



Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

Fall 2018 Newsletter

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Finding the Future in the Arboretum

By Eric Jones



R. Hinchcliff

Redbud in the Arboretum (*Cercis canadensis*)

The book *Trees and Shrubs of the Dominion Arboretum* was written almost 40 years ago by a former curator of the Arboretum, Arthur Buckley. It offers informed and curious views of the characteristics and redeeming qualities of each species and variety in the collection at that time.

In his introduction, the author commented on a number of species that seemed hardier than expected (e.g., Umbrella Magnolia, Redbud, Bald Cypress, Shingle Oak, Sargent's Cherry). It's safe to say in 2018 that more species can be considered hardy here due to climate change and plant breeding.

Hardiness of hardwoods

The collection in Buckley's time (as now) included many maples, although some exotic species were killed back to ground level resulting in many trunks from a central bole; e.g. some Japanese Maples. Buckley noted that maples were particularly sensitive to the stress of transplanting with exposed roots. A couple of specimens were destroyed during winter "probably by skiers."

Buckley wrote that the collection had more American elms than any other species. In view of the ravages of elm diseases in Ottawa, he predicted that the eventual outcome will be "a city without elms." Since

the book came out, there have been some ameliorating factors: some disease-resistant varieties, some new hybrid elms and ongoing treatment of a few older white elms. Ash trees, on the other hand, have become the new heartbreak for the city.

Buckley reported on a large number of birch varieties, many of which have not survived. He didn't mention the borers that are well-known birch pests today. One of the birch trees was reported to be destroyed by a "large gang mower unit" in the Arboretum.

Of the London Plane, Buckley noted that most don't survive Ottawa winters but speculated that some of the seedlings had inherited greater resistance to winter from its sycamore parent. He commented on the Macoun Memorial Garden's London Plane tree, already 60 years old at the time (still there now).

Buckley stated that hickories and walnuts need to be planted very early or they suffer setbacks, noting a hickory that was growing very slowly near a large one in the woodland area. He reported on efforts to grow chestnut trees but recognized that it wasn't just lack of hardiness but susceptibility to the chestnut blight disease that killed them.

Buckley regretted the scarcity of beech trees in the Ottawa area—once abundant but "now disappearing beneath the contractors' bulldozers." The horse chestnut was not considered totally hardy in Ottawa, although he noted a few large specimens in sheltered places in the city. Some related buckeye trees seemed to do well here.

Vigour of ornamentals

Of magnolias, he said: "more specimens would be grown if they were not associated with the 'Deep South' and if their needs were better understood." Since then, many

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A Lovely Meandering Garden

On Sunday, September 9 we celebrated not only the donations we received in the past year, but also the completion of the development phase of the Merivale Shelterbelt. In 2004, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm planted the first trees in what was to become the Merivale Shelterbelt. Over the next 14 years, the Friends planted hundreds of trees and dozens of shrubs. The final really large addition was the 150 trees that AAFC planted in recognition of Canada's 150th anniversary. The result of all this work is a lovely meandering garden along Merivale Road from Baseline Road to the northern edge of the Farm property.

Shelterbelts, which are narrow bands of trees generally two to four trees deep, have been encouraged as a way to reduce the impact of wind and reduce soil erosion. While that is also the purpose of the Merivale Shelterbelt, we have the bonus of a meandering path to walk along and enjoy the peaceful setting.

During the years we have worked on the Shelterbelt, we have learned a lot. Some trees, originally recommended, could simply not survive the harsh conditions that include wind and salt spray. Still, we have been very pleased with the overall survival rate of the plants.

While the initial planting is done, work will continue here for many years and we will continue to improve the garden. For example, we have already begun installing signs that identify the various trees and shrubs. We also plan to install additional benches along the path. And, of course, we

will continue to do the maintenance that a garden like this requires, including replacing plants as necessary.

We were delighted to have Pierre Corriveau, the retiring Deputy Minister of the Corporate Management Branch, at the September ceremony. We were pleased to honour this long-time friend of the Friends by adding an inscription on a plaque at the beginning of the path.

There are many people we should thank for their work on the Merivale Shelterbelt, more than we could hope to recognize, including all the hard-working volunteers on Shelterbelt teams over the years, and

Deborah Higdon-LeBlond, our Shelterbelt program administrator. But two people should definitely be acknowledged for their many years of dedication. Michel Falardeau, who is now retired from AAFC, spent many years supporting the Shelterbelt. And, of course, Polly McColl of the Friends, who continues to lead the volunteer work to create and maintain the garden. We are grateful for all their efforts.



Ken Young

(Left to right) Michel Falardeau, Judy Dodds, Polly McColl

Judy Dodds

Les tournants d'un joli jardin

La célébration du dimanche 9 septembre dernier a donné l'occasion de souligner les dons reçus durant la dernière année et à la fois de marquer la fin de la phase de développement du brise-vent Merivale. En 2004, Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada (AAC) et les Amis de la Ferme expérimentale centrale ont planté les premiers arbres à l'endroit même où se trouve le brise-vent actuel. Au cours des 14 années qui ont suivi, les Amis ont planté des centaines d'arbres et des douzaines d'arbustes. Le plus grand ajout en vérité a été réalisé lorsque AAC a planté 150 arbres pour souligner le 150^e anniversaire du Canada. Tout ce travail a donné un joli jardin à méandres le long du chemin Merivale, s'étendant du chemin Baseline à la limite boréale de la propriété de la Ferme.

Les brise-vent sont d'étroites bandes d'arbres qui sont plantés trois ou quatre dans le sens de la largeur, ce qui permet de limiter les effets du vent et l'érosion du sol. Bien que ce soit en effet l'objectif du brise-vent Merivale, nous avons le bonheur de nous

promener le long d'un sentier à courbes dans une ambiance empreinte de calme.

Au cours de nos années de travail pour établir le brise-vent, nous avons acquis bien des connaissances. Quelques arbres, dont le choix avait été recommandé, n'ont tout simplement pu résister aux dures conditions telles que le vent et l'embrun salé. De manière générale, nous sommes toutefois bien satisfaits du taux de survie des plantes.

Bien que le projet de plantation initial ait été achevé, il y aura du travail pour bien des années encore. Nous avons déjà procédé à l'installation des écriteaux qui permettent d'identifier les divers types d'arbres et d'arbustes. Nous voulons aussi installer d'autres bancs le long du sentier. Nous continuerons, bien entendu, de veiller à l'entretien qu'exige un tel jardin.

Nous avons été agréablement surpris de la présence à la cérémonie du 9 septembre de Pierre Corriveau, sous-ministre de la Direction générale de la gestion intégrée, dont le départ à la retraite était imminent. Nous avons été heureux de rendre hommage à cet ami de longue date pour les Amis en plaçant aux

approches du sentier une plaque portant une inscription.

Nous devons des remerciements à plusieurs personnes en raison du travail accompli dans le cadre du projet du brise-vent Merivale, et celles-ci sont en fait bien plus nombreuses que nous l'avions imaginé au début, notamment les dévoués bénévoles des équipes du brise-vent qui ont déployé des efforts inlassables au cours des années, et Deborah Higdon-LeBlond, notre administrateur de programme du brise-vent. Nous voulons cependant reconnaître deux personnes pour leur dévouement qui s'est échelonné sur de nombreuses années : Michel Falardeau, retraité d'AAC, a manifesté un appui inébranlable pendant bien des années à l'égard de l'élaboration du brise-vent; également, Polly McColl, membre des Amis, qui continue à assurer le leadership du travail des bénévoles dans l'amélioration et l'entretien du jardin. Nous leur vouons une reconnaissance inestimable.

Judy Dodds

Finding the Future in the Arboretum ... *(continued from page 1)*



Kobus Magnolias in the Arboretum.

new magnolia cultivars have been tried in sheltered locations, and some beautiful ones have survived. He mentioned the large Kobus Magnolias that are still there today.

Redbud was reported to be not sufficiently hardy (more recent rebuds sourced from colder areas have been more successful). He wrote that Tulip Trees were not fully hardy here and were frequently killed back by frost, although one specimen had appeared to overcome this for many years; it later died but has been replaced.

Crabapples, selected especially for their hardiness, were featured in the last Friends of the Farm newsletter so readers know that many varieties were developed here on the Farm. Buckley discussed their disease susceptibility as well as hardiness.

Rhododendrons, he noted, were challenged in Ottawa not just by the cold but also the alkaline soil. He reported that the Farm had done extensive trials of varieties, and that many rhododendrons and azaleas may be hardy here if given the proper soil preparation. Some rhododendrons have done very well under the conifers at the entrance to the Arboretum, due to the soil acidity there.

Lilacs, many of which were developed here, are discussed in detail. Part of the reason for the popularity of lilacs on the Farm, especially those bred by Preston, is their hardiness.

Condition of conifers

Conifers grow much further north than Ottawa so you'd think they would do very well here. However, Buckley's general impression was that pines and spruces and

firs were not too happy in the atmosphere and soil of the Ottawa area, seeming to prefer their own niches. He suggested it might be due to lack of mycorrhizal activity (beneficial fungi in the soil).

Over time, planting sufficient numbers of conifers can gradually improve these conditions and this has happened in parts of the Arboretum. For example, a conifer grove planted near the canal at the southern end of the Arboretum in the early 1990s is thriving today.

For many junipers, he wrote that "rapid fluctuations of temperature caused by bright winter sunshine and strong winds can cause a browning of the leaves." This continues to be an issue for juniper varieties.

What will be 'native' in the future?

Over the coming years it would be very useful to have an updated companion book to the Buckley volume. Testing the suitability of trees and shrubs in a northern climate was the original reason for the Arboretum and is still of great interest everywhere, even though the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) mandate and circumstances have changed since 1980.

Some shrubs and small trees that Buckley reported to be unsuccessful in the Ottawa climate have since been grown in sheltered parts of the Arboretum (e.g. Dawn Redwood, *fothergilla*, *lespedeza*, *liquidambar*). It's still true that many shrubs only attain a meter or so in height due to winter dieback, but that could change with the climate. Evidence is needed to know for sure.

We are going to need new trees and shrubs here and elsewhere in Canada as time goes on because we are losing many of our native species. After the dramatic loss of elms and ashes and with other major tree diseases looming in the near future, new species and varieties will be needed to fill the void. Our species today will not necessarily be our species tomorrow. Evolution is never ending, and we need to find out what works best in the 21st century!

Eric Jones has worked for the Canadian Wood Council and leads the Arboretum volunteer team.



Conifer grove at the southern end of the Arboretum, August 2018.

Upcoming Events

For more information, visit www.friendsofthefarm.ca or call 613-230-3276.

Annual Non-dinner

- Please join the Friends for our popular annual fundraiser from September 1 to December 31. Not a single person will show up and we will be delighted. You can help the Friends of the Farm just by staying at home!
- By purchasing tickets to this fundraising event that will never take place, you can help sponsor numerous activities in support of the Ornamental Gardens and Arboretum on the Farm. By purchasing tickets to this fundraising event that will never take place, you can help sponsor numerous activities in support of the Ornamental Gardens and Arboretum on the Farm.
- Individual seats \$25. Couples \$50. Family \$100. Table of Six \$250. Community \$500.
- Your support is greatly appreciated and your donation is tax deductible.
- You can contribute by using our new online fillable form for cheques or PayPal at Annual Non-dinner or Non-souper annuel.

Nature vs City Tour at the Shelterbelt

- Sunday, October 14, 2 pm.
- Meet at the Shelterbelt between Merivale Rd and McCooney Lane.
- The Shelterbelt project has planted many trees along Merivale Road.
- Find out how these trees have fared in a challenging environment with tour leader Roman Popadiouk.
- Parking will be available on side streets west of Merivale (e.g. Celebration Street or Crystal Park Crescent).
- All our welcome. No special knowledge of trees is needed to attend this tour.
- Although the tour is free and open to the public, please register in advance.

Bulbs for Year-Round Enjoyment

- Presentation by Master Gardener Mary Reid.
- Tuesday, October 16, from 7 pm to 9 pm.
- Building 72 in the Arboretum, east of Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Daffodils and dahlias, crocus and cannas as well as some of the winter favourites like paper whites and amaryllis are discussed.
- We'll look at bulbs throughout the year—how to choose them, how to plant and care for them and how to ENJOY them.
- Bring your garden diary as you might want to mark down highlights of each month's bulbs.
- FCEF Member: \$12; Non-member: \$15.

Used Book Drop Off

- Saturday, October 20, 10 am to 3 pm.
- Donate your books for a great cause.
- Please note that we do not accept magazines, textbooks or encyclopaedias.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum, east of the Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Please respect Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada property and do not drop off books at any other time, thanks!

Endangered Trees and New Appearances

- Come and join this final Arboretum tour of the season with tour leaders Ken Farr and Eric Jones.
- Sunday, October 28, 10 am.
- Meet at Building 72 in the Arboretum, east of Prince of Wales roundabout.
- This tour will focus on trees that are listed on the Canadian Species at Risk Act, or closely related to endangered species.
- Also visited on this tour will be many surprising southern tree species that regularly survive winter in Ottawa.
- Although the Arboretum tours are free and open to the public, please register in advance.

History of English Country House Gardens

- Presentation by Master Gardener Heather Clemenson.
- Tuesday, November 6, from 7 pm to 9 pm. Building 72 in the Arboretum, east of Prince of Wales roundabout.
- This illustrated talk outlines the history and design of English country house gardens.
- From the Tudor period to the present day,

Best Wishes to Pierre Corriveau



Ken Young

Friends of the Farm send best wishes to Pierre Corriveau, who retired in September as Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Management Branch, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (see Judy's message, page 2). Pierre worked in the department for 37 years and was a strong supporter of the goals and activities of the Friends of the Farm, who have donated an inscription in his honour at the Merivale Shelterbelt.

the focus is on pleasure gardens of the aristocracy and gentry.

- The presentation provides an overview of how changes in the lifestyle and wealth of these powerful landowners have contributed to the development of garden tourism in England.
- FCEF Member: \$12; Non-member: \$15.



Richard Raycraft

Residence of William Saunders, Director of Experimental Farms. Later occupied by Agriculture's Deputy Minister before it was demolished in the early 1930s, this home has inspired Cole Robillard (see next page).

Cole Robillard – A Thirst for Learning

J. H. C. (Cole) Robillard has been a book dealer, furniture repairer and salesman, antique collector and importer, wood miller, history researcher, gardener, high school graduate, volunteer with the Friends of the Farm, and more. He will be 18 years of age this November. “It’s not about time spent,” he says, “it’s about what you do with your time.”

Cole graduated from Glebe Collegiate this year and has now begun a four-year B. Sc. program at Trent University in sustainable agriculture and food systems. He plans to specialize in horticulture, after which he hopes to find a job in Ottawa. He would love to work at the Farm.

Cole grew up in Centretown West, where his family roots run deep. His great grandfather built a mansion for himself and his family on Cambridge Street after WWI, and also built the house that Cole grew up in. His great grandmother was a German baroness and on his father’s side, Cole’s great great grandfather, Honoré Robillard, was the first francophone MPP in Ontario, representing the city of Ottawa. Family members were involved in the building of St. Anthony’s Church on Booth Street and its rebuilding after two fires. Cole says that when his grandmother was young, she would take lunch to the men at work on the church. The painter working on the interior frescoes took a look at this young woman, said “That’s the face of my angel” and painted her into a fresco, which remains today.

While he has a general love of history, Cole has a soft spot for Ottawa’s Farm. His great grandmother knew William Saunders, first director, who gave her a personal tour of the Farm, as well as some roses and peonies. Cole believes that one of the roses was ‘Mary Arnott’, which Saunders himself bred.

The first time Cole saw a photo of the Saunders residence at the Farm, he decided he wanted it, and has begun a special project to replicate it. His family has a property of about 100 acres near Almonte, and on it Cole has found “the perfect place” to build. He was not put off, he says, when he discovered the Saunders home had 13 bedrooms and two kitchens. He will have only one kitchen and will not be putting six bedrooms in the attic. He plans to lay the foundation as soon as possible, and then take his time on the construction. With his own machinery, he can mill the lumber he needs, and as an avid antique collector, he already has period doors and brass fittings, among other items. One feature that captures the period charm he likes will be wainscoting in the kitchen.

No doubt Cole will have flower beds, shrubs and trees around his home, just as William Saunders did. Cole’s mother gave him a garden plot to take care of when he was five years of age, and he has been growing and learning about plants ever since. He estimates that his garden at the family farm now covers half an acre, centred around a rock garden. He has approximately 5,000 bulbs and loves peonies and irises, but his favourites are roses. “I adore my roses,” he says.

As a student at Glebe Collegiate, his love of gardening and interest in the Farm led to volunteering with the Friends in 2015. During summer breaks, he has worked on the Explorer rose team and the Shelterbelt team, as well as helping out at many events, such as the used book sale and the run on the Farm. Kitty Langill and Polly McColl, leaders of the Explorer rose and Shelterbelt teams



respectively, speak of his engaging and cheerful manner, and thirst for learning.

Cole enjoys the company of older Friends, but wishes the Friends were able to attract other young people. There were many at the orientation session he attended, he remembers, but only one other person his age joined a team that year. He is sure that if they found out more about the Farm and got involved with the Friends, they would be hooked also. He certainly does his best to spread the word, handing out brochures and talking to all and sundry about the Farm and Friends.

“I will forever have a special attachment to Ottawa’s Farm,” says Cole. “I felt so strongly and believed so much in the Shelterbelt and what the Friends stand for, I bought a plaque to go on the Shelterbelt so that, no matter how far away I was, a part of me would always be looking over the Farm that I love so much.”

On behalf of all Friends who have had the pleasure of knowing Cole, we wish him well in his future endeavours and invite him back — anytime!

Text and photos by Richard Hinchcliff.

Snapshots of a Few 2018 Events



Ken Young

Deborah Higdon-LeBlond in her Lego dress and Judy Dodds at Deborah's Lego display at Art on the Farm, August 11.



Ken Young

Deborah Higdon-LeBlond, Pierre Corriveau and guests at the Shelterbelt ceremony, September 9.



Eric Jones

Zoe Panchen, tree tour guide, May 13.



R. Hinchcliff

Linda Horricks, volunteer cashier, book sale, June 16.



Eric Jones

Ramin Izadpanah, photo tour guide, August 23.



Kate Hadden, Polly McColl, Cole Robillard, Joan Craig and husband Dan, Lynn Culhane and Lorraine Boulay helped at Émilie's Run on the Farm, April 18.



R. Hinchcliff

Plant sale, May 13.

Peony Team Planet



Jean-Charles Charron

Friends of the Farm peony team, 2018.

Jean-Charles Charron captured this photo of the peony team with his Ricoh Theta S camera that shoots at 360 degrees. "This camera has two lenses," he writes, "one in the front and one in the back enabling you to take a 360 photo at the push of one button. After taking the picture, I downloaded it to my iPad using the Theta software and did a bit of editing. I then used the Theta+ software to save it in 'Little Planet' mode."

Eye in the Sky

J-P Gratton captured this photo of the Macoun Memorial Garden with the camera on his drone, August, 2018.



Jean-Pascal Gratton

The Perilous Life of Trees

By Owen Clarkin

Despite the frequently tranquil and eternal appearance of trees, for survival they need to navigate a perilous life full of potential calamities such as fungal diseases, insect pests, herbivores, and hostile environmental factors (too hot, too cold, too windy, too wet, too dry, ice storms, lightning).

On June 10, 2018, a tour of the Dominion Arboretum that looked at trees and their damaging agents took place. It was one of this year's guided tours of the Arboretum offered by the Friends of the Farm.

We examined various kinds of damage, including:

- trees significantly damaged by wind such as the famous Bebb's Oak;
- mechanically damaged seedlings/saplings (activity by squirrels, etc.);
- cold-damaged trees, such as a Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*), recently dead from apparent winter-kill;
- ice storm damaged trees: old crown damage consistent with effects of excessive ice from the disastrous January 1998 storm;
- drought/heat-damaged trees: e.g. Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*), dying/dead apparently from prior heatwaves;
- insect damaged trees: e.g. Blue Ash (*Fraxinus quadrangulata*), nearly killed by the Emerald Ash Borer;
- disease damaged trees: e.g. American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), killed by Dutch Elm Disease.

Despite such a variety of damaging agents, we considered how



White Fir (*Abies concolor*), downed by wind in May 2018 at the Arboretum.

trees often recover from major injuries, which seemingly should be permanent or even fatal. The main lesson was that the toughness and will to live of trees is not to be underestimated.

In addition to leading public nature bikes, Owen Clarkin regularly contributes to local and worldwide plant identification forums on social media.

Unlike in previous storms, such as the one that injured Bebb's Oak, the Arboretum suffered only minor damage during the September 2018 tornados that caused so much devastation in Ottawa-Gatineau.

Bebb's Oak

A year ago, the beloved Bebb's Oak in the Arboretum suffered major damage in a severe storm. The tree lost about a third of its trunk and two large branches.

An international expert in tree hazard assessment checked the oak at the time, said that the damage would be a shock to the tree's system but was optimistic about its future. As Owen Clarkin writes above, "the toughness and will to live of trees is not to be underestimated."

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is acting to help preserve the tree. "Grass will be removed and mulch spread around under the canopy," says Pierre Huppé, which will result in "less soil compaction, better water and nutrient absorption. This will give the tree a maximum chance to heal from the major injury."

Because other branches on the tree have similar characteristics to those that fell, AAFC has installed a fence around the tree for safety reasons.



Bebb's Oak, August 2018.

Diana Dakers-Ryan – Doing What She Loved

In the year 2001, Diana Dakers-Ryan put in about 17,000 hours for the Friends of the Farm. “I don’t think of this as an achievement,” she said at the time, “just something I love to do.”

Born and raised in Vancouver, Diana worked as an operating room nurse for 15 years at the Queensway Carleton Hospital in Ottawa. After she retired in 1996, she became a Friends of the Farm volunteer, beginning on a gardening team, then joining the craft group. Soon after, she was appointed to the Board of Directors. “They wanted me to be the secretary for the board but what I do best is manage events,” she

said, and she did that for 15 years.

Although she always said it was her volunteer helpers who made the events run smoothly, Diana was an expert organizer, who not only made it fun for the volunteers but also rewarding on occasion – such as a pizza at the Prescott or some of her homemade wine after an event.

The late Valerie Cousins, former president of the Friends, wrote about how she became involved with the Friends. Passing Building 72, Valerie was “approached by Diana Dakers-Ryan, who happened to be coming out of the door with an armload of books, magazines, clay pots and a couple of dirty garden tools. Though we’d never met before, we talked freely at her car for more than 20 minutes. Because of her no-nonsense charm, her sense of humour and disarming, blue-eyed gaze, I felt an immediate affection for her and knew that I would end up doing almost anything she asked.”

As well as planning and orchestrating each event, Diana took care of promotion and media contact. She loved to talk about the Farm, leading tours of various community groups around the site. She



Diana (left) leading the rose team, 2008

R. Hinchcliff



Sheila Istead

Victorian Tea, August 2008

served as vice president of the Friends and was always keen to work in the gardens, at one time leading a rose team.

Diana began the highly popular Victorian Tea 20 years ago and was always suitably dressed for the occasion. “I love this event,” she said in 2002, “because it brings people back to the Farm and reminds them of the old days.”

Through her tireless work for the Friends, she became known as “Mrs. Friends of the Farm.” Later, when she married Peter Ryan, who added his energy and skills, we had our “Mrs. and Mr. Friends of the Farm.”

Diana died July 1 at the age of 88. We send sincere condolences to Peter and the family.

Courage and Passion

“Not so long ago, it was nearly impossible to be a woman and a scientist,” states the introduction to an exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Nature entitled *Courage and Passion*. “But a number of brave women followed their passion and challenged the idea that only men could be scientists.”

Twenty female scientists are celebrated in the exhibit. One of those women is Isabella Preston, the “Queen of Ornamental Horticulture,” who created about 200 garden hybrids during the time she worked at the Central Experimental Farm. Also included in the exhibit is Mildred Nobles, who had a long and distinguished career in the botany division at the Farm devoted to the study of wood-destroying fungi.

The exhibit, which runs until March 31, 2019, also allows visitors to explore opportunities and challenges that exist today for women interested in a career in science, from games to interactive videos. More information is at

<https://nature.ca/en/plan-your-visit/what-see-do/our-exhibitions/courage-passion-canadian-women-natural-sciences>.



The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm is a volunteer organization committed to the maintenance and protection of the Ornamental Gardens and the Arboretum of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Membership for the Friends of the Farm costs \$30 per year for an individual, \$50 per year for a family, \$25 for seniors/students. Payment by PayPal available on website. Membership fees support the many projects of the Friends of the Farm.

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John Connor — Sharing the Joy of Gardens

By Blaine Marchand

“Anything green was important to John,” his widow Pamela Burns said with a catch in her voice, but a proud one. “Bringing struggling plants back to life pleased him.”

John Thomas Connor passed away on October 1, 2017. He was a man of many accomplishments. Born in the Maritimes, his family moved to Ottawa in the early 1950s and lived along the Rideau River, close to the Central Experimental Farm. The area then was still largely rural, its open fields were his to explore. In 1971, he graduated in pharmacy from Dalhousie University and went on to own three pharmacies in villages in eastern Ottawa. He rose to hold leadership roles in the Ottawa-Carleton Pharmacists Association, the Ontario Pharmacy Association and the Canadian Pharmacy Association.

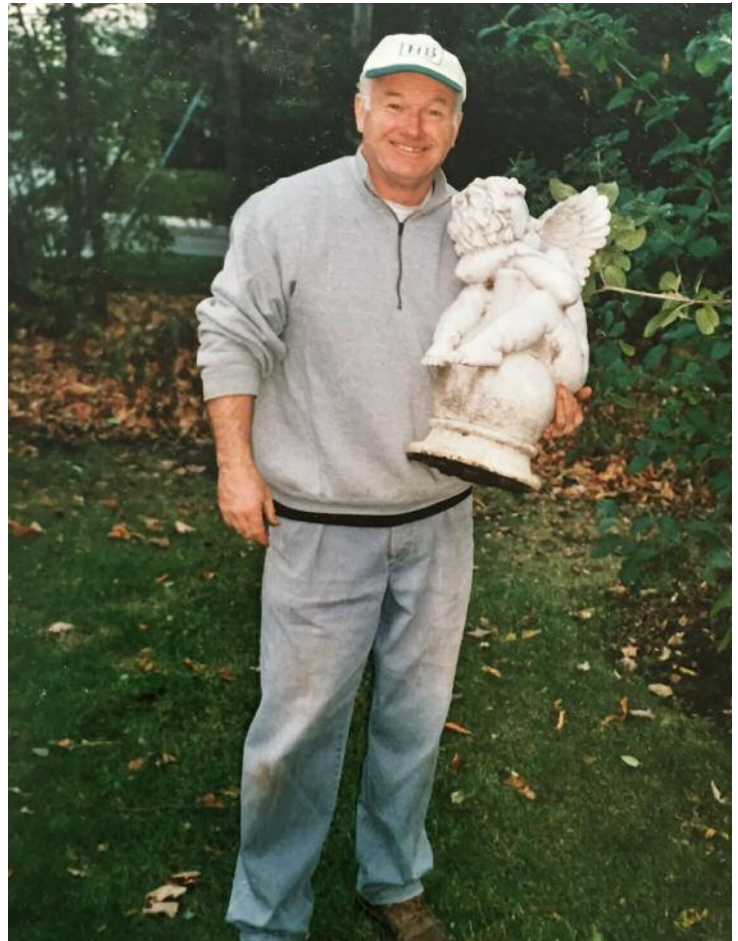
John’s core values were courage, loyalty, justice, and continued learning. He played a key role in having cigarettes taken off the shelves of pharmacies. He reasoned pharmacies were about health care and he was fiercely committed to this principle.

In 1983, he met Pamela Burns and two years later they married. They shared a passion for gardening. They created in their homes, both in Ottawa and in St-Pascal (southeast of Ottawa), garden sanctuaries, where they would spend many leisure hours. Their 156-acre rural property featured an environmentally sustainable house, complete with a two-storey greenhouse containing 300 houseplants. Besides farming crops such as buckwheat and soya beans, together they planted herbs, flowers, vegetables, and trees. John and his dad tended to 40 beehives and produced many pounds of honey. Whenever they travelled, John and Pamela made sure to visit botanical and historic gardens.

Their homes have always featured the 13-piece art collection of the Central Experimental Farm that was created by artist Susan Geraldine Taylor for the centennial celebration of the Farm in 1986. She described the Farm as “a wonderful open-air museum encompassing a multitude of treasures.” John and Pam felt blessed to have had the resources to create their own garden sanctuary, but recognized that many do not have this opportunity. The Farm provides this special place for many to enjoy.

“In my parent’s home, the Central Experimental Farm was always important”, Pamela added. “My mother, Judy Burns, was a Friend of the Farm and kept us fully informed about the gardens and events. She passed away this past June.

“When John drew up his will, he decided to designate a sum for the Friends to be used to enhance the gardens. And in his



Courtesy of Pamela Burns

obituary, it was requested that donations in his memory be made to the Friends. This was so appropriate. He believed gardens are a joy for everyone. They offer beautiful spaces for people to wander in and reflect.”

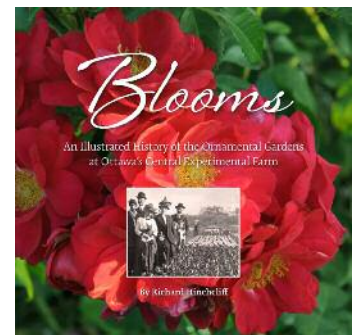
Blaine Marchand is a member of the peony team and director of gardens on the Friends of the Farm board of directors.

Great Gift Idea

A “tour de force in both words and pictures” was how *The Ottawa Citizen* described it. The *Canadian Field-Naturalist* journal described it as “first and foremost, gorgeous” and wrote, “at \$35.00, *Blooms* is a steal.”

The book *Blooms: An Illustrated History of the Ornamental Gardens at Ottawa’s Central Experimental Farm* is a celebration of the Farm’s achievements, and a treat for anyone who loves gardens, flowers and Canadian history. Keep it in mind as a great gift idea this Christmas!

It is available online from www.friendsofthefarm.ca and from bookstores throughout Ottawa (check ahead that copies are available).



The Fight Against Dog-strangling Vine

Vine ... continued from page 12

Greg Bales, www.invasivespecies.com/dog-stranglingvine/



Dog-strangling vine.

We have also noted that walnut trees inhibit the growth of DSV. Although we don't want a forest of walnuts at the FWG, we appreciate this help from the squirrels who disperse these nuts every fall. Although we've tried to explore this phenomenon in more controlled experiments, we have not been able to find a way to use the information in a practical way.

Finally, in a shady spot under sumacs, DSV has been completely replaced by White Snake-root, Purpleflowering raspberry, and Elderberries. Arrowleaved Asters have also come into this area—all without any help from our volunteers. Figuring out how to use this information is another story.

Big thanks

The FWG is run by volunteers only, and we are very grateful for the effort these people put into improving our wonderful wildlife garden. In terms of DSV, we especially thank volunteers Catherine Shearer and Michelle St-Germain for vast improvements in two highly visible parts of our garden, and Tim Morris for his herculean efforts with scythe and shovel. This summer we had amazing help from Algonquin College horticulture students. And AAFC saved us hours of toil by mowing large expanses of DSV around our borders.

For her significant contributions over many years to the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and its parent organization, The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club, Sandy Garland was recently awarded the George McGee Service Award.



Canada Science and Technology Museum, 960362

Six images on new photo cards available from the Friends of the Farm feature botanical artwork from Farm artists, such as this painting by Arthur Kellett of the 'Millicent' rose, introduced by Isabella Preston in 1938.



Non-dinner (see page 4).

Consider joining the Friends of the Farm!

Find our membership form on the website: <http://friendsofthefarm.ca/become-a-member/> and pay by PayPal, or send in a cheque.

Benefits include discounts on Master Gardener lectures, one adult member of a family free admission to the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, quarterly printed newsletters by post, and monthly Farm Notes e-newsletter.

We also accept donations to support our activities and events, which also support the garden teams that maintain the cherished Ornamental Gardens. A variety of donations can be made through our webpage: www.friendsofthefarm.ca/donations/.



The Fight Against Dog-strangling Vine

By Sandy Garland
Fletcher Wildlife Garden



Sandy Garland

Hypena opulenta larva, our hope for biocontrol of DSV.

At the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, we've been struggling with Dog-strangling Vine (*Vincetoxicum rossicum*) or DSV for over 15 years. We're still not winning the battle, but we've learned some strategies that might help others.

Biocontrol

The most promising news is about the moth that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) researchers discovered in the Ukraine, where DSV is a native species and kept well under control by a variety of insects and the local ecology. They chose to experiment with *Hypena opulenta*, whose larvae eat DSV leaves and are not a threat to native species here in Canada. They successfully overwintered the moths, then released them - first in test plots at the Farm, and now in a wider area. Millions of these creatures will be needed to make a dent in the DSV in Ottawa and elsewhere. However, looking at the success of the Loosestrife Beetle campaign, we have high hopes for *Hypena*.

Other recent good news

This winter, we were also delighted to hear about some research on "seedbank dynamics" of DSV. In summary, seeds are short-lived; so *unlike* Garlic Mustard seeds which remain viable for many years, DSV

seeds do not germinate after two years. Also, seeds buried under 10 cm of soil or mulch germinate, but cannot grow through that barrier.

What does this mean for practical purposes? Well, DSV doesn't spread by root growth, so our aim at the FWG has always been to keep the plants from going to seed. That way, we prevent new plants from growing, and have only the existing ones to deal with. It's good to know that DSV seeds and seedlings are much more vulnerable than we thought and pretty easy to eradicate.

Successes: accidental and deliberate

Because we have large areas of DSV-only growth, using a scythe to cut the plants several times during the summer is an effective way to keep them from setting seed, and it's a lot easier on aging backs than manual weeding. We even have a volunteer, who loves scything because it gives him a "good workout." In particularly "bad" areas, we often cover the scythed plants with a tarpaulin or a thick layer of leaf mulch; a year later, we can usually safely plant "good" species. In 2018, we started using layers of cardboard and organic matter, which I'm told gardeners call the "lasagna method."

DSV loves to climb, and one fall we spent hours pulling seed-laden plants off the

fence that surrounds the AAFC baseball diamond. To avoid having to repeat that dreadful job in later years, we covered the line of very large and robust DSV plants growing along the fence with landscape cloth. It worked! They are gone.

Several years ago, two volunteers planted a variety of ferns in our woods. At the same time, every week they would hoe DSV. The following summer, there was no DSV in that area—a miracle! This proved that repeated and concentrated effort could work. DSV is a plant: if you keep removing the green parts, it will die.

This led us to send out feelers to see if any of our volunteers were interested in adopting an area—size and location to be decided by them. The only stipulation was that they prevent DSV in their area from going to seed. Several people accepted the challenge, and they are working wonders. They easily meet the goal of no seed production, and they are slowly but surely digging older DSV plants out of their area and planting native wildflowers and shrubs.

Nature is helping us! Goldenrods, raspberries, and even Jewelweed can compete with DSV, so when we see these species growing, we help them out by pulling DSV around the edges of their clumps to encourage their spread.

Continued on page 11



Christine Hanrahan

Band of stunted and wilted DSV at the edge of a DSV-free patch of grass. We believe that a nearby walnut tree is having this effect on DSV here and elsewhere.