Interesting Finds in Punta Cana!

Barbara Parke

On a recent trip (October 2012) to Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic I was intrigued by a small orchid garden I discovered while exploring the grounds of the resort we were staying at. Although not the normal flowering season for these orchids there were a couple varieties out in bloom. What intrigued me was how the orchids were planted in this garden… large cone shaped pots, amply spaced throughout the specimen garden. Another day I explored the grounds of a neighbouring resort… and they too had orchids growing in these odd shaped pots. Although I never ran into any volunteers working in this orchid retreat I suspect that the pots were made of a combination of bark, sphagnum moss, coconut fibers and other material. The humidity level while we were vacationing was very high and the air circulation in this tiny garden area was good… so fabulous growing conditions for these various varieties of orchids.

(Interesting Finds continued on page 5)
Coordinator’s Corner

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

By the time you are reading this, it might be a winter’s wonderland out there. For those of you who have winter vacations planned in a sunnier climate… enjoy. And for those of you who prefer your winters at home… enjoy all that nature has to offer this time of year. Enjoy a stroll through The Arboretum… on the look-out for the many birds and critters who winter with us.

An update on our 2012 Plant Sale financials… per the e-mail I sent out on November 7, 2012…. Gross Revenue from this years Auxiliary Plant Sale was $21,976.04, with expenses of $5,003.94… leaving us with a Net Revenue of $16,972.10.

Pancake Breakfast 2013 – New Method for Invitations

With the ever increasing use of technology tools throughout business and personal use… we at The Arboretum have decided to use E-invitations this year for our annual Pancake Breakfast invitation, rather than the normal paper copy. An invitation will be sent to you from evite.com … it will be addressed from ‘Arboretum staff’. From there you must click on either the picture of the invitation/envelope or the underlined link ‘View this Invitation’. Then you can RSVP… either Yes, Maybe or No. You can also include a short note, if you feel one is required. From the evite.com site I can check on the status of all RSVP’s… so I will know how many attendees will be coming to the breakfast, how many are maybe’s and how many volunteers are unable to attend the breakfast. I’ve already tested this new approach with all staff… and worked out any kinks using these E-invitations… so hopefully no snags. By all means, if you prefer to RSVP to me by telephone (519-824-4120 ext. 53615) or to my regular e-mail address (bparke@uoguelph.ca)... those options are still available to you. One final note…. If you don’t have e-mail or haven’t provided your e-mail address to me your invitation to the Pancake Breakfast will be sent by Canada Post mail.

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Volunteer Information Session #12
Date: Spring 2013, date to be determined
Location: Board Room Arboretum Centre
Date of next Volunteer Info Session and agenda will be forwarded in a separate e-mail to all Auxiliary members
With reference to a letter to the Editor that appeared in Saturday’s (November 17th) Mercury on the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) I feel it is important that your readers are provided with accurate information on this important issue.

Ash (there are actually five commonly planted species in this area) is a common tree in Guelph and an estimated 9000 trees occur on City streets and parks; there are probably a similar number of ash trees on private properties. In addition to the large specimen trees growing in our parks, many urban streets are planted to monocultures of ash and will be very heavily impacted when they die. EAB has already been detected in the City and based on comparisons with similar municipalities widespread mortality can be expected within the next few years.

Detailed cost analyses recently conducted by many southern Ontario communities conclude that it is usually cheaper to treat trees in otherwise good health and condition over a ten year period than to cut them. Additionally, Natural Resources Canada-Canadian Forest Service has concluded that when the total value of a tree is factored into the equation (such as urban wind abatement, amelioration of storm water runoff and reduction of urban heating), the period of cost-effectiveness can be 15 or more years. It must also be considered that the presence of large healthy trees can greatly enhance real estate values. For this reason, most municipalities in southern Ontario have either implemented treatment programs for their urban ash, or are seriously considering them. This includes many of Guelph’s neighbouring communities such as Waterloo, Kitchener, Burlington, Oakville, Mississauga and London. Toronto estimates that removing and replacing 32,000 City-owned ash will cost $60-80M over the next few years and has recently requested funding to treat 11,000 trees in 2013 and beyond to lower this cost and preserve its urban canopy.

TreeAzin™, the pest control product of choice is a natural product derived from the Neem tree. While it is expensive and must be injected into the tree to be effective, it is relatively safe to humans and other vertebrate animals and has been proven to be quite effective against EAB. Its mode of action is quite complex and it affects its target pest in several different ways. For this reason, pesticide experts with both the provincial and federal governments conclude that the likelihood of an insect such as the EAB becoming resistant to it is very low.

While the possibility of having to treat trees in perpetuity is an intimidating prospect to the tax payer, this is not likely to be the case. Invasive alien insects such as the EAB usually come into balance – often sooner than later. While EAB is currently in an epidemic phase and killing millions of trees in Canada and the US, nature abhors a vacuum and in the long term, EAB is likely to settle down and behave like a naturalized insect. In an effort to speed this process along, US scientists have released three species of parasitic wasps collected in eastern Asia (the natural range of EAB). These were extensively tested prior to release to ensure that they would not attack native species of insects and become a pest in their own right. These species have successfully established and are likely to disperse to Canada on their own accord over the next few years. While it is uncertain what their ultimate impact will be, they are likely to reduce EAB populations. Additionally, two native species of parasitic wasps which feed on close relatives of EAB in Canada have been found attacking EAB in large numbers and will likely have a considerable impact on EAB populations in future years.

(Letter to the Editor continued on page 5)
A Living Rainbow
Marg. Gillies

Having lived in Australia for a year, I became enchanted by the variety of eucalyptus or gum trees that were part of the unique Australian scenery. Although Australia has many lovely native trees, I do not recall encountering what has been described as the most colourful tree on the planet.

It was while meandering through a rainforest park in Puerto Rico last February that I unexpectedly sighted a dazzling tree trunk that inched its way to the top of the tree canopy. I later learned that it was a Rainbow Eucalyptus (Eucalypta deglupta) also known as a rainbow gum tree (Mindanao gum). For me it was an exciting and colourful ending to a week long Caribbean cruise.

The Rainbow Eucalyptus is the only species of eucalyptus found in North America. Native to Indonesia, New Guinea and the Philippines, it has been introduced into other areas of the world as a parkland tree as well as a plantation tree to serve the pulp industry. Stately in appearance, it can reach a height of 70 meters.

What makes this tree an eye-catching stunner? Its trunk has the unusual phenomenon of being covered in patches of bark that shed at different times of the year. The different bark colours indicate the age of the bark. As the outer bark sheds, the bright dark green inner bark is revealed. The aging green bark will then turn from blue to purple shades. Finally these shades change to orange and maroon tones at which stage they are ready to shed. Isn’t it wonderful how nature has a way of presenting a cycle of entrancing colours through living things? I can only imagine that there are birds and insects with similar colour patterns that lurk in these same kind of forests.
While it is not practical or even possible to save a large number of urban trees, there is considerable merit in saving some of them through the use of TreeAzin™ or other approved pesticides. To not do so will mean the loss of a considerable portion of our urban canopy and numerous large specimen trees over the next few years.

Lastly, while it is tempting to compare EAB to Dutch elm disease, this is not a good comparison. Dutch elm disease is an invasive alien fungal disease spread by bark beetles, while EAB is an insect. It is interesting to note however, that some Canadian cities such as Winnipeg have elected to annually treat their urban elms and have preserved many thousands of these trees over the past thirty years that would have otherwise died.

I encourage residents of Guelph to look at the big picture and do a bit of number crunching before they conclude that culling is the only practical option available to the City. Guelph, Ontario

Ken Marchant
Guelph, Ontario
The Ginkgo Biloba…A Cool Tree

Ann Estill

When we were raising our boys in Woodstock I always delighted in their Grade four assignment to create a leaf collection. We lived on a subdivision that had once been an estate. The original owner must have loved trees. We had such a variety near-by, the children could gather more than ten varieties within the block. Of course, waxing and mounting them ensued.

A pocket park provided blue beech leaves from a beautiful tree planted in 1912 by the Prince of Wales. There we also found ginkgo biloba, one I had never seen or heard of before. Sometimes called maidenhair, it has a delicate fan-shaped, notched and slightly grooved leaf. A prized shade tree for it is pest and disease resistance, its only drawback is how long it takes to mature. The male tree is much preferred as the fruit of the female is not pleasant and there is no way of knowing its gender when planting the seed.

Imagine our surprise to have a bag of the seed appear with a Christmas letter from North Carolina. My family there had come upon a crop of fruit of this ancient tree. Plum like in size and shape it harbors the seed in a nutshell, not unlike a peanut. However the pulp around this shell is nasty business, smelling like vomit or rancid butter, depending on which book you read.

The children dug through the oozy biomass to the hard shells, boiled them and sent them out as a part of their Christmas greeting. After boiling, the shell is easily crushed on a counter top, and the seed is edible. Here we come to another catch. It has no taste. Boring! It will, however, take on the flavour of whatever dish you choose for it; if garlic, it’s garlic flavoured, if tomato, it’s tomato flavoured.

Ginkgo is prized in the eastern world. It is said to increase blood flow and brain function and serves as an aphrodisiac. Eating it is supposed to bring good luck.

Sean tells me we have eight mature trees in the World of Trees, grown from seed and planted in 1976. Interesting to note that they have not yet arrived at the seed bearing age so there is no way of knowing if we have male or female in our Arboretum. We also have some started in the nursery.
Staff, and Volunteers of the Gardening Group—May 2012

Pictures taken by Lynda Marsland
To all our Arboretum Auxiliary Members... a big THANK-YOU for your volunteer assistance during 2012. Your dedication to assisting in the various volunteer groups or on our Annual Arboretum Auxiliary Plant Sale Day in September is very much appreciated. Your time and assistance helps to make The Arboretum the jewel that it is. Thank-you from all Arboretum staff.

Best Wishes for 2013!

Come and enjoy all that The Arboretum has to offer... nature at its finest. Always lots to explore through the changing seasons.