

Autumn 2021

# The Garden Path

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## Guardians of the Seeds – Troll Exhibit Maine Coastal Botanical Gardens

Nancy Noel

On a recent family trip to Maine, I went to see the Trolls in the Maine Coastal Botanical Gardens. Before leaving Portland, we took my granddog “Beacon” for a morning walk in Fort William Park in Cape Elizabeth even though the fog was descending. Assured by weather reports that



Booth Bay would be clear, we departed at 11:00 am to make our 1:00 pm appointment for the Gardens. (Note to visitors: the Gardens require appointments to exercise crowd control) My son-in-law warned me that the last 10 miles would take 30 minutes because of the traffic stopping at Red’s Lobster Roll stand – the line outside the diner wrapped around the block!

The Trolls are an exhibit named “**Guardians of the Seeds**” designed by Thomas Dambo from Copenhagen, Denmark. As a child of 5 years old he collected old discarded pieces of wood to craft objects from them, and now regards himself as a “recycle art activist “. There are several such exhibits in the United States as well as in Belgium, Puerto Rico, and China. You can read about his world village at [www.trollmap.com](http://www.trollmap.com). The heads, hands and feet were built in Denmark and shipped to Portland; then craftsmen and volunteers built the trolls under the direction of the artist.

Since the five trolls are scattered among all the gardens, we could not help but appreciate the lovely garden sights that we passed on the way, especially the Children’s Garden. The



garden shed with its living roof gives a resting spot for the praying mantis sculpture.

**Roskva** was the first troll we found – representing tree trunks – amazing us with her towering height. Signs at each troll location explained to us: “Roskva knows a tree trunk has many lives. In its first, it supports the tree and moves food around inside. After it dies, it provides habitat and food for different animals and fungi. Eventually, it becomes part of the soil, where new life will grow.”

**Lilja** is the flower troll with her fun-loving demeanor: “Lilja knows how important tree flowers are to the insects of the forest. When insects take pollen and nectar, they also give back to the tree. With their help, pollen spreads, and flowers become fruit. Inside all fruit is the seed that holds the next generation.” In italics, below the botany lesson, is the artist's interpretation of his sculpture: “Just last summer, Lilja came out from her hiding place. The youngest of the trolls, she's still just a child. She loves the colors and the scents of the flowers and when bees and butterflies fly among the branches.”

Our sign writer gets a little “punny” for **Soren** “who sticks up for the BRANCHES of the tree.” We are encouraged to think of the animals and birds which make their home in the treetop as well as some lichen, plants and fungi which only live in the trees. Soren is a very curious troll; his head is always turning and twisting, searching for places ever higher.” We could walk behind Soren to see the branches making up his hair.

**Gro** appears to be meditating! “Most of us can't eat sunlight, but GRO knows trees can – with their leaves. Leaves, in turn, become the building blocks of animal life; they feed caterpillars, and caterpillars feed birds, bears, and everything in-between. Using the sun, leaves make animal life on earth possible.”



I saved my favorite troll for last! “BIRK knows that a tree’s roots are as big as the branches above it. In the forest, these roots are all connected to each other. Trees use this wood-wide web to signal each other who needs food or who is in trouble from pests or disease.” “Birk is the wisest and most mysterious of the trolls. He hides in the shadows and listens to the whispers of the soil. He knows everything that happens in the wild, and every day he tells tales to all the other creatures of the forest.”

By now we were all a bit weary from walking the trails and hunting trolls! The brochure map indicated that the seeds for the trees were hidden ahead of us, but I checked my fitbit, and I had 12,500 steps for the entire day. WOW! Time to head back to Portland and find a delightful restaurant. Anyone who wants more information and pictures of the exhibit may find it at:

[www.maine gardens.org/events-exhibits/giant-trolls](http://www.maine gardens.org/events-exhibits/giant-trolls).

There you will learn the teachings of the trolls:

**Save seeds and plant more trees.**

**Reduce and reuse.**

**Discover and share Stories of the Woods.**



# Garden Tyro, August 2021

Eileen Novak

I have many bad gardening habits, but doing before thinking must be the worst one yet. In a past column, I told you how I put my raised beds so close together that I cannot run the wheelbarrow between them.

I did it again this year: I put 2 beds so close together that I cannot even use the string trimmer to keep the grass from taking over. I can see that my winter gardening will be full of fixes.

Those beds that I COULD get to, I trimmed the weeds and grass down twice, and they came back stronger than ever. So yesterday, I was weeding the PATHS as well as the raised beds. You'd think, after spending hours trying to put the wood chips in place to suppress the weeds, that I would have learned that raw wood chips don't suppress all weeds. Sure, the composting process that is taking place in the chips uses available nitrogen, and the sheer amount of mulch prevents light from getting down to the soil where years of weed seeds are just WAITING to jump up to life. BUT (and it's a big BUT), there are some weeds that fly below the radar, so to speak, and others that just crawl over top. And then, of course, there are the plants that make their OWN nitrogen.

I have 2 low-crawling weeds in the garden: Bindweed, which is lovely like a morning glory and can tunnel under anything I have so far put out there. Then there's my old nemesis: Bermuda grass. I truly wish that it were possible for me to bring back to life the first person that decided to bring that grass to America, and make him or her DIG IT ALL OUT OF MY YARD. Since I have approximately 5 acres of front and back yard, I feel that would be adequate punishment, don't you? I saw the bindweed a couple of years ago and was too tired at the end of the gardening season to get rid of it. I have been paying for that poor decision ever since.

And then there's the "over-the-top" weed: crabgrass. It crawls over top of the mulch, putting down little roots at every leaf axil. I will say that it's easy to pull up a bunch of it till I get to where it started. And all that covering over the top did keep the mulch in place during the monsoons that we had earlier in the year. I'm glad it didn't float downhill but not enough to spare the crabgrass when I finally dedicated myself to getting rid of it.

The clover that makes its own oxygen is a yearly nemesis that I should have eradicated that first year in the garden, but I figured that the soil was in such poor shape that it could use all the nitrogen I could give it. Big mistake, that.

What I'm trying to tell you, in so many words, is that prevention is usually much easier than correction. Really, New gardeners should learn from the mistakes of others, you simply don't have time to make them all yourself!



## What's in a Name?

Juel Duke

Gardeners know the importance of using the scientific name when referring to a particular plant. It helps avoid confusion because there's only one plant with that genus and species name. (We won't get into the changing of those names over time.) Carl Linneaus, an 18th Century botanist, is who we thank for creating binomial nomenclature, i.e. "the Latin". However, there is no Linneaus for garden tools. The idea for this planned series of articles came when a group of Extension Master Gardeners at a workday realized there was confusion of spade versus shovel so I set out to discover the differences. Spoiler alert: I do not come to a firm distinction. I couldn't find such despite consulting numerous gardening how-to books and dictionaries, more numerous than I'm citing here to avoid even more confusion.

The North Carolina Extension Gardener Handbook has this definition under "Types of Tools":

### *Spades for digging and lifting*

- *A round-pointed shovel is a good all-purpose tool that is useful for digging and turning soil and can also be used to harvest crops such as Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes.*
- *A spade with a sharp edge is used for cutting and digging heavy soil, removing sod, and incorporating organic matter.*

(<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/extension-gardener-handbook/appendix-d-garden-tools>)

“Shovel” is not listed anywhere else in Types of Tools and it only appears in the index under “spade”. Now, this implies to me that a shovel is a type of spade. Therefore, all shovels are spades but not all spades are shovels? Still following me?

Note also that I’m only considering the words as nouns though you can shovel (verb) soil but you don’t spade it.

Next, I explored the definition of both words in the Merriam-Webster dictionary.

shovel [noun](#)...

Definition of shovel (Entry 1 of 2)

1a: a hand implement consisting of a broad scoop or a more or less hollowed out blade with a handle used to lift and throw material

b: something that resembles a shovel

“Shovel.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster,

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shovel>. Accessed 10 Aug. 2021.

spade [noun \(1\)](#)...

Definition of spade (Entry 1 of 3)

1: a digging implement adapted for being pushed into the ground with the foot

2: a spade-shaped instrument

“Shovel.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster,

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/spade>. Accessed 10 Aug. 2021.

This is leaving me nearly dazed and confused so I sought clarity in a large gardening catalog. I did not find clarity. A M Leonard (amleo.com) gives 73 results for Spade. That does include one “spading fork”? “Shovel” results in over 200 results though many of them are related to “snow”, a subject I wish to avoid. I saw not one thing that made the distinction clear across the board.

Seeking something more definitive, I found this table.

## At a Glance

	Shovel	Spade
Blade Shape	Bowl-shaped (concave) with a rounded or pointed tip	Flat (or nearly flat) with a straight edge
Handle/Shaft	Long, straight shaft	Shorter shaft, may have a "T" or "D" handle
Blade Size	Larger	Smaller
Best Uses	Digging, breaking up, and turning soil	Slicing through soil and roots, moving soil and loose material

<https://gardeningproductsreview.com/shovel-vs-spade-whats-difference/> Accessed 08/10/2021



Long vs short handle! Bowl vs flat-shaped blade! Rounded vs straight edge! If only it were that easy... Here you see four of my digging tools that don't conform to these simple distinctions. Therefore, I'm still confused. If I've helped you figure it out, please let me know the secret. For now, I'll take the easy way out and give each one a gender neutral name and a name tag. Since I'm unlikely to get spade or shovel correct these four will be Jan, Tiny, Pat and River from now on, or until the name tags fall off. For what it's worth, I do think Pat is clearly a shovel and River is likely a spade.

# My Experiment and Quest for Healthy Tomato Plants

## Mary Jane Bosworth

Over the past few years, my tomato crop has been pathetic due to fungus and soil conditions. I now have raised beds and decided to do a quasi-scientific study of tomatoes under different growing circumstances to see how they would perform. I was inspired by a talk given by Gerald Adams, at a Master Gardener meeting, who recommended growing tomatoes in large pots with new soil rather than raised beds for healthier tomatoes.

I started 2 varieties of tomatoes from seed purchased from Park Seed Company, one being a tomato hybrid called Better Boy and the other a Roma style, Suprimo. Both were started indoors in mid-February and had the benefit of grow lights. They were then, after hardening off, transplanted outdoors at the end of April. One of each variety was planted in a large pot with new potting soil mix and one of each was planted in a raised bed nearby. Then I acquired two tomato plants that had been grafted onto strong root stock that was fungus resistant. One variety was Cherokee Purple and the other was a Roma variety. These were planted in my raised bed at the end of May.

All the plants were fertilized with a water soluble fertilizer every two weeks and watered when necessary.

As far as growth goes, by June 10, the plants in the pots were doing the best. These tomatoes were 3 feet tall and very bushy with several tomatoes. The plants in the raised beds were also 3 feet tall but not as bushy and had fewer tomatoes. The grafted tomatoes had gotten a later start and so were only 2 feet tall and bushy but had no blossoms nor tomatoes.

At the end of June, I was able to harvest some tomatoes from both the potted ones and the ones in the raised beds. After this, the ones in the pots started to wilt and eventually died followed by the ones in the raised beds. The grafted tomatoes now have many tomatoes but they are still green and I haven't tasted any yet.

### Conclusions, observations and recommendations

I admit that this wasn't a very scientific experiment. I was expecting the tomatoes in the raised beds, that I had started from seed, to eventually die but I was totally surprised that the ones in the pots died first. This did not happen for Gerald Adams, so what did he do differently? I am still not quite sure what to say about the grafted tomatoes except that they seem to have performed the best, so far, and this type of tomato would be my choice in the future. I wonder if anyone else had tried growing tomatoes in large pots and what their results were?

Maybe I should just stick to blueberries and asparagus, as I have less trouble with them, and forget tomatoes altogether.

## All the Buzz from the Memorial Garden

Bea Leach

Remember the spring? The temperatures in March and April were like a rollercoaster. There were cold, rainy and damp days that seemed would never end. I would take one of those cold and rainy days right now.



If you have read this column before, you know I am always finding something new each season to fall in love with in the Memorial Garden. This season I have a crush on a couple sweet guys named Henry – Henry Sweetspire and Henry Eilers' Sweet Coneflower. Let me tell you a little bit about these attractive guys.

*Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet' also has the common names of Sweet Spire, Sweetspire, Tassel-White, Virginian Willow, Virginia Willow and Virginia Sweetspire.

Sweetspire's attractiveness comes from a profusion of showy fragrant white flowers that cover the bush in spring and summer. The flowers remind me of a bottle brush and can be three to six inches in length and have a weeping characteristic like a willow. The fall colors of the leaves of this deciduous shrub are just as attractive as the flowers turning orange and red and lasting into the first of winter.

Planting *Itea virginica* in your garden will delight you and your garden visitors, whether they are human or insect. The pollinators have been all over this shrub all spring and summer.

Henry Eilers opened a nursery in Litchfield, Illinois in 1960. His nursery expanded over the years and he became one of the first in Illinois to start a wholesale nursery distributing plants to retail stores in Springfield and St. Louis. Eilers has spent his life in natural area preservation and restoration. The City of Litchfield has honored him by naming an area of 266 acres of woodlands and prairie, The Henry Eilers Shoal Creek Preserve. (<https://sites.google.com/a/asu.edu/henry-eilers/home>)



Henry Eilers Sweet Coneflower or *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* is a member of the daisy family and grows almost anywhere you want to plant it. The lemony yellow petals are rolled rather than flat like other *Rudbeckia*. They grow on tall stalks that may need staking. The ones that are in the Memorial Garden were pruned back one third in late spring but we probably could have cut them back two-thirds as they are leggy and falling from the center, heavy-headed with flowers. Sweet coneflower attracts butterflies and allowing the plant to remain in place through the winter will provide winter shelter for other insects and pollinators.



I was unable to discover why the cultivar *Rudbeckia subtomentosa* was named after Henry Eilers, but based upon his life's work and the tenacity of the sweet coneflower, I think it is a fitting tribute.

This spring and summer has seemed like we have had more pollinators in the Memorial Garden than ever. If you plant it, they will come. The one pollinator that we seldom see in the garden has been the honeybee, since honeybees do not typically travel more than two miles from their hive.



One of the tasks I have taken on in the Memorial Garden is to take care of the birds including the hummingbirds. I filled the hummingbird feeder with fresh food and it wasn't an hour and the feeder was covered with honeybees! I was so surprised and excited! The next time I went to refill the hummingbird feeder, I dribbled a bit of the sugar water on myself. I had honeybees hitching a ride on me while I was working in the garden. At first, I would brush them away, but they just came back so I gave up. I just let them hitch a ride for the morning. As a gardener, that was probably the coolest thing that has happened to me!

If you are looking ahead to fall/winter garden cleanup, remember to provide shelter for the insects through the winter.

Until next time...

# Checklist of Things To Do in the Garden in the Autumn

*Mary Jane Bosworth*

## September

- *Most flowers have now set seeds and they may be collected and saved for the following year. Annuals and biennials are among the easiest to grow from seeds. Some you might want to consider for this project would be: marigolds, zinnias, spider flowers, strawflowers, larkspur, and sunflower. Store seeds in a cool, dry place in a paper envelope or bag.*
- *If you will be considering planting spring bulbs for the following year, now is the time to order them.*
- *Plant pansies for splashes of winter color.*
- *Control winter weeds with a pre-emergent herbicide applied from September 1-15 on shrub planting areas.*
- *Divide and replant overgrown perennials such as hostas, coneflowers and daylilies.*
- *This is a good time to get your soil tested for next year's plantings.*
- *Clean debris out of your garden. Remove spent annuals and cut the tops of perennials.*
- *Bring houseplants indoors when temperatures dip below 50. Give them a good bath with soapy water or spray with insecticidal soap. Move plants to shade for a week to condition them to the lower light levels they will receive when they are returned to the house.*

## October

- *Now is a good time to visit local nurseries. They should be less crowded than in the spring so you can take your time considering your options.*
- *Keep watering so that plants don't get stressed.*
- *Finish cleaning up garden beds by pulling out annuals and vegetables. Cut off tops of perennials.*
- *Just before frost, dig up sweet potatoes and pick all the green tomatoes which can be wrapped in newspaper and will continue to ripen.*
- *Most flowering shrubs can be propagated by hardwood cuttings. Make cuttings 6-8" long and dip in rooting hormone. Set them in a good quality container mix, leaving 2" exposed and keep moist.*
- *Store the bulbs of Dahlia, Canna, Caladium, Gladiolus and Tuberous Begonia as they may not overwinter. Lift the roots, tubers or corms about the time of the first killing frost and store in a garage until the soil dries and then shake it off. Cut off the dried stem and place in sawdust or peat moss and store in a basement or other cool, dry place. These plants cannot withstand freezing.*

## November

- *Plan now for spring color and plant spring flowering bulbs.*
- *Prepare your vegetable beds by tilling or double digging the beds and adding organic matter.*
- *Test your soil.*
- *Keep up your garden care and harvest your cool season vegetables.*
- *Plant asparagus this month. If you already have some, now is the time to cut back the ferny tops as they turn yellow and brown.*
- *Mulch well around figs, pomegranates and other warmth loving fruits.*
- *Pick, divide and share perennials.*

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