Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale
Saturday September 10\textsuperscript{th} 2011
Plan for it now!

Pictures by Andrea Appleton

Content Compiler Editor: Barbara Parke
Technical Production: Alvin Gillies 519 837 3492 alvingillies@hotmail.com
Coordinator’s Corner

Our 8th Volunteer Info Session was held on March 23, 2011. Honestly I didn’t plan for that inclement weather! Glad a few of you made it to the event to see Alan’s presentation on his Tanzania Safari and Chris’s presentation on the Galapagos Islands… both were leaders on recent Quest Nature tours. Although I couldn’t make it in that day I understand that both presentations/slide shows were amazing. There were no Q & A’s.

10th Annual Pancake Breakfast on Saturday April 16, 2011— please see my short article regarding this event on page 4 in this issue.

Spring seems to be late coming this year… there is much work that needs to be done in our own gardens… spring clean-up, organizing and just checking out all those wondrous colours and surprises that are starting to appear. The outdoor volunteer groups at The Arboretum will be hard at work shortly with all the spring activities… provided they don’t get too many rain-out days. At the time of writing (April 27)… a Wednesday morning… the day for Sean’s Grounds group and another rain-out day… Sean was conducting an interesting and informative presentation on pruning to his eager volunteers … it was great for the volunteer group to enjoy the indoors today.

Other activities have also geared up… the Guelph and Wellington County Master Gardener’s Spring Plant Sale was held at The Arboretum this year on Saturday May 14, 2011. The Arboretum’s Plant Sale volunteer group also included a mini spring plant sale that day. Hope all enjoyed!

Waivers for the 2011 season are now due. Many of you filled out and returned these forms during the Pancake Breakfast… thank-you. For all other volunteers… you can download this form from the volunteer page of our website… or pick up a copy in my office. Please note that all volunteers must fill out this form on an annual basis.

Happy Spring… all the April showers are sure to bring May flowers!
A Daughter Remembers
Ann Estill

My mother regarded her setting as a virtual Walden Pond, loving every turn of the seasons, every bloom of a bush, every bird at the feeder or pond, every caterpillar on a leaf, remarking on such things often in her letters. She had lived across from this pond all her life, first in the big old stone farmhouse of my grandparents, and later in the home built for my parents at the time of their wedding.

The arrival of the Great Blue Heron, which stayed for the summer, was always a wonderful herald for her of spring’s return. She often spotted other migrating birds. She watched for the muskrat that swam across the pond from somewhere on the other side, gathering materials and building its den.

On a sunny day she would call our attention to the diamonds on the pond; on a moonlit night there was a fairy path. I remember my little sister becoming quite impatient with her enthusiasm. One time Mama called: “Girls, come quick! Sis, sighing, muttered, “Probably another sunset.” in a disgusted tone of voice.

One time when I was antiquing in the garage, a bird flew in and could not find its way out. It was smashing against the window, frightened to death. Mama and I finally got it safely out and it flew away. I asked her how she knew that it was a Brown Towhee as she said she had never seen one before. “From studying my Roger Tory Peterson.” was the answer. (I remember my first birthday away from home, after my marriage, was my own Roger Tory Peterson.)

I remember a time when we had just arrived for a visit, having driven 500 miles from our home in Woodstock. She barely greeted the family, insisting I come with her at once, down by the icehouse where a bird was stranded. She thought it was a scaup and wanted another opinion. I could not help her and have since learned from Chris that scaups are one of the most difficult birds to identify accurately.

Under her tutelage I learned to identify wildflowers, spot a 7-year locust shell, how to divide peonies and iris, and how to prune rambler roses and mock orange. How grateful I am for Mother’s influence which nurtured in me a love of nature.

Don’t allow the grass to grow on the path to friendship. Native American

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Volunteer Information Session #9
Date: to be determined - Fall 2011, likely October
A reminder about the date and location will be forwarded in an email to all Auxiliary Members
National Volunteer Week was celebrated from April 10 to April 16, 2011. All in all, 66 volunteers, guests and staff attended this annual celebration on Saturday, April 16. A delicious treat of pancakes and sausage were served to volunteers and their guests by Arboretum staff. The blueberry pancakes and real maple syrup were fantastic, yum, yum! Thank you volunteers for all you do in making The Arboretum the treasure it is.

The winner of the Volunteer draw was Peter Jackson. The gift was a copy of the book *Second Nature – A Gardener’s Education* by Michael Pollan. The draw was made possible due to a previous donation in memory of Bruce Monroe, one of our very faithful volunteers who was very active with Plant Sale group… it’s a way of remembering and honoring him.

Thanks again to all Auxiliary members. Your dedication in volunteering at The Arboretum is truly appreciated!

Training to be a docent at the Arboretum is a delightful process of continual learning about the natural world in general, and the Arboretum in particular.

At one of our teaching sessions this winter, Chris Earley brought along some boxes of animal skulls for us to look at, handle, and try to identify. They ranged from tiny, (a vole & a least weasel), to very large, (a cow). It was fascinating to see how form follows function, - what an animal eats, determines the shape and strength of the jaws required to physically breakdown its food. Also the teeth, if still present in the skull, can be an important clue to the creature’s diet.

Then there is the size and weight of the skull to consider, the position and size of the eye-sockets, the sites in the skull for muscle attachment, and many other clues are present. So if we were to find a skull lying in a field, or woods, we should be able to use some detective work to make a good guess as to what animal it originated from.

At another recent session, Ann Estill, one of our longtime and very experienced docents, took the group out on a short walk in the Arboretum, and not only identified trees, bushes and wild flowers for us, but also entertained us with interesting stories and snippets of information about the lore and legends of plants, and their medicinal uses in old times.

Teaching sessions like these are preparing us trainees, to take tour groups around the Arboretum, and to pass on some of our knowledge and enthusiasm to them, in an informative, educational and entertaining way. We want to make their Arboretum experience a happy and memorable one.
I am thrilled to announce that we have received significant donations in support of two Arboretum positions: Curator and Horticultural Internship.

Curator

The Curator has been made possible by an anonymous donation that secures this part-time position for 5 years. Filling this position is Dr. Aron Fazekas, Botanical Curator, Centre for Biodiversity Genomics (CBG), Biodiversity Institute of Ontario (BIO) Herbarium, University of Guelph. Aron officially began as Arboretum Curator on April 8 and has an office at the RJ Hilton Centre where he will be working closely with Arboretum Assistant Manager Sean Fox. Some Auxiliary members had a chance to meet our new Curator at the Pancake Breakfast.

Aron has been responsible for the organization and curation of the OAC Herbarium Barcode of Life Plant collection. In addition to local DNA bar coding initiatives he also carries out ongoing bar coding collaborations with several international partners in various parts of the world.

Aron is also a research associate with Dr. Steven Newmaster, Integrative Biology, and is presently engaged in other projects involving conservation genetics of rare species, and the application of DNA barcoding methods to ecological questions. These include recent projects in forest biodiversity genomics, barcoding tree roots in order to understand forest community structure, barcoding forest seed banks in order to understand community assemblage, woodlot biodiversity studies in the Arboretum and Dairy bush on campus and tropical tree systematics (Nutmeg and Acacia).

Aron will play an important role in the development of our collections and strengthen The Arboretum’s place in the international community of research-based Arboreta and Botanical Gardens.

Horticultural Internship

The Gosling Foundation, on the heels of funding out new Henry Kock Propagation Centre, has donated $14,700 to fund a Horticultural Internship. Philip and Susan Gosling recognized the need for Sean Fox to have a student dedicated to the on-going conservation activities at The Arboretum. With the help of a Conservation Horticulture Intern Sean will be able to concentrate on the more detailed conservation work such as the Elm Recovery project; the project will benefit greatly from this.

Polly Samland, Master of Landscape Architecture student, has started as the Horticultural Intern. Polly has a strong plant-related background: in 2003 Polly worked as a gardener’s assistant/apprentice at the City of Nanaimo Park Department and in 2007 she was the head gardener for Timberland, a landscape company on the West Island of Montreal. In addition, Polly is no stranger to The Arboretum. During 2010-11 Polly worked with Sean on a work study program.

Please join us as we welcome Aron Fazekas and Polly Samland to The Arboretum and as we send out a sincere heat-felt thanks to the donors for their generous support.
Halifax Public Garden
Marg Gillies

Having enjoyed Halifax on previous visits, late last September during a day long cruise stopover in Halifax, we opted to spend a few hours in the Halifax Public Gardens. Even though it was an overcast day, the gardens set in the heart of Halifax on sixteen acres provided an uplifting treat to the eye. As much as we enjoyed the garden’s unique character, it was only later that I began to understand what made this garden so different from those that have we have visited elsewhere.

In 1984 The Halifax Public Garden was designated as a National Historic Site due to the fact that it was considered the best preserved Victorian garden left in North America. The garden’s origins date back to 1837 when the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society acquired a plot of swampy common land covered in brambles. In 1874 a nearby garden established by the City of Halifax in 1867 was merged with the original public garden. Designer Richard Power was hired in 1872 by the City of Halifax and spent the following forty-five years executing his Victorian Garden vision.

In creating his Victorian garden design, Power followed his belief that “Gardens were a work of art rather than a work of nature.” The garden’s almost square shape is surrounded by a wrought iron fence that feature wrought iron gated entrances. The symmetrical layout of the garden include tree lined gravelled paths, lawns and flowers planted in carpet beds, scroll beds and serpentine beds whose styles were popular in the 1870’s. The beds are filled with separate specimen plants such as marigolds, salvia, cannas and dahlias that were also popular at the time of the park’s opening.

Interspersed among the lawns and flower beds are fountains, statues and a band stand. These honour milestones, contemporary military events such as the Boer War and important local people. The bandstand was built in honour of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. The park contains a small spring-fed lake with a floating model of the Titanic. No doubt the model was added at a later date in memory of several Titanic victims who are buried in a nearby cemetery.

Three generations of the Power Family were involved with the garden’s maintenance over the garden’s first one hundred years. As a result of their endeavours, the Halifax Public Garden has remained true to the Victorian garden design to this day. This garden is also significant in that it is are a valuable source for the study of heritage plants and landscape design. As a public garden, it is a garden for everyone to enjoy.