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May 2009

ARBRETUM VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION

Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale
Saturday September 12th 2009
Plan for it now!

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COORDINATOR’S CORNER
Volunteer Information Session #4 – Wednesday, March 4, 2009

1. Welcome and introductions of attendees (volunteers & staff) – a small turnout, only five volunteers.

2. College Royal: A special thanks to Norma Fear, Ann Estill, Gord Graham, Barbara Hallett, and Lorne and Sally Smith who volunteered. Thanks for the great feedback you provided, as well.

3. Computer/Internet Volunteer help needed: You can work from home updating web sites that offer free advertising, i.e., by inputting the seasonal program into the SNAP website, etc. As well, Barb requires office help with faxing. Please contact Barb Watson-Ash if you might be interested. One suggestion was made that perhaps we can get high school students or volunteers through the Volunteer Centre of Guelph Wellington... further follow-up is required.

4. Theatre in the Trees Dinner Theatre: Barb Watson-Ash identified that the cost of tickets for the volunteers is $30 not $25. A new play starts March 27, 2009 and runs through until May 9, 2009. Barb Watson-Ash sent out an e-mail to the volunteers about this.

5. Capital Project: Greenhouse (Alan Watson): Alan identified that our greenhouse has some serious problems. One of the capital projects identified in the Operational Plan is a new greenhouse. Alan, Ric and Sean have met to discuss this need. The cost of a greenhouse (Henry’s), with an objective of being environmentally friendly, is expensive to design and build. Other options are to look at building a traditional greenhouse, to look at other locations, or at the feasibility of connecting off the header house to the Hilton Centre. We must work through U of G’s Physical Resources department... to get them involved and to get in touch with greenhouse manufacturers. Then we require a firm estimate of the cost for a new greenhouse. With economic conditions as they are it’s clearly known that the university doesn’t have a lot of money. Our OAC dean is very supportive of our needs..., however, we still need to find a potential donor. The Arboretum does in fact recognize the need for a new greenhouse. The next steps are to get a firm cost for a new greenhouse, then to look for funds once we have the cost estimate. Finally we need to find an applicable fundraiser to raise money specifically for this greenhouse.

In response to an e-mail from Mary Beverly-Burton regarding Plant Sale profits for the past number of years and how this might have paid for a new greenhouse, Alan added these comments..., if the Plant Sale profits were used to pay for a new greenhouse other Arboretum activities would NOT have taken place. Arboretum funding doesn’t meet the current needs of The Arboretum. There are 8.2 staff functions, of which only 6 are funded, 2.2 staff functions are funded through ‘soft money’. Examples of ‘soft money’ are our Dinner Theatre,

(Tentative schedule for upcoming Volunteer Information Night
The date is to be determined.
Input is requested regarding the value and timing of these sessions.
Contact Barbara Parke with your comments and suggestions.)
(Coordinator's Corner continued from page 2)

Plant Sale, Bench Dedication, Room Bookings. The Summer students’ salaries also comes out of this ‘soft money’ pot. If we did not use these funds for staffing and maintenance then The Arboretum would have suffered i.e., a lack of summer students, staff and maintenance of The Arboretum property. Our ‘collection’ and maintenance activities are partially funded through funds raised at the Plant Sale. These funds have not been able to support a new greenhouse. Our General Endowment fund which generates approximately $35 - 40K, again is needed to support maintenance activities at The Arboretum. Only once was money withdrawn from the endowment fund and it took years to recoup that money. Currently all Plant Sale profits are utilized. With a reduced Plant Sale in 2009, The Arboretum will no doubt be short of money... money that is normally generated through our very successful Plant Sales.

Questions:... ‘Is there a possibility of setting up a special Endowment fund for a portion of the Plant Sale profit?’

Doubtful at this time... all Plant Sale profits are utilized for salaries/maintenance activities... and these would suffer if money was diverted to a special Endowment fund. One additional note... since The Arboretum is not an academic department at the University we have a difficult time getting the University to support/allocate funds for a new greenhouse.

This research site is near the Hilton Centre on property that we are not using. A professor from campus is conducting the research. It will be a teaching facility and research hut. She has funding to build her building. The Arboretum is NOT providing any funding. This project is a joint venture with Government, University and City. Bore holes will be drilled to examine rock structure etc. She will only consume enough water for her study.

7. Children’s Theatre fundraiser – update (Barbara Parke): Funding/sponsorship has been secured for one program (afternoon/evening performance) for 2009. Stone Road Mall has graciously provided a sponsorship again for 2009. Volunteers are still needed for set-up, co-ordination, i.e., introduction of play/performers and for closing, i.e., to put away chairs, to lock up the Arboretum. We still require a volunteer to act as overall co-ordinator to help secure funds for a 2nd program. Positions for both an overall Children’s Theatre Co-ordinator and helpers for the day of the performance have been advertised through the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington. Although we have had some replies there is no firm commitment for help yet. Several parents who attended our last performance indicated a possible interest is assisting on the day of the performance after my plea for help and the notice that the Children’s Theatre might no longer continue without volunteer assistance. As always, if you are interested, or know of someone who might be interested in assisting with the Children’s Theatre fundraiser please have them contact me.

8. Q & A Session (all):

Q. When will our Volunteer Groups start working?
A. Gardening and Grounds Groups – an e-mail will be sent when the weather improves. Plant Sale Group - some seeds have been started (Lig, Barbara Hallett and Lenore). Daniella (summer student) will be the core leader of the Plant Sale group once summer students start. The steering committee for the Plant Sale Group is working on guidelines for Plant Sale activities... everyone will get a copy of this manual for reference.

Q. Notification of Volunteer Information Sessions - concern re those who do not have e-mail. How are they notified?
A. The suggestion was made that perhaps certain individuals could contact those who are not on my e-mail list to pass on date of Volunteer Information Session... or perhaps notification could be done by Volunteer Groups... i.e. someone in each of the volunteer groups might contact other members without e-mail in their own group. Please also note that the date/time of these Volunteer Information sessions is always included in our Arb Aux publication... so if a volunteer reads the Arb Aux they can note the date and always contact me for an agenda.

9. Presentations: Barbara Parke’s presentation ‘A Stroll through the Arboretum’ was shown, along with Ric Jordan’s presentation of some old slides of The Arboretum.
FROM MY WINDOW...CUP-PLANT THROUGH THE SEASONS
Barbara Hallett

Five years ago, I planted two specimens of cup-plant, *Silphium perfoliatum*, in a bed along the foundation of my house. At the time, I did not anticipate that I would soon be viewing the plants, as well as the wildlife they attract, many times a day from a nearby window.

Cup-plant is a fast-growing, native perennial. Established specimens in full sun often grow to a height of eight feet. The hollow stems are ½” to ¾” square with ¼” thick walls, giving them sufficient strength to support a blue jay or red-winged blackbird. The opposite leaves are ovate in shape with a serrated margin and measure up to six inches in length. The leaves of each opposite pair are united at their bases and surround the stem to form a “cup” that collects rain water. Although cup-plant grows rapidly and is somewhat coarse looking, it is not an aggressive plant in the garden. The most striking setting that I have seen positioned cup-plant in the angles of a zigzag cedar rail fence. If I am not mistaken, this was a sight along the north side of Arboretum road in the 1990’s. I have also seen cup-plant looking considerably more docile when growing in part sun in an urban garden.

Cup-plant is a member of the Composite Family and develops numerous radiate heads of bright-yellow flowers that measure two to three inches in diameter. These are borne in a three-flower cluster that branches repeatedly until the end of the growing season. Cup-plant is a good nectar source for butterflies and bees. Its seeds are a favourite of goldfinches and other small, seed eating birds.

Cup-plant begins to flower in mid-summer, when it is sufficiently tall that it can be seen from my window. Bumblebees are frequent visitors and I can observe them only inches away as they systematically flit from flower to flower, sipping nectar. Of course, as they do this, the bumblebees are also pollinating the flowers so they will form seed. One day I watched as a bumblebee, laden with pollen and probably too heavy to fly, groomed itself on the windowsill. It reached around with its hind legs, one at a time, to brush the pollen from its back and then took flight, leaving behind a little pile of yellow-orange pollen.

Cup-plant flowers for about six weeks, from August to mid-September. During this time, some flowers are in bud, others are opening, and still others are maturing seed. When the first cup-plant seeds are maturing, goldfinches are in their bright-yellow, breeding plumage and they blend in well with the multitude of bright-yellow flowers. As

(Cup-Plant through the Seasons continued on page 6)
8th ANNUAL PANCAKE BREAKFAST

Another fun and successful event to help celebrate National Volunteer Week. Thanks volunteers! The Arboretum staff members were decked in their white aprons as they served tantalizing blueberry pancakes and sausages with real maple syrup to Arboretum Auxiliary members and their guests. All in all, 49 volunteers, guests and staff attended this joyous event on Saturday, April 25, 2009. This was our 8th annual ‘thank-you’ to all the Auxiliary members, who give so freely of their time. Without you, the many volunteers, the Arboretum would not be such a wonderful and well-known attraction for all visitors to enjoy.

The winner of the Volunteer draw was Dorothy Medhurst. The prize was a copy of the book Growing Trees from Seeds by Henry Kock with Paul Aird, John Ambrose and Gerald Waldron. Congratulations, Dorothy!

Thanks again to all Auxiliary members. Your dedication in volunteering at The Arboretum is truly appreciated!
more of the flowers begin to fade, the goldfinches are simultaneously changing to their olive-drab plumage and continue to enjoy protective coloration in the cup-plant. I often wonder whether this is an example of co-evolution or simply coincidence.

I have watched the goldfinches bring their fledglings to the security of this large-leaved plant to learn to feed. The little ones aimlessly peck at this and that, learning by trial and error what is good to eat and what is not. They drink from the “cups” and discover insects trapped there as well. Although a tube feeder filled with a multi-finch seed blend hangs nearby, adult goldfinches prefer to feed on seed from cup-plant. In fact, they are so efficient that I find very few seedlings beneath each cup-plant in the spring.

During the winter, when the goldfinches rely on the nearby feeder, I watch as they fly back and forth from the feeder to the stiff, leafless stems of their familiar cup-plant. Here they are sheltered from the prevailing wind and, perhaps, enjoy some warmth radiating from the bricks of the house.

By spring, the cup-plant stems lie all askew, having been rearranged by several months of wind, snow, and freezing rain. We cut back the remains of last year’s growth for composting. The long, hollow stems are light, but very rigid, and have a silvery patina. Now, at mid-April, the stubble of last year’s growth is almost concealed by a flush of dark-green, emerging leaves. It won’t be long until I can see cup-plant from my window once again.

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH ARBORETUM**

The University of Guelph Arboretum is a significant visitor attraction as well as an important amenity for the citizens of Guelph and Ontario. The Arboretum offers a pleasant stroll or a study of the fabulous diversity in plants. The Gravel Pit section of the Arboretum was rehabilitated in the 1970s with select trees, shrubs and vines for reforestation and to attract wildlife. They are now maturing to produce a beautiful landscape.

**WAYSIDE FLOWERS QUIZ**

I guess we made a mistake in the labelling of this wayside flower in the quiz and now I wish to correct that information. The plant is actually Motherwort (Leonurus cardiaca)

Thank you to Janet Dalgleish for providing the correct information.

**Docent Docket**

Ann Estill

Ever wonder what the docent part of the Arboretum Auxiliary is all about?

We meet the first Monday of the month and learn as much as possible from Chris, from each other, and from the Arboretum itself. Even in foul weather we might be found wandering a native tree section with Sean pointing out salient items that we would otherwise have missed. Or maybe Ken, our resident tree expert, will chime in from his wide experience about a bud or a root or a pest. Sometimes our well-traveled Gordon has a tidbit to share about Cuban wildlife or a swimming eagle in Northern Ontario. Billie might have brought us a teeny-tiny fungi for our wonderment, while Sue provides bird experiences and photos galore.

It is a learning group, all trying to absorb as much as we can so that when we are asked to lead groups who wish to tour, we can be informative about our small bit of “country in the city.” All in all, we are folk in awe of nature, its power and mystery, and wish to share that. Oh, you might find us at the plant sale also selling, answering questions or handing out homemade cookies, but that is just a footnote to our being a part of this fascinating project called the Arboretum at the University of Guelph.

Newcomers welcome!

**Fall 2009 Issue of Arb Aux**

Planned Publication Date: Week of September 14, 2009

Submission deadline for articles and pictures: Wednesday, August 19, 2009
SPRINGTIME SURPRISES ALONG ARBORETUM TRAILS

Marg Gillies

The trail system in The Arboretum at the height of spring is meant for leisurely walks. If the main idea of walking along these trails is a form of calorie burning strenuous exercise, then one can miss many treats that are a delight to the senses. Before the trees have fully gained their new foliage, the sound of birds calling to each other provide an opportunity to track the source of those calls. A fluttering butterfly may lead the eye to an unfamiliar wildflower nestled against a tree trunk. A patch of sunny yellow blossoms may rouse one’s curiosity enough to research and identify its name.

In spite of the fact that I have taken many springtime walks along the trails especially in Victoria and Wild Goose Woods, until more recently, a number of unfamiliar plants somehow managed to escape close scrutiny on my part. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the blossoms of some of these plants were not as attention grabbing as compared to well recognized plants such as bloodroot, dog-tooth violet, jack-in-pulpits, marsh marigolds and the masses of trilliums that stand out in the Arboretum. On my walks last spring, I purposely watched for plants that were not among the ‘big five’ including coltsfoot, early meadowrue, blue cohosh and wild ginger. These plants were brought to my attention by Ann Estill during a wildflower walk that she conducted for a number of residents from Village by the Arboretum two or three years ago.

As an alien early blooming plant, the coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) has dandelion yellow blossoms which appear on stalks that have reddish scales. Their large leaves appear later. A large patch of coltsfoot can be found under the trees near the little bridge in the World of Trees.

In Victoria Woods there are patches of Early meadow rue (*Thalictrum dioicum*), which is a member of the buttercup family. It can be recognized by its sprays of droopy clusters of very tiny greenish white flowers (actually sepals) tinged with a deep purplish-red colour. The stem has many leaves in three parts, with each leaflet being a rounded lobe.

The clusters of tiny, six-pointed blossoms in...
GARDEN WORDS OF WISDOM
Mary Ann LaPensee

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

The easiest way to find a lost garden tool is to buy a replacement.

Correction – Co-ordinator’s Corner
January 2009 issue of Arb Aux

Item 5. Organic Farm Plot

Initiative is actually called Guelph Centre for Urban Organic Farming.

Thank you to Mary Beverley-Burton for providing the correct information.