husband, who is not known for his green thumb, suggested I cut it back. Amazingly, it bounced back, more or less. Maybe it responded to encouraging words and classical music – who knows? It may not thrive beyond its current little collection of leaves, but it is at least alive, and I have avoided disappointing my sponsors Mary Pratte and Chris Edwards!



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

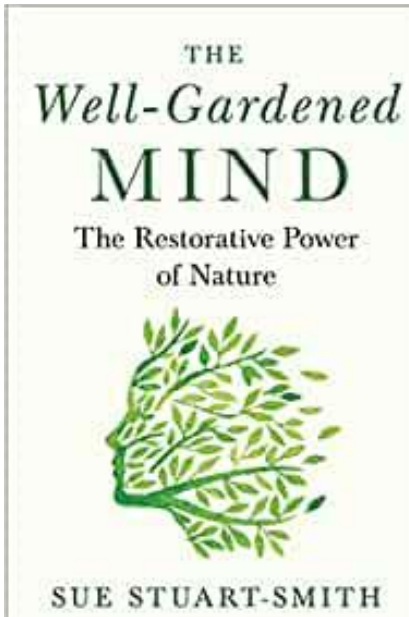
I hope you have all had the opportunity to read the AGM Report that was sent to you in the May 28 *Blooming Update*. It contains some important information such as the Treasurer's Report and the decision that we will not be collecting annual fees at this time. Your executive has decided to defer collection until we can meet again. Also of note is the Membership Report, which outlines changes to the process for sponsoring new members and announces that we will open the club to new members once we have reassembled post-pandemic.

The AGM Report, as well as the updated forms "How to Sponsor a New Member" and "Nomination Form" can all be found on the Ottawa Garden Club website: www.ogc.website/documents. I encourage you to take a look.

Heather Brown

The following review by Peter D. Smith is reprinted with permission from the *Guardian Weekly* newspaper.

***The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature* by Sue Stuart-Smith**



Sue Stuart-Smith, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, has a unique view of gardening: "I have come to understand that deep existential processes can be involved in creating and caring for a garden." For her, a garden – such as her own at Serge Hill, Hertfordshire (*[see link to a description below](#)*) – is far more than just a much-loved physical space. It is also a mental space, one that "gives you quiet, so you can hear your thoughts." When you work with your hands in the garden, weeding or clipping, you free your mind to work through feelings and problems. By tending your plants, you are also gardening your inner space and, over time, a garden is woven into your sense of identity, becoming a place to "buffer us when the going gets tough."

It was Wordsworth who said that to walk through a garden is to be "in the midst of the realities of things", to be immersed in the primal awareness not just of nature's beauty, but the eternal cycle of the seasons, of life, death and rebirth.

The psychoanalyst Carl Jung believed modern technological life had alienated us from the "dark maternal, earthy ground of our being." He grew his own vegetables and argued that "every human should have a plot of land so that their instincts can come to life again."

The fast and unremitting pace of modern urban living, with its smart technology and instant feedback, leads to a "devaluing of the slower rhythms of natural time." We have become disconnected from nature: "the pace of life is the pace of plants." Informed by literature as well as psychoanalysis, Stuart-Smith's beautifully written book is filled with insights into the joys of gardening, but also the remarkable therapeutic benefits that tending plants can offer, not just to people who feel they have lost their place in nature, but to everyone: "As we cultivate the earth, we cultivate an attitude of care towards the world." She argues for a greening of our lives – bringing green spaces back into housing developments and encouraging community gardening schemes, such as a project called *Incredible Edible*, founded by Pam Warhurst and Mary Clear in Todmorden, in Calderdale, UK – "a radical experiment in urban foraging" that has created more than 70 food-growing plots around the town.

This is a life-affirming study of the special pleasures of tending your garden and growing things, from planting the seed and watching it grow each day ("seeds have tomorrow ready-built into them"), to cropping home-grown vegetables and cooking delicious meals with them. Even the chores like weeding and watering have their unique joys: "watering is calming and strangely, when it is finished, you end up feeling refreshed, like the plants themselves."

Her heartfelt arguments for the benefits of nature and gardening for our mental health are informed by research in neuroscience and the evidence of patients who have improved through therapeutic gardening. Gardening brings together the emotional, physical, social, vocational and spiritual aspects of life, boosting people's mood and self-esteem. Stuart-Smith agrees passionately with Voltaire's conclusion to *Candide*: "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin*" – we must cultivate our gardens. For, as she says: "In this era of virtual worlds and fake facts, the garden brings us back to reality."

• *The Well-Gardened Mind* is published by William Collins, and is available on Amazon.ca.

*Serge Hill, Hertfordshire: <https://thegardengateisopen.blog/2019/06/30/the-stuart-smith-trilogy/>

IN MEMORIAM

Mary Mahoney 1934 - 2020

Mary loved being a member of the Garden Club. Throughout her life, she was an avid gardener and in later life turned a small area off the kitchen in her condo into a splendid oasis. Seems to me she could turn any patch of earth into a wonderful garden.

Mary was a devoted mother and grandmother. Her face always lit up when talking about her family, even near the end, when her dementia was more pronounced. Mary was a contributor. A few of her many accomplishments: she chaired the Rockcliffe Book Fair, was on Village Council committees, she founded the Ottawa Guild of Potters, she sold bricks for Ronald McDonald House, she was the Rector's Warden at St Bartholomew's Church for many years, and she organized the first Home for the Holidays shop. She also was a great supporter of the arts. She travelled extensively with her family and friends, and was always ready for the next adventure! Two of her proudest accomplishments were co-founding our neighbourhood independent book store, *Books on Beechwood*, and initiating a grandmother's support group with Help Lesotho (after a working visit to that country).



On top of all of this, Mary had time for her friends. She will be remembered by many in the Garden Club and beyond as a true, loyal friend who had the most wonderful smile. She is greatly missed.

Joanne Nelson



LOCKDOWN LINKS

Throughout the coronavirus lockdown period earlier this year, Heather Brown and her executive team worked hard to make sure that OGC members would still have access to interesting, informative (and fun!) virtual content to compensate for the lack of face-to-face meetings. Rather than sending out information piecemeal, a weekly email was introduced called *Blooming Updates*. It included a marvellous blog created by Mary Pratte, our peony expert; a series called *Emerging Gardens* - a slide show featuring photos of members' gardens as they developed through the spring; links to garden tours and resources, as well as club information important to our members. Thanks to every one who has contributed ideas to keep us all connected during a challenging time, and a big thank you to our technical wizard Kelly Noel for creating the slide show and distributing the *Blooming Updates*. In case you missed any of the emails, or would like to browse through some of these links again, a list is provided below. We have also included two more wonderful garden sites for you to explore.

Mary Pratte's Blog - "How Does Your Garden Grow?" www.ogc.website/blog

Mary writes informatively and entertainingly about what is happening in her garden, and includes photos of certain plants (including peonies of course!) with details on maintenance and design ideas. She also challenged members to a plant ID contest.

She writes: "Thank you to those who took part in the plant ID contest on the OGC blog! Our winners were: Sonia Rajani, Hanneke Boadway, Pauline Yelle, and Kelly Noel. They all correctly identified the red shoots as peonies. I should have asked them to figure out which one it is! It is, in fact, very special, a yellow herbaceous peony affectionately called 'Molly the Witch', but known botanically as *Paeonia mlokosewitschii*. It has a lovely reddish purple in the spring leaves, beautiful powdery blue/pink early on, a single pale yellow flower early in peony time, and red and blue seeds in the fall. A true star over many months."

Emerging Gardens Slide Shows

April 17-23	https://youtu.be/mV8MO7N7DbE
April 23-29	https://youtu.be/nFRZ9dkde2E
April 30-May 6	https://youtu.be/sprdOvvOcx8
May 7-13	https://youtu.be/q5Axfw22aY
May 14-20	https://youtu.be/Lo3ejWsV0wY
May 21-28	https://youtu.be/i5Yz7eFnKEs
May 29-June 4	https://youtu.be/WZJW_a7aNGI
June 5-11	https://youtu.be/0ekMBzyX1gE
June 12-18	https://youtu.be/PuDfh7kUGfY



Two plants eerily echoing an image that we have come to know all too well in the time of Covid....!

A visit to Frank Cabot's 'Le quatre vents': <https://www.tv.org/video/documentaries/the-gardener>

Pat Webster's daffodil tour: <http://www.siteandinsight.com/daffodils-and-more/>

Tour of Keukenhof Gardens, where seven million bulbs were only seen virtually this year:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGcdXvgqX1w>

Harrington Peony Farm/La Pivoinerie Harrington: <https://www.pivoinerieharrington.com/>

Those of us who were on the OGC garden tour last June won't soon forget this beautiful peony farm or our energetic hosts, Brian and Yolanta Bertram. Sally Hutchison, our tour leader, was in touch with Yolanta earlier this year, who provided an update on their activities. They continue to expand their organic and sustainable farm and last year provided more than 2,000 peonies to a Montreal florist. This year they generously donated flowers to the Canadian army to help lift the spirits of those soldiers who worked tirelessly in the area's long-term care homes.

National Garden Scheme <https://ngs.org.uk/>

The UK's National Garden Scheme raises money for hospice care by inviting qualifying private owners to open their gardens for visits on specific dates listed in the "Yellow Book." This year the tours were all virtual, and can be accessed through the link above.

THE BLOOMING NEWS

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Tour the Royal Gardens at Prince Charles's Highgrove:
<https://www.highgrovegardens.com/>

Eight more beautiful gardens to enjoy, including The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew; Chicago Botanic Garden and Monet's Giverny:
www.housebeautiful.com/UK/garden/g31913008/best-virtual-tour-garden/

The lesson I have thoroughly learnt, and wish to pass on to others, is to know the enduring happiness that the love of a garden gives.

Gertrude Jekyll