

There are many factors to take into consideration when planning a flower bed. We like a variety of colours, shapes and heights and also have to take into account how much exposure there is to the sun. Sometimes we have a reasonable amount of sun and rain and that makes life a great deal easier. At other times we have to take it in turns to water the beds and try to encourage the flowers to continue blooming, even though our watering cans do not seem to give the same amount of enthusiasm to our plants as a mild rainstorm. Sometimes an unseasonably cold storm puts a blight on our endeavours, or hot dry winds can kill seedlings that are not yet properly established. So gardening is always a challenge. When all goes well, we can admire our efforts each time we pass by.

As well as offering a public service, we have meetings on the last Monday of the month at the Prospect Missionary Hall in Colborne, to which we invite a speaker to address us. In 2003 we covered a variety of subjects. Kim Patton, our local chiropractor, gave us some tips on how to garden without hurting our backs – one tip she gave us was to keep changing our activities. It's not a good idea to spend more than 15 minutes doing any one job. In a garden there are always a number of activities that need attention, so it is best to keep changing about. We also had a wonderful slide show given by Laura Haferkorn on North Atlantic Gardens and 2002 Floriade. There is nothing more heartening in the middle of winter than seeing such beautiful slides. Another speaker was Don Davis, who gave an interesting talk entitled adventures with Monarch butterflies. Cecil Lamrock came to talk to us about Roses – he has a vast collection and grows a number of the same species in different areas so that he can compare the suitability of location for each of his species. He also brought a variety of plants, include mini roses, to sell, which were soon bought by our members. James Rogers gave us a talk about Forestry in Northumberland County. It seems we are particularly fortunate in the trees in our area, which include many hard woods such as maple, oak, beech and so on. Our final speaker for the year was Lenni Workman who spoke about organic gardening – much in the news these days, as we try to improve the quality of our food.

We have an interesting programme laid on for this year. We start with Sandra Zabudofsky who teaches Tai Chi and is giving us a demonstration and will expect her audience to participate. Several of our members go to her classes already. They are particularly suitable for those of us who are no longer in our first flush of youth. The exercises are pleasant and interesting and treat the individual as a whole, body, mind and spirit. We always come out feeling refreshed and invigorated. She is followed by Bill Brooks who will speak on photography in our gardens. We are beginning to include photography in our flower shows, so his information will help us to get started. Peter Keeping will give us a talk on Clematis, some of which are easier to grow than others, but in general they like plenty of sun but must have cool feet and lots of water. At the end of May we are having a special Question and Answer Night at which members can bring their sick plants, or just come and ask questions and we will do our best to answer them. Our local expert, Jacques Filteau, who is a very successful and knowledgeable gardener, will be on hand to give us valuable advice. We are also holding a Flower Arranging Workshop on Saturday, June 5 given by Margaret Goode. This Master Gardener is excellent, very approachable and to be highly recommended. Some of us attended her workshop in Lakefield last year and had a great time. The class size will be limited to 24 people and will be held in the Town Hall in Castleton. In October Wayne Hingston is giving an introductory talk on Orchid Culture. It seems that some kinds of orchids are quite easy to grow if you can give them the right lighting and heating conditions. We wind up in November with a talk given by John Munroe-Cape on Cacti – something we can all grow.