Let me tell you ‘bout the birds and the bees
And the flowers and the “beasts”

(Title modified after Herb Newman, song by Jewel Akens, 1965)

Franziska Boerlin-Petzold

When we bought our house over 5 years ago in the South end of Guelph, the previous owner left us a backyard with some Day Lilies, a green fence to mark the property line towards the adjoining conservation land, and, of course, a Kentucky Bluegrass monoculture. For us it was clear that we would like to plant only native wildflowers, shrubs and trees to attract wildlife like birds, hummingbirds, butterflies and other insects.

That was the plan.

But already during the first winter we had the impression that our green fence, a couple of White-cedars, changed their form from day to day or better from night to night. And at the end of the winter they looked like mushrooms: on top a lot of leaves and then very thin on both sides. As we saw the “gardener”, we understood, this must be a typical deer-cut! Ok, deer need some green food during the winter, but will these poor looking cedars really come back next spring?

Meanwhile our wildflower planting took a little while, as we planted some of them grown from seeds or spores (from the Waterloo-Wellington-Wildflower Society workshops). And then what a joy to see the plants growing and to see the first flower of a Purple Coneflower! And what a deception the next day to find the only flower on the ground, decapitated with a clean cut! There must be other “gardeners” around.

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Coordinator’s Corner

Well, it’s almost fall and 2010 has been a busy year at The Arboretum. Finally we have a new greenhouse… read and see more in Alan’s article. Volunteer activities have been ongoing with many new volunteers joining the various groups. The Plant Sale group (Monday and Thursday mornings) geared up for the Annual Auxiliary Plant Sale on Saturday September 11… details/financials to follow in an e-mail update. The Gardening Group (Tuesday mornings) and Rose Garden Group (Thursday mornings) have been busy all year with weeding, pruning and sprucing up the formal gardens. The Grounds Group (Wednesday mornings) has once again tackled some of the collection beds that don’t often receive much attention. The Docents (first Monday afternoon each month, other than July and August) have enjoyed their training sessions… read more in Joy’s article in this issue. And of course we have seen many new faces at the Reception Desk in The Arboretum Centre over the lunch hour period. Of course one familiar face still volunteers in this position. As well, this year saw a new volunteer who is assisting/coordinating our Children’s Theatre… you will see Theresa at these productions with her children and family. Spring performance was ‘Rumpelstiltskin’ on April 29, 2010… a fun, entertaining, interactive program for children and parents alike. Next performance is Cinderella (by DuffleBag) on Tuesday November 9, 2010. And don’t forget The Arboretum’s 40th anniversary Open House that was held on Saturday June 19th. Did you come out for a tour and a piece of cake?

So much activity at The Arboretum this year… and thanks to the dedicated efforts of all our volunteers. As we have said many times before… The Arboretum wouldn’t be the jewel it is without all your hard work and volunteer hours. A big ‘THANK-YOU’ from all Arboretum staff!
Rabbits!

After two years of defending our flowers against these originally not invited wild animals, we thought that a chain-link-fence would end all these deceptions.

That was our thought.

Well, for the deer it was efficient. I remember the look of a doe, which was standing outside the fence, looking straight at me, as if she would think: “What have you done so badly, that they put you in this cage…” And the White-cedars, now inside the fence, are growing slowly back.

For the raccoons the fence was no problem. They used to cross our backyard to do their business once in the morning and once in the evening, and so, stubborn they are, they didn’t change their path, they just climbed over the fence twice in order to cross our backyard on the same path. We had a little pity for the little ones because for them the climbing was a challenge when they followed their mother.

The skunks just squeeze through the frame of the fence gates especially after a short territorial “discussion” with the neighbour’s dog.…

The squirrels are polishing their balancing skills while running on top of the fence frame. And the chipmunks will not be stopped by the fence with their own gardening ideas with their very successful plantings of sunflower seeds in every flower pot.…

And the frogs and snakes don’t seem to be bothered by the fence. The frogs still jump across the yard and find their way directly in front of the basement window, where they are trapped and wait until we pick them up.

But unfortunately the fence is not so efficient against the rabbits; the younger ones manage to slip through the fence. And then, hop… the chase begins. We had to adjust our war-strategy too. Only chasing them while clapping our hands, hiding some dog hairs (from the neighbour’s dog) or planting some garlic seem by way not the miracle method to stop these ever hungry long-eared beasts. Now do you know what works best for us? A water-gun! Yes, this is true. They don’t like water and disappear not only for 2 minutes but for a little bit longer. And they are not harmed and we… we have a lot of fun too.

Now you will think that there are a lot of native plants, which the rabbits don’t like. Yes… yes, we figured that out too after several years of experience. But do you want a backyard full of Wild Columbines, Ohio Spiderworts and Nodding Onions? But the Purple and Gray-headed Coneflowers, Black-Eyed Susan and different types of sunflowers and asters are a must! So the species which are really in high rabbit-cut-danger we had to double fence in, like the Wild Lupines, the young Downy Serviceberries, the Dwarf Hackberries and the Dwarf Chinquapin. I will always remember when I was on a lounge chair on our deck and the House Wren was singing and singing and singing and then slowly his song became more and more a lullaby and of course, I felt asleep. But when I woke up, I just opened my eyes and without turning my head, the first thing I saw was what? Guess! Yes, it was again one of these rabbits just chewing the last of the green leaves of what I think was an Obedient Plant! What a provocation! I grabbed the water-gun and was slowly approaching the rabbit. But this rascal looked at me with his big eyes, as if it would say: “Why are you so angry, I left you all the stems.” Yes, the stems were still
Yucca Plant
Marg Gillies

Did You Know?

Did you know that there are 40 species of Yucca plants and that they are symbiotic plants? Yucca plants can only be fertilized by yucca moths that live in the yucca bushes. Each yucca moth species is adapted to a particular yucca species. The moths cannot use any other plant to raise its larvae.

The garden variety that is most familiar to us and which is also located in the Arboretum is identified by its lack of stems with a rosette of stiff, sword-shaped leaves at the base. Every other year a stem with clusters of blossoms appear.

This past July the Yucca plant in the Arboretum produced a beautiful tall bouquet of waxy, white blossoms. This shrub is located in a sunny bed near the junction of the service road and the main walkway (once the Arb Road) that leads through the Arboretum.

('bout the birds' from page 3)

there, but they looked like skeletons!

The unhappiest plant we ever had was a Queen of the Prairie: when only a little tip of a green leave was barely visible, the rabbits took it immediately away. It was so hopeless that we renamed the plant in Maria Stuart…

But after a couple of years the wild flowers began to spread out and now there are still enough flowers for the birds and butterflies despite the young rabbits. And it is a reward to see hummingbirds feeding on Wild Columbines, Foxglove Beardtongues or on Obedient plants and to see Goldfinches picking seeds from Purple Coneflowers and Giant Hyssops (they are addicted to them) or to see a Rose-breasted Grosbeak choosing the ripe berries of the now taller Serviceberry, or to observe a Monarch butterfly sipping on a Spiked Blazing Star or to have a short visit from a Eastern or even a Giant Swallowtail, or to detect different bee species being very busy on the flowers of the Ninebarks. This is always lovely to see.

And if you think now that I was planting all these wild flowers, I have to admit: no, no, my husband is the chief-gardener and I am only the helper, I mean the one with only two legs and short ears…

But wait, wasn’t there a vole just running in the corner of the backyard where the plants don’t grow so well?
History, Art and Botanicals…

Barbara Parke

Arboretum staff had the chance to visit the Royal Botanical Gardens on July 22. The day included a look back at history, exploring the Hendrie Park/Rose Garden and Rock Garden, viewing some of the exquisite Earth Art displays and enjoying the colourful display of plants, trees and shrubs.

We had a chance to meet with and talk to several of the RBG staff who highlighted many moments in history of the RBG. We visited the plaque dedicated to Thomas Baker McQuesten, who was instrumental in convincing the Hamilton Board of Parks Management to include a botanical garden in the redevelopment plan for the city’s northwest entrance. Did you know that the High Level Bridge, also known as the Thomas Baker McQuesten High Level Bridge, was originally planned to have some statues in the pillars… look closely and you will see where these statues would have been erected had it not been for the great depression.

We also visited the memorial site and plaque that guards the resting place of unknown soldiers, immigrants and citizens who died in the war of 1812 – 1814, or from ship fever in 1847 – 1848 or from cholera in 1854 – 1855. Near this memorial site is a deserted garden area… which once had formal gardens and reflecting pools. The support structure still exists although the gardens are no longer maintained… however the grass is still mowed.

Throughout the Royal Botanical Gardens you will see various ‘Earth Art’ exhibits… several renowned Canadian and international artists created these one-of-a-kind displays which can be found within the various gardens at RBG. Of the ones we saw… ‘Future Compass 2009’, ‘Shelter’, ‘The Sound of a Hundred Years’, and ‘XIII/08’. I thought this last one… three large urns out of which flow white fir branches, was the most interesting.

In the gardens… well, there is so much to see and not enough time to explore all… but the new reflecting pools in front of the Tea House in Hendrie Park are spectacular. Gorgeous water lilies and other aquatic plants, like arrowhead adorn these reflecting pools. A sight to be seen for sure!

I know I will be heading back there soon to check out more of the Royal Botanical Gardens.

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Every garden may have some weeds. 

*English*

If and When were planted, but Nothing grew.

*Turkish*
The Arboretum Auxiliary works hard in many different capacities within The Arboretum. As I have said many times, The Arboretum would not be able to function at the level it does without our volunteers. One group of volunteers, the Plant Sale group, have been working with sub-standard greenhouse facilities and in recent years these facilities have become embarrassingly dilapidated to the point where sections were declared unsafe. As a result, the Plant Sale group has been limited in its ability to grow the plants for the Plant Sale. All of this, is about to come to an end!

Opening this September is our new Westbrook ‘Skyline II”, 60ft X 60ft greenhouse (total area = 3,600 ft). This $280,000 facility will play a very important role in The Arboretum staff’s ability to propagate plants for collection development, the Elm Recovery Project and other Arboretum research activities and be used for horticultural workshops. For the Auxiliary Plant Sale group, the new greenhouse will provide a modern greenhouse with amenities that match this group’s enthusiasm, and passion for the work they do for The Arboretum.

The greenhouse would not have been possible without the support of the Gosling Foundation. The Gosling Foundation and its Chairman, Dr. Philip Gosling has provided significant support to The Arboretum since the initial support of the Gosling Wildlife Gardens in 1987. Since then the Gosling Foundation has supported student internships, renovation to the Taylor Centre and continued development of the Gosling Wildlife Gardens. Now, the Foundation is donating The Arboretum’s new greenhouse.

The Gosling Foundation’s long term, on-going support of The Arboretum certainly demonstrates the Gosling’s love of The Arboretum and interest in its goals; this goes without saying. However, the Gosling Foundation’s understanding of The Arboretum and its staff and volunteers is highlighted by Philip and Susan Gosling’s request that the new greenhouse be named the “Henry Kock Propagation Centre”

Below is the text of a plaque to be placed on the greenhouse:

The Henry Kock Propagation Centre

This facility was made possible with a generous gift from The Gosling Foundation and dedicated in memory of Henry Kock, OAC '77 (1952-2005). Henry was a beloved horticulturist and educator at the University of Guelph Arboretum. Deeply concerned about environmental degradation, he inspired countless people to protect wild places, to propagate native plant species, and to liberate their gardens from pesticides. Henry also initiated the Elm Recovery Project in order to restore the majestic American elm to the landscape.

The University of Guelph is grateful to Dr. Philip R. Gosling, Hon.DSc. ’08 and Mrs. Susan Gosling and The Gosling Foundation for their longtime friendship and support of the Arboretum’s development.
As a “docent” at the Arboretum for the last two years [that is, a voluntary teacher, from Latin *docere* to teach], I have learned a lot at our monthly training sessions and on the summer evening walks. We are a small group but everything we learn and share with each other spreads like ripples on a pond to friends, family and visitors to The Arboretum.

In The Wild Goose Woods, for example, many of the trees along the boardwalk are natural crosses between silver and red maples and these trees are all the same age! The trees sprang up when Dutch Elm disease killed the elms that had been here and opened the canopy for Freeman's maples to thrive.

You might have seen some large white trilliums with a beautiful green stripe on each petal. I would never have guessed that such a stunning variation had been caused by a virus! And did you know that Jack-in-the-Pulpit can be male or female and that each plant can change its gender? There are so many interesting discoveries to be made right here in The Arboretum - where the perch is where the male hummingbird is very often to be found guarding his territory; the hidden grassy spot where a fawn waits quietly and scentlessly for its mother to return; or how to identify three very special trees, relatives of the giant coastal Douglas firs and the Big-cone Douglas fir of California, which live at The Arboretum.

There is so much to learn and share. We docents have the very best, most enthusiastic teachers. For thirty years I enjoyed walking at The Arboretum and participating in many programs. As a docent, I am grateful to be able to give a little back.

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**Chicory as a Useful Plant**

*Marg Gillies*

Because of its delicate blue blossoms, one of my favourite wayside plants is the chicory *Cichorium intybus*. Not only is it an attractive weed when not covered in roadside dust, but as an herb it has had a tradition of being a very useful plant.

Chicory is an edible perennial herb native to North Africa, Europe and Asia. From a medical usage perspective, chicory first gained its fame during Antiquity times because of its therapeutic value. For example the old Egyptians used chicory to treat liver and gall bladder problems.

For those adventuresome enough to consider using chicory as a food source, the delicate blue florets can add a colourful touch to salads. Because chicory roots can grow tough and bitter, as a food source, the roots must be harvested before blossoms appear on the plant or long after the plant has bloomed. The tender roots can be eaten raw in salads or cooked as a vegetable.

Due to being caffeine free, chicory roots when chopped, dried and roasted until dark brown and then ground can be used as a coffee substitute or mixed with coffee. Apparently sugars in the roots produce a distinctive, coffee-like fragrance when the roots are roasted. The grounds can also be used to add a tangy flavour to stews and soups.

My only tasting experience with chicory took place in the early sixties while I was on a teaching assignment in Germany. During that time, real coffee was an expensive luxury in many households especially in Germany and that is perhaps why a certain young man offered me a cup of coffee following a date.

Assuming that I was drinking normal coffee, I was not enamoured by the strong, somewhat bitter taste as I politely struggled to empty the cup before learning that I been given a chicory, a coffee substitute. While not impressed with the chicory coffee flavour, I was still impressed by the young man, who later became my husband!
Harold and Bill helping to plant a new accession in the Beech Family Collection

Wednesday morning Grounds Crew taking a break on Audrey Lomas' bench and under her dedicated Beech tree.

The 2010 Arboretum Summer Grounds Staff.
Pictures by Sean Fox

The butterfly is the Red Admiral (Vanessa atalanta) and the plant is an Echinacea cultivar, Echinacea purpurea 'White Swan' Mary Grad