

A WORMS EYE VIEW  
FERGUS AND DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY  
MARCH 2019



Winter Is All Downhill From Here!

Monthly Meeting  
Wednesday March 20

Victoria Park Senior Centre  
7:30 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m.

Please join us for a night of fellowship and fun  
For more info please contact Connie Di Pisa at 519-843-4866

## President's Message March 2019

We've had quite a blast of nasty winter weather this February. I hope you all have stayed warm and cozy planning all you'd like to accomplish in your gardens this year. On a good note, March is here and spring is on its way. The sooner, the better as I think we've all had enough of this nasty weather.

In the mean time there are still a few events coming up that will get us dreaming of spring. Canada Blooms is still on until March 17. **Seedy Saturday is coming up as well on March 16.** The District #7 Spring AGM hosted by Mount Forest & District Horticultural Society is on April 13 and Earth Day is April 22. All good things to tide us over until spring arrives.

I was sorry we had to cancel February's meeting due to the ice storm warnings. I was really looking forward to our guest speaker Christine Gilhuly and her "Lazy Gardening" presentation. We are trying to arrange for her to come back in 2020. Our speaker this month is Joanne Baars from Arthur Greenhouses. I hope to see you all there on the 20th and hope that the weather behaves kindly.

Please remember that your Board and I value your ideas and comments on what you would like us as a society to accomplish, so don't be shy..... fill out a comment slip or approach any of us with your ideas.

Also, don't be shy to volunteer your assistance with any project or committee you have an interest in. We value all contributions you can make, whether a few minutes, a few hours or whatever you are comfortable with. This is *your* Society and its success depends upon all of its members contributions. Besides, its a great way to get to know new people and we always have a good time working together.

Here's to an early spring!

Connie

## **Our Guest Speaker for March**

Our Guest Speaker for the upcoming Members' Meeting on March 20th will be Joanna Baars, of Arthur Greenhouses, who will speak on the topic "My Year in the Nursery". She will be accompanied by her husband and business partner Patrick van den Eijnden.

We all typically visit plant nurseries and garden centres during the warm months when plants are in bloom and ready for transplanting to our gardens, but, for Joanne and Patrick, work at Arthur Greenhouses continues all year round. Joanne will provide some insights into what goes on behind the scenes during both their peak and off-season months.

While living in the Netherlands, Joanne farmed on rented land, growing cut flowers for the international market and perennials and shrubs for the national market. All were grown outside in containers (no greenhouses) and included peonies, dianthus, snapdragons, sunflowers and flowering kale. Patrick worked "off-farm" as an agriculture advisor. The two met at university where they both graduated as agriculture engineers, Joanna specialising in bio-dynamic farming and Patrick in agricultural economics.

Patrick is the 15th generation of farmer in his family, which farmed in the Netherlands, Belgium and France, but Patrick is the first generation here in Canada. Joanna is the 6th generation of vegetable farmer in her family, and was raised on a small dairy farm close to Amsterdam. As a student she worked for several years on a tulip farm, where she learned her trade growing bulbs and cut flowers.

The couple emigrated to Canada in 2007 because farmland is not available to own as property in the Netherlands. They founded Arthur Greenhouses in October of that year, and have since continuously grown and expanded the business, now entering its 12th season.

Please come along and welcome Joanna and Patrick at our next meeting.

## **April 22nd is Earth Day**

### **What will you do to celebrate this day?**

This was the question posed to our Society by the 2nd Vice-President, Joanne Rachfalowski of the OHA. It was discussed at our March 6th Board meeting and we realized that April 22nd is Easter Monday this year. As our Diggin' in the Dirt group is normally out on the Tuesdays, we thought we would help our community by picking up debris not only in our gardens but in the general downtown area.

Of course, you may do your own activity at home on the 22nd and this could be any of the following:

- \* Turn out the lights when not in use
- \* Do not buy or use plastic water bottles.
- \* Walk to do your errands instead of driving to each and every one
- \* Pick up garbage or winter debris – that is on public land or side of the road
- \* Cook from scratch – do not use processed foods
- \* Buy local produce (that has not travelled thousands of kilometres)
- \* Ride a bike

Check out the Earth Day website for many more activities that you can do – not only on Earth Day but each and every day.

## **Membership to our Society is now available.**

This is a reminder that your yearly membership fees are due in January. Once again the fees remain at ten dollars per member. The membership committee will be available to collect your dues at 7:00 pm, before our meeting starts.

## July 11<sup>th</sup> 2019 Bus Trip



We'll be leaving at 8am sharp from Centre Wellington Sportsplex and returning around 6pm. All Ontario Horticultural Society members are welcome. Cost for the trip is \$45, add \$20 for buffet lunch, payable when you reserve your spot. Your cheques will be deposited on July 1st.

First stop will be Riverwood Gardens not far from Durham and Hanover followed by a coffee break at Tim Hortons in Durham. Continuing north on Hwy. 6 to Blossom Hills near Holland Centre.

The Falls Inn at Walters Falls is our buffet lunch destination, you may opt in or out for the buffet. Be sure to wander over and view the river and falls. Then eastward to Willow Farm Grasses near Walters Falls. From there we head to Kimberley and Artemesia Daylilies.

Last stop, Froggies Song in Flesherton. To see pictures and learn a bit more about the gardens, visit [www.ruralgardens.ca](http://www.ruralgardens.ca) Please contact either Karen Eddie at 519-856-9881 [kareneddie22@gmail.com](mailto:kareneddie22@gmail.com) or Bernie Siegmund at 519-843-6870 [bernie.siegmund@everus.ca](mailto:bernie.siegmund@everus.ca), for more info or to book your tour.

Hope you'll join us!

## **May 11th Save the Date!**

Looking ahead to Spring we are already thinking of our big fundraiser the 20th edition of the Best Bloomin' plant sale on May 11th. With this recent cold and snowy weather one is hard pressed to believe Spring will come but it will. A few weather forecasters are saying Spring will come on strong and quickly so cheers to that! Your committee is already organizing and preparing for the plant sale. Hopefully members will be thinking of plants you are able to divide and donate. As in previous years we will have two potting up days the two Fridays before the sale May 3 and May 10. Sign up sheets will be circulated at the April meeting but if you are not able to attend that meeting you can let me know at the March meeting. We hope you will consider helping out it is a great social time as well as work.

A group of society members recently attended a day conference where the topic was use of native plants in the landscape and indeed this is a trend we are starting to see. I remember from past plant sales people asking about native plants. So if you have any native plants suitable for splitting we would most welcome them. If space allows in your garden maybe this is the year for you to try a new perennial and hopefully in a few years there will be something new to donate to the sale.

Michelle Goff



## The sugar maple has a rich Canadian history

Ron Stevenson, Fergus Horticultural Society

Finally, the first indications of spring reveals that winter's last days aren't that far off. Warm breezes, robins and maple syrup are long awaited signs that this lingering winter may soon be coming to an end. Once a year, in late winter, the tradition of collecting sap from sugar maples (*Acer saccharum*) begins the process of making maple syrup. Also known as rock maple, the sugar maple turns a glorious orangey-red in autumn. It's the most abundant of the seven types of maples found in Canada.

Historically, it was selected for making utensils, juice presses, grinders, cooking tools and rolling pins. In today's marketplace, it's chosen for furniture, flooring and construction. Because of its density, sugar maple firewood is a choice fuel during the home heating season. A red sugar maple leaf on our flag is further evidence of its importance.

European settlers watched First Nations women chop into maple tree trunks, then collect and boil down the sugar water. Over time, the settlers adapted these methods by drilling holes into the trunks and inserted spiles. Over the years, the settlers hung buckets below the spouts to catch the dripping sap. They also used iron pots over open fires to evaporate the sugar water.

It should be noted that birch trees can also be tapped. Birch syrup is not as sweet as its maple counterpart. It takes 40L of maple sap to make 1L syrup, whereas it takes 85L of birch sap to make 1L of syrup.

Present-day large maple syrup producers use a labour saving tube system for collecting sap. Maple syrup operations in Canada (Québec, Ontario, Maritimes) produce 85% of the world's commercial crop. United States (Vermont) produces the balance. Sugar maples are a renewable resource and have been known to last for 70 - 100 years.

On average, sap contains 2% to 3% sugar. This "sweet water" has the ingredients the tree needs to continue growing (salts, peptides, amino acids, amylase). The running of the sap depends on air temperatures during the day versus the night. The freeze/thaw process is essential else the sap will stop running. There are two stages in the sap run. The absorption phase occurs during freezing nights -0°C (32°F) and an exudation phase when the day temperatures are above freezing.

Because of the daily toggling between temperatures, it is theorized that the sap is pushed up and deposited in branches of the tree. Once air temperatures rises above 5°C (41°F), the frozen sap thaws in the branches and begins to flow down towards the base of the tree or to the point where the tree has been tapped. Logically, a tree freezes from the outside in and the smallest branches would freeze first. Sap would still be sucked up the sapwood that has not begun to freeze.

During the next day, if air temperature rises above freezing, any frozen sap will melt and fall down the tree (because of gravity) and will exit the tree through freshly tapped hole. For this reason, sap flows best when air temperatures are below zero during the nights and above freezing during the day. Only when these day and night temperatures fluctuate will the trees release a steady flow of sap. Weather dictates the timeframe of the season. In Ontario and Québec the season lasts about six weeks, mid-March to mid-April. Sap flow will slow if temperatures are continuously below freezing during the night and day. Once night temperatures are continuously warmer (above freezing), the slower flow signifies the end of the season.

The colour and flavour of the syrup will change throughout the season. The best quality of sap flows in early spring. Once the leaf buds expand and start to develop, syrup will take on a stronger flavour. This type of syrup is generally reserved for commercial use. Syrup is graded by colour. The lighter the syrup, the higher the grade, and the more subtle flavour it will have.

There are 5 grades of syrup:

Canada # 1 (Grade AA) Extra Light – Candy making

Canada # 1 (Grade A) Light – Delicate flavour

Canada # 1 (Grade B) Medium – Table use

Canada # 2 (Grade C) Amber – Baking

Canada # 3 (Grade D) Dark – Commercial flavouring



## **BEAR THOUGHTS**

Self-expression can be difficult. It is always risky to share something with anyone for a variety of reasons. Some things offer no feedback in response (rocks, trees, dirt) while others simply seem unwilling to listen (anxious squirrels, the raccoon I accidentally sat on, essentially all ants). Then there are the creatures who make me feel embarrassed to share. Birds, for example, do so many things so well and with such ease, making it challenging to share things in front of or around them. They fly with determination. They sit atop trees with grace. They never seem to fall. They, most importantly, sing. They sing so beautifully.

I, too, like to sing. I like to sing maybe as often as birds do, but I do not feel the confidence they must feel to sing so freely and so openly. When I sing, I am usually alone, sometimes among trees and rocks (again, they say nothing back so it is easier, though still difficult, to sing in front of them). I let out tiny growls and tiny howls and such and, I must admit, try to mimic what I have heard from birds. They do sing so well, and I do desire to sound like them. I know I do not. I know that my bear songs are probably not nearly as sweet and calming as most bird sounds seem, but that does not stop me.

Once, a bird caught me singing. I thought my only audience was a few rocks sitting outside of my cave, but after belting out a few growls, I looked up to see a very red bird

staring at me. I was unable to tell what the bird thought of my song. I stared back, waiting for a review or, even better, advice. It never came. We stared at each other for awhile longer and then I let go and channeled my bird confidence and sang some more. The very red bird kept staring and when I stopped, it looked elsewhere and then finally flew off.

It felt nice to have a real audience, as stoic as it seemed. It made me feel like maybe I could do what birds do with the same kind of confidence. Maybe I do not sing as well as any bird, but I am sure I could at least feel as good about my singing as every bird must.