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It is very 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. As well, a major problem is replacing a speaker who drops out at the last minute. Please keep this on file for future opportunities in case I might be available on short notice to help out.

I have been speaking to horticultural societies and service clubs since 1991 in Milton, Acton, Canada Blooms, Ottawa, Minden, at the CNE & Civic Garden Center and to the Master Gardeners at the RBG to name a few. I have given talks at HortEast - the landscaping trade show for the Atlantic Provinces. I have had the privilege to help put together the national curriculum for Horticultural Apprentices. An updated list of my topics is attached. My experience with several local committees and my history of public speaking will pay off for you. Especially during the winter, I can be available on short notice, if I'm not already booked. October through March are the best times for me.

A long and short version of my bio are attached for your files as well.

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 am very central.

Rates are \$75 per hour from my door, back to my door so local groups are cheaper and if you put your group's 'business' first, then that will be included in the fee. (There's a \$150 minimum...sorry.) In trying to keep rates low, I would urge societies to have the speaker go before the group business. (If I choose to stay longer, that's my responsibility, not yours of course.) I understand the rationales for having the speaker go second but it would make life much easier if speakers could present, answer questions and dash since with travel, it makes for a very late night otherwise. Alternatively, since it only takes five minutes to set up for any given speech, having the speaker arrive ten minutes before you estimate you'll be ready would save time and reduce stress especially if the speaker is coming from a long distance.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me any time. Horticultural consultations are also available.



Sean James NPD, & Master Gardener



## Bio: Short Version

Gardening has been Sean James' hobby and profession for over 30 years. A graduate of Niagara Parks, a public speaker, frequent guest on radio gardening shows, writer, teacher and environmentalist, 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, has appeared on several television and radio shows and runs Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting.

## Bio: Long Version

Sean has been gardening professionally since he was sixteen and speaking to horticultural societies since 1991, when he graduated from the Niagara Parks School of Horticulture. He runs his own landscaping business, Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting, and is a 2X past president of the Milton & District Horticultural Society. He designed the sustainable Anderson Parkette in Oakville and several other landmark gardens. He has 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 Master Gardener.

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 only natural that he would choose a career like landscaping."

More below...



## Speech List

All speeches run between 45 minutes to 1 hour with questions anytime and a question period after. I am willing to stay until all questions are answered. Related examples from my library will be available for examination. Have me come and speak. You won't be disappointed!

**NEW – “Garden Trends for 2016”**

A look at the main foci in landscaping including edible landscaping, gardening for the bees, drought-tolerant landscaping and more.

**NEW – “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 just to that number.)

Most importantly, folks think that certain circumstances are challenging. 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, N.S. 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 and a litany of botanical garden visits...and more. Feedback is, the replay is quite fascinating. Take a chance! ☺



**NEW - "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 about how a garden changes as it ages as well as how to manage it. A large and overlooked topic.



**NEW – “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 – “Nifty Natives”**

Various desirable, ornamental natives, including some you may not even *know* are native, will be covered. Location suitability will be covered including handling challenging soils and situations.

### **NEW – “B4 Gardening – Beautiful Blooms for Birds and Bees”**

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



### **NEW – “Keeping it Green - Keeping it Beautiful”:**

It is one of the fundamental beliefs at Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting 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 principals using any list of plants and discussing several 'green' gardening techniques.

### **NEW - "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 out 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 great 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 garden from rain gardens through shade and sun and look at tolerance to soil types as well.

### **"Xeriscaping – The Necessary Wave of the Future":**

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



### **"Working WITH Nature":**

- a common sense approach to avoiding pesticides in the garden
- we will address safe use of chemicals (natural and man-made), biological and cultural alternatives and discuss Integrated Pest Management and a bit on fertilizers
- time will be spent throughout discussing natural treatments for plant health problems
- just a few slides and *lots* of information and answering of questions.

### **"Making a Splash - Water in the Home Garden":**

- design, construction, planting & maintenance
- lower maintenance than you think...no weeding & no mowing!
- rain garden construction is also covered



### **NEW - "B4 Gardening: Beautiful Blooms for Bees and Butterflies":**

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.

### **"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 be all, end all

### **“Fall Cleanup – The Green Way”:**

There are many misconceptions about what to do in the fall. These will be set right plus labour saving techniques such as mulching leaves. There will also be lots of 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 native and perennials to be eco-friendly



### **“Fighting the Triffids – Native Alternatives to Invasive Ornamentals”:**

-a beginning looks at what plants to choose instead of traditional plants such as Norway Maple and Russian Olive. Important.

### **“English Cottage Gardens – A Canadian Approach”:**

- in depth presentation of design principals, suitable plant material, 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
- short discussion on identification of diseases and how to deal with them
- most important & useful of my speeches – everyone needs to hear this but may not know it.

### **“Bringing Back the Nearly Dead: Renovating an Existing Landscape”:**

- no slides but use of diagrams
- (including Q&A) of how to use the existing material & assets when up-grading older landscapes
- talk of design principals and construction priorities & winter interest
- brief talk on pruning techniques
- brief talk on principals of hard landscaping (using stone, concrete & wood)

### **“Crystal Ball: Rain Gardens and Other Gardening Trends for 2016”:**

- 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
- new, short slide show



### **“Lower Your Maintenance - Groundcovers & Mulches”:**

- steps to lower maintenance, stay environmentally friendly, and improve aesthetics
- many examples and how to use them
- something folk need to hear

### **“Rocks & Blocks & Wood – Understanding Hard Landscaping”:**

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

### **“The Art of Nightlighting”:**

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



### **“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

**“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)
- details on growing and how to design using them & winter interest

**“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



**Design Workshops and Landscape Photography Workshops (elementary but useful) are also available**

**“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

**“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 as well of course as relates to the topic.