

# It's time to start those seedlings

By **MAGGIE PETRUSHEVSKY**  
The New Tanner

The weatherman may be dithering about the season but area gardeners recognize the time of the year anyway. Master gardener and president of the Acton Horticultural Society Max MacSween says it is indeed time to dig out the seeds, the potting mixtures and the seeding trays.  
"This is the right time for



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starting most of the annuals you buy at the stores later in the season," he said in a recent interview. "Things like petunias and assyllum, for instance. It's also the time for slipping geraniums and plants like that if you want to start them for planting out later."

Those vegetable seedlings you buy, like tomatoes, don't need to get into the ground until mid April, however. Since they take about six weeks to reach appropriate planting out size, you don't want to start them earlier or they will be spindly by the time you are ready to put them outside.

For beginners in the gardening hobby he recommends trays with plastic tops that create their own greenhouse. He also suggests buying a good planting medium from a nursery because it will be labeled with its nutrient mixtures as well as being sterilized so as not to contaminate your sprouting seedlings.

While you might think you could dig up some dirt from your own yard to start your seeds, he points out that much of the soil's nutrients will already be used up. There is also the risk it will contain fungus or other bacteria which could infect your seedlings with ailments like Black Stem or root rot.

If you have old trays you

want to re-use, don't forget to sterilize them first. A couple of teaspoons of bleach in the washing water should eliminate any contaminants from previous seasons.

MacSween suggests dampening your medium before planting so that daily light watering will be enough to keep those germinating seeds moist. Once the second set of leaves appear your plants can stand a light application of fertilizer. Let them grow to the size specified on the package before transferring them to individual containers.

When they are reaching appropriate size and the days are sunny and warm, start setting the containers outdoors daily to let them harden up in preparation for replanting into the actual garden, he says.

MacSween says the seed catalogues are just starting to arrive and the emphasis this year seems to be on mauve.

"They have been talking about blue gardens or pink gardens and so forth for several years now," he says. Well this is going to be a mauve year from what I can see."

This is the Acton Horticultural Society's 10th year. MacSween estimates their membership at more than 70 with a good blend of ages from their early 20's to "probably in their 80's".

Most unusual is the fact a high proportion of those active members are male.

"Other clubs are envious," he laughs. "They all want to know how we get all those men to come out for us."

MacSween himself has been gardening since he arrived in town and bought his first home in the early 1970s.

Three years ago he and fellow gardener Karen Brozic successfully applied to join Burlington's Master Gardeners' Club. A master gardener is an experienced gardener who enjoys volunteering time and providing knowledge to help others. Through the club, the club's Ontario organization and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs members receive training leading to a certificate in horticulture. MacSween and Brozic are the first north Halton residents to join the club and graduate from the program. Now they can provide alternate resources for the Acton club as well as being a contact for speakers and other sources of information.

Horticultural Society members plant and tend the flowers through the downtown core, in the parkette at Mill and Main streets and at the library. The library garden will be the club's millennium project.



Max MacSween practises what he preaches. He already has his potting mixture and his new planting trays to start some California poppies.

## IODE meets at Birchway Place

By **DOT NORTON**

The IODE meeting was held in the Terrace room of 51 Birchway Place with the hostess Helen Otterbien.

Regent Helen Jocque announced there was a very special invitation to a party for Aileen Currie in Guelph on the occasion of her 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. Several ladies attended.

The treasurer's report was

read and approved and it was moved by Ernestine and seconded by Mary Papillon that all bills had been paid.

Rosealea had a letter from our school in Labrador. After she had written them a five page letter on things the IODE did to help we finally got one back. A new teacher is there and she is more than grateful for the money and things we do to help them.

Commentator Plates are being sold by the Blue Mountain Chapter. Anyone interested can see the brochure at Helen's. Our Toys for the North Campaign have been discounted and must come through a supplier, but there is still a need for eyeglasses and hearing aids for the bale. New grooming bags for babies this year have been added to our bale. Joyce will be handing out the bags in April.

A short discourse from the Regent on the flag of Nova Scotia noted it has the Scottish cross and different ones reversed. A lion on a field of gold with a Laurel spray as well signified peace. The coat of arms for the flag was annulled early in the century and returned after the war.

The next meeting will be at Dot Norton's, 51 Birchway Place, Apartment 201 at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

Entertainment by Barbara Andrews followed with a sale of New Kitchen cadets. About 22 ladies attended and were all interested in Barbara's talk and show of material. A light lunch was served after the demonstration.

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