Although Uganda is a landlocked country with all but a small corner in the southwest and parts of its shoreline of Lake Victoria being north of the Equator it is surprising how many familiar plants and shrubs are found there. Trees are a different matter - these grow to great heights, some as tall as 250 feet or more. Of course the plants that we do recognize are not ones that survive our winters but do grow year round in their climate.

In square miles Uganda has less than 10% of the land in Ontario, even less than Southern Ontario alone. 25% of their country is covered with water - lakes, rivers, streams and marshes. In the other 75% you find rainforests and savannahs in the central and southern parts of the country and semi desert areas in the north. Close to Lake Victoria rain occurs frequently all year round but in most areas they have two rainy periods, March to May and September to November, and the other six months are dry periods with little or no rain.

But like everywhere else in the world, the climate is changing. When we are there in February we do have rain. The lightning flashes, the thunder bounces off the mountains and heavy rain comes down for short periods three or four times during the month. Mbale, the town where we stay is in the foothills of Mount Elgon, about 2000 feet above sea level but for the first five years while building the school, we stayed in the village of Nyondo, 4000 feet above sea level, but still within 100 miles of the Equator. We even had a lengthy hail storm there once; imagine marble size hail stones hitting on a
Volunteer Information Night #2 –
Tuesday, July 8, 2008

A total of 14 (volunteers and staff) attended the event... well received by all.

Items covered:

Tour of the gardens, Italian, Japanese and English. Mary Grad was our tour guide and did a fabulous job. Hope to plant the perennial beds in the Italian garden next spring. Lavender is one suggested plant. Other suggestions welcome to compliment the Italian theme. Come out and explore the gardens... they are amazing this year.

'Arboretum Auxiliary - Volunteer Groups'...
Presentation: a who's who in the various volunteer groups. A few notes about the various volunteer groups: Docents require a Police Records Check every 3 years. Gardening group could use 2 more volunteers. Grounds group is at maximum volunteers. Plant Sale group could use additional help on Thursdays. Office Assistance - there is always a need for office assistance... whether manning the reception desk, assisting with faxing or other office duties or stuffing parties for our Seasonal programs or Theatre in the Tress.

Children's Theatre - A special plea for help. If interested please contact me or Lona Buck.

Q&A Session:

Tours: Great... should be a regular part of the Volunteer Info Nights.

Potholes: Entrance road to The Arboretum is being graded every month. Mega funds needed to pave entrance.

Lighting into The Arboretum Centre: especially for Theatre in The Trees. Main entrance is well lit.

Volunteer Card - Free Admission to RBG: Following up with RBG whether benefit will be extended to Arboretum auxiliary in 2008 or 2009.

Theatre in the Trees: Next session is Nov/Dec then Mar/Apr. Discount for tickets are offered to volunteers.

What's new at The Arboretum: Nothing new in collections? Mandate is to maintain our current collections. Frisbee golf has been set up by the Rotary Tree Grove (initiative with the Athletics department), no cost at present. Initiative with the Organic Agriculture Department for students to practice market gardening starting next spring... plot on College Ave.

Ottawa Arboretum: Check out the Ottawa Arboretum if you are vacationing in the Capital.

Arb Aux: Informative publication, interesting articles.

Poison Ivy Display: An educational caged display is located off the service road that leads from The Arboretum to the Hilton Centre near the prickly pear cactus display.

Flowering Trees: Absolutely gorgeous this year. A job for one of the volunteers to identify when these trees are in bloom. Anyone interested?

Arboretum Web site: Alvin Gillies now doing some updates to the web site.

Tree Atlas Project - Status: Should be completed within a year. Tree Atlas will be sold... cost unknown at this time.

Suggestions for Volunteer Info Nights: Contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator with your suggestions.

Cross Country Race (held at the Arboretum in 2008): Next time in approx. 3 years.

Next Volunteer Information Night:
Tuesday, October 7, 2008 in The Arboretum Centre (Boardroom). Time 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Watch your email closer to the date for the agenda.
Being on and close to the Equator affects the length of days - they stay the same all year round with the sun rising shortly after 6:30 a.m. and setting shortly after 7:00 p.m.

When one lands at Entebbe airport on flights from Europe around 9:00 p.m. or later you cannot appreciate the beautifully landscaped area around the airport; it is only when you return in daylight to fly out that you see the array of flowering plants and shrubs. Between Entebbe and Kampala, the capital city, driving close to Lake Victoria the countryside is green and lush with towering trees and beautiful gardens around the numerous resort hotels, service stations, small businesses and even private homes. Bougainvillea, oleander, hibiscus, cannas, amaryllis, peace and other lilies and garden plants such as lantana, poinsettia, purple passion flower, chenille plant and several types of cacti flourish. Several nurseries add to the scene by selling plants along the road. In 2007, with the Commonwealth Conference in Kampala, a great deal of work was done to make the route especially attractive for the Queen’s visit!!

Parts of Kampala are very crowded, but even so around big hotels, government buildings, embassies and private homes beautiful gardens and lawns are kept.

When we leave Kampala to drive to Mbale, a four hour drive, the changing scene includes sugar, tea and banana plantations. market gardens growing sweet potatoes, corn (maize), sorghum, cassava, tomatoes and other vegetables, pineapples, mango, passion fruit and jackfruit trees, rice paddies and open fields of various grasses, papyrus and sisal and the occasional field of cotton plants. We drive through a National Forest preserve, one of several that in total cover 1.7 million acres of the country. Protection of these forested areas is provided by a government ministry but the reserve we pass through is being threatened by owners of sugar plantations who want to cut the trees in order to use the land to grow more sugar. People have protested and so far the government has refused to allow the cutting, but how long they will hold out is questionable. In a country in which the fuel for cooking is either wood or charcoal forest management is very important. One growing industry in Uganda is the export of cut flowers to Europe, the altitude and temperature of the country is ideal for the growing of Sweetheart roses, Gerbera and Anthurium and the yearly export now totals over 7000 metric tonnes.

The town of Mbale, once a very popular tourist area especially for hikers wanting to climb Mount Elgon, is trying to improve parks and open land. The main street has an eight foot boulevard down the centre and flowering shrubs help to make it more attractive. Inns, like the one at which we stay, as well as the larger resort hotels all maintain beautiful grounds. And in open fields on the outskirts of the town, huge trees such as mvule, mahogany, jacarandas with their crown of purple flowers and several varieties of palm trees stretch toward the sky. On the mountains coffee trees flourish and provide a source of income for many families who are able to market the beans through a local co-operative - we bring home a good supply.

The British introduced eucalyptus trees from Australia in some areas of the country and they are frequently seen lining country roads including one that we walked daily when we were staying up the mountain in Nyondo. Their
humongous roots sit on top of the shallow soil and when it rains the scent of eucalyptus fills the air as you walk under their branches. It brings back memories of when our families used the oil as a cold remedy.

Ugandans take all this greenery for granted and students or adults are rarely able to tell you the name of plants. Fortunately there are books available that name them and one of our students who is studying forestry can identify most trees for us.

I am wondering how many volunteers know about the ‘9 hole Disc Golf Course’ located in the Arboretum’s Maple Tree grove? I have seen a couple of the basket-like structures on my walks along the service road but had no real idea until this past weekend what Frisbee golf is all about. My son-in-law has played it from time to time on Centre Island in Toronto and quite enjoyed the Arboretum course with our 6 year old grandson on Monday.

I found out as well through the Arboretum website, that there is a detailed map of the course that can be printed. The rules for playing this game can also be found on the web. I found out it is not just a matter of throwing a Frisbee. Try this link for more information.

http://www.athletics.uoguelph.ca/Recreation/Drop-In_Recreation

Photographs of Plant Sale Volunteers in Action

Norma—Checking the Trees

Mary & Pat Doing Inventory

Ted - Mary - Monica - Marg

Winter Issue of Arb Aux

Planned Publication Date:
Week of January 12, 2009

Submission Deadline for articles, pictures
Monday, December 17, 2008.
Smell The Roses—Is There More?
Marg Gillies

In spite of what the weather forecasters might have predicted, the spring and summer rains of 2008 may well be remembered by garden enthusiasts. As a result of the rain, not only have our gardens produced lush greenery along with profusion of blossoms, but so have the roadsides and meadows added to nature’s amazing palette of colour this year.

Before the trees began to sprout their greenery, blood root, hepatica and dog-tooth violets provided patches of colour to the brown forest floor. The appearance of beloved native plants such as trilliums and jack-in-the-pulpits reminded us that they were the real woodland messengers of spring. The woodland appearance of a dandelion plant here and there is perhaps an unhappy reminder to some gardeners that spring is truly with us.

Although dandelions are not seen as a ‘joy to behold’ by many, I do enjoy the blankets of happy yellow sunshine they produce each spring in the Arboretum’s world of trees and elsewhere. How many of us have taken the time to really look at and appreciate the delicate beauty of a dandelion seed head before it drifts away with the wind to places unknown? The same can be said regarding the sparkly seed head that is produced by goat’s beard.

Goat’s beards begin to make their appearance along some of the Arboretum trails in June along with a number of other wayside wildflowers. I first became aware of goat’s beard with one that I found growing in a small garden area near a boxwood hedge in my front yard. Not recognizing the plant in its earlier stages, I let it blossom for the remainder of the season while wondering from where it came. I finally concluded after a clump of Queen Anne’s lace appeared in the back garden, that these seedlings were bonus plants with the perennials that I had purchased at an Arboretum plant sale!

Having wayside or roadside plants in my garden has never caused me a problem as I enjoy their blossoms as much as the traditional perennials that surround them.

During the North Western Ontario gardening years, where I had very limited access to perennials, my garden included a few clumps of wild columbine, buttercups and field daisies that were carefully controlled. The person whose wintertime purchase of our last home in the north perhaps had a bit of surprise that summer with the appearance of bird’s foot trefoil. Having admired its small clusters of yellow blossoms along a roadside, I decided a splash of yellow would add to the curb appeal to this home. (In reality it was the collection of garden photos that I had taken that helped to seal the home’s sale).

Now that Guelph has been my home for ten years, I feel privileged to live within a ten to twenty minute walk along any number of Arboretum trails. When the woodland areas are thick with mosquitoes, summertime walks along trails in the more open areas provide weekly changing palettes of colours derived from wild flower plants such as the campions, vetches, clovers, hawkweeds, verbenas, milkweed, bindweed, toadflax, chickweed and an assortment of thistles. While many of these plants can be a nuisance in a garden, their colourful blossoms provide an unique purpose in their natural plant world environment. For example the Arboretum is a unique place to observe a variety of insects that gain nutrition from these plants while at the same time providing much beauty and wonderment to the eye of the observer.

There are surprises to be had when one takes time to really look closely at the real beauty that lies within the blossoms of plants that are often seen as the poor cousins in the plant world. This summer I had a new appreciation for the hated stinging nettle that grows at one corner of the lathe house at the Hilton Centre. I actually took time to look closely at its tiny blossoms and my reaction was WOW! Not only is it wise to take time “to smell the roses” but perhaps we need to take time to admire more closely the true beauty of plants that are more than a weed.
A Trip to Pterophylla
Barbara Parke

Staff at The Arboretum were off for an early start on Tuesday, July 15... for an exciting field trip. Our destination... South Walsingham... to visit Pterophylla. And what is Pterophylla you ask? It's an old tobacco farm which was purchased by Mary Gartshore and Peter Carson... who planned to restore the land. Serious work started in 1992 with a group of about 20 volunteers who came out to hoe, dig, scatter seeds, plant plugs and then water. The following year even more volunteers came to help... again some of the 60 acre field was seeded using the same hand dispersal method. Some volunteers worked on removing the troublesome invasive quack grass and goats beard. By the end of the third summer... many wonderful native species could be seen flowering... Wild Bergamot, Brown-eyed Susan and Butterfly weed.

Mary shared so much interesting information with us as we toured the property. What captured my attention was her description of the controlled burns that have been done. The latest burn was done in April 2008... there hadn't been a burn done since 2003. One of the purposes of the burn is to clean up weeds. It is done on a day when there is a NE wind... but just a light wind. A buffer is built around the outside of the field.... then they do a back burn with a drip torch. When the fire is roaring (back burn and head fire) it sounds like a train roaring through. After about two hours when all is complete there is silence. Then the birds return for a treat of crispy things. The field is green in a week's time.

Mary pointed out some of the troublesome weeds... like wild carrot, white sweet clover. But the fields are alive with prairie grasses, round head bush clover, native wild lupin... which is a food plant for three native butterfly species. New Jersey tea is an excellent pollinator plant.

Another important component of this operation is production... for sales... prairie grass seed, showy tick and round head bush clover, which fetches quite a price per kilo.

One part of the field is planted in crop rows... and was alive with many colourful species. There were rows of swamp rose mallow, thimble weed, iron weed, carpenter square, St John's wart, compass plants, butterfly weed and of course the brown eyed Susan.

In the nursery area were many native plants that are tenderly cared for by Mary and her staff of four.

We also toured the nearby nature conservation area... songs from the hooded warbler greeted us. Pine warblers are also common here. When we got out of the van to check the colourful fields that have been planted by Mary's crew in 2006 we were amazed at the amount of bees and grasshoppers that were enjoying the sights... and food sources... including us! We enjoyed a panoramic view (atop Mary's ladder) of a sea of light purple (monarda) and yellow (brown-eyed Susan's)... what a sight to behold.

After a heartfelt thanks to our host and hostess we were off to Backus Woods... which is one of the largest Carolinian forest tracts in Canada. We followed the Sugar Bush trail and saw many wonderful tree specimens... some that reached far into the sky. By far the most impressive were the tulip trees... towering upward of five or six metres above the forest canopy. But there were other interesting specimens too... beeches, black oaks and several varieties of maples.

The only creature we didn’t encounter on our excursion was the Eastern Hognose snake. Good thing there were no toads nearby... or they would have been dinner for this snake.

The trail was also alive with several varieties of ferns... Cinnamon fern, Interrupted fern and New York fern... many wild mushrooms... edible? I’m not sure... and a small patch of poison ivy... which we all avoided like the plague. On our way back to the van we saw horsetail... its name arose because the branched species somewhat resembles a horse's tail.

What an excellent field trip... educational... but fun too!
Can you identify these wayside flowers?

Arboretum Children's Theatre
Lona Buck

Children's Theatre is a fund raising event for The Arboretum. Twice a year we arrange to bring professional children's entertainers in to put on a show in the Arboretum Centre. These entertainers are hired through a professional agency in Toronto. We look for shows that will appeal to children in kindergarten to grade 6. The shows are interactive with the audience so the children become involved. This is a good introduction for children to live theatre.

In the afternoon of the day of the show we hire three buses to bring children from one of the local schools to be our guests. There is no charge to the school. We sell 250 tickets for the evening show. The tickets are sold for $5.00 making it very affordable for families to attend. The money from the ticket sales is our raised funds.

Several businesses are approached for financial support to pay for the buses and performers. Last year we had two major donors who covered all the expenses. In previous years the costs have been covered by numerous small donations.

These shows are extremely well received by the children and their parents. Many times several parents put their name down for tickets to the next show as they are leaving. It is a pleasure to see the children enjoying and taking part in the performances.

This year's performances are: Sing and Dance with Jack Grunsky (Tuesday, November 4, 2008) and DuffleBag's Beauty and the Beast (Tuesday, February 17, 2009).

Volunteer assistance is needed to assist with all aspects of this event… from preparing flyers, contacting businesses for financial support, to helping with set-up on the day of the performances. If you are willing to assist… please contact Lona at lonabuck@hotmail.com.

Tree Survival… a Tale of the Emerald Ash Borer
Brian Hamilton

Some might say I’m a glutton for punishment, some may say that I live in a depressing world of plant death. I’m one of the few people who have had the privilege to be involved in 2 of the most efficient tree killing pests in the past hundred years. Both Dutch Elm Disease (Ophiostoma spp.) or DED and Emerald Ash Borer (Agrilis planipennis) or EAB, can be found on my resume, and thanks to my experiences working with our friend Henry Kock on the grounds of The Arboretum I am still able to look at the bright side of tree mortality.

Prior to graduating from the Geography program University of Guelph, I was on a bit of a soul searching mission. I lived on friends floors, subsisted on a diet of apples and liquorice (when Bi-way went out of business you could get a case of liquorice for $5…what a deal!) and got an early morning job unloading trucks when I got a call from Henry who was beginning the mapping phase of the Elm Recovery Project. He was excited to have a Geography major apply, my thoughts were that by late June there was no one else left, and I was Johnny-on-the-spot.

For the next two years or so I worked on helping map the big surviving Elms in Ontario as well as on grounds. In that time I learned most things I needed to know in life from Henry, of course much of this was an analogy revolving around trees, but that was not lost on me. Henry taught me to think differently. A few examples - No species has ever been wiped out due to a pest; there are always survivors. Natural resistance as a form of natural selection is always happening, and is the long term solution to any problem. Things that happen on a time scale beyond our own. We see elms dying but this may just be a down cycle in the ecology of the elm. Perhaps most importantly - Human involvement has been detrimental to perpetuating resistant genes, we encourage the weaker genetics to perpetuate. To sum this up - If a tree dies
due to Fire Blight, it is sad. From the ecosystems perspective, well it doesn’t matter much. What matters is that this tree is allowed to die, and not prop it up with fertilizers or chemicals, so that this trees genetics are not perpetuated. If this tree reproduces you now have many more trees that are weak, which may be why when there is an insect or pathogen outbreak it is so devastating – a great population of trees has inferior genes. Too often we take pictures of the dead trees, and ignore the living ones in the middle of the death; such is the case with elm trees.

In my past 5 years working with EAB I have tried to keep these philosophies. This is a devastating insect, no doubt about it. It has killed millions of ash trees, and altered many of the fragmented ecosystems in Essex county. The hope is that on an ecological timescale when the dust settles historians, botanists and the ash tree will look back at a low point in its evolution. How will this happen? Biocontrols, and natural resistance. If it is found in a tree in Guelph will that tree die? Most likely yes. Will it wipe out every ash tree? I find it hard to believe.

What can you do regarding EAB? Take ownership of your tree. Watch your tree for the characteristic exit holes, bark cracking, epicormic shoots and the insect itself. If you do suspect EAB call 1-866-463-6017. It is important to detect early populations of EAB so that regulations restricting the movement of ash products to other areas are implemented. Mother Nature did not intend on firewood, logs, or nursery stock movement.

Canada's largest private gardens: Les Quatre-Vents

Ken Marchant

On August 2, 2008 my wife Pat and myself had the pleasure of visiting Canada's largest private gardens: Les Quatre-Vents, just outside of Malbaie, Quebec, two hours northeast of Quebec City. This is reputedly the largest private garden in Canada and is nestled into a sheltered area of the rugged Charlevoix region. The long journey from Guelph was well worth the effort; the gardens, to say the least were spectacular. Les Quatre-Vents, owned by Frank Cabot and his family since 1902, are the incredible and brilliant culmination of his life-long dedication to meld extensive plantings of flowers and trees with the local geography. The end result is an art-form rather than a mere

2009 Parks/Gardens/Arboretum Tour

Norma Fear

Planning is starting for a possible parks/gardens/arboretum bus tour of 5 to 7 days in either the spring or fall of 2009. The New England States area has been suggested as a possibility. Norma Fear does some of the planning, in conjunction with Clare Newson.

Cost is kept to around $1,000.00 a person. Clare acts as tour guide and makes the bus trip interesting. Last year's trip to Chicago was great and enjoyed by all.

If you are interested, please contact Norma directly at fearbeno@sympatico.ca

Further information can be obtained from www.cepas.qc.ca/jardin.php