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Thank you for your interest!

It can be difficult to assemble a list of speakers a year in advance. I know this because that was one of my responsibilities at the Milton Horticultural Society. Possibly a greater challenge is to replace a speaker who drops out at the last minute. Please keep this on file for future opportunities in case I'm available on short notice to help out.

I have spoken to horticultural societies, Master Gardener chapters, environmental groups and service clubs throughout Ontario for more than 25 years. I've presented at Canada Blooms, the Stratford Garden Festival, the Hamilton Home Show, Toronto Botanical Garden and Royal Botanical Gardens and more. I have given talks from coast to coast, at landscape trade shows including HortEast and CanWest. I have had the privilege to help put together the national curriculum for Horticultural Apprentices, and have taught at the college level for over a decade. I've also landscaped, professionally, from Nova Scotia to California.

An updated list of my topics is attached. My experience with several committees (environmental and otherwise) and my history of public speaking will pay off for you. You can contact me by e-mail at [<sdjames@on.aibn.com>](mailto:sdjames@on.aibn.com) or by phone at 905-699-2197. I live in Milton so I am very central. A quotable long and short version of my bio are included for your files.

For small groups -- such as horticultural societies and nature groups -- rates are \$75/hour (travel included) with a 2-hour minimum. If you schedule your group's 'business' after my presentation, you will save money. Rates for larger events will be determined on a client-by-client basis.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me anytime. Horticultural consultations and customized workshops are also available.

Sean James

NPD & Master Gardener

Owner: Sean James Consulting & Design

Chair: Landscape Ontario's Environmental Stewardship Committee





Sean James' Bio

Short version

“Named by GardenMaking magazine as one of “20 Making a Difference”, gardening has been Sean James’ hobby and profession for over 30 years. A graduate of Niagara Parks School of Horticulture, a Master Gardener, a public speaker, writer, and teacher; Sean focuses on eco-gardening techniques, which makes sense since he grew up surrounded by nature near Crawford Lake. He sits on several environmental committees and has appeared on several television and radio shows. Sean ran Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting for over 20 years, recently handing it over to his leadership team. He now owns ‘Sean James Consulting & Design’, focusing on teaching, speaking, writing, designing and consulting.”

Long version

“Named by GardenMaking magazine as one of “20 Making a Difference”, Sean has been gardening professionally since he was sixteen and speaking to horticultural societies for more than 25 years when he graduated from the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture. Sean ran Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting for over 20 years, recently handing it over to his leadership team. He now owns ‘Sean James Consulting & Design’, focusing on teaching, speaking, writing, designing and consulting. He is a 2X past president of the Milton & District Horticultural Society. He designed the award-winning sustainable Anderson Parkette in Oakville and several other landmark gardens. He has written several regular eco-gardening columns as well as articles for Garden Making magazine, Ontario Gardener, Trellis, (the magazine for the Toronto Botanical Garden), as well as in the global digital newsletter for the Perennial Plant Association. He’s also a member of Master Gardeners of Ontario.

He has had the privilege to help put together the national curriculum for Horticultural Apprentices. He’s been featured on the CBC and on two HGTV shows including ‘Green Force’. He’s co-hosted ‘the Garden Show’ with Charlie Dobbin and been on the radio in Halifax and Ottawa with Niki Jabbour. He chairs Landscape Ontario’s Environmental Stewardship Committee and sits on the Ontario Invasive Plant Council’s Horticultural Outreach Collaborative, and the Perennial Plant Association’s Environmental Committee.

Sean grew up surrounded by nature, near Crawford Lake in Campbellville, so it was destined that he would choose a career like landscaping.”





Sean's speech list

All speeches run between 45 minutes to 1 hour (with questions anytime) followed by an 'official' question period.

20+ Bulletproof Plants

Gardening can be challenging. We'll look at different situations and what plants do best in them. (The original request was for 20 plants but it couldn't be kept to just that number.)

Most importantly, folks think that certain circumstances are challenging. The truth is, one just needs to know the right plants.

NEW!

Nova Scotia Summer: A Horticultural Epic

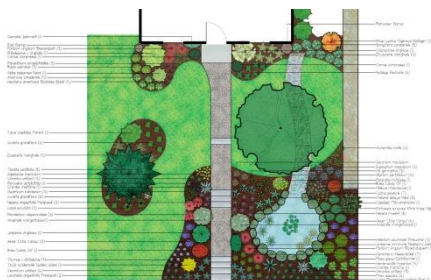
Summer, 2016, and the Fern Ridge Gang went to Guysborough, NS to install an eco-landscape and came back, and went down and came back... and so on. This resulted in upgrading an incredibly biodiverse 120-year-old mill pond. Along the way, we visited a litany of botanical gardens... and more. We've been told the replay is quite fascinating.



Take a chance! ☺

Growing Gracefully: The Evolution (Creation?) of a Garden from Young to Mature

Is your garden tired, in need of a little sprucing up? Did you inherit somebody else's garden 'issues'? Gardeners make mistakes! Hard to admit but true. We'll examine those mistakes early on, how to avoid them and we'll discuss how a garden changes as it ages as well as how to manage it. A large and overlooked topic.





Flowers for Feathered Friends

Gardening to attract birds can be mixed with any other kind of gardening, but requires a few specific considerations. It also has benefits to your landscape beyond the joy of birdsong. This is a talk for more than just birders, covering concepts such as biodiversity and native plants.

NEW! Fusion® Gardening

Encouraged by many municipalities and regions, Fusion Gardening® blends LID (rainwater handling) with xeriscaping (drought-tolerant gardening) and folds in plantings to enhance biodiversity. One of the main foci of this style is to engage the public with *beauty*. Since it's so important that property owners take up this gauntlet, we'll address the backbone of each of these disciplines, and discuss how to do each artfully.



NEW! B4 Gardening: Beautiful Blooms for Birds and Bees

We LOVE butterflies in our gardens and we recognize that bees, upon which our food supply depends, are under stress. Any garden can be a pollinator garden and we'll discuss how, with a brief discussion about pollinators themselves.

A broader picture than “Flowers for Feathered Friends”, this talk also covers attracting pollinators and other desirable wildlife to the garden. This ties into how biodiversity will benefit your garden...and how incredibly beautiful it can be.





Keeping it Green: Keeping it Beautiful

It is one of my fundamental beliefs that whatever your sustainable palette -- permaculture, native plantings, rainwater handling etc. -- beauty should be the starting point. If we don't make these initiatives beautiful, folks won't buy in. This is an in-depth talk on design principles using any list of plants and discussing several 'green' gardening techniques.

What to do With a Downpour: Ornamental Ways to Handle Rainwater

Urban Development has resulted in large areas of impermeable surfaces, leading to poor water quality and erosion, as well as drying of the creeks during droughts. Techniques will be discussed to aid in infiltrating rainwater into the soil while beautifying your landscapes and allowing a more unusual palette of plants to be used. Rain Gardens can be a beautiful addition to any yard and allow the planting of some truly interesting plants. They also help the environment by infiltrating water to clean it and restore the water table and base-flow (the water that seeps through the ground to our creeks). We'll cover how to design and build a rain garden including placement, construction, and plant choices.



NEW!

Texture Workhorses: Sedges and Grasses

Only recently appreciated, grasses offer year-'round interest in the garden, increase biodiversity and offer sound and movement. Their close relatives, sedges, are indispensable in the fast-growing area of rain gardens. Horizons will be broadened!

NEW!

Simply Shrubs!

Focusing on natives and nativars (cultivars of native plants), we'll talk about some of the best shrubs for all types of gardens from rain gardens through shade and sun and look at tolerance to soil types as well.





Working WITH Nature

- a common-sense approach to avoiding pesticides in the garden
- how to let nature do the work by encouraging soil health, biodiversity, and proper plant care
- just a few slides and lots of information and answering of questions

Xeriscaping: The Necessary Wave of the Future

- drought-resistant landscaping using perennials, shrubs, trees and annuals
- winter interest
- a short slide presentation



Making a Splash: Water in the Home Garden

- design, construction, planting & maintenance
- lower maintenance than you think...no weeding & no mowing!
- plus, a bit about rain garden construction



NEW! Nifty Natives

Various desirable, ornamental natives, including some you may not even know are native, will be covered. Location suitability will be dealt with, including addressing difficult soils and situations





It Doesn't End in August: Extending Interest in the Garden

- a study, month by month, from September to December and beyond
- combinations, individual plants
- breaking down the belief that the spring garden is the climax, and the rest of the year is the denouement

Fall Cleanup: The Green Way

- addressing the many misconceptions about what to do in the fall
- labour-saving techniques
- extra information about biodiversity and general horticulture

Looks Good Enough to Eat! Permaculture: Living off YOUR Land

- the basic principles of growing food on your property
- creative solutions for city yards
- keeping it ornamental
- using edible natives and perennials to be eco-friendly



Fighting the Triffids: Native Alternatives to Invasive Ornamentals

We love plants, but some of the plants we love are a bit too enamoured with our natural areas. They're not native to Canada and they move aggressively into our wild spaces. Not all non-natives are bad! We'll talk about which plants we'd like to avoid and what options – native and non-native, non-invasive – might be better options. We'll also touch on how to control some of these aggressors. How invasives affect our biodiversity will also be addressed.





English Cottage Gardens: A Canadian Approach

- an in-depth presentation of design principles, matching plants to soil, and planting combinations
- slide presentation of perennials and examples of cottage gardens and shade cottage gardens



Proud of My Pruning

- how to prune woody ornamentals – shrubs to trees – young and old
- an in-depth pruning demonstration of how to make proper cuts and maintaining aging shrubs
- a short discussion on identification of diseases and how to deal with them
- everyone needs to hear this but may not know it

Bringing Back the Nearly Dead: Renovating an Existing Landscape

- a white-board presentation; dealing with a landscape afflicted with the usual challenges
- bit by bit, we erase those challenges and redesign the situation
- (including Q&A) of how to use the existing material & assets when upgrading older landscapes
- talk of design principles and construction priorities & winter interest
- a brief talk on pruning techniques
- a brief talk on principles of hard landscaping (using stone, concrete & wood)

Crystal Ball: Garden Trends for the Upcoming Year

- a look at the main foci in landscaping, including edible landscaping, gardening for the bees, drought-tolerant landscaping and more
- dealing with urban development and large areas of impermeable surfaces is a challenge, so we'll discuss techniques for holding and infiltrating rainwater
- we'll also touch on drought-tolerant landscaping, native and edible plants and using less 'hardscaping'





Close Companions: Using Perennials and Annuals Together

- discussion on how to keep colour in your garden through the entire season
- keeping costs and maintenance low
- using colours together
- using bulbs, tender perennials (e.g. Dahlias), self-seeding annuals with perennials



Reduce Your Maintenance: Groundcovers & Mulches

No one call a landscaper looking for something sort of 'Palace of Versailles'! The first request is usually 'low maintenance'. The best and most visually appealing way to reduce work is by using mulches and groundcovers. We'll discuss a variety of both, their pros and cons and how to design with them. We'll also touch on natives and biodiversity enhancement, which are becoming major interests. The soil microbiome will also be touched on.

Rocks, Blocks & Wood: Understanding Hard Landscaping

- using stone, wood, and interlock in the landscape, includes sources
- common mistakes
- large focus on design principles
- dealing with contractors

Practical Perennials

- 20 or so perennials that provide easy care, long season of interest, and how to grow them with slides of each (updated to include new varieties)
- thoughts on designing, growing & winter interest





The Art of Lighting

- if you've put so much work into the landscape why not enjoy it at night... when you are home?
- different types and styles of lighting the landscape with a focus on low voltage fixtures
- what to look for and how to deal with contractors
- slide presentation & how-to demonstration



The Devil's in the Details:

Landscaping a Small Yard... Some Design Tips from a Pro

- small yards have great potential, more than large yards in many ways
- a short slide show will be analyzed to share ideas and help guide you

Catching a Garden: Photography Tips for Real Gardeners

- not high tech! Just a simple look at how to photograph nature and more
- I am a semi-professional (just a bit in my spare time but I have sold works and done paid shoots)
- we will NOT discuss f-stops and aperture sizes and all that...it's not usually necessary with today's cameras
- we will discuss composition, colour, form and perhaps a few useful tricks





Green Roofing: An Overview

- think long term and this is a no-brainer
- why should we and how should we?
- what does it cost?
- some of the plants we can use
- based on a CBC interview with Sean James

NEW!

Soil, and the Things Living in It

- we're learning much about soil and its importance to plant health and climate change; this may be the most important speech on the list
- latest information and research will be discussed
- how do we steward the soil microbiome, including the beneficial bacteria and fungi?
- what activities harm the soil and therefore the plants
- can better soil stewardship also mean lower maintenance? We'll talk about how.

A Pillar of Salt... and Plants that Tolerate It

- designing and planting for roadsides, sea sides, and other salty conditions
- with boulevard gardens gaining ground but slip and fall insurance claims on the rise, choosing plants that can tolerate salt is of particular interest to gardeners and municipalities alike
- restrictions on boulevard gardens will be discussed
- touching on how these plants often support biodiversity

Couples and Threesomes: Companions for Hostas

Achieving the potential of a shade garden

- an in-depth look at using more than just Hostas to bring all aspects of garden design to a shade garden
- includes discussion of biodiversity and sustainability





Fundraising

Consider offering a course to your membership or the general public. Stack several speeches together or choose from the courses below. Hire me for the day, offer lunch (when we did this for Oakville Master Gardeners many moons ago, a local Subway donated lunch) and charge participants to raise money for garden projects or just top up your organization's coffers. As with any of the talks above, I'll promote your group through my newsletter and social networking platforms.

Woody Plants: Their Appeal and Uses in the Landscape (Full Day)

- a 6-hour presentation of the advantages and concerns surrounding woody plant choices
- includes discussion of plants suitable for rain gardens, attracting birds, invasive species, native species and suitability to soil type
- hardiness zones will also be included

Dig Deeper: Landscape Plants and How to Use Them (Full Day)

- a 6-hour presentation on various types of plants; annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs and even veggies!
- design will also be tackled throughout
- includes discussion of plants suitable for rain gardens, attracting birds, invasive species, native species and suitability to soil type

Do-it-Yourself: A Design Workshop (Full Day)

- the morning will involve a presentation on all aspects to be considered to create a landscape design, from construction basics to prioritizing needs, to aesthetic principles
- the afternoon will be spent working with participants, one on one, to help them create their design
- participants should bring a design of their property, preferably measured to scale, photos of their house and garden, paper (11x17 is best), a ruler or scale, pencils and erasers (or the host group can provide stationery and supplies)
- typically, the host group provides a simple lunch to participants.
- maximum of 12 participants

Xeriscaping: Drought-tolerant Landscaping (Half- Day)

- a 3-hour workshop on all aspects of reducing water use in the landscape.
- with municipalities beginning to charge what water actually costs, and with an increasing awareness of environmental issues, this is a valuable presentation
- plant choices, whys and hows and different styles will be discussed

