

LOOP 1: ANASTASIA’S GARDEN

1. **Anastasia’s Flowering Almond, *Prunus triloba*, Amandier de Chine**

The first tree to flower in spring, the almond is not a nut tree but a member of the rose family, with the almond being its seed, much like its cousins, the peach and apricot, which have almond-like seeds inside their seed shell. When you return to this spot at the end of April, the tree will be entirely pink, as the flowers bloom before the leaves emerge.

2. **Hidcote lavender, *Lavendula angustifolia*, and other perfumed plants**

Anastasia loved pinks and mauves and the fragrances that often come with flowers of those colours. Good smells are peacemakers in the sense that they calm us, yet in our audiovisual age, this sense is given little importance. Insects know otherwise. Smell attracts such pollinators such as the bumble bee to the nectar and pollen of fragrant flowers. Be sure to rub the oily leaves of the lavender plant to appreciate its age-old spell. Smell also the numerous roses to see which are most fragrant.

3. **Bitternut hickory, *Carya cordiformis*, *Caryer cordiforme***

This towering old tree is probably a remnant of the original forest on this wet piece of land. At least 150 years old, the bitternut hickory, alongside the sugar maple, defines the forest domain in which Montreal is located. At the most northerly extreme of its territory, this rare tree was highly exploited in the 19th century for its very hard wood, which was used for curing fish and meats, and making Montreal’s wooden sidewalks. Look on the ground to find its bitter-tasting nut, and rub the leaves to get the smell of the hickory and all trees in the *Juglans* family, which include walnuts and hickories, even the pecan!

4. **Pink Turtle Head, *Chelone obliqua speciosa*, *Chelone obliqua***

Take a look at this oddly shaped flower and you’ll see that this plant comes by its name

honestly. Like its namesake, **turtle head** needs water. Native to Eastern North America, this late summer-early autumn plant attracts insects, especially bumblebees not via its perfume, but via its colour. Hummingbirds too seek the nectar at the bottom of each tubular flower. Reproducing via both its seeds and root system, this colony of turtle head will continue to expand.

5. **Asters, *Symphyotrichum* sp., Asters**

Asters are the stars of autumn. There are countless native species now in flower. Characterized by their star-like fringe, which ranges from white, through to pink and mauve, asters provide food for insects and beauty for us. Like all members of the *Asteraceae* family, which include sun flowers and daisies, their flower consists of thousands of tiny, often yellow, flowers in the centre, surrounded by coloured bracts. These plants open at dawn and close at dusk. No wonder the name, ‘daisy,’ is derived from day’s eye!

ANASTASIA’S GARDEN

THE ECOGARDEN

LOOP 2: THE ECOGARDEN

6. **Colorado spruce, *Picea pungens*, Épinette de Colorado, and other conifers**

Colorado spruce, aka blue spruce, dominate among the conifers on the college grounds but there are numerous other conifers within this ecogarden, the area defined by the large stones. At the foot of the old spruce is a young Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*, Sapin baumier), easily distinguished from the spruce by its soft needles, aligned in two layers as opposed to the prickly needles of the elder, which grow from all sides of the twig. Next to the fir is a young White spruce (*Picea glauca*, Épinette blanche) with softer needles than the Colorado. As you walk clockwise along the tops of these old stones, you’ll also come across a young Tamarack (*Larix laricina*, Mélèze), one of the few deciduous conifers, whose needles will soon be turning orange and falling.

7. **Logs, les Bûches**

You may wonder why these old logs have been left lying around. We are used to tidy gardens, but in this circle of mostly native plants, where the intention is to allow nature to run its course, the decaying Norway maple log, the largest of the lot, as well as the birch and silver maple logs, will serve to nourish the soil, provide homes for insects and small rodents as well as create mini-ecosystems in the angle where the log meets the ground. Be sure to walk this circle during each season to observe the changes in vegetation.

8. **Ferns, les Fougères**

Ferns are among the oldest plants on Earth. In the age of dinosaurs, there were forests of giant ferns. Today, they are largely understory plants, reproducing not from seeds but from spores which are found either on the underside of the frond (leaf-like structure) or on a separate structure growing from the base of the plant. Ferns also spread via their root systems as these Sensitive ferns (*Onoclea sensibilis*, Onoclée sensible), with the bright green rounded edges, are doing.

9. **Staghorn sumac, *Rhus typhina*, Vinaigrier**

Most of you recognize the staghorn sumac in the fall by its bright red leaves and red fruit clusters, often seen alongside the highway. The fruit, when left to steep in boiling water makes a “lemonade,” a sour, pink drink which is high in vitamin C. This was one of the plants that saved early Europeans in North American from death from scurvy, once First Nations peoples shared their knowledge.



LOOP 3: THE CHIEF’S GARDEN

10. Lavender mist meadow rue, *Thalictrum roche-brunianum*, Pigamon “Lavender mist”

You can’t miss this tallest of all flowering plants in the Chief’s Garden with the unusual leaf. This rue is from Korea but many of you will know the white-pink native spring flower, Early meadow rue (*Thalictrum pubescens*, Pigamon hâtif) common to our local sugar maple-bitternut hickory forest, such as we find in Mount Royal Park. Soon the native rue will be planted and you will be able to compare the flowers of the two species of *Thalictrum* as one begins the flowering season, while the other ends it.

11. Silver maple, *Acer saccharinum*, Erable argenté

One of the most commonly found street and park trees in Montreal, the silver maple grows quickly and hollows out quickly, creating homes for many birds, squirrels and racoons. Along with the pussy-willow, the silver maple is the earliest of native trees to flower. Look out for the unusual yellow-red flowers, which appear at the end of April before the leaves come out. Note the deeply lobed and toothed leaf that is silver on the underside.

12. Stones, Peace and the East

You may notice here that the stones around the big silver maple have petered out, leaving this garden open to the East. This last stone, like all the stones of the garden, was quarried near Hemmingford, in southwestern Quebec. Estimated to be 500 million years old, these stones were formed by the accumulation of molusc shells at the bottom of a vast inland sea. In Algonquin belief, East is the direction of fertility, femininity, rebirth, openness. As Algonquin Chief Dominique Rankin said in his blessing of the garden last spring: “If there is to be peace, the stones to the east must have a doorway to let in the light of healing and communion.”

13. Common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*, asclépiade, and the Monarch

Just behind the last stone is a patch of milkweed that you will recognize from its plump and warty seedpods. This, and other North American species of milkweed, is the only plant eaten by the caterpillar of the Monarch butterfly so this is where the female lays her eggs. While milkweed is threatened by industrial agriculture, it can thrive in urban settings, such as Dawson College. This is the plant’s first year in the garden and already there have been numerous sitings of the butterfly. Look out for the tiny white eggs and the plump white caterpillar with black and yellow stripes.

14. Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, Lobélie cardinale

This striking native flower is as red as the male cardinals that patronize the Peace Garden. Flourishing in humidity, this plant will thrive in this wet side of the Dawson campus, as will the ruby-throated hummingbird that, in the wild, is the plant’s main pollinator.

15. Burning bush, *Euonymus alatus*, Fusain ailé

Where this tour began with the soft pink, that was Anastasia De Sousa’s favourite colour and the colour of her almond tree’s flowers, it ends in the bright autumnal red of the burning bush. Native to Asia, this bush brings brightness and joy in the autumn. In Europe, its hard, but compact wood, was used to make *fusain* –charcoal, in English- for drawing. Art students sketching in the garden may well be using the age-old material. In North America, the native species, the Eastern Wahoo, was used to make arrows. Let’s think of this bush as an autumnal emissary for joyful peace.



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DAWSON
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GARDEN



Dawson College
Ecological
Peace Garden

A garden, like peace, is a process. We prepare the earth, plant seeds, choose and nurture the right conditions, and hope that the young plants will take and spread. In the four years since the planting of the flowering almond by the Mon-treal police, in memory of Anastasia De Sousa, the student who died on that sad day, September 13, 2006, the garden has grown from a single tree to three interlocking infinity loops of life, involving hundreds of plants and volunteers.

Insects buzz from flower to flower drinking nectar and collecting pollen; squirrels dart along the decaying logs, feeding on the maple keys and burying the nuts of the old bitternut hickory on the northern periphery of the Ecogarden loop; classes come to observe, draw, and write about the garden in French and English; while robins, jays, woodpeckers and even the tiny hummingbird flit from plant to tree.

From the green grounds of century old silver and Norway maples, linden and Colorado blue spruce – attractive but with limited biodiversity - has emerged a life-brimming, warm and colourful centrepiece of learning, creation and communion for the entire community, both local and beyond. Adversity has bloomed into biodiversity

With this brochure in hand, you will meet 15 elements of that biodiversity. We begin in the middle loop at Anastasia’s tree.

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