

# GROWING TOGETHER

Cobourg Horticultural Society Newsletter

Spring Edition 2015

## SAVOUR THE SLOW RETURN OF **SPRING!**

- Martha Baldwin, CHS Member

*It seems that a gardener is always able to enjoy Spring for the small pleasures – we stop and savour the new season; notice the first snowdrop poking through the ground; the yellow buds on the forsythia bush; the return of the first robin in the trees; and many other treasures that the melting snow might reveal. Spring is a season that brings a slow reveal of change to delight anyone who takes a moment to step outside. I recently went on a Saturday morning drive along Highway 2 East and was delighted by the sight of many greenhouses advertising “opening soon.” It was a breath of fresh air to stop into one garden centre that was open early (I walked inside the warm greenhouse and felt myself again). I continued on down the road to another spot where I passed a sign that read “**We’re so excited for spring, we wet our plants!**” (well, isn’t that the truth!)*

*If you too are excited about Spring, here are a few other “delights” to savour coming up in our community:*

- 1. On May 2nd and 9th, we see the return of area **Farmers’ Markets**. To me, there is nothing more satisfying than getting up early on a Saturday morning, walking down to the market and enjoying a browse.*
- 2. Then, just in time for planting season, there are a variety of local **Perennial and Plant Sales** during the weekends of May 9th and 16th. A great way to support local organizations and find plants for great prices!*
- 3. An annual tradition: the Village of Warkworth hosts its **Lilac Festival**, but this year, it’s as a “thirty day” event commencing May 25th-June 30th. Alas, it’s Spring!*



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

### OUR SPEAKER SERIES

**Wed. May 6:** Garden Design: Accessorizing your Garden  
- **Kevin Brown**

\*\* Our Spring Mini Flower Show!

---

**Wed. June 3:** Growing Dahlias and Glads Successfully”  
- **Malcolm MacDonald**

### COMMUNITY PLANT SALES

**May 9** – Port Hope Horts Society Plant Sale, 8:30am @ Port Hope Fair Building

**May 9** – Grafton Horts Society Plant Sale, 9am @ Haldiman Arena

**May 16** –  
**Cobourg Horticultural Society Plant Sale, 9am – 11am**  
@ Columbus Community Centre!!

*A Review of the...*



## *The 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Show!*

For many, a highlight of a busy Easter weekend this year was the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Peterborough Garden Show. Whether you live near the area or carpoled from afar, a trip to the Peterborough show never seems to disappoint; well worth the \$7 admission.

This year I was certainly impressed by the transformed nature of a once typical arena to an array of colour, showcasing display gardens, incorporating water features and creative garden furniture encouraging rest for the wearied shopper. While there was no shortage of things to buy in the market place, the vendors also seemed to provide for opportunities to educate and grow one's creativity and on any size budget.

The show also doesn't discriminate, as novice and seasoned gardeners can find something of interest. Children are also entertained with a play garden and the high school floral competition with a people's choice award, demonstrates a budding curiosity for an art form only I wish could have learned, when I went to school. Finally, the array of speakers and presentations on the roster for the 3 days suggested there's no limit to the knowledgeable "gardening gurus" in Peterborough and area.

But, if you missed this year's show, be sure to mark your calendar for **2016**.  
**Show dates are April 8, 9, 10 (Fri-Sun).**

## It's Almost Time for .... Our Annual Plant Sale!



**Saturday May 16, 2015**

The annual Cobourg Horticultural Society Plant Sale is on Saturday May 16. It always our biggest fundraiser of the year, entirely from the sale of donated perennials, shrubs, trees, herbs, vegetables, books, manuals, and gently used garden tools and treasures.

It is notably a popular event on the calendar for many in our community, as they know they can buy really well seasoned, local plants at modest prices, hence the line-ups outside the Columbus Centre each year!

All members are encouraged to dig, separate, and pot up plants for the sale. Please help promote the event by distributing flyers to your neighbours, family and friends.

If you have attended the Plant Sale in the past, you know that it is a very busy event and all over in a couple of hours! We rely on volunteers to make it happen, so please consider volunteering your time or talents!

For more information, please contact:  
Sarah Holland (905) 349-3710



## My Love of Kohleria – Written by Yvonne Michalski, CHS Member



I wrote this article for our spring newsletter during the grip of our epic 2014 winter. That winter is now a distant memory (I hope!) as we survey our gardens for signs of ephemerals like snowdrops and crocuses. I would like to share with you a lovely tropical plant variety that is very easy to grow, gorgeous and doesn't seem to attract the usual diseases that plague our regular house plants. I am talking house plants because that's what keeps me sane during the winter, and as I write, it is still winter. So if you are tired of picking scale, dabbing mealy bug off your indoor plants with a swab and alcohol, or just tossing stuff because of the mysterious "failure to thrive" disorder... let's talk hardy and beautiful. Kohleria.

**Kohleria** is a New World genus of flowering herb of the family Gesneriaceae. They are related to the familiar African Violets which we know so well. Another popular member of this huge family of gesneriads is Streptocarpella, those lovely sky blue tubular flowers on stems that appear at Pine Ridge Nursery every May and then grace porches all around Cobourg. Stems of Kohleria plants are fuzzy and leaves are velvety and attractive, even when the plant is not blooming. Kohleria can be grown upright or draping over the edge of the pot or hanging basket. But it's the brightly coloured, tubular flowers that make this hardy group of plants so desirable, both in the summer and in the winter. Red is the dominant colour and the hummingbirds flock to this flower if you put it out in the summer. The flower colours range from red to pink, orange and yellow and all shades in between with speckles, bicolour shades and striations on the throats of the flowers. They come in all sizes from compact ones to really showy plants that can fill a 40 cm pot and grow 35 to 40 cm tall to large shrubs that grow wild in the Caribbean and South America.

**Lighting:** Like African Violets, Kohleria prefer bright light, but no hot, direct sunlight in the summer and can manage a south/west exposure in the winter if light is through a gauzy curtain. A north window does not provide enough quality light but if you do not have appropriate windows, you can grow them under fluorescent plant lights, where they thrive. I use one regular white strip light together with a Growlux tube, available at Home Depot and similar stores. Your lights should be on 12 to 14 hours a day to promote flowering; I have all my plants on timers.

**Soil:** I suggest that you use clean, plastic pots and light, loose soil from a better quality manufacturer. African violet soil is good, amended, if you like, with perlite, sand and peat if the commercial soil has none. Heavy, clay soil inhibits good circulation of air and water. Straight from the bag, potting soil should be free of insects and diseases. You can also use soilless mix but that these mixes have virtually no nutrition, and they dry out, and are difficult to re-hydrate.

**Water:** Kohleria are rhizomatous, that is, they have rhizomes, pine cone-like growths below the soil, that help sustain the plant through short periods of drought. Water with tepid water, as you would all plants, but avoid overwatering. Do not allow plants to sit in water as rot will set in. Cold water on the leaves will mark them. If you forget to water and the plant is in a state of collapse, water can revive it and the rhizomes will often regenerate a new shoot and eventually, a plant. Feed with a diluted fertilizer (1/4 to 1/3 strength), either all-purpose or flower (in spring and summer while plant is actively growing and flowering). Never fertilize a dry plant as it can burn the roots. Like most plants, they prefer humidity around 40%, which can easily be achieved with a tray of pebbles or a humidifier.

**And finally..** Kohleria, like people, prefer a comfort zone between 65 and 85 degrees F. with no cold drafts. They appreciate regular waterings and feedings and some grooming to keep leaves and spent flowers off the plant to avoid rot. Pinching out the leggy growth keeps the plant compact and the plant bits will easily root in moist soil to start a new plant, as will the rhizomes. They love a shady situation, under trees or swinging from a porch in the summer and will attract hummingbirds and many admiring glances from friends. They are very hardy and I have never had bugs or diseases on mine. Overwatering seems to be the main concern. Winters can be interminably long and dark in Canada and weary Canadians have learned the joys of bringing these hardy and colourful gems into bloom at any time of year.

**Sources for Kohleria:** You can sometimes find these plants at better plant nurseries in larger cities but reliable sources are from plant societies like the Toronto Gesneriad Society: <http://www.torontogesneriadsociety.org> Toronto African Violet society <http://www.lakeshoreavs.ca> . I will have some of my cuttings and rhizomes also available at our spring garden sale in the Columbus Centre, be sure to check these out! ... Happy Planting!



## **“WOO” COULD WIN A \$750 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP?**

The Cobourg Horticultural Scholarship has been increased to \$750 this year!

Do you know someone who might be eligible?

The Annual Award is given to a deserving Cobourg High School Graduate who has been successfully accepted to study in the areas of agriculture, horticulture, landscape architecture or environmental science at a post-secondary institution.

For application form and more details on how to apply see: [www.cobourggardenclub.org/activities](http://www.cobourggardenclub.org/activities)

**Deadline to Apply: May 19, 2015 \*\***

**\*\*Applications must be left with the guidance department of a Cobourg High School**



Cobourg Horticultural Society  
Box 312, Cobourg, Ontario  
K9A 4K8  
Email: [cobourg@gardenontario.org](mailto:cobourg@gardenontario.org)  
Website: [www.cobourggardenclub.org](http://www.cobourggardenclub.org)