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Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale
Saturday September 12th 2009
Plan for it now!
If you would like to contact me, you can do it in two recommended ways.

Please call 519 824 4120 ext. 53615

or email me at bparke@uoguelph.ca

COORDINATOR’S CORNER

Things are busy at The Arboretum now… with all our volunteer groups meeting on their regular mornings.

The Plant Sale group meets Monday and Thursday mornings…and are gearing up for the Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale on Saturday, September 12, 2009. All perennials and woodies are receiving TLC from the volunteers.

The Gardening group meets on Tuesday mornings…and have been tackling the weeds in the formal garden areas, along with deadheading, edging and chipping of beds and de-weeding the stone dust pathways. The most exiting outing was on May 26, 2009, the day volunteers, summer students and our gardener planted 312 perennials in the Italian garden. Come out and enjoy a stroll through the Italian Garden.

The Grounds group meets on Wednesday mornings and has been busy in various areas of The Arboretum…ensuring our collections are truly a natural treasure for our visitors. On one occasion they were clearing some nasty buckthorn out by the bridge.

Our new Gardening group, which looks after the Frances Ball Rose collection beds, started up this season with only a few volunteers. They are making headway on maintaining this collection.

The Docent group, which meets on the first Monday of the month in the afternoon, has had some interesting topics of discussion. They take a break during the months of July and August…but will be starting up again in September. What is next on the agenda?

This spring/summer has been busy with several new Guelph residents joining the ranks of The Arboretum Auxiliary. Along with current volunteer, Marjatta, who often covers our Reception/Foyer desk over the lunch hour or during monthly staff meetings, we now have 3 additional volunteers who will share this responsibility. The Grounds, Gardening, Docent, and Frances Ball Rose Garden group have also seen additional volunteers join their ranks.

A heartfelt WELCOME to all our new volunteers!

ART UNKNOWN

Matt McConnell

When traversing the winding path that finds its way through all sections of the Gosling Gardens, you come across a plaque inscribed with the words of Alexander Pope: “All nature is but art unknown”. In the two years I have spent as a summer employee at The Arboretum, I have pieced together my own understanding of this quotation and its relevance within such a place as this. The appreciation of art, whether it is visual art, literature, or music, does not come from the mere observation of the aesthetics of the arts immediate form, but rather it stems from an understanding of the story behind that piece. Nature, in all of its forms, is no different. Every natural exhibit within The Arboretum holds with it its own story; its own history that often stretches far beyond our sight, like its roots that bury themselves further from our grasp every passing year. But, as a summer employee, perhaps the most gratifying benefit is that we have access to these stories. Just as we are capable of pulling out our spades and shovels to track these roots to their ends, we have the ability to uncover the stories of all of these trees. Whether it be the almost magical elms that continually stave off Dutch Elm Disease, or the invasive, and more than frustrating, buckthorn, every...
A Greeting from Gard Otis, Acting Director

It is my pleasure to introduce myself to you. I have been a natural history geek for as long as I can remember. While birds were my main interest until I was 20, I found everything in nature fascinating, from insects (my professional study organisms), trees, shells, fossils, bird nests, and flowers, to frogs and snakes. When required to make a leaf collection in Grade 10, I got carried away with the assignment. First, my father had already taught me how to identify many of the tree species in south-eastern Michigan. Secondly, for identification I could easily refer to “Michigan Trees” written by my great uncle, Charles Herbert Otis. And finally, I discovered that in nearby Ann Arbor there was a fabulous place with the trees labelled: the University of Michigan Arboretum! I had the largest leaf collection of all the biology students that year! And I learned that people cultivate trees in arboreta and botanical gardens.

I served as Acting Director of The Arboretum at the University of Guelph once before. During the first eight months of 2003, I devoted myself to enhancing the programs and facilities at The Arboretum. I enjoyed that experience immensely, in large part because of the wonderful staff. I am proud of the initiatives completed during my tenure which include:

- renovation of the conference room at the Arboretum Centre (completed at 60% of the cost estimate);
- supervision of Chris Earley’s transition from contract to permanent employee;
- delivery of a workshop on butterflies;
- negotiation for several significant donations;
- coordination of a study tour of staff to The Plantations (arboretum and gardens) of Cornell University.

My second term as Acting Director officially began on September 1st and will again last eight months. I am well aware that The Arboretum has changed over the last seven years. Numbers of employees and budgets have both declined. Financial constraints influence every aspect of our mission and activities. Clearly, much of my time must be directed towards improving the financial picture. Luckily, one item that was at the top of my agenda is already ticked off: the construction of a new greenhouse! I know you are looking forward perhaps even more than I am to the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the new greenhouse. It will play a central role in our ability to improve arboretum collections and increase the diversity of plants that can be offered at Arboretum plant sales in the future. My thanks and congratulations go to Alan, Ric, Sean, Andrea Hamilton of Physical Resources, and most significantly to the Gosling Foundation for achieving this milestone in our history.

As a volunteer at The Arboretum, you facilitate the work of the staff and make a big difference in what we accomplish each year. I hope to meet you personally at the next scheduled meeting for volunteers on October 7th. I am particularly interested to hear your ideas about new initiatives you feel The Arboretum should consider. For the rest of 2009, I anticipate being at the Arboretum Centre on most Tuesdays and Thursdays. Please feel free to drop by my office at the Arboretum Centre, phone me (519-824-4120 extension 52356), or send me an email (gotis@uoguelph.ca).

With warm regards,

   Gard

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Credits
The picture on the cover and pictures on pages 4, 5, 6 were taken by Barbara Parke
Picture of Lyndsay & Heather, page 8, by Heather
The pictures of the Music Garden on pages 7 & 8 by Marg Gillies

Winter 2010 Issue of Arb Aux #7
Planned Publication Date: Week of January 18, 2010
Submission deadline for articles and pictures:
Monday, December 14, 2009
Volunteer Information Session

Date: Wednesday, October 7, 2009
Location: Arboretum Centre – Boardroom
Time: 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Please plan on attending our next Volunteer Information Session for some interesting and informative updates about The Arboretum and Staff.

Note that our current Director, Alan Watson will be on Sabbatical from September 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010.

Our Acting Arboretum Director during Alan’s sabbatical is Gard Otis. Gard will be attending this Volunteer Information Session to introduce himself to the Arboretum Auxiliary.

Other topics of discussion will be included on the agenda, which will be sent out about a week prior to our session. Agenda items are welcomed.

* Note: Session will start in Boardroom…but can be moved to Auditorium, as required, after Third Age Learning vacate the auditorium.

DOCENT DOCKET

Ken Marchant

February 28 was a bitter cold Saturday, but this did not deter some hardy boy scouts and their equally tough parents from attending a tree identification session at The Arboretum hosted by docents Ken Marchant and Ann Stallman. While the number of participants was less than expected (primarily because of the cold weather), those who attended were highly enthusiastic and seemed to soak up everything that was said, making the event very worthwhile from a docent’s perspective.

The session included both a hands-on indoor session to familiarize the group with some of the aspects of tree identification, and a walkabout around The Arboretum to put the theory into practice. The classroom session focused on what to look for when identifying trees. In preparation for this, samples of twigs from various genera of trees were presented to each group to examine and to take back for the rest of troop to work with. The emphasis was on "how to look" rather than "what to see" and it was highly gratifying to see how well the participants did in the field session.

As a memento of their trip to The Arboretum, we presented the troop with some Kentucky Coffee Tree seeds and an instruction sheet on how to grow them. Hopefully, most of these are well on their way to becoming trees somewhere and we have some converts to the wonderful world of trees. There is something incredibly satisfying about watching a seed you have planted develop into a tree.
New Greenhouse is a Reality

Alan Watson

We have received a preliminary quote on a 3,600 ft² (335 m²) Westbrook open roof “Skyline II” greenhouse. With this quote in hand I met with Philip and Susan Gosling and I’m pleased to report that the Gosling Foundation will fund this much needed facility. While official permission is required, the Goslings would like to have the greenhouse called the “Henry Kock Propagation Centre.” I’m certain that those of you who worked with and/or knew Henry would agree that this is a very suitable designation!

The new greenhouse will be located in the area presently used for the sale of herbaceous plants at the Auxiliary Plant Sale (east of the Hilton Service Centre). The greenhouse will have “hot” and “cold” sections divided by rolling benches. More details will soon be available and construction will start, as they say in the building industry, “right away”.

Century Pines Will Help Celebrate The Arboretum’s 40th Anniversary

Alan Watson

In the spring 2008 edition of The Arboretum newsletter, The Green Web, I wrote about the white pines planted in 1907 by E.J. Zavitz. These pines are growing at the corner of College Ave. and Victoria Rd. just east of the new Arboretum entrance.

As a way celebrating of The Arboretum’s upcoming 40th Anniversary in 2010, we have planned a path that will lead through the area of the Century Pines. Construction of the path will begin this fall. At the beginning of the path will be a bronze plaque commentating E.J. Zavitz and the pines he planted. This bronze plaque will be one of the stops on the University’s Historical Walking Tour a “…self-guided walking tour that leads one through history, visiting significant buildings that bear the names of those who have made invaluable contributions to the development of the University of Guelph.” see: http://www.uoguelph.ca/historicaltour/

Twenty of the Century Pines are available for dedication and at the base of each dedicated tree will be a corion plaque (similar to the plaques at the base of the trees in the OAC 56 Park in the Garden).

I hope that you will consider dedicating one of the Century Pines and celebrate two aspects of The Arboretum’s history: the 40th anniversary and the oldest plantings in the Arboretum. The $ 3,000 cost of dedication is 100% tax deductible.
The Arboretum holds within it a tale. Our staff is comprised of two Landscape Architecture graduates, a Food and Tourism graduate, an English graduate, a Natural Sciences student, and an OVC student: a more varying staff there could not be. However, it is this diversity that proves the worth of The Arboretum itself, as we have all come to enjoy everything it has to offer in our own ways. I will be the first to admit to my general ignorance in contrast to the wealth of knowledge held by my superiors and peers; which, with their collegial rapport, has made me much more knowledgeable than two years ago. I have acquired countless useful methods for the implementation, removal, and maintenance of plants, trees, and shrubs, but what stands alone as the most gratifying of acquirements is simply the connection I have managed to forge with The Arboretum itself.

What I’ve noticed is that everyone on summer staff has managed to birth a relationship with The Arboretum under the context that their past has allowed. What I mean by this can be exemplified through my personal experience. Because I studied English, my relationships with both nature and literature have been fortified through my time at The Arboretum. Everyday a seemingly mundane task sparks a sense of nostalgia within me and I find myself remembering quotes from writings I studied years ago. As 8:30 rolls around on a Monday morning and my weeks first task reveals itself to be the edging of a bed in the rose garden, I can hear John Steinbeck telling me that “there is nothing pleasanter than spading when the ground is soft and damp.” As I kneel in front of a seemingly endless mass of thistles, Ralph Waldo Emerson asks “what is a weed?” and answers, “a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.” What I mean is that nature is connected to all things, and I think that it takes a certain aspect of one’s life to allow a connection to it to form. For me it has been literature. For Nicole, the vet student on staff, it has been the resident animals that scamper through the trees and grasses and in front, behind, and to the sides of our gators. For Jay, our Natural Sciences buff, it has perhaps been the memorization of all of the plants original Latin names that has bonded him with this place so tightly over the years. For Jenny, our master of Food and Tourism, it has proven itself to be her comprehension of The Arboretum as something far more valuable to this city than most realize. And for Rob and Daniella, our two LA grads, a connection has been formed through an overall understanding of The Arboretum, one that I cannot profess to be capable of attaining, but one that I have a deep respect for. Though we all differ in our walks of life, one thing that remains constant as summer wanes at The Arboretum, is that we have been given the privilege of creating our own connections with one of the landmarks of this city, and that is something that will never cease despite our physical distance from it.

Editor’s Addendum:
In addition, there are also two Interpretive Naturalist Interns supported by the Gosling Foundation working with Chris Earley. Heather and Lyndsay have had a very busy summer.

Lyndsay leads the Wildlife Garden Walks on Tuesday evenings, and Heather leads the Toonie Nature Treks on Wednesday evenings. They’ve also been very involved with many other projects including a RBG Dragonfly count, surveying for dragonflies and other animals and plants here at the Arboretum and producing some new interpretive signage for the Gosling Wildlife
The Music Garden
Marg Gillies

A n inviting garden that enables a visitor to reflect, contemplate and enjoy is one that suggests that more than one artist has been at work. The layout of the garden may be that of the garden’s designer but the final palette of contours, shapes, textures and colour brought forth by plant life are the result of the artistic endeavours of nature.

The addition of architectural details or sculptures may convey messages that provide additional meaning to the garden. With music added to the mix, the garden can present an exhilarating spiritual experience for the visitor. This was the reaction that the Toronto Music Garden left with me during a June, Toronto garden tour organized through the Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Group.

Toronto’s Music Garden had its beginnings more than ten years ago and is an interpretation of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Suites for Unaccompanied Cello”. Each of the garden’s six sections corresponds to a dance movement within the suite. To this end, the cellist Yo-Yo Ma collaborated with the garden’s designers and artists in creating the garden’s final vision. As visitors, our group had the privilege of being accompanied by a volunteer from the Toronto Botanical Gardens. Along with an informative commentary, she provided the soundtrack of Bach’s music as we proceeded from garden to garden.

Beginning with the Prelude, our imaginations led us along “an undulating river scrape with curves and bends”. The Allemande (an ancient German dance) "interpreted here as a birch forest” edged us along to a higher rocky vantage point - a view of the Toronto harbour. Next the exuberant Courante movement is meant to swirl the visitor through a colourful meadow along a path that spirals up to a Maypole that spins in the wind.

Sarabande is a contemplative fourth movement that leads the visitor to ‘an inward-arcing circle’ surrounded by evergreen trees. Referred to as the poet’s corner, a very large stone that holds a pool of reflecting water, forms this garden’s centre.

SNAP Guelph’s Volunteers of the Month
Marg and Alvin Gillies, two of our Arboretum Auxiliary, are being highlighted in the September issue of SNAP Guelph, as Volunteers of the Month.

The Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington’s goal is to highlight the greatest number and variety of volunteers in our community.

Hope you have picked up your September issue of SNAP.
The more formal fifth garden Minuet, provides the opportunity to imagine a graceful French dance performed under the garden’s ornamental steel pavilion. At the same time one has a marvellous and unusual view of the CN Tower.

The jaunty music of the garden’s finale Gigue (meaning jog) leads down a ‘series of grass steps’ that provide another view of the harbour. An area below the grass stairway, which can also be reached by a separate trail without steps, provides a relaxing sitting area under the shade of large, leafy trees. It was here that our little group had additional time to contemplate on an unusual garden experience as we listened to the last of Bach’s Suites for Unaccompanied Cello.

As the seasons change, so do gardens. For example as the grasses that line the path of the meadow garden grow taller during the summer months, their sounds as the wind sways through them create differing tones. Perhaps this is an example of nature as a musical artist.

Note: The Music Garden is located along Toronto’s waterfront between Bathurst Street and Spadina Avenue. There is no charge (bring your own music!). During the summer months, concerts take place at 7 pm on Thursdays and 4 pm on Sundays.