

Trillium Volunteer Judges Training

Environmental Services



8/11/2026



Program Overview



What is the Hamilton Trillium Program?

- A community garden program to contribute to the beautification of the city.
- Est 1965 – 70 years!
- Community volunteers act as judges, scoring local gardens based on design and ecological criteria.
- Awards are given to the gardens with the highest scores.
- A way to connect with your neighbours, fellow volunteers, and learn more about gardening!



Trillium Award Categories



White Trillium

- 20 Per Ward



Pink Trillium

- 1 Per Ward



Red Trillium

- 1 Per City



Community Trillium

- 2 Per Ward

Your Responsibilities

- Nominate 10 beautiful gardens by July 1st.
- Check your emails for assignments and updates.
- Score your gardens using the New Scoring Guide and Tool Kit.
- Submit scores for all your assignments by the category deadline.





Program Schedule



Program Dates – White and Pink Awards

Dates	Action
July 1 st	Garden Nomination Portal Closes.
July 2 nd – 6 th	You will be assigned your gardens.
July 6 th – 20 th	You will go out & judge your White Trillium Nominations.
July 20 th	Deadline for your White Award submissions.
July 21 st – 25 th	White scorecard evaluation.
July 26 th – August 10 th	White winners receive their awards and are judged for Pink Trillium.
August 10 th	Deadline for Pink Award submissions.
August 11 th – 13 th	Pink scorecard evaluation.
August 16 th – 24 th	Pink winner receives their award and are judged for Red Trillium.

Program Dates – Red Awards and Post Judging

Dates	Action
August 24 th	Deadline for Red Award Submissions.
August 25 th – 27 th	Red scorecard evaluation.
August 28 th	Red winner report emailed to Red Judges.
August 29 th – September 15 th	Red Award can be delivered over the following 2 weeks.
September 15 th	All winners are posted on the city website. Judges Registration and Garden Nomination Portals open for 2027.
October 16 th	Volunteer Appreciation/Trillium Celebration and Conversation Café.
November 12 th	Advisory team debrief, SWOT and planning for 2027.



Roles



Who is a new Judge?

Who is a returning Judge?

How long have you been involved in the program?

Program Members and Roles

Advisory Team

- Work with the Community Liaison Coordinators to plan the successful operation of the program.
- Coordinate with the Ward Coaches.

Ward Coaches

- Assist the judges with any questions and are prepared to take over any outstanding gardens.
- Judge the gardens assigned to them and deliver awards to winners.

Trillium Judges

- Judge the gardens assigned to them using resources and submit scores online by given deadlines.
- Reach out to Ward Coaches for assistance, accompany to deliver awards if required/desired.

Trillium Advisory Team

Chair - Joanne Hofstee

Co-Chair - Allyn Walsh

Secretary - Nicole Wolfe

Ward Coach, Mapping and Logistics Coordinator - Corrin Whiteway

Photography - Currently Vacant

Social Media Coordinator & LinkedIn Page - Luke Ezima

Stakeholder Relations, Event and Ceremony Coordinator - Dominica Malara

Volunteer Engagement and Community Trillium Outreach Coordinator - Gemma Ireland

Honorary Member At Large - Melita Vrakela

City Staff, Community Liaison Coordinator - Theresa Phair

City Staff, Project Manager - Florence Pirrera



White Trillium: Judging Process



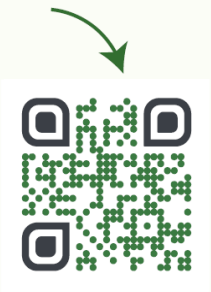
Pre-Judging

1. **Attend Judge's training.**
2. **Collect nominations.**
 - Look around your neighbourhood and others.
 - Nominate 10 beautiful gardens you see.
3. **Review your nominations judges.**
 - Your judging assignments will arrive via email.



Become a Volunteer Trillium Judge

- Volunteer judges critique and score properties that have been nominated for a Trillium Award
- No experience necessary, training and materials will be provided



hamilton.ca/trilliumawardsjudges



Active Judging

1. Judging Time Window

- You have two weeks to judge your assigned nominations.

2. Use your Judge's Tools & Accessories

- Use your digital and physical tools to help support your judging process.
- Only judge from the sidewalk! Look at the garden from multiple angles and sidewalk positions.

3. Drop-off Nomination Cards

- For nominations that are marked as publicly nominated, leave a nomination card in their mailbox.



Post-Judging

1. Keep an Eye on Deadlines on the Website.

- Be sure to finish judging your gardens within the given time window.
- If you cannot complete your judging, let your ward coach know as soon as you can.

2. Submit Your Scores.

- Once you have submitted your scores online via the portal, you are done judging.





White Trillium: Judging Criteria



Judging Categories

Landscape Design: Principles and Elements

- Curb Appeal and Focal Area
- Unity/Harmony/Balance
- Scale/Proportion
- Rhythm/Sequence

Landscape Maintenance

- Annuals and Perennials
- Trees, Shrubs, and Evergreens
- Hardscape/Softscape
- Property Maintenance

Biodiversity Excellence

- Native Plants
- Biodiversity Support and Water Management

Judging Scoresheet

Trillium Judging Score Sheet



Ward (1-15): _____

Address	Landscape Design				Landscape Maintenance				Biodiversity Excellence		Support and Water Management (5)		Total Score (/50)	Comments
		Curb Appeal and Focal Areas (/5)	Unity / Harmony / Balance (/5)	Scale / Proportion (/5)		Annuals and Perennials (/5)	Trees, Shrubs, and Evergreens (/5)	Hardscape / Softscape (/5)	Property Maintenance (/5)		Native Plants (/5)			

Criteria Rubric

- Each category is now worth 5 points.
- Each property is now scored on a basis of 50 points total.
- We have created a new rubric this year to guide your scoring.

Category	Overview	Many Challenges (1)	Fair (2)	Good (3)	Strong (4)	Outstanding (5)	Training Notes
Curb Appeal	How visually appealing and inviting the property appears from the street.	Uninviting and cluttered; lacks visual interest or a focal point.	Weak focal area placement with minimal impact	Clear focal element that contributes to street presence.	Strong focal point that complements surroundings and enhances street beauty.	Highly engaging, memorable, and beautifully designed focal area.	<i>Example photos, good & bad.</i>
Unity / Harmony / Balance	May be traditional, matrix, or food garden style.	Disorganized mix of elements and plants; no design cohesion.	Some compatible features, but overall design does not feel cohesive.	Connected and intentional elements but lacks overall refinement.	Consistent cohesion: plants and features complement each other well.	Exceptionally cohesive, intentional, and visually pleasing layout.	<i>Photos of each garden type with explanations; include sample matrix plan.</i>
Scale / Proportion	Suitability of planting scale relative to the property and space.	Poorly sized elements; lacks height diversity; awkward proportions.	Some elements are disproportionate, but a few parts fit the space.	Appropriately sized elements with a mix of heights and shapes.	Good blend of plant sizes and structures suited to the space.	Superior mix of shapes and heights; fits the space perfectly.	<i>Explain layers and shapes using photos.</i>
Rhythm & Sequence	Flow and organization of planting through repetition, variation, and visual movement.	Scattered or disorganized; flat layout entirely lacking contrast.	Some element variation is present but lacks meaningful contrast.	Varied colors, forms, and textures, but lacks clear organization.	Consistent repetition of shapes and colors; clear multi-layered planting.	Encourage the eye to move from one area to another in a structured progression, through repetition of form/textures/colours.	<i>Photos</i>

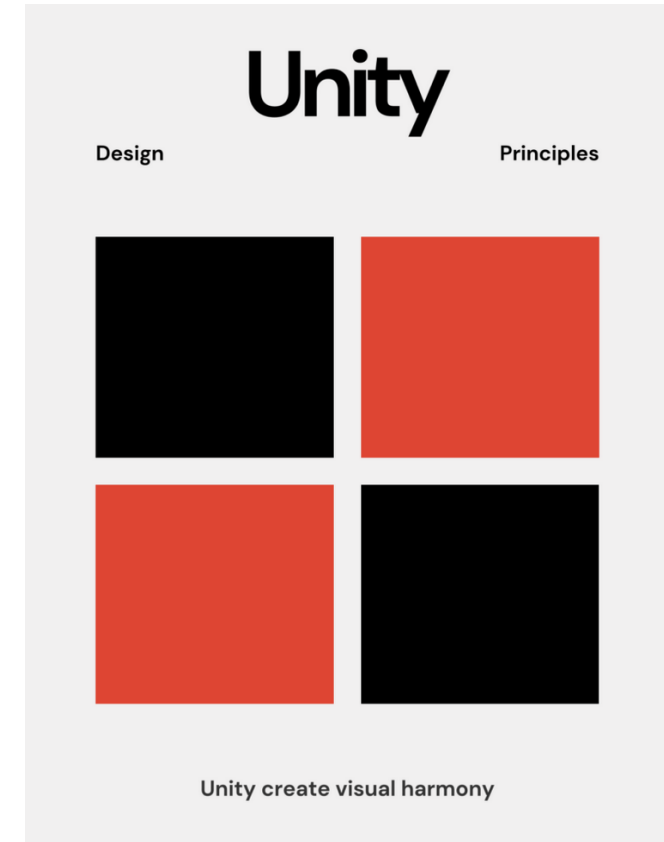
Curb Appeal and Focal Area

- The attractiveness of the garden from the street.
- Good first impression that catches your attention.
- The exterior looks inviting and welcoming. Is there naturalization, artistic expression, or innovation in biodiversity?
- **Focal Point** is the visual anchor of the garden; what captures your attention first/most prominently.
- Looking for a strong focal point that complements sounding planting.
- **Curb appeal** can be accomplished by any number of methods including new design elements, exterior decorations, color schemes and extensive attention to the landscaping.



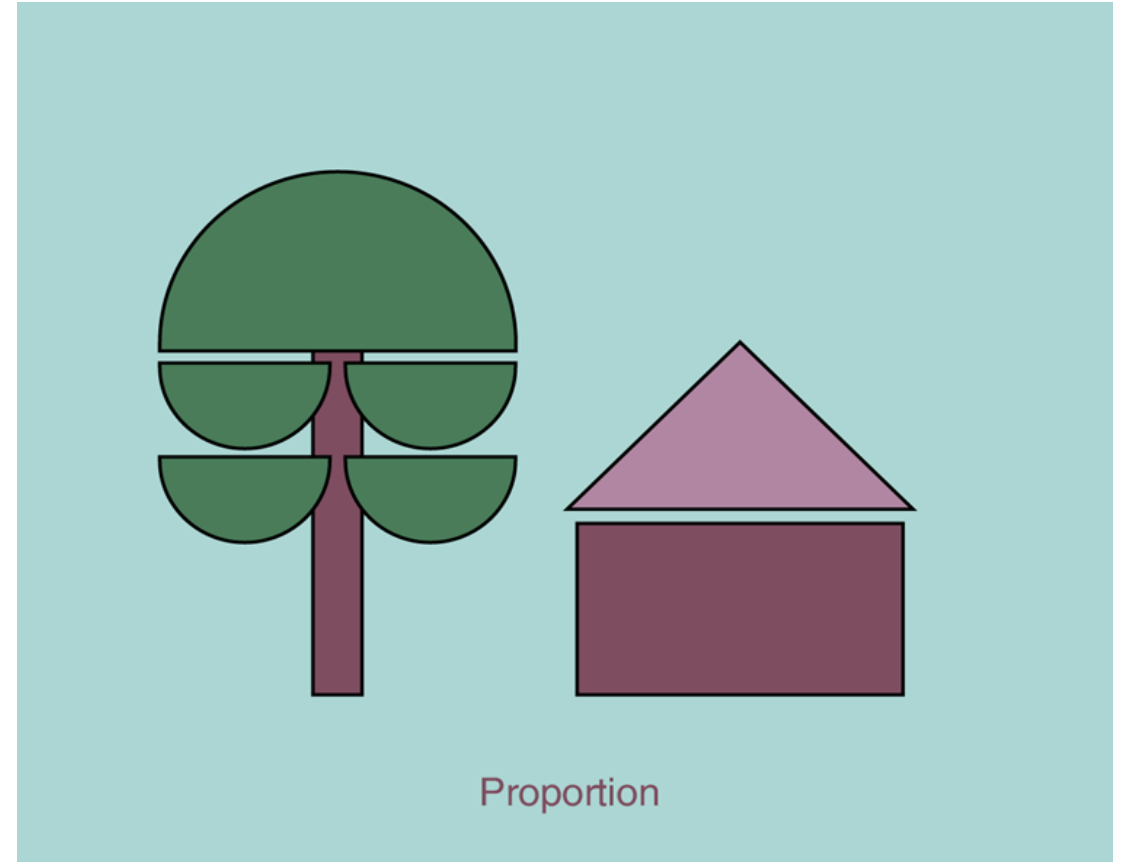
Unity/Harmony/Balance

- Foundational design principles that guide how elements in art, architecture, and visual design interact.
- Looking for consistent connection and cohesion between plants and features.
- Elements complement each other and placement feels intentional.
- Elements feel balanced across the property.



Scale & Proportion

- **Scale** is the size of an object in relation to the house and property.
- How the size of design elements relate to each other and the design as a whole.
- When scale is appropriate, the proportions of a property connect and make sense.
- Looking for a strong mix of shapes, sizes, and heights.
- Everything fits the space beautifully and with strong organization and intention.



Rhythm & Sequence

- The repetition and pattern of visual elements (shapes, colours, lines) to create a sense of organized movement and guide the viewers eye.
- Looking for planting material that has repetition and connection of colours and shapes.
- Multiple garden layers present (e.g. trees, shrubs, tall grasses, lower plants, groundcovers) for multi-season interest.



Annuals and Perennials

- **Annuals** are plants that bloom once, often found in containers or bedding areas.
- **Perennials** die back in the fall and re-bloom in the spring/summer.
- Looking for a diverse mix of perennial and annual species planted in attractive groupings.
- All plants vigorous, well-maintained, with limited invasive plants.



Trees, Evergreens, & Shrubs

- **Evergreens, Trees and Shrubs** are woody plants with multiple permanent stems branching from the base.
- Generally staying under 15 feet tall.
- Some lose their leaves and/or flowers, others do not.
- Looking for a diverse mix of healthy, well-maintained plants of varying forms; good proportion and controlled growth enhancing garden structure.



Hardscape/Softscape

- **Hardscape** is a built environment: stones, rocks, pavers, structures, water elements and mulches that enhance both beauty and function of the space.
- **Softscape** is the living horticultural elements providing texture, colour, and seasonal changes used in harmony with the hardscape.
- Looking for well-maintained, well-placed elements that complement the overall landscape.



Property Maintenance

- **Property Maintenance** contributes to a tidy and well-kept garden.
- Looking for walkways, driveways, fences, and porches that are in good order and contribute to the overall appearance of the property.
- Landscaping is maintained and free of litter.
- Plants are properly staked, pruned, and spaced.





Biodiversity Spotlight



Native Plants

- **Native plants** are naturally-occurring plants connected to a specific region and ecosystem.
- Looking for a variety of native species in healthy clumps, ideally at least three in bloom.
- Limited or no invasive plants seen.



Biodiversity Support and Water Management

- Added garden elements that support wildlife and preserve natural rain water.
- Looking for active measures (e.g., barrels, raingardens) and reliable water and shelter for insects and birds.



Why Native vs. Invasive Plants?

Native Plants

- Plants which have co-evolved with other living entities in our ecosystem.
- Part of an interdependent web, they have developed without human intervention over millennia, and are adapted to local conditions.
- Offer support (food, shelter) to native birds, pollinators, fauna.

Invasive Plants

- Aggressive spreaders with no natural controls.
- Evolved in different ecosystems.
- Cover ground quickly and grow easily, replacing native plants.
- Very little or no support for native birds, pollinators, fauna.

Native Plants: See Your Biodiversity Resource Page

Get free plant ID apps. (e.g., PlantNet, Google Lens)



Coreopsis



Nodding Onion



Purple Cone Flower

Harmful Invasive Plants: Check “Grow Me Instead”

Focus on Common garden invasive plants.

- Ground covers like Periwinkle, English Ivy, Goutweed, Lily of the Valley
- Shrubs like Barberry, Burning Bush, Amur Honeysuckle



Periwinkle



English Ivy



Lily of the Valley



Barberry



Burning Bush



Amur Honeysuckle

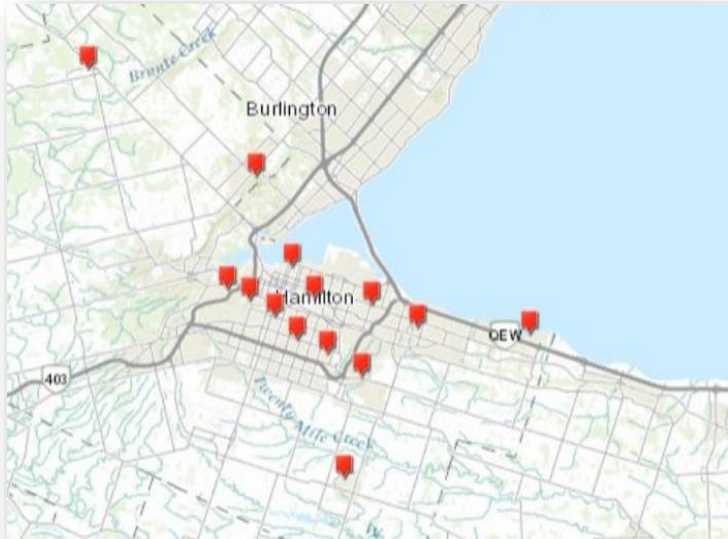


Tech Tools & Resources



Online Submissions

<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/cdfbfadc801047d6a0272a2b6e58751f>



Zoom to Pan

Property: 26 Rockview
Ward: 7
Nomination Type: Residential
Judge: Kyle
This Garden was Publicly Nominated, please leave a courtesy card at this location.

[Click to Score this Property.](#)

Judging Components

Curb Appeal and Focal Area*

Exterior looks inviting, welcoming and attractive - Property creates a good first impression - Property catches your attention immediately

-Please select-

Landscape Maintenance: Softscape/Hardscape*

Softscape comprises live horticultural elements, ornamental grasses, and naturalization of plants and shrubs. Hardscape refers to a built environment

-Please select-

Landscape Maintenance: Flowers (Annuals and Perennials)*

Well maintained, with healthy colour and foliage, and part of a colour scheme - Proper size and proportion in containers/planters

-Please select-

Online Tools

Volunteer Page

- <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-council/awards-tributes/trillium-awards/trillium-award-volunteer-judges>

Judges Criteria

- <https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/2026-06/trilliumawards-judges-criteria-2026.pdf>

Judges Scorecard

- <https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/2026-06/trilliumawards-judges-scoresheet-2026.pdf>

Judges Route Planner

- <https://www.hamilton.ca/sites/default/files/2023-06/trilliumawards-judges-route-planner.pdf>



Summary & Next Steps



Summary

- Your job as a White Trillium Judge is to evaluate the beautiful gardens of Hamilton!
- There are rubrics, guides, maps, and other resources online to help support your judging.
- You will receive your properties to evaluate early July; you will have two weeks to judge your nominated properties and submit your scores.
- The goal of this program is to connect with community and beautify the city.

Don't forget to have fun and enjoy the process!

Reminders

- If you are unable to complete your judging, please let your Ward Coach know as soon as you can.
- If you have a conflict of interest with a garden (your own, a family member's garden, a friend's garden, etc.), please let your Ward Coach know as soon as you can.
- Use your physical scoring tools before submitting online; once you submit your scores online, they cannot be changed.
- Plan your route and judge with a friend or family member! Bring more people into the adventure!
- Different neighbourhoods will have very different garden sizes, successes, and flair. Evaluate each garden based on its merit, effort, and impact.

Questions?

