

Keeping Ontario Beautiful

Trillium

Ontario Horticultural Association

Spring 2026



OHA President's Message

Celebrating New Plantings and Growing Opportunities

Dear Horticultural Enthusiasts,

As winter fades and the world bursts into colour, we are excited to welcome the arrival of spring. This season brings with it a renewed sense of energy, growth and optimism. Whether you are planting new ideas, starting fresh projects or simply enjoying the warmer days ahead, spring is the perfect time to embrace change and look forward to what is possible.

Mark your calendars. Member Societies and Clubs have several exciting events planned this spring, including Seedy Saturdays, workshops and volunteer opportunities. Stay tuned for dates and details on our website and by email from your group.

Earth Day 2026 will be observed on April 24 with a Webex presentation delivered by Mark Cullen, focusing on Dianna Beresford-Krieger's book *Our Green Heart*. The presentation is scheduled to last approximately 45 to 50 minutes and will be followed by a 10 minute question and answer session. The event will be recorded, and additional details will be provided in due course.

The forthcoming OHA Convention and Annual Meeting will address the theme "Gardening for Life." The organizing committee has curated a comprehensive program featuring distinguished speakers, informative workshops and educational field excursions. Please be advised that the meetings are scheduled for July 24 to 26 at Durham College, Oshawa. I anticipate the privilege of meeting you at this event.

This spring, we are recognizing local Societies, Clubs and individuals with grants and awards. The Awards Committee is currently choosing winners who will receive their awards at the Ontario Horticultural Association Convention and Annual Meeting. Thank you to everyone who submitted applications for deserving candidates.

The Association offers items from Supplies to acknowledge your members' exceptional volunteer work and years of service. Information is available on the Gardenontario website.

After speaking with many Ontario Societies and Clubs, I have seen the value of recruiting, recognizing and planning for leadership succession. Spring is a great time to energize your group and prepare for the future as your community members look ahead to gardening season.

Thank you for being a valued member of the Ontario Horticultural Association. I wish you a joyful and inspiring spring.

Regards,

Vicky Culbert





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secretary@gardenontario.org

The Trillium is also available on the OHA website:
<https://gardenontario.org>

Submission dates for 2026:

March 1	Spring Issue
June 1	Summer Issue
September 1	Autumn Issue
December 1	Winter Issue

The Trillium is the quarterly online newsletter of the OHA where you’ll find the latest gardening news.

The Trillium welcomes contributions from members of all Horticultural Societies and Garden Clubs across Ontario, in every district. If your Club or Society has a special project to share, we encourage you to submit a story along with photographs.

Articles and opinions included in this issue are those of the authors. They are shared to encourage learning and conversation, and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Ontario Horticultural Association.

Deadline: The deadline for the next issue is June 1st, but submissions are welcome at any time.

Articles: Please email in Word, PDF, or plain text format.

Photographs & Graphics:

Submit as separate files (not embedded in Word or PDF). Minimum resolution: 1000 × 800 pixels; full-size originals are preferred.

Include signed waivers from the photographer or artist.
<https://gardenontario.org/wp-content/uploads/Media-Release-and-Indemnity-Form-2024-01-26.pdf>

Provide the author’s name and photographer’s name(s) for proper credit.

To avoid illegal copyright issues, please do not submit articles, artwork and photographs copied from the internet or elsewhere unless written, signed permission from the writer, artist or photographer has been given. Special Note: For images featuring minors, signed parental permission is required.

Send all articles and photographs to:

editor@gardenontario.org

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Editor's Message



Spring has a way of putting on its own little show. One morning the yard is buried under a thick blanket of drifting snow, and the next there's a mildness in the air that hints the garden might finally stir. This issue has that same sense of change. As I went through the submissions, I was struck by how many of our Societies are using this season to rebuild, rethink, or simply get back to the hands-on work that keeps their communities blooming.

You'll see it in Ancaster's preparations for another

full year of municipal garden care and their ever-popular heirloom tomato sale. Bancroft's story is a standout this spring: a complete revitalization of Millennium Park Garden, built through grants, local partnerships, and a remarkable amount of volunteer grit. Brockville brings two very different pieces this issue, from a behind-the-scenes look at filming *Some Time in the Garden* to the thoughtful rebranding that led to their new identity, GardenBrockville.

We also have a detailed and timely article on the emerald ash borer, a reminder of how quickly our landscapes can change and how much research and innovation is happening across Canada to protect what we still have. And for those eager to welcome back the season's earliest visitors, Joyce Morgan's spring pollinator guide offers practical steps you can take before the hummingbirds and solitary bees return.

As always, thank you to every Society and Club that sent in stories, photos, and updates. Your work fills these pages with real community life. If your group hasn't submitted before, consider this your invitation. A single project, a small success, or even a lesson learned can spark ideas for others across the province.

Enjoy the longer days, the first green shoots, and the promise of another gardening season. I look forward to seeing what you grow next.

David St. Amand
editor@gardenontario.org

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Tickets will be sold beginning at 12:00 PM on March 29, 2026, and ending at 11:59 PM on July 25, 2026. All tickets purchased between March 29, 2026 at or after 12:00 PM and July 25, 2026 at or before 11:59 PM will be entered into the grand prize draw. Draw to take place on Sun. July 26, 2026 at 11:00 AM. Licence # RAF1533331

For your chance to win, visit
<https://www.rafflebox.ca/raffle/ontario-ha>

Your ticket purchases for the OHA 50/50 Draw not only helps us keep Ontario Beautiful but it supports education for youth and adults. It also supports environmental programs, awards and grants assisting with pollinators, tree planting and community beautification.

Ancaster Horticultural Society

Keeping Ancaster Beautiful for 65 years

Submitted by and photos by Rhu Sherrard



The Ancaster Horticultural Society is gearing up for the spring and summer gardening projects. We continue to maintain our local municipal gardens and may add a project or two to our new season.

The Fieldcote Museum clean-up is scheduled for Saturday, April 25, 2026. We look forward to sharing the space with the local Scouts and our community members.

The Plant Sale is scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2026, at Ancaster Food Basics (plaza parking lot), 71 Wilson St. W., Ancaster. Time: 8:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Our "famous" Heirloom Tomato Sale is up and running. Details can be found at <https://ancasterhort.org/>. We are also adding a few "hot peppers" to our sale.

Please submit your order to ahsordertomatoes@gmail.com by April 30.

Pick-up on Saturday, May 16, 2026, in Ancaster, Ontario ONLY.

Our 2026 speaker series is underway. We have had the pleasure of hosting Duane Hewitt as our January speaker.

Duane Hewitt is a molecular biologist with an over twenty-year career in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry. He is currently combining his lab experience with his farming heritage in his new venture, Forest Fruits Mushrooms. Duane has a Bachelor of Science from McMaster University and a Master of Science degree from the University of Calgary. Forest Fruits Mushrooms is the result of that journey. Forest Fruits started with gourmet mushrooms for farmers' markets in Dundas, Hamilton, and Burlington, but has evolved to producing tinctures from medicinal mushrooms.



In February, Daryl MacTavish's presentation was on Six Degrees of Historical Separation.

"I have worked for the City of Hamilton's Historic House Museums for the past 40 years. I enjoy helping bring history alive to visitors, trying to make the lifestyle and choices people made back then understandable to people today, in a hopefully informative and entertaining way. I live in a brick home built in 1887, in the historic Corktown neighbourhood of Hamilton, that is filled with what some might describe as 'too many books,' and I also collect antique photographs."



Ancaster Horticultural Society Calendar of Events

March 17, 2026

Darryl Cheng, House Plant Journal
An Engineer's Approach to Houseplant Care

April 21, 2026

Melissa North, Certified Holistic Health Practitioner
Wild Edibles

May 19, 2026

Kirsten McCarthy, Master Gardener
Gardens That Give Back: Nurturing Biodiversity with Native Plants

June 16, 2026

Colin Phillips and Mandey Moote, Sycamore Hill Flower Farm
From Garden to Farm, Scaling Up the Love of Flowers

June 24, 2026,

10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Road trip to Purple Haven Lavender Farm and Beth Powell's garden in Canfield, Ontario. Field trip details to follow.

September 15, 2026

Dr. Mike Dixon, University of Guelph, Professor Emeritus and Director
The Contribution of Plants to Life Support in Space

October 20, 2026

Irene Kicak and Veronica Tunzi, Fancy Farmerettes
Growing with Hemp

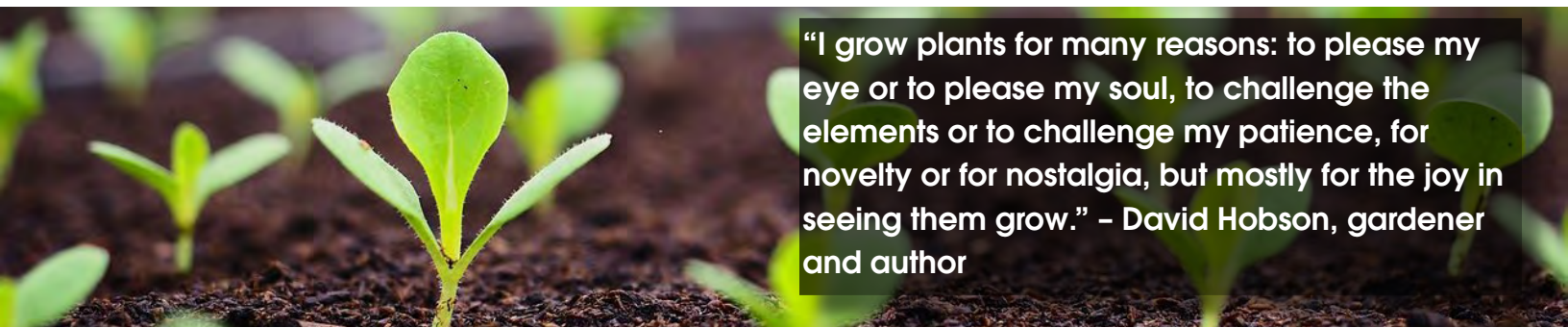
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Ancaster Horticultural Society



"I grow plants for many reasons: to please my eye or to please my soul, to challenge the elements or to challenge my patience, for novelty or for nostalgia, but mostly for the joy in seeing them grow." - David Hobson, gardener and author

Bancroft Horticultural Society

A Labour of Love

Submitted by and photos by Tina Stevens Forani & Lynsey Pickering



2025 was a memorable and busy year for the Bancroft Horticultural Society (BHS). Our biggest accomplishment was the revitalization of the Millennium Park Garden, a central spot in town where residents and visitors gather for events and celebrations. The project truly showcased the spirit of the Bancroft community.



Before construction began, BHS volunteers prepared the garden for its transformation. Originally built in 2000 to mark the new millennium, the garden had served the community well but was ready for a fresh start. Volunteers spent the early summer removing plants, selling them at BHS plant sales, and carefully relocating those that remained. The Town of Bancroft's works department pitched in by removing old fencing, topsoil, rocks and dead trees, setting the stage for new growth.

In January 2025, we reached out to six local landscapers for help. One landscaper, a lifelong Bancroft resident, stood out by submitting a design that incorporated natural stone, both beautiful and cost-effective. He was eager to support the beautification of his hometown, and his commitment resonated with our goals.

Construction kicked off in May 2025. The new garden featured a circular layout with four garden beds, bordered by locally sourced igneous and metamorphic boulders. Four eight-foot entrances, surfaced with hard-packed stones, made the garden accessible for strollers, walkers and wheelchairs. The landscaper also worked with local contractors and suppliers,



who generously provided materials at cost to help keep expenses down.

Funding the project was a community effort. BHS secured grants from the Ontario Horticultural Association for special projects, trees and pollinators, enabling us to plant trees, shrubs and perennials once construction wrapped up in late July. Every Saturday throughout the summer, members staffed a stall at the local Farmers Market to raise additional funds for the garden's completion.

Thanks to summer fundraising, including plant and flower sales, we raised over \$2,500. This allowed us to add a circular bench at the centre of the garden, surrounding a newly planted Crimson King maple tree. The bench, made of smooth resin for comfort and durability, seats twelve and offers a 360 degree view of the garden, which blooms with native pollinators and perennial plants.



Volunteers spent countless hours nurturing and watering the fragile new plants, especially during the hot summer's drought. Throughout the project, BHS prioritized working with local businesses. The Canadian-made bench features a back support and was designed to maximize visitor comfort by eliminating the risk of snags and splinters.

We made sure to show our appreciation. Each business that supported us received a framed certificate of thanks, and plaques were placed on the bench to recognize generous donors who made the reconstruction possible.

The Bancroft Horticultural Society is deeply grateful to its members, local businesses, the Town of Bancroft and all residents who contributed to this project.



One volunteer remarked, "Seeing everyone come together for this project made me proud to be part of Bancroft." It was truly a community effort and a labour of love that has brought new beauty and lasting pride to Millennium Park.



Brockville & District Horticultural Society

Some Time in the Garden

Submitted by Mary Ann Van Berlo

Photos by Michael Slack, Sébastien Chabot & Mary Ann Van Berlo

If you saw the 2016 documentary entitled *The Gardener* (the story of Frank Cabot's iconic garden, *Les Quatre Vents*, in Malbaie, QC), then you're already familiar with Films Reflektor's work. If you haven't seen it, then I highly recommend you track it down (I believe it is on Amazon Prime). The film's informative content and the visual impact will not disappoint.

Films Reflektor's current project is a YouTube Channel series, *Some Time in the Garden*. The producers visit gardens, both public and private, in Ontario and Quebec and create a short video about the garden. The gardens vary in style and size, but each one inspires the viewer. This series fills a gap left when the TV networks stopped airing gardening programs.



In 2024, Films Reflektor contacted Garden Ontario to identify beautiful gardens and willing gardeners to participate in their video project. I was put in touch with them by Garden Brockville's President.

Last summer, the video crew visited my garden and spent a day filming the front garden. Yes, eight hours of filming were whittled down to an under 10 minute video. The Films Reflektor team, Sébastien Chabot and Michael Slack, are true professionals. They came with an armless chair (so it doesn't show on the video), wireless microphones, lighting, reflectors, various cameras, and even a drone. After finding a spot with the right lighting (and supplemental reflected light), we spent about an hour going through their standard interview. However, since the finished product doesn't present like an interview, they asked that I not respond with a simple answer, but instead weave the question into my response so that it comes across as me simply talking about the garden.

An "I didn't know that about video production" moment for me was when, at the end of the interview portion, Michael said, "OK, this is going to be the most boring 45 seconds of your life. We're all just going to sit here quietly and record the ambient noise." It turns out that is the filler they use when they don't have speaking in the video. Then those segments have the same background noise as the speaking parts.

SOME TIME IN THE GARDEN

Upon completion of the interview, they spent the rest of the day getting beauty shots of the individual plants and the overall garden. It was fun to watch Michael guide Sébastien through the garden so that he could concentrate on what the camera was seeing rather than where he was stepping.

They visit and film gardens all summer, and then Sébastien spends the fall and winter editing the footage into a cohesive video. He says the editing takes about a week for each video, including verifying plant IDs and editing subtitles. They release a new video every two to three weeks, and if you subscribe to their YouTube Channel, you will be notified when a new video is available for viewing, which is great for a gardening fix in the dead of winter.

I'm very pleased with the final product, and two weeks after its release, the video has over 13K views. Sébastien and Michael say they will be back to feature other parts of my garden, the back yard shade garden and the arboretum area. I'm looking forward to another fun day of sharing my garden with them and their audience.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkrwC0OLx6o>



Rebranding for Growth: GardenBrockville's BLOOMING Approach to Gardening

Submitted by Nancy Léger

Photos obtained from the Archives of the Society

The Brockville & District Horticultural Society has a long and storied history. It was founded in 1905 but formalized in 1934. Patrons at the time were the movers and shakers of Brockville, including a Senator, an MLA, and a Doctor. War caused a suspension in activities as the population turned to cultivating Victory Gardens.



This photo is from the Archives of the Society. Photographer is unknown. It was originally taken at a Junior Flower Show held by Brockville & District Horticultural Society in the 1940s. The show took place in Victoria Hall (now City Hall). I am told that the photo was sent to us by Malcolm Geast, the OHA Historian, in 2020 when BDHS was celebrating its 115 Years.

In 1954 the club once again sprang to life with approximately 50 members, and the area felt its impact with flower shows and beautification projects. By the Centennial Year of 1967 the society boasted a membership of almost 400 people, and major projects in local parks were undertaken. More recently, in 2017, a Pollinator Garden was established and continues to flourish on the Brock Trail. Members also care for planters and gardens at the local hospital and at Glen Elbe, a community hub for nature education. Presently our society has over 200 members.

In 2024, the society decided on a name change in hopes of appealing to a broader audience. The Executive Officers and Board Members began to discuss ideas, establish goals, and a budget, reviewing the successful strategies of other societies.

It was felt that increasing membership was the key and that by modernizing our image, a younger demographic might be attracted to grow our club. Perhaps the word horticultural was intimidating, suggesting a need for expertise, when in actual fact we wanted to grow gardeners, encouraging and educating them in a welcoming environment, and so the name GardenBrockville was chosen. Following the guidelines set out by the OHA, we began the rebranding process, and at the 2025 AGM the membership adopted the new name.

Our legal and historic name, Brockville & District Horticultural Society, remains though in smaller typeface. For administrative purposes we will always be Brockville & District Horticultural Society. What we are doing is just upping our attraction by putting some new flowers in our garden and naming ourselves GardenBrockville.

To mark our name change, a celebratory event will be held with members, and a new park bench with a commemorative plaque featuring the *Iris ensata* will be installed across from the Pollinator Garden on the Brock Trail. The bench is partially funded by a Centennial Grant from OMAFA (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness). Through our website, on Facebook, and other media platforms, the society will announce its new identity as GardenBrockville, inviting everyone to join in this blooming approach to gardening.



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<https://gardenontario.org/gardenshop>

Climate Legacy

Planting a Climate-Friendly Garden is Easier Than You Think!

Submitted by Eric Murphy, Climate Legacy

Depending on how you tend to it, a garden can do some amazing things. In past *Trillium* issues we've written about how the right gardening practices can help local species flourish, prevent flooding in your community, and even keep away ticks. Even more is possible though, and in today's article we're sharing how you can even turn your garden into a carbon sink, effectively drawing polluting carbon dioxide (CO₂) out of the air and storing it underground. This is great for the planet, as excess CO₂ in the atmosphere is the main driver of climate change, and great for your garden too.

Though all plants soak up at least some CO₂, with the right techniques a garden can increase its absorption from a baseline of about 8.5 tonnes of CO₂ per acre to anywhere from 20 tonnes to an incredible 60 tonnes. Admittedly, most gardens don't cover a full acre, but even a small backyard garden that absorbs 5 tonnes is effectively undoing the annual pollution of a gas-powered family car. With more than a million gardens spread across Canada, that kind of impact adds up fast.

Below, we've outlined three tips to help you get started on a garden that, in addition to looking beautiful or producing tasty food, pulls CO₂ right out of the air and stores it underground, enriching your soil in the process.

Choose the Right Plants, and Plant Plenty of Them!

When we think about plants that absorb lots of CO₂, the first that usually come to mind are trees. Although a red maple is certainly a better carbon sink than something like Kentucky bluegrass, trees are not the only game in town.

To turn your garden into a carbon sink without relying on trees and shrubs, you'll want to focus on planting long-lived perennials and plants with deep roots. When a plant dies, much of the carbon it has absorbed is released back in the air, so long-lived perennials are ideal to not only soak up CO₂ but also to store it long term. If they grow well in your area, a few great options include asparagus, bunchberry, thyme, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, anemone, harebell, trout lilies, purple coneflower, and deep-rooted grasses like bluestem and switchgrass.

It's also good to keep in mind that the more plants a garden has, the better chance it has of becoming an effective carbon sink. Long stretches of open soil, woodchips, or decorative elements like large rocks can look great, but represent wasted potential as far as carbon absorption goes.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

Cultivate Healthy, Nutrient-Dense Soil

If left undisturbed, soil can store carbon for 70,000 years. To achieve this, you should plant it with deep-rooted plants like the ones listed above, or with trees or shrubs.

Just as important is to avoid tilling, which, despite its benefits, releases CO₂ stored in soil back into the air and only impoverishes your soil over time. Instead, consider layering a natural mulch, compost, or manure, if available, over soil to increase its nutrient density. Sowing cover crops is another fantastic way to enrich your garden and soil, especially if you have a large vegetable garden or farm.

Steer Clear of Hidden Pollutants

While researching this article I came upon a surprising study, which found urban and community gardens often have a larger carbon footprint than more rural backyard gardens. The reason? Community gardens in parks or on building rooftops typically require more added elements like raised beds, plastic tarps, or chicken wire.

This is because just about anything we buy in the store, from fresh wood for raised beds or a garden trowel with a plastic handle, comes with their own carbon cost in their creation or transportation. Even worse are synthetic **fertilizers and pesticides**, which require oil and gas simply to make them and release CO₂ over time.

So if you're trying to plant a garden that's truly carbon neutral or even carbon positive, you should also keep in mind the hidden pollution costs of what you buy. Choosing reclaimed wood for planters and using second-hand or borrowed tools is a subtle way to ensure your garden remains part of a healthy ecosystem, free of unexpected negative impacts.

If you've already taken steps to make your garden a carbon sink, or if this article inspires you to do so, we hope you will let us know about your experience. You can email us anytime at climatelegacycanada@gmail.com.

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CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

Presented by



Featuring Special Guest Speaker

Mark Cullen

and a Special Talk by



*Let's Talk Climate:
What are the risks,
and what can you do?*

by Betty Plewes



Celebrate Earth Day with us as renowned horticulturalist and author Mark Cullen shares his passion for the natural world.

Through reflections on two inspiring books —The Light Eaters and Our Green Heart— Mark will explore the beauty, resilience, and wonder of the landscapes that sustain us.

An engaging presentation for gardeners, nature lovers, and anyone who cares about our green future.

SAVE THE DATE!

April 24, 2026

7:00 - 8:30 pm via WebEx

No Registration Required





GardenOntario[®]

Climate Legacy



WebEx Login Details

Friday, April 24, 2026

7:00 PM | (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Sign In at: 6:40 pm

No Registration Required - This event will be first-come, first-serve and open to the first 1000 individuals logged on to the WebEx Account

Join from the meeting link

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Emerald Ash Borer

Submitted by Cynthia B. Lauer

Canadians are rightfully proud of our national forests. Occupying 367 million hectares, or almost 35% of the land mass, Canada ranks third on the list of the most forested countries in the world by area. Forests are a significant feature of the national environment. They are crucial for biodiversity, carbon storage, water filtration, industry, employment, cultural identity, and recreation.

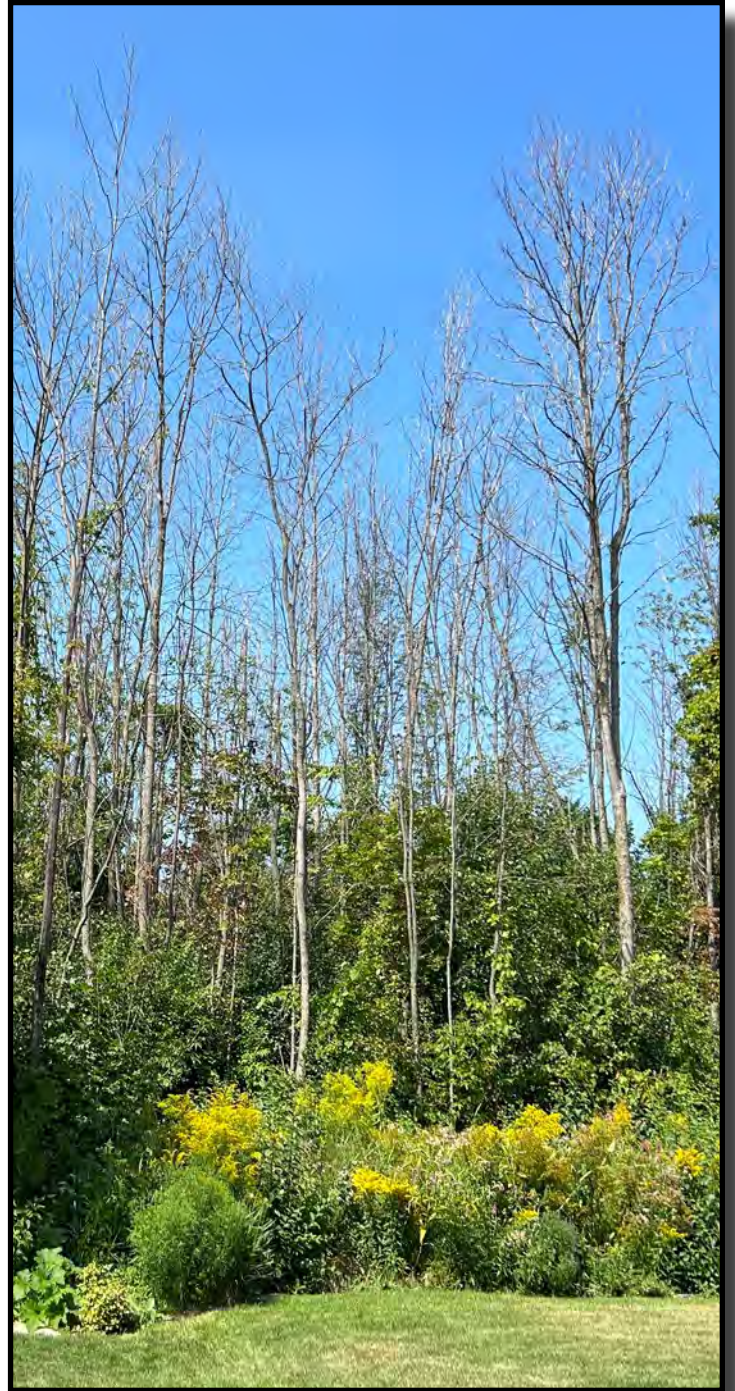
But we can't be complacent. Our native trees are threatened. Unwelcome insects are infecting the aspens, fir, spruce, hemlocks, and pines that make up a large proportion of Canadian forests from coast to coast. Other trees, including ashes, beeches, elms, and oaks, are affected by invasive species, fungi, or combinations of pathogens and vectors.

These trees are commonly found on urban streets and in local parks. Gardeners may already be tackling the consequences of their diseases in their backyards.

Whether on public or private land, tree diseases are resulting in permanent changes to our urban and rural landscapes.

The emerald ash borer is of particular concern. As of 2024, the beetle has been found throughout the eastern North American range of ash, including southern Ontario and Quebec, and isolated locations in Atlantic Canada. It has now spread to Winnipeg and Vancouver.

Ash trees provide shelter and food for wildlife. Large trees often form spacious trunk cavities that are used as nesting sites by squirrels and various birds, often woodpeckers, wood ducks, and owls. Seeds are eaten by birds and small mammals, foliage is browsed by deer, and bark is occasionally chewed by beaver and porcupine. Ashes support native bees and hundreds of other insects, and they are a larval host to swallowtail butterflies and specialized moths. Their destruction by the emerald ash borer has a cascading effect on the environment.



Dead ash trees - Blue Mountain¹

Features

Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*) is one of the first introduced insects to threaten an entire group of native trees in North America. The outcome is similar to chestnut blight and Dutch Elm Disease. A species of metallic wood-boring beetle native to East Asia, emerald ash borer is named for its bright iridescent colour. North American ash trees are very vulnerable to this beetle, which has killed millions of trees in Canada. All species of ash are susceptible, including green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), white ash (*F. americana*), and black ash (*F. nigra*), which are the most vulnerable, while blue ash (*F. quadrangulata*) appears to be the most resistant.

At 8 to 14 millimetres long, emerald ash borer adults are relatively large, but since they concentrate on the upper canopy of the tree, they are hard to see. Adults cause only minor damage to ash trees by feeding on foliage. It is the larvae that are responsible for the death of a tree. Swarming through the inner bark, they leave behind serpentine pathways known as galleries that disrupt water and nutrient transport. Eventually, the bark is girdled by these passages. Leaves on infested branches turn yellow, and branch dieback follows. As the infestation intensifies, vertical cracks develop in the bark. Once weakened, the attacks intensify. Large individual trees will die after three to four years; young trees can succumb in a single year.

The beetle can be detected by the D-shaped holes in the outer bark created by new adults emerging from the tree. Peeling back the bark will reveal distinctive larval galleries. Sometimes woodpeckers tear away at the bark when they detect this abundant larval food source. But no North American natural predators, whether birds, other insects, or parasites, have been able to slow the spread of the emerald ash borer. Up to 99% of all ash trees are killed within eight to ten years once the beetle arrives in an area.



Emerald ash borer²



A gallery produced by emerald ash borer larvae³

Spread

Likely arriving in North America on wood packaging materials in the early 1990s, the emerald ash borer was first detected near Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor in 2002. The beetle has spread rapidly since then. Infested material and adult beetles are transported by vehicles over long distances. Spread is also aided by movement of nursery stock, logs, and firewood. Regulations have been implemented to restrict the movement of these wood products out of infested areas.

The Bad News

Emerald ash borer infestations cause significant ecological and economic impacts on forested and urban habitats. In forest habitats, biodiversity is severely compromised when ash trees die, affecting natural forest succession and nutrient cycling. Habitats also become more vulnerable to invasion by exotic plants. After an infestation, remaining beetles can kill new growth, jeopardizing forest recovery.

In urban areas, infestations have killed tens of thousands of ash trees planted in parks and along streets. Municipal governments are responsible for removing dead ash trees on urban land, but, as I have learned, they may take action only when trees have fallen. Ash trees affected by emerald ash borer should be chemically treated or removed and replaced, which can be a significant economic burden.

The Good News

Canadian innovators have developed several products and methods to control the emerald ash borer. Dr. Peter Silk at the Atlantic Forestry Centre in Fredericton has synthesized the emerald ash borer's pheromone. Positioned as a lure in the mid to upper tree canopy, it functions as an effective trap device. The product is commercially available and in use across North America.

At the Laurentian Forestry Centre in Quebec City, Dr. Robert Lavallée has conducted very successful research on an alternative to synthetic pesticides: naturally occurring pathogenic fungi. Spores from these fungi are added to traps. When an adult emerald ash borer enters, it is exposed to lethal spores and later transmits them to other insects during mating. The infected emerald ash borers die within days.

A final control method is the trademarked product TreeAzin, developed by Canada Forestry Service and BioForest Technologies Inc. Derived from oil in the seeds of the neem tree, the product is injected into the tree. Commercially available and in use by numerous municipalities and tree care companies, the product is one component of their emerald ash borer management strategy.

Research has also led to the introduction of a biological control in the form of parasitic wasps from the emerald ash borer's native range in China and Russia. The wasps insert their eggs directly into emerald ash borer larvae. As the wasp larvae grow, they consume the beetle larvae.

Another wasp species attacks the eggs of the emerald ash borer. The technique has a success rate of over 50% in some areas in North America. Scientists have reported that these parasitoid wasps are spreading quickly across the landscape.

Researchers expect that these biocontrol insects will eventually be present throughout the entire Great Lakes region. Dr. Krista Ryall of the Great Lakes Forestry Centre in Sault Ste. Marie believes that biocontrol may be the only long-term and sustainable option for managing emerald ash borer.

With continued investment in research and development of targeted control techniques like these, Canadians will be able to enjoy our ash trees again and for generations to come.

Bio

Cynthia B. Lauer, PhD, is a member of Simcoe County Master Gardeners, a regular contributor to The Gardener magazine, and a retired sociology professor. She has been a regular contributor to Trillium since 2022.

Photo Credits

- 1 Dead ash trees in a small woodlot in Blue Mountain, Ontario - Credit: Cynthia Lauer
- 2 An adult emerald ash borer - Credit: USFWS photo by Tom Brumbelow, Public Domain Mark 1.0
- 3 A gallery produced by emerald ash borer larvae
Credit: judygva, CC BY 2.0

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Helping Our Pollinators Through the Seasons - Spring

Submitted by Joyce Morgan, a member of the Conservation and Environment Committee

I started writing this article while I was waiting for my Board of Directors to join me for a Zoom meeting. I was sitting at my desk looking out the window and couldn't believe the size of the snowflake clumps that were coming down. Gently at first and then all at once, as if they were in a hurry to make our day uncomfortable. As much as I hate the winter season, those clumps really were pretty. And then I started thinking that soon the cold wind will become warm breezes that will help all that snow disappear.

But I'm here to talk to you about what you can do to help our pollinators as spring comes to greet us. I can hardly wait for the breezes and that satisfying rainfall that says all is well with the world. First, we need to understand what some of our pollinators do to survive winter. Monarchs, painted ladies, the common buckeye and hummingbirds all fly south for the winter. I heard on a newscast that the hummingbirds have already started their trek north. It won't be long before the monarchs follow them, along with the painted ladies and common buckeye.

Bees, on the other hand, stay at home. Social bees will cluster around their queen while the worker bees flap their wings to raise the temperature of their hive and, of course, they change places. While the worker bees on the outside of the cluster are busy keeping the inside warm, there are other workers ready to take their place so they too can rest and get warm. Solitary bees and bumblebee queens will go into diapause, a state of hibernation where their bodies almost become dormant. Eggs, pupae, larvae and adults also go dormant, hiding under leaf litter or in tree crevices.

So, what can we do to prepare for the return of pollinators? A few weeks before hummingbirds are expected to arrive, you can prepare your nectar: one part sugar to four parts water. There is no need to add red dye. You can plant hummingbird friendly plants such as columbine, honeysuckle and bee balm. Make sure that what you plant is not on the invasive species list.

While you're busy preparing nectar, you can get your bird bath, the stones and your bee hotel out of storage. They'll need to be cleaned before putting them to use. Wash the bath and stones, being careful to remove all of the green scum that may have accumulated last summer. Rinse everything well. When you're ready to place it outside, fill it until the water is just about an inch above the stones. You'll make these tiny pollinators very happy. It can sit on a stand or just on the ground in your garden. They need water to survive and a bath to cleanse themselves in.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

If you think I was kidding about bee hotels, trust me, I'm not. I had two small ones in my last big perennial garden. Using a Q-tip to prod each of the rooms, usually made from a slice of bamboo or rolled bark, helps remove dust, debris and maybe a cobweb or two. They can be as small as you want. Mine had room for 12 guests, or they can be much larger to house many more bees needing a rest. Decorative or plain, bees won't mind. Respite is respite.

Butterflies really like the nectar from flowers, but in early spring there aren't many to choose from, so they'll look for running sap flows, rotten fruit, carrion, dung and more. As far as flowers go, they look for those with the stamens up front and the petals behind. The closer the petals are together, the harder it is for them to find that delicious nectar. When bees come out of their clusters or diapause, they want to eat and start building reserves of honey to feed the newborn bees. They look for early bloomers such as dandelions, crocuses and native bluebells. Once the weather warms and other flowers start to bloom, they'll spread their wings to look for other sources of food.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

To prepare for the return of our pollinators, set out some clear nectar, rotten fruit and leave a few dandelions to snack on. You'll be well on your way to helping our pollinators in the early spring.

You can find additional resources from Ontario Pollinator Health, the Canadian Wildlife Federation or online. I've only focused and generalized on hummingbirds, butterflies and bees in this article. Thank you for taking the time to read this article. Stay tuned for my summer pollinator article in the next *Trillium*.

North York Garden Club

A Great Year Celebrated, a Great Year Ahead

Submitted by and photos by: Christine Pierroz, President, North York Garden Club

In 2025, the North York Garden Club celebrated new milestones, among them our 101st Anniversary, 100 years of combined volunteer service by our Board, and our 100th member. The Club further participated in five outreach events, co-hosting one for attendees of all ages entitled “*Spring Gardening Celebration*,” together with the North York Central Library. Club members also took part in three community planting events, including the collaborative Yonge St. Beautification Planter Project with Councillor Lily Cheng’s office (Ward 18, Willowdale) and the Yonge North York BIA. Rounding out the year were a Tour of Members’ Gardens, Pop-Up Gardens, a bus trip to Whistling Gardens and Walter’s Greenhouses & Garden Centre, a Floral Design Workshop for Novices to encourage budding designers, the creation of vase arrangements for the 100th anniversary of Willowdale Presbyterian Church, and a well-attended Annual General Meeting (AGM).



Peony Tour at Whistling Gardens

Having surpassed a century of joyful learning, gardening, and community contributions, Board members connected with a team at the North York Civic Centre through Councillor Cheng to design a commemorative centennial plaque (1924–2024) for the North York Garden Club. Funding was approved by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA). The plaque, which highlights the Club’s early history as recorded in our archives at the North York Central Library, will feature the yellow blotch pansy found in our logo. It is anticipated to be unveiled in 2026 in the vicinity of Mel Lastman Square.

In what is certainly a rare occurrence, we discovered that our 2025 Board had provided 100 years of combined volunteer service to the Club, and so honoured their collective contribution with a North York Garden Club Award presented at the November 24, 2025 AGM. Anchoring the group were Patrizia (Pat) Cappelli (27 years of service) and Gloria Broks (25 years), together with stalwarts Soo-Ling Huang (15 years), Rocco DeMiglio (13 years), Mary Ann Nelson (8 years), Richard Sage (6 years), and Tom Cloutier (4 years), supported by Sheri Ferdinand-Brugel (1 year) and Christine Pierroz (1 year). There are times when we must celebrate the moment, and this was one such occasion.

Another cause for celebration was the registration of the Club's 100th member towards the end of August. We finished the year with 101 members, but made sure to enjoy a chocolate cake with red rose icing and ice cream at our September general meeting and flower show. Membership increased by 26 members in 2025 from the previous year, and we look forward to learning and growing together through 2026.

Fundraising activities in 2025 included the sale of donated plants and floral-themed items at select outreach events and the sale of shirts embroidered with the Club logo, as well as our popular 50/50 draw and refreshments donations collected at general meetings.



Eco-Fair at Willowdale Environment Day



Boutonniere Making - Spring Gardening Celebration



Plant Marker Craft - Spring Gardening Celebration

The November 24, 2025 AGM was a wonderful evening that included awards, elections, a delicious potluck, and live entertainment with singer and musician Joseph (Joe) Thomson. Gloria Broks and Lorraine Luski presented the award for highest points earned at North York Garden Club flower and vegetable shows throughout the year to Zela Gilbert. A certificate and Sheridan gift card were given to acknowledge Zela's achievement.

Tom Cloutier, organizer of the 2025 Photography Contest, presented three finalist photos that were among 30 entries from 12 members. Members had subsequently voted online for the winning submission, which was by David Arnett. David received congratulations, a Sheridan gift card, and the honour of having his photo featured on the 2026 Yearbook cover.

District 5 Representative Cindy Scythes awarded a District Appreciation Certificate to outgoing Board members Gloria Broks, Pat Cappelli and Richard Sage, and to treasurer Soo-Ling Huang, whose successor, Sandy Cloutier, was appointed in February 2026. Cindy congratulated all four recipients, including on behalf of District 5 Director Ursula Eley, who sent remarks reflecting on her

own interactions with each recipient over the years and praise for a job well done. Newly elected to the Board were directors Janet Love and Natasha Mansouri, whose focus will be membership. Re-elected to the Board was director and club ambassador Rocco DeMiglio.



Louise Veffer - Tree Peony
Best in Show



Richard Sage - Bomb Girls - Miniature
3rd Place



Table Arrangement - Willowdale
Presbyterian Church 100th Anniversary

Throughout the year, the Board of Directors met monthly via Zoom, two weeks in advance of the eight general meetings. Leads and co-leads worked on an ad hoc basis to organize outreach events such as "Taste of North York" and the delivery of food donations to Neighbourlink North York, plus three adjudicated flower and vegetable shows that were training grounds for new clerks and judges.

Board members also served as delegates during the District 5 Meetings of Societies, in person at the OHA District 5 AGM in Scarborough, and during the OHA Annual Meeting.

The gardens at the Club's meeting place, Willowdale Presbyterian Church, continued to be so well maintained by volunteers, led by director Mary Ann Nelson, that the site was included in the annual Tour of Members' Gardens. A special addition to the gardens on May 4, prior to the tour, included three serviceberry bushes delivered through a Treemobile grant, which were planted by club volunteers and the congregation to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Willowdale Presbyterian Church.

Volunteers were at the heart of everything we accomplished as a club in 2025, bringing boundless enthusiasm to 1,391 hours of service to the Club, in our North York community, and at events such as the Canadian National Exhibition, Markham Fair, and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

To all our 2025 volunteers, we can't thank you enough. Whether you fed us, hosted us, helped us, or represented us, we appreciate you:

Angela Bontje, Gloria Broks, Brenda Burton, Liz Camilleri, Pat Cappelli, Tom Cloutier, Sandy Cloutier, Rosa Maria de Barros, Rocco DeMiglio, Rosalinda DeMiglio, Sheri Ferdinand-Brugel, Sarah Fernandes, Lisa Forsyth, Zela Gilbert, Myint Gillespie, Soo-Ling Huang, Vicki Johnson, Kathie Kowal, Swan Li, Janet Love, Lorraine Luski, Jennifer Lynde, Azi Margan, Natasha Mansouri, Ann McConnell, Mary Ann Nelson, Joan Patterson, Christine Pierroz, Jeremiah Reandino, Richard Sage, Lucja Segal-Seiden, Rosemary Sheppard, Gary Shorney, Ranji Sithamparapillai, Louise Veffe, Jo-Anne Wilson, Diane Wilton and Yvonne Zhang.

To our community supporters whose donations made our outreach possible, please accept our gratitude and thanks for reaching in when we needed you. Metro (Yonge and Church), Shoppers Drug Mart (Yonge and Finch); and Woodhill Garden Centre (Bayview and Steeles).

The year ahead is bright, based on all that we've learned and hope to explore through our speakers program, our outreach and collaborations, creative contributions to Flower Shows, our workshops, and our travels. We look forward to sharing more as 2026 unfolds. Enjoy the year everyone!



Tour of Members' Gardens

Orillia Horticultural Society

I switched to native plants that support pollinators

Submitted by Nancy Paylor

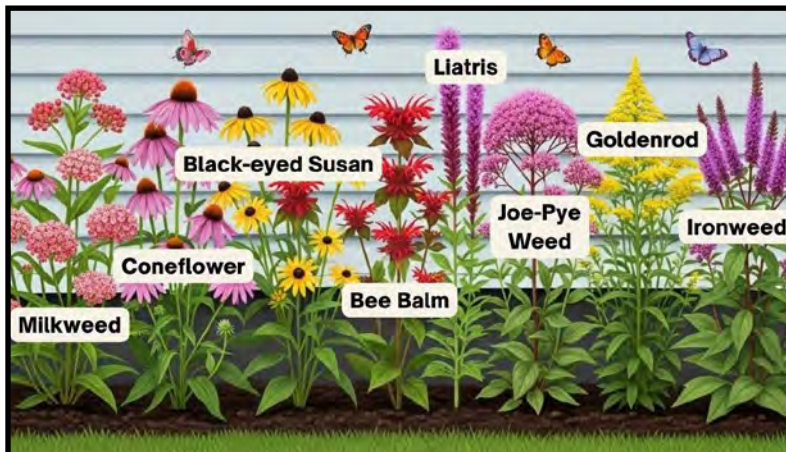
Hello everyone! I am Nancy Paylor.

For many years, I had many roses in a special area of my garden shaped as a heart. I did that as my dedication to my mother, who planted and loves roses (red, yellow and white). When I was young in the Philippines, roses were like “gold” and rare, as I remember. As the youngest, she specially assigned me to water them before I went to school.

But my roses in Orillia were devoured by many insects. My Asian lilies and other plants were the same too. I felt bad letting the two special plants go. Rest in peace. I remember winning some of their flowers in our Horticulture flower show.

I switched to native plants that are pollinators. Since then, I have attracted many kinds of butterflies, bees, birds, etc. It is so joyful to see many butterflies flying from one flower to the next, and the bumble bees sleeping on the marigold, dazed with nectars. No more “bad insects and nightmares!”

Eight Native Perennials to Attract Butterflies



Photos:

- Sweet Nancy standing beside an obedient plant
- Monarch on *Asclepias Tuberosa*
- Bicoloured striped sweat bee
- Eastern bumblebee on sneezeweed
- Orange-belted bumblebee with large pollen sacs



Orillia Horticultural Society
Presents

Spring into Gardening



Saturday, April 11, 2026
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Hawk Ridge Golf Club 1151 Hurlwood Ln, Severn ON

GUEST SPEAKERS

Lorraine Johnson

Birds, Bees & Butterflies: Habitat Gardening for Wildlife

Celeste Koeslag, Elegance of Nature Floral Design

Demonstration on Spring Planters

Sean James

Bringing Back the Nearly Dead: Renovating an Existing Landscape

\$50 Ticket Includes:

- ☛ Coffee, Tea, Muffins
- ☛ Lunch
- ☛ Vendors
- ☛ Silent Auction
- ☛ Door Prizes



Orillia Horticultural Society *Est. 1888*



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Oro-Medonte Horticultural Society

REVIVING A GIANT: THE AMERICAN ELM

Submitted by Lynne Melynk

When I decide on a topic for an article, my research sometimes takes me in an unexpected direction. More about that later.

Trees—is there anything more impressive in the living world? They are the lungs of our world, they sequester carbon, they interact with their environment, and they can live for hundreds of years.

I thought it would be timely to go back to the 1930s when Dutch elm disease (DED for short) struck North America in the U.S. and killed millions of trees. This disease originated in Asia and was named for the Dutch, as the Netherlands is where it was first scientifically identified and described. It has devastated trees throughout Europe and is found in New Zealand, as well as North America.

It first entered Canada in Quebec in 1944, as during WWII defenses against the disease were dropped in favour of the war effort. It had spread to Ontario by 1967, followed by other provinces. Currently, Alberta and British Columbia are the only provinces that are free of the disease.



Photo Credit: Flickr- Nick Wood - licensed as CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

DED is caused by more than one fungal pathogen, which are carried by bark beetles that attack elm trees. Currently, the only cure is an expensive injection treatment, which must be repeated every two or three years. Winnipeg, which has close to 200,000 elms remaining, uses various strategies such as identifying and inspecting trees, controlling insects, and removing and replacing trees.

The tree most affected by DED in Ontario is the American elm, *Ulmus americana*. The American, or white elm, is a magnificent tree, vase-shaped with an umbrella profile, with a height of 69 to 115 feet tall and a trunk diameter of up to 4 feet. It is a lowland tree preferring streambanks, valley floors, and wetlands, though it can grow in drier conditions. The Sauble Elm, which grew on the banks of the Sauble River, reached a height of 140 feet and a diameter of 77 inches before it died from DED. It was found to have germinated in 1701.

The University of Guelph has a program to restore our lost elm canopy called the Elm Recovery Project. They are working to find resistant trees and gathering pollen to fertilize gene-bank seed orchards to create offspring that are resistant to disease. The project is funded by the Henry Kock Tree Recovery Endowment.

And here is my pivot: Henry Kock was born in 1951 and completed a degree in horticulture at the University of Guelph. He then worked at the Arboretum for the rest of his life. He grew trees from seed for the Arboretum and designed many of the Arboretum's collections. In 1998 he started the Elm Recovery Project, which received a large amount of attention because of its success and use of citizen science. He won the Governor General's Award for Forest Stewardship, the Forest Stewardship of Canada Award, and the Bonnie McCallum Environmental Award for his work. He died at 53 in 2004. The endowment was created for him, as well as a greenhouse at U of G being named for him. It is inspiring to see what one man can do.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

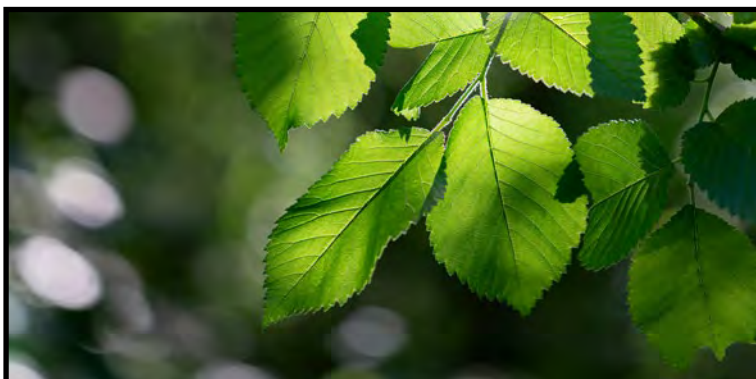


Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

There are still around 800 original American elms scattered around Ontario. There are a few around our area which you may know of. There was one north of Oshawa at an apple orchard, but it came down in a storm. I lived close to one in Aurora, which was beside a sidewalk in the older part of town. To see a mature elm is a beautiful sight.

Oro-Medonte Horticultural Society Updates

We kicked off our year on Monday March 16 with a Zoom meeting featuring Basil Conlin. Baz runs Haliburton Micromeadows, a small native plant nursery that focuses on true local ecotype plants. His work supports gardens and restoration projects across Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes, Hastings, Peterborough, and Northumberland Counties. He walked us through how to build a small meadowstyle planting and showed how easily this kind of design can slip into almost any landscape.

Our first in-person meeting of the year is coming up on Monday April 13 at the Oro-Medonte Community Centre. We're welcoming Sean James, who will be talking about the basics of growing food on your own property. His presentation is titled *Looks Good Enough to Eat! Permaculture: Living off YOUR Land*. Visitors are always welcome, so feel free to bring a friend or neighbour.

2026 SPEAKER PROGRAM		
March 16	HALIBURTON MICROMEADOWS	Speaker: Baz Conlon By ZOOM
April 13	LOOKS GOOD ENOUGH TO EAT: PERMACULTURE: LIVING OFF YOUR LAND	Speaker: Sean James Oro-Medonte Community Centre
May 11	CREATING A NEW GARDEN FROM SCRATCH: PLANNING, DESIGNING, AND BUILDING	Speaker: Angelique Mesei Flower Show Oro-Medonte Community Centre
June 22	INVASIVE SPECIES & PLANTING FOR POLLINATORS	Speaker: Patrick Jackson Flower Show Oro-Medonte Community Centre
August 10	TRENDS IN GARDEN DESIGN	Speaker: Trevor Hillis Oro-Medonte Community Centre
September 14	I GIARDINI INTORNO A ROMA THE GARDENS AROUND ROME	Speaker: Lynne Melnyk Flower Show Oro-Medonte Community Centre
October 19	THE MUSHROOMERY	Speaker: Sinda Simpson Flower Show & Awards Oro-Medonte Community Centre
November 23	INSPIRED BY OUR GARDENS: A SHOWCASE OF MEMBERS' CREATIVITY	AGM Oro-Medonte Community Centre

And mark your calendar for our annual plant sale on Saturday May 23. The plant sale kicks off at 10 AM at the Oro-Fairgrounds at 15th/16th Side Road and Line 7 North.

Pakenham Horticultural Society

A Century of Gardeners Helping Gardeners: Pakenham Hort Celebrates 100 Years in 2025

Submitted by Lori Ray. Photos by Lori Ray and Jacquelyn Holland

The Pakenham Horticultural Society, founded in 1925, marked its centennial in 2025 with a series of special events designed to commemorate this significant milestone. Throughout the year, the club enhanced its regular programming to ensure the anniversary was celebrated in grand style.

District 2 Annual General Meeting

Festivities began in May when the Society hosted more than 100 Ontario Horticultural Association (OHA) members for the District 2 Annual General Meeting at the Stewart Community Center in Pakenham, Ontario. The organizing committee transformed the hockey arena ice surface into a vibrant meeting venue, complete with vendor booths, delicious food and a silent auction. Attendees enjoyed presentations from two fantastic guest speakers: Nadine Snowling from Volunteer Ottawa, and local biologist and organic farmer Alberto Suarez Esteban. OHA Vice President Vicki Culbert was present to award the OHA 100 Year Certificate to current Pakenham President Bridie Johnson.



Summer Flower and Edibles Show and Strawberry Social

In June, the club shifted its Summer Flower and Edibles Show from a Wednesday evening to a Saturday afternoon. This change coincided with a Strawberry Social celebrating the club's tradition of "Gardeners Helping Gardeners." The event drew a large crowd of both current and past members, as well as members of the public, making it the most attended flower show in recent memory. More than 100 servings of strawberries were enjoyed under a tent on the back lawn of St Andrews United Church.

Canada Day Eve Parade

For the June 30 Canada Day Eve Parade, board member Paul L'Arrivee generously provided his vintage 1970s pickup truck, which was festively decorated with 100 Year balloons. Past President Toby Barratt joined the parade, riding in comfort in a lawn chair in the truck bed and waving to spectators.

Annual Meeting and Potluck Dinner

October saw the Society's annual meeting paired with a potluck dinner, celebrating both junior and senior members. In addition to the regular trophy and awards ceremony, three lifetime memberships were awarded to Toby Barratt, Sherryl Smith and Sandy Black. Doreen Blair received a 50 Year Service Pin, and all members with more than 10 years of service were recognized with OHA service pins.

Santa Claus Parade Grand Finale

The year concluded with the club's participation in the Santa Claus Parade. Their float featured eleven Christmas trees, each representing a decade of the Society's presence in the community from 1925 through 2025. Along the parade route, members distributed candy canes and seeds for winter sowing.

Ongoing Activities and Volunteer Effort

All these special celebrations were held in addition to the club's regular offerings, including the speaker series, flower shows, community beautification projects and the junior gardeners program. Despite having fewer than 50 members, the club's volunteers contributed an impressive total of 804 hours throughout the year, truly embodying their motto: "Celebrating a Century of Gardeners Helping Gardeners."



Peterborough Master Gardeners



Peterborough & Area Master Gardeners Present
A Day for Gardeners
“Gardening for Healthy Living”



Saturday April 25, 2026

Westdale United Church
1509 Sherbrooke St, Peterborough, ON
9:30am to 3pm (estimate)

Four Seminars,
lunch & door
prizes

Cost: \$60 early bird
\$75 after Apr1

Come join us for a fun day
of learning, lunch and
friendship!

Session 1:

- ❖ **Healthy Parks, Healthy People** with Anne Craig OR
- ❖ **Gardens that BUZZ: Designing with Native Plants for Beauty and Life** by Silvia Strobl

Session 2:

- ❖ **Seasonal Gardening for Birds** with Thom Luloff OR
- ❖ **Rose Care: A Beginner Guide** with Jennifer Guertin

Session 3:

- ❖ **Resilient Landscaping for Community, Humans, and Food Webs** with Deanna Hergert OR
- ❖ 2 Mini sessions: **Unusual Culinary Herbs** with Carol Ireland AND **Seeds: Heritage vs Heirloom vs GMO** with Jillian Bishop

Plenary: Growing Well: How Gardening supports Longevity, Health and Happiness with Mary-Jane Pilgrim

Port Dover Horticultural Society

Winter Sowing Workshop: How To...

Submitted by and photos by Laurene Via

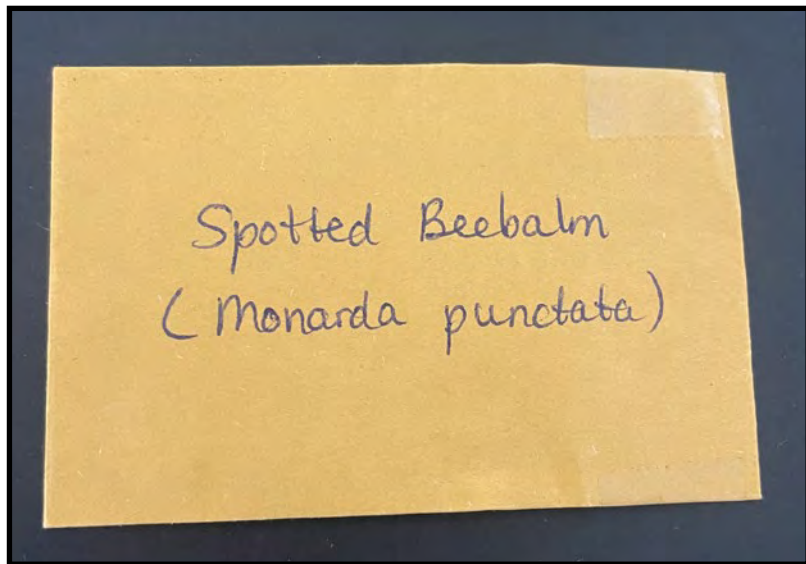
Last November, I told a gardening friend of mine in Florida that I am learning about Winter Sowing. She responded logically and asked me what I am making (sewing). Obviously, when gardening in a semi-tropical climate, seasonal extremes typically aren't a cause for dramatic shifts. Just like in our northern climes, winter is a time for the garden(er) to rest and reflect. But what is there to do if you don't want to take a break from gardening in our northern winter? Here's the answer: Winter Sowing! Gardening in zone 6b/7a is no longer just a time to dream and peruse seed catalogues. It's no longer even a time for investments in grow lights and finding or creating indoor space. Instead, winter can be a time to sow seeds by using this novel technique called Winter Sowing. (By the way, there is no entymological relationship between "sowing" and "sewing," although I think that's open for more discussion.)

Recently, Master Gardener Laura Rodger, member of the Port Dover and Woodhouse Horticultural Society as well as the Grand Erie Master Gardeners, conducted a workshop teaching interested members how to winter sow.

Soooo... What is WINTER SOWING?

As the Royal Botanical Gardens describes it: "Winter sowing (or WS) is a way for home gardeners to germinate seeds outdoors in mini greenhouses made from recycled containers and bottles. It's a somewhat controlled way to mimic what nature does when seeds drop in autumn, spend winter outdoors, and germinate naturally in the spring. The technical term for this process is 'cold moist stratification.'"

But first, we must start at the beginning of our journey. Laura, who is a local resident, has a garden in the front of her home that is the envy of anyone who relishes wild native plants in bloom. I pass by her garden every time I visit the local coffee shop. It's an amazing garden. She's an amazing gardener. Last fall, she offered native plant seeds from her garden to our membership. There were 37 different native plant seed varieties neatly itemized on a spreadsheet with photos and growth descriptions, based on light, space, and soil conditions, for us to pick from. She generously and strategically didn't limit the number of selections she shared with us. Choices ranged from American alumroot to field pussytoes to prairie smoke. Some of us got hooked.



Seeds were sealed in discreet and tidy packages

By early December, orders were picked up and delivered. The next step was organizing a workshop where PDWHS members could learn how to winter sow seeds. The best time to winter sow native plant seeds is after the winter solstice and into early February, as many generally need about 60 to 90 days of cold moist conditions to begin germination. Laura and I selected a Sunday late in January, a day that Mother Nature decided to deliver a major snowstorm to southern Ontario. But since we knew we were running out of calendar time to winter sow, we persevered and ran the workshop anyway with 13 hardy and eager participants. In advance, Laura created a list of items the participants needed to bring with them. She also prepared more seed packets to share with us, as well as containers (jugs), plastic labels, soil, an impermeable tray to work on, watering cans, and a PowerPoint presentation demonstrating the winter sowing rationale and process.

Why Winter Sow

- No grow lights or indoor space needed.
- No watering, turning, or hardening off required.
- Seedlings will be strong, no risk of damping off.
- Wildlife will not eat your seeds. The wind won't scatter them. (But do locate your containers in a secure spot away from the protection of a structure as they need rainwater and snowfall melt.)
- Identification of seedlings is easy.
- It is cheap, easy, and fun. You get to "garden" in the winter.



Materials provided by Laura and the PDWHS

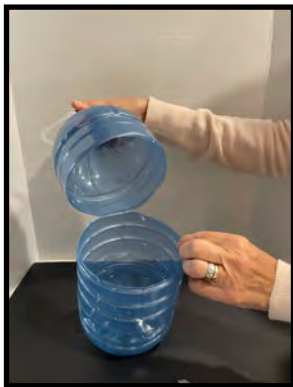
Here's what participants were instructed to bring: wide green painters' tape, a permanent marker, a plastic bag to carry the container home in so it doesn't leak during transportation, an X-Acto knife, sharp scissors, and a waterproof cover to protect the workspace.

Step 1: Remove any labels or covering from the clear or translucent container or jug and make sure it is tall enough to allow for root and shoot growth. Discard the cap or recycle if possible. The colour (if there is one) of the container is inconsequential as long as light gets through. While various seeds may or may not need light to germinate, the shoots will require light transferring through the walls of the container in order to grow.



Step 2: Cut* the container or jug horizontally in half, three quarters of the way around. This creates a hinge so that the top half of the jug can be pulled back to open and allow access to the bottom half of the jug. The bottom half of the jug needs to be deep enough to accommodate about 10 cm of soil.

**Start the cut by making a small horizontal slit with the knife. Then complete the cut around three sides with pointy scissors or the knife.*



Step 3: Use the knife or scissors to puncture five to six holes in the bottom of the container. Make the holes large enough for water to drain out but not to lose soil (similar to what you get when you purchase a pot from a nursery). Or use a hot glue gun to melt holes in the bottom.



Step 4: Place your container on a waterproof tray and fill it with the potting mix to at least 10 to 15 cm high. Add enough water to the soil so that it reaches a point where water is filtering down to the bottom and leaking out of the container.

Step 5: Select your seeds. Write the name of the seeds on the label and plant the label along the side of the container. The labels used at the workshop were from cut up used yogurt (opaque) containers. Just be certain the strips are long and use a waterproof marker and push them into the soil against the inside of the jug.

Step 6: Sprinkle the seeds on top of the damp soil and gently press them down. Some seeds require light to germinate. Larger seeds may need some soil coverage, but often the freeze and thaw cycles will work them down into the soil.



Step 7: Close the top half of the container down and tape the horizontal seam back together, sealing the two parts of the container together using the wide green painters' tape. Make sure the attachment is tight. Then, using the permanent marker, write the name of the seeds on the container or the tape. Seeds can now be identified from both the inside and outside of the container.

Step 8: Carry the container outside and place it in a location where it will receive rain and snowfall through the opening at the top where the lid used to be. Set the container directly on the ground. Do not place it near a house or similar structure because it will not get enough water. While this method does prevent the seeds from being blown away by the wind if they were scattered naturally, it's important to find a place where the containers won't be blown away.



Step 9: Do nothing else until spring. No fertilization is needed. But come spring, be sure the soil in the jugs does not dry out.

Here is Laura’s original article with more detail and what to do next:

<https://granderiema.org/gardening-tips-blog/f/winter-sowing>



St. Thomas and District Horticultural Society

Horticultural Society Flower Shows, Why Not?

Submitted by Crystal Trojek

All gardeners are dreamers, all of them. Who else would plant seeds and expect a positive result? All pursue horticultural excellence in their own personal garden spaces, and be it large or small, they are driven with or without knowledge because they must. Of such was the Horticultural Flower Show born: the devotion to sharing knowledge, horticultural excellence, the art of flower arranging, or perhaps nothing intended at all on the show table but a simple message of "How beautiful this is, what a lovely thing. More people should have the opportunity to see it." Some things should be shared more, and often.

I filled in my first flower show entry tag over thirty years ago. My hand was trembling, writing almost illegible. I lost sleep the night before, whispered to the full moon I must be out of my mind. I happened to have visited our local library, and there was a poster dangling from a pair of thumb tacks with many newsworthy friends on a very large cork bulletin board at the library entrance. I stopped and perused many exciting opportunities. I should go to a horticultural society meeting. I like gardening, I like flowers, I should go. A friendly bunch met in one of the library meeting rooms. I had never seen a flower show. I perused the tables in the company of a cookie and a cuppa. I went back for the next meeting and the next. I listened, and I learned, from the shadows at the back of the room, circling those tables, asked questions, and I bought a membership.

"You should enter something," came the infamous words of encouragement from like-minded flower show enthusiasts. I liberally and consistently fertilized my courage to enter the flower show. Next meeting I did. Husband said, "What do you know about entering, or flower arranging?" "Nothing, but you've got to start somewhere." I started. I made mistakes because I lacked knowledge, which isn't really a mistake because I didn't know. I didn't care. I wanted to learn, I wanted experience so I could make fewer errors. I kept going, made more mistakes, bought the judging standards book, listened to judges' comments and other conversations about what to do and not do. I learned. I started to win ribbons. I forged ahead into design because my artistic bent loved working with flowers. I left the horticultural side of flower shows to devote my learning time to floral design. I had successes, I had disappointments, and I still went. What I thought was the best thing I ever made won nothing. There



Photo Credit: David St Amand

was a time when I thought the worst thing I ever made won Best in Show. I literally gagged when I packed it up to take to the venue. I whispered in its face that maybe it would have an irrevocable and life altering accident on the journey. I learned that ultimately, you can never predict show results and you shouldn't waste your energy doing so. You get what you get, which is experience, some good, some profoundly enabling, and some not so good but humbling, which is still a worthwhile lesson.

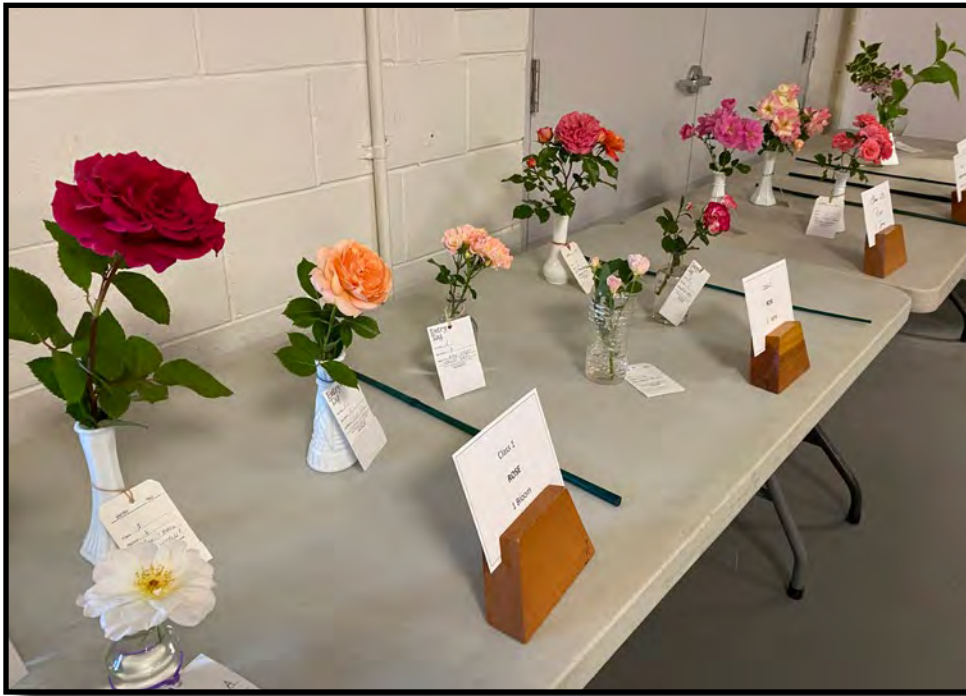


Photo Credit: David St Amand



Photo Credit: David St Amand

The thing that I am learning most about flower shows over the past few years is the downsizing or disappearance of them, or why societies don't have them at all. They maybe never have. Number one reason for this seems to be "we don't have anyone to teach us anything about flower shows." If mentoring by other competitors to increase entries and participation isn't happening, that, my flower show friends, is our fault. That's on us. Everything from showing some first timer where their class is, explaining a change that might result in a better placing, how to fill in a tag, to "you should add a bit more water to that bud vase." It all matters. Flower shows must have some moral support from their society's board of directors, even if there is a functioning show sub committee that just does their thing. Other reasons flower shows do not exist might include: we don't have time for them at our meetings (we make time for what we deem important), we don't have space (we make space for what interests us), we can't afford to pay a judge or offer prizes (everything costs money, maybe a small annual participation fee would work). Maybe there's a way to start a flower show with two or three other nearby societies and pool your resources.

Horticultural society members attend meetings for a number of reasons. They don't all come solely for the speaker. A range of events fills an assortment of interests, which results in a thriving and increasing membership. Who wouldn't welcome more members? I wouldn't suggest starting out with a full range of classes unless you've already got some floral designers and flower show people

at hand. I can see no impediment to starting cut flower competitions in any society meeting during the growing season. Even in November you can have a class competition for seed heads or for any dried flower stem.

Start in the spring with something as simple as a tulip or a daffodil show. You just need a table. A white tablecloth isn't mandatory unless somebody's got one. You can print your entry tags on somebody's printer and get stickers for First, Second, etc. Get a bud vase from the thrift store and you can participate. They have lots. Someone can go over basic single flower stem in a vase tips, which are provided in the judging standards book, the previous month before the following month's competition. Send out email reminder notes, designate a contact person or two. Decide as a group which entry is the best and why, and how important naming the tulip variety is. You can start without a judge, just yourselves. You are just learning. (Don't cringe certified judges, they are testing the waters and if they jump in they will need you.) You can have a zinnia or a cosmos competition in the autumn, or vegetable classes. One zinnia, one cosmos stem, one tomato or one pepper at a time. Start small and dream big. Who knows where you will go in floral competitions, you've only got to make a start to do it. The important thing is to keep dreaming and make the world a better place.

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Tillsonburg Horticultural Society

Submitted by Sue Healey. Photos by Sue Healey & Pat Zeyen

The early and intense onset of winter weather did nothing to dampen the activities of the Tillsonburg Horticultural Society in the last quarter of 2025 and the first few months of 2026. Regular meetings resumed in September after a well-deserved summer break, and a busy schedule of speakers, workshops, tours, and outreach kept us engaged despite the frigid temperatures and snowy conditions.

Topics such as elevated gardens, orchid cultivation, and gardening in the context of climate change were among the engaging subjects presented at our regular meetings. Knowledgeable and dynamic presenters are a key component of our society's success and continue to draw large numbers to our monthly meetings.

This year's fall coach tour had us visit Collingwood and the surrounding area. Members enjoyed great discounts at local restaurants and nurseries, with a private garden tour along the way. Garden tours have become a popular addition to both the spring and fall buying trips, offering inspiration, fresh ideas, and a glimpse into stunning private gardens for visitors. We put those ideas into action during our autumn workshop, where attendees received guidance on creating their own decorative sleds.

THS volunteers planted the "200 Garden" at Broadway/Oxford Park in honour of the Founder's Festival, celebrating two hundred years of Dereham Forge settlement. Special thanks to our volunteers for their hard work, and to Tillsonburg Garden Gate for supplies for this special project. This group is one of several volunteer teams maintaining public spaces in town. Local parks, arts centres, and even business fronts benefit from the dedication that our volunteers show towards society projects. Volunteers form the foundation of every horticultural society, supporting continuous programs like public gardens, Junior Gardener programs, health and wellness fairs, and various other responsibilities that rely on their dedication.



Celebrating 200 Years of Dereham Forge settlement

In recognition of that commitment, the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards ceremony took place in London, Ontario. On October 24, 2025, representatives from the Ontario provincial government honoured volunteers nominated by their respective groups for their years of service. The Tillsonburg Horticultural Society had strong representation from its committed volunteers. This year's ceremony celebrated THS members Marion Smith, with twenty years of service, Dena Luyt, fifteen years, and Sue Healey, five years.



As the winter set in and the holiday season began, the society once again collaborated with Meals on Wheels to provide potted poinsettias to their program recipients. Now in its second year, the program has received positive feedback from all participants. THS looks forward to continuing to spread holiday cheer to the community and surrounding area. To end the year, the society held its annual Christmas potluck dinner instead of regular meetings in December. Our local Lion's Auditorium accommodated the large number of guests, and musical entertainment by "The Gentlemen of Harmony" was a rare treat enjoyed by all. As always, the donated side dishes were a uniquely varied affair, highlighting our members' other talents beyond horticulture, while the society provided turkey, mashed potatoes, and gravy. This year's slideshow, thoughtfully

assembled by Pat Zeyen and Barb Quantrill, highlighted the society's annual achievements and reminded us of the value of connections fostered through membership.

January saw the dissolution of the 2025 Board of Directors and the induction of the new board. Joining the board are Elaine Gauld, Tina Hopper, and Mary Jane Leighton. Our annual Seed Exchange in February once again drew many new and renewed members for another year of swapping seeds. In March, our fourth annual Panel of Knowledge will once again answer our members' questions relating to the garden.

We look forward to another productive year of seeding, planting, and growing our message of beautification through education and experience.



Ontario Volunteer Service Awards



THS Season's greetings 2025



OHA MEMBER OR FAMILY MEMBER SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

MISSION STATEMENT The Ontario Horticultural Association is a volunteer charitable organization that provides leadership, education and promotes interest in gardening and related environmental issues with affiliated Horticultural Societies/Garden Clubs and like-minded organizations.

Purpose: The Ontario Horticultural Association is committed to assisting its Affiliated Society/Club members and their children and grandchildren in their pursuit of post-secondary education in a Horticulture related field.

The Ontario Horticultural Association may offer up to one (1) one thousand dollar (\$1,000.00) Scholarship each year.

Criteria:

- Applicant must be a member or a child, stepchild, grandchild, or step-grandchild of a Horticultural Society member in good standing within the OHA.
- Applicant must be attending a post secondary educational institution in Ontario.
- Applicant may be any age and must be accepted into a post secondary educational institute in the Province of Ontario.
- The program must be a minimum of 2 years, but the applicant is eligible in either year one or any following year of the program.
- Applicant must provide the following with their application:
 1. A transcript of their marks unless returning as a mature student.
 2. A letter to the Scholarship committee detailing their role in horticulture and community involvement and outlining why they deserve this scholarship.
 3. A letter from an organization or company outlining their volunteer contribution to the organization or the company with which they have volunteered.
 4. A copy of their acceptance letter into their program or confirmation of continuing in their program.
- Applicant must be willing to attend a Society/Club meeting or a District or OHA meeting within 1 year of receiving the award to speak about the award or another topic of interest within their horticultural learning.
- Applicant must be willing to have their photo taken and allow it to be published, along with their Thank You letter in the Trillium magazine and in any other GardenOntario Publication and on the GardenOntario Webpage and/or Face Book page. They will be required to sign a waiver regarding publication at the time of the award being issued.
- The home society will be made aware of the scholarship winner so they can arrange for the speaking engagement to follow.
- Applications will be submitted to the Awards Coordinator as noted on the application.
awards@gardenontario.org
- Applications will be accepted from March 1st to June 30th of every year.
- **The application form can be found by clicking this link: [OHA Scholarship Application](#)**

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Additional information regarding the OHA insurance plan can be found at:

<https://gardenontario.org/resources/#insurance>



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