



# Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

Summer 2011 Newsletter

Volume 23 No. 3

## Garden Dances From the Farm



R. Hinchcliff

'Rumba' in the Arboretum. This is one of the Dance series of weigelas created at the Central Experimental Farm

The Central Experimental Farm and Dr. Felicitas Svejda are famous for the Explorers, that hugely popular series of hardy, ever-blooming, beautiful roses. The Explorers are just one of the success stories from a long program of hybridizing ornamental plants at the Farm.

Dr. Svejda achieved much more than the Explorer roses. She bred new varieties of forsythia and mock orange. And, she created the Dance series of weigelas that continue to rate highly among varieties of that shrub.

### "Among the most beautiful flowering shrubs in cultivation"

Weigela testing in the Arboretum began in 1889. By 1899, there were 275 different varieties on trial. William Saunders, director of the Farm, and W. T. Macoun, horticulturist, reported that most species and varieties were tender, with branches killed back each winter halfway or more to the ground.

Although the weigela was not entirely hardy at Ottawa, it was a favourite of Saunders. He described them as "among the most beautiful flowering shrubs in cultivation." In 1894, he included the large-flowered variegated weigela in his "choice collection" of 10 hardy ornamental shrubs. With its leaves "beautifully margined with white," this particular variegated type "makes a most attractive object on the lawn at all seasons of the year."

### A need for hardier, lower-growing varieties

Hardiness continued to be a concern with weigelas in 1958 when R. W. (Warren) Oliver, assistant horticulturist at the Farm, wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen* that winter kill meant "cutting out the dead wood each spring." Also, because the plants bloom mainly from one-year-old wood, he said, dieback of the stems affected the quality of the blooming.

Finding plants suitable for the urban landscape had also become more important in plant breeding. Plants that could readily adapt to poor urban soil and pollution were needed, as were low-growing shrubs that would fit into small public spaces, small private gardens and containers.

### Creating the "dances"

Thus, low-growing, winter-hardy, profusely flowering, shapely shrubs were the goals of Dr. Svejda's weigela breeding program at the Farm from 1961 to her retirement in 1987.

She was successful using two *Weigela florida* cultivars as parents. Among the first shrubs planted in the Arboretum, *W. florida* has an attractive shape and masses

*Continued on Page 3*

## President's Message

I look forward to the first growing season as President of the Friends of the Farm and to meeting new and returning gardening volunteers. Although spring came much later than last year's unusually early arrival, it finally appeared in full force.

The ornamental gardens and shrubs are looking great after all the dedicated and hard work of AAFC staff and the many FCEF volunteers. There are plans to plant new trees at the Shelterbelt along Merivale Road this year. This follows from the completion of the solar powered "silo" in the centre of the area which will be able to supply water for the new and existing trees. There will also be important work this summer in the Hosta Garden to



Chuck Craddock

replace the deteriorating walls. This will improve both the appearance and safety of the garden.

The Friends' "Events" volunteers have already successfully completed the first Craft and Bake sale for the year, the Rare and Unusual Plant sale, and the history tour of the CEF. By the time you receive this newsletter, the first garden tours and the book sale will also be behind us. I encourage members to participate in the many upcoming activities throughout the summer and fall. These events along with membership fees and donations provide us with the funds to continue our gardening and other activities in support of the Central Experimental Farm.

Come and enjoy the Ornamental Gardens, Arboretum and Shelterbelt. I look forward to seeing you.

## Mots du président

C'est avec plaisir que j'entreprends ma première saison printanière en tant que président des Amis de la Ferme. J'ai bien hâte de rencontrer les nouveaux bénévoles aux jardins ainsi que ceux qui nous reviennent. Bien que la nouvelle saison soit arrivée beaucoup plus tard que le printemps hâtif de l'année dernière, elle est finalement ici, avec toute son énergie.

Les Jardins ornementaux et les arbustes ont déjà belle allure suite aux importants travaux des employés d'Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada et des nombreux bénévoles des Amis de la Ferme. Cette

année, nous planterons de nouveaux arbres au Brise-vent, le long du chemin Merivale. Cela est possible suite à l'installation, au centre de l'espace, du « silo » solaire qui fournira l'eau nécessaire aux anciens et aux nouveaux arbres. Cet été, nous ferons aussi d'importants travaux dans le Jardin d'hostas afin de remplacer les murs détériorés. Nous améliorerons ainsi l'apparence et la sécurité des jardins.

Les bénévoles responsables des événements divers ont déjà bien réussi la première vente d'artisanat et de pâtisseries de l'année ainsi que la visite historique de

la Ferme. Alors que vous lisez ce bulletin d'information, nous aurons aussi déjà fait notre première visite des jardins et notre vente de livres. J'encourage les membres à participer aux nombreuses activités prévues durant l'été et l'automne. Ces événements, ainsi que les frais d'adhésion et les dons reçus, nous permettent de continuer à faire les travaux de jardinage et plusieurs autres activités en faveur de la Ferme expérimentale centrale.

Venez profiter des Jardins ornementaux, de l'Arboretum et du Brise-vent. J'ai hâte de vous y rencontrer.

## Volunteers in Action

It is summer and the Friends of the Farm gardening teams are hard at work, helping to maintain and enhance the beauty and heritage value of the collections in the Ornamental Gardens and Arboretum. Volunteers have much to enjoy – the attraction of the workplace, learning from expert gardeners, a common interest in contributing to an historic site.

There are five Green Thumb teams, Monday to Friday, with a focus, respectively, on the Macoun Memorial Garden, perennials/annuals, day lilies and irises, peonies, heritage roses, and Explorer roses. There are two lilac teams, meeting



Monday and Friday, and a Wednesday hosta team. The Merivale Shelterbelt team meets on Tuesday, the Arboretum and Tree Plaques teams on Wednesday, and finally, there is a team recording bloom times and a volunteer assisting researchers at the Herbarium.

It's never too late to join in! Some teams have yet to reach a full complement and would welcome newcomers. Contact Donna at [volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca](mailto:volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca) or call her at 613-230-3276. Enrolment forms are at

[www.friendsofthefarm.ca/volunteer.htm](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca/volunteer.htm).



## Garden Dances From the Farm *(continued from Page 1)*

of funnel-shaped flowers. She chose the cultivar 'Purpurea' because of its low stature, and 'Dropmore Pink' for its hardiness. The latter originated with the Canadian hybridist F. L. Skinner, who grew it from *W. florida* seeds that he brought in from Manchuria to his nursery at Dropmore, Manitoba.

After being tested at 20 locations across Canada and 4 in bordering American states, representing different plant hardiness zones, 5 new weigelas were released by Agriculture Canada. Dr. Svejda named them for dances – 'Minuet', 'Samba', 'Rumba', 'Tango' and 'Polka'.

### Features of the dance weigelas

'Minuet' was the first to be released (1981) and is the lowest growing of the series. Described as "a dainty, refined beauty," this best-selling weigela with

two-toned red and pink flowers reaches a height and diameter of just 0.6 m in Ottawa (see photo Page 12). Because it is so small, snow cover may protect it.

'Tango' features purple leaves. It has red flowers and is also low growing. 'Rumba' is medium in height, spreading, with dark red flowers. "It was said to be the greenest of the Dance series," says Sharon Saunders, Lead Hand, Ornamental Gardens, AAFC.

'Samba' has purple tips and edges that persist all season long on its dark green leaves, notes Sharon. Testing has proven this cultivar to be the most cold tolerant of the series. 'Polka' is a "sprightly, spirited cultivar ... a nice, compact mound of dark green foliage and masses of bright, two-toned, pink flowers from early summer to autumn. It is one of the best pinks we have ever grown." (Garden Splendor, Inc.)

### See them at the Farm before you buy

Specimens from the Dance series grow in an arc-shaped weigela bed at the northern end of the Arboretum, just south of the old magnolia collection. 'Polka' weigelas grow in a bed outside the former Botany Building (#74) near the entrance to the Arboretum and there is a 'Rumba' in a bed across the road from 'Polka'. There are other weigelas in the Arboretum near Dow's Lake as well as in the Macoun Memorial Garden border facing the NCC Driveway.

Richard Hinchcliff

(You can find where the weigelas are located in the Arboretum using the new Location Guide at the Friends' website. See Page 11.)

## Larry Hodgson – Garden Lover

Come and enjoy a talk by Larry Hodgson entitled "Gardens of Canada ... and Beyond." He is the author of over 30 books and hundreds of articles. A full-time freelance writer, lecturer and photographer, he leads garden tours around the world and has visited gardens in over 30 countries.

A former national director of the Garden Writers Association, Larry is garden correspondent for *Le Soleil de Québec*, radio garden commentator for CBC Radio (Quebec City), and teaches



horticulture to mature students at Laval University.

Larry has been editor-in-chief of *HousePlant Magazine*, *Fleurs*, *Plantes et Jardins*, *A Fleur de Pot* and *Houseplant Forum*, and is a regular contributor to garden magazines in both the United States and Canada. His book credits include *The Garden Lover's Guide to Canada*, *Perennials for Every Purpose*, *Annuals for Every Purpose*, and *Houseplants for Dummies*. His latest English-language book is *Making the Most of Shade*.

Wednesday, September 14, 2011, 7 pm  
(at the Friends of the Farm Annual General Meeting) K. W. Neatby Building, CEF

## A Dream Takes Shape

The focus of a proposed botanic garden in Ottawa is to be on "the science of climate change, Canadian landscapes, horticulture, and learning-based interactive experiences."

Commissioned by the Ottawa Botanical Garden Society (OBGS) and prepared by the Glenn Group landscape architecture and design firm, the business plan was presented on April 28 to a group of stakeholders and to the OBGS's annual general meeting.

Summary information has been made available publicly in the Society's spring newsletter. At press time, the business plan report had not been released. It is

to be used to generate interest and raise funds.

The plan includes exhibits designed to attract a wide range of people, not just gardening enthusiasts. There would be stories and displays about the vital agricultural and horticultural research of the Central Experimental Farm. It would include provincial, territorial, and aboriginal themed exhibits; and there would be an international flavour with embassy or consulate gardens from around the world and complementary diplomatic events. The Garden would "embrace technology as a vehicle for experiential programming complete with digital "avatars" and a digital garden design studio."

"Using a 2010 operating scenario, \$6 million in estimated revenue will be achieved once construction is achieved, by an estimated 340,000 visitations and membership of 4,900. Upon completion of The Garden, the year-round operation will be staffed with 48 full-time and 48 part-time positions, supported by 300 volunteers."

Located on the 34 acres of the Farm on the east side of Prince of Wales Drive, south of the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, the Garden's first phase would be targeted to open in 2017, the 150th anniversary of Confederation.

## Upcoming Events

For more information, visit [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca) or call 613 230-3276.

### Strawberry Social

- July 1, 11:30 am to 2 pm.
- Come and enjoy a delicious strawberry treat while participating in the Canada Agriculture Museum's holiday activities.
- Admission to the museum is free on Canada Day; the strawberry treat is \$6.
- Visit the museum's website at [www.agriculture.technomuses.ca](http://www.agriculture.technomuses.ca) for more information on the day's festivities.
- Location: Memory Park, Canada Agriculture Museum. Parking and the main entrance is located off Prince of Wales, south of the traffic circle.



### 10 Mile Run and Cowpattie Relay on the Farm

- Wednesday, July 20, 6:30 pm.
- Join the Friends of the Farm and the Run Ottawa Club for a challenging 10-mile run through the Central Experimental Farm, or get together a two- or three-person team and enter the 10 Mile Cowpattie Relay.



- Location: Morningside Lane, CEF.
- Visit [www.runottawaclub.com](http://www.runottawaclub.com) for more information on the race/relay and how to register.

### Victorian Tea

- Sunday, August 7, 2 to 4 pm.
- Classic tea served under the trees of the Arboretum.
- Bring a patio chair and listen to live music.
- Enter the best hat contest and don period costume (not required).
- Location: Building 72, CEF Arboretum.
- Admission and parking free; formal tea \$6.



### Thousand Islands & Two Castles Tour

- Sunday, September 18, 8 am to 8 pm. (see below)



### Art on the Farm

- Saturday, August 20, 10 am to 4 pm.
- Rain date August 21.

- Artists will display and sell their original works under the trees of the Central Experimental Farm.
- Location: NCC Driveway and Maple Drive, CEF.
- Free admission and parking.

### Annual General Meeting

- Wednesday, September 14, 7 to 10 pm.
- Guest speaker Larry Hodgson (see Page 3).
- Location: K.W. Neatby Building, CEF, Carling Ave., west of Maple Drive.
- All are welcome. You do not have to be a member to attend.
- Free admission and parking.

### For the Love of the Farm Art Exhibition and Sale

- October 8 to 10, 10 am to 4 pm.
- A juried exhibition and sale featuring the work of up to eight artists.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum, CEF.
- Admission and parking free.



## On the Road ... and the River

It really was a beautiful sunny March day when we visited the Sucrierie de la Montagne in Rigaud. As you can see by the photo, we were both entertained and entertaining, when we played the spoons with the entertainer! A small detour to Hudson's outlet mall was rewarding for bargain-hunters. Thank you all for your participation!

### And now we are accepting registrations for the Thousand Island and Two Castle tour in September!

On Sunday, September 18, we will travel to the heart of the Thousand Islands for an enchanting boat tour of the islands as well as visits to Boldt and Singer castles. Because the castles are in U.S. territory, valid passports are required, without exception. The trip includes: transportation from Agriculture Museum parking lot to Rockport and return, hot buffet lunch, and visits to two castles.

#### Cost:

#### Before July 31

- FCEF members \$135 - Others \$143

#### After July 31

- FCEF members \$145 - Others \$153

Please call 613-230-3276, Monday to Thursday, 9 am to 3 pm for reservations.

N'oubliez pas le prochain voyage au milles isles! Enregistrez vous avant le 31 juillet afin d'épargner 10\$ sur le prix du voyage! Un repas buffet est inclu ainsi que visites aux deux chateaux situés en territoire américain. Prière d'apporter vos passeports, sans exceptions!

Denise Kennedy



Playing the spoons at the sugarbush

Ted Gray



## Carol MacLeod: Life in the Playforce



R. Hinchliff

Carol MacLeod has a strong sense of community. And her commitment to the community – whether the neighbourhood where she lives or the city she calls home – is apparent in the way she lives her life. Carol is a “doer.” When she believes in a “cause,” she gets involved. So when there was talk of “ditching” at least some part of the Ornamental Gardens and Arboretum in the late 1980s, Carol decided the best line of defence was to become a Friend of the Farm. Today, she leads the Friends’ Iris and Daylily Team. Her choice of volunteer work at the CEF speaks of her love of gardening and respect for history.

As a child she recalls traipsing after her father, and “whatever he did, I did,” Carol explains, whether it was listening to football, helping in his workshop or working in the garden. She also remembers accompanying her father on visits to his boss’s house near Guelph, Ontario and strolling through his gardens past symmetrical rows of peach gladiola and pink dahlias.

### Love of gardening, irises and history

Carol’s love of gardening, fostered in childhood, grew with her into adulthood. Today, she lovingly maintains a delightful garden in her Glebe backyard, a mix of old perennials and local native wildflowers. For an inner city garden, she maintains that “it is not in fashion. It has a bit of whatever I can squish into it. It is old-fashioned, full of primary colours. It breaks every rule in the book; it is without guile or design.”

Irises – especially Siberians – are one of Carol’s favourite flowers so it was natural that she chose to volunteer in the iris gardens at the Farm. Also, Isabella Preston, a horticulturist and the first female plant hybridist, who worked at the Farm in the 1920s, bred a series of iris named after Canadian rivers, and as a lifelong student of history, Carol was drawn to the iris beds because of their historical significance. She “would like all the flowers [grown at the

Farm] to reflect its heritage” and believes that it is important to “look at what was [grown] here [in the past] and have it represented.”

### “If you live in a community, you contribute to it”

Carol is strong minded and rarely shy to voice her opinions. Those opinions are well informed by hours of meticulous research. Her research skills have proven valuable in the Glebe Community Association’s response to the redevelopment of Lansdowne Park. Carol represents her area on the Association and is also part of the group advising the City of Ottawa on the building of a footbridge across the Rideau Canal. “There’s always something to do,” she says of her community involvement, “if you live in a community, you contribute to it.”

Carol lives by those words. Since joining “the playforce” (aka retirement), in addition to the Glebe Community Association, she belongs to “Grammas to Ambuyas,” part of the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign initiated by the Stephen Lewis Foundation to help grandmothers and the children in their care in sub-Saharan Africa. She also volunteers in the kindergarten at First Avenue Public School, proofreads and contributes to the *Glebe Report* and then – the list seems endless – there’s her daughter and two grandchildren to lavish love and attention on, and cycling, paddling, cross country skiing, and skating on the Rideau Canal to keep her in good physical shape.

Wednesday mornings from May to October, Carol works in the iris/daylily beds at the Farm and as team leader is responsible for all the accompanying paperwork. She’s a delightful sight arriving by bike (Carol has neither a car nor a TV) often balancing several bags on the handlebars. She also helps at the Friends’ Victorian Tea, Art on the Farm, and at the “Love of the Farm” fine art vernissage. “They are a wonderful group of people with such interesting life stories,” Carol says of the other volunteers she has encountered. “The Farm draws people from all over the city, and I wouldn’t have met them otherwise.”

Mary Ann Smythe

## Growing Stamps for Canada Post



Canada Post

The flowers you see on Canadian stamps may have been grown at the Farm. A relationship has developed between staff at the Arboretum and Ornamental Gardens and at Canada Post.

A few years ago, Pierre Huppé and Sharon Saunders kept a close eye on some selected lilacs and contacted Canada Post when they were approaching their peak bloom time. Pierre, Sharon and Joan Speirs, the Friends' lilac advisor, had recommended certain Canadian-bred lilacs. The result was a set of beautiful stamps featuring lilacs in the Farm's collection. Peonies were featured the following year.

At the beginning of last year, Canada Post's Stamp Services staff went a step further and asked Agriculture staff if they would grow sunflowers from seed specifically for a new set of stamps. Pierre and Sharon agreed and got approval from Ron Stanley, Field Research Superintendent, for the use of an area beyond the Ornamental Gardens to create the sunflower bed.

Canada Post supplied large bags of seed of 'Moulin Rouge', 'Prado Red', 'Ring of Fire', 'Soraya' and 'Sunbright'. These sunflowers had the colours that Canada Post wanted and

were expected to grow well. In the end, the two varieties selected for the stamps were 'Prado Red' and 'Sunbright'.



(Left to right) Joy Parks, Post Canada, Danielle Trotter, Post Canada, Pierre Huppé, AAFC, Sharon Saunders, AAFC

Jean-Pascal Gratton

Danielle Trotter, stamp design manager at Canada Post, says the usual approach for their flower series of stamps is to locate the right plant for a design, then wait for bloom time. This is how it was done with the lilacs. "This time, we knew exactly the kind of flowers we'd end up with because they were grown specifically for the stamp. That made it easier to plan out the entire issue and know exactly how the two varieties would appear."

There were some nervous moments at the final stage. "It was a weird growing season last year," says Pierre, "with an early spring and a hot and dry July. The sunflowers grew faster and matured earlier than we expected. We weren't keeping a close eye on that bed and there was a scramble to get the Canada Post photographer in from Montreal to shoot the last few flowers." Fortunately, it turned out well and the sunflower stamps were released on March 3, 2011.

Richard Hinchcliff



## Book Sorting - From Chaos to Order

A team of 16 dedicated volunteers work from September to May each year in the basement of Building 72 to organize the many thousands of books donated to FCEF for the annual fundraising Book Sale in June. They work in groups of three or four, in three hour shifts from Monday to Thursday each week, to ensure that shoppers enjoy their experience browsing through a well organized selection of good quality used books, so that they, hopefully, will buy many books and return to future sales.

The sorters' job entails emptying the boxes and bags in which books arrive on FCEF book drop-off days, separating the books according to genre, such as history, fiction, reference, etc., resorting them into finer groupings, such as alphabetically by author's last name for all fiction, and packing them into display trays for the sale. Usually, the process flows smoothly with just enough books to fill the available sales space and provide a few "extras" to start next year's sorting.

The drop-off day on February 5, 2011 was overwhelmingly successful - three rooms in the basement were filled wall to wall with huge stacks of donated books overtaking the sorters' work and storage space. Nevertheless, these amazing volunteers "stole" back their work space inches at a time and created order out of chaos one box at a time. In just three months they cleared two rooms of boxes and sorted approximately 12,000 books to fill the 2011 two-day book sale on June 18 and 19 - and they say they can't wait to get started on the third room of boxes for next year's sale!

This year, the Friends' book-sorting team comprised: Bob Barron, Judy Benner, Izobel Dabrowski, Paul Dick, Leslie Hill, Brenda Lester, Jeannine Lewis, Carole McColgan, Polly McColl, Betty Jean O'Riordan, Dave and Diane Roeske, Joe Slobodian, Mary Ann Smythe, Jo Stanic, and Ali Stout.

Brenda Lester



Stacks of books on drop-off day

Polly McColl



The Monday group (left to right): Bob Barron, Carole McColgan and Izobel Dabrowski (missing Jeannine Lewis)



The Thursday group (left to right): Diane Roeske, Paul Dick and Dave Roeske (missing Leslie Hill)



The Tuesday group (left to right): Ali Stout, Mary Ann Smythe, Judy Benner, Jo Stanic

Photos by Brenda Lester

## Living on a Farm in the Middle of the City



Eleanor McLay, at the site of her childhood home at the Farm

R. Hinchliff

Wide open space, fresh air and animals, with barns and chicken coops for mischief-making – “It was a wonderful place to grow up,” says Eleanor McLay of the 14 years she lived at the Central Experimental Farm as a youngster with her father and mother.

Thomas (Tom) Knox, her father, was responsible for the beef cattle herd at the Booth barn, way out at the end of Ash Lane. In those days, around 1950, it was a much larger barn complex than it is today. A house across the farm road from the barns was rented to the Knox family. As Eleanor says, “we lived out in the fields.”

The house<sup>1</sup> was divided down the middle from front to back, accommodating two families. Eleanor recalls that while her family was there, S.B. (Syd) Williams and family lived in the other side. Williams was in animal research at the time, later became superintendent of the Experimental Farm at Nappan, Nova Scotia and then, in 1967, deputy minister of the Department of Agriculture.

### From cows to collies to chicken coops

Animals were a feature of life on the Farm, especially cows. They were kept in “loose housing” at the barn, which meant they had an open-bedded area to move

around in, rather than being kept in individual pens or stalls. There were experiments with various types and quantities of feed at individual feeding stations, and Eleanor remembers helping her father to let the cows out when they had finished eating.

In the spring, Tom Knox was busy with calves and then with herding the cattle out to Shirley’s Bay for summer grazing. The two border collies that helped

with this trek were also family pets. There were horses, barn cats and ducks, the latter of which Eleanor’s mother raised for eggs. “Her duck eggs were prized ingredients in many people’s angel cakes.” Eleanor remembers giving some ducklings a swim in the cows’ water troughs.

She also recalls that chicken coops were nearby in a large enclosure. This was before they were moved to the other (west) side of Merivale Avenue, which was part of the Farm at that time. They were the “cutest little houses for chickens,” Eleanor adds, and she wasn’t popular when, as a practical joke, she and a friend locked a cousin in an empty coop.

Eleanor wonders if others remember “the cow with a hole in its side” on display in a barn. A hole had been cut in the side of the cow and covered with clear material to show the animal’s internal workings.

### Many mouths to feed

Her mother was very proud of her flower garden and her father grew vegetables and fruit – Eleanor remembers the raspberries in particular. There were

many mouths to feed. “My mother began to take in students from the Agriculture College at Kemptville for the summer. Later, other Farm staff stayed with us. We had an attic with two rooms and a large extra bedroom on the second floor, and had up to five boarders at a time.” Her mother kept house, cooked, baked and prepared lunches for everyone. “It was a traditional farm life,” Eleanor explains, “up at the crack of dawn, a long day.”

The fruit and vegetable test plots in the Farm fields near to their house provided some excitement. Even though the RCMP patrolled endlessly, Eleanor recalls, on some dark evenings people would drive into Cow Lane off Morningside, turn their



Courtesy of Eleanor McLay

Tom Knox at the Booth barn

headlights on to the vegetables, quickly pick as much as they could and try to leave before being caught.

### Up to mischief

She and her friends used to sneak in the back to watch movies at the Auto-Sky Drive-In Theatre, which was across Baseline at Fisher Avenue. In the summer, they would bike to the centre of the Farm and get up to more mischief. By lying on their bellies, they were able to scoop up

*Continued on Page 9*

<sup>1</sup> The house was part of the land and property purchased by the Central Experimental Farm from J. R. Booth in 1929. Sam Desforges, the Farm’s poultry foreman, lived there with his family in the early days.



## Living on a Farm in the Middle of the City *(continued from Page 8)*

enough pennies from the pond at the Macoun Memorial Garden to buy themselves a soft drink. They also played in the Main Dairy Barn, walking across the high ceiling beams.

In winter, she remembers hanging out at the skating rink created on the tennis courts behind the William Saunders Building. "There was a little hut there with a pot belly stove that was so warm and cosy." Another favourite time in winter was Sunday afternoon when, after church and lunch, she would be dropped off at the Arboretum to go tobogganing.

Courtesy of Eleanor McLay



The Knox home across the road from the Booth barn

In the early 1960s, when he began courting Eleanor Knox, Jim McLay thought Thomas Knox owned the farm around the house and was very impressed. By the time they married, laughs Eleanor, he realized it was part of the Central Experimental Farm. "He can't have been too disappointed, we've been together now for 47 years."

Richard Hinchcliff

For more about those who grew up on the Farm, see *Ottawa's Farm: A History of the Central Experimental Farm* by Helen Smith and Mary Bramley. The book is available at Friends' events or at the office.

## William Saunders Retired 100 Years Ago

*"A record that inspires, a tradition that continues, a personality that lives"*

In the summer of 1886, there wasn't much happening at the newly created Central Experimental Farm. In October of that year, William Saunders was appointed director and work began in earnest to clear, build and plant. The land, said Saunders, "was liberally sprinkled with stumps and stones, and encumbered with one hundred and forty acres of second-growth timber and forty acres of swamp."

The land was soon cleared and reclaimed. By 1911, the Farm had been in business for 25 years and was well established as a research institution, a model farm, a learning centre and a beautiful landscape. William Saunders is credited for this early success, with his energetic, hands-on direction and the exceptional staff he attracted. He retired that year, 100 years ago, at the age of 75.

"Dr. Saunders was a man with vision far ahead of his time... When in 1911 he retired ripe with honours, he had spanned the Dominion with a well-knit system of experimental farms and stations, bequeathing not only great foundations and great



William Saunders, 1836-1914

W.J. Topley, Library & Archives Canada, PA-140405

accomplishments but a record that inspires, a tradition that continues, a personality that lives.

"A dominant characteristic was his love of the beautiful, as the ornamental grounds of the Central Experimental Farm bear witness. To the end of his directorship one of

his chief joys was to spend a few spring days planting flowers and shrubs."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fifty Years of Progress*, Department of Agriculture, 1936



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 in the Friends of the Farm costs \$25 per year for an individual and \$45 per year for a family, \$20 Seniors/Students. Membership fees support the many projects of the Friends of the Farm.

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# Tackling Hunger With Naked Oats Bred at the Farm

In our fall 2009 newsletter, Eileen Reardon gave a glimpse of the work of Dr. Vern Burrows, a researcher at the Central Experimental Farm since 1958. Dr. Burrows is a world-renowned expert on oat breeding and usage who has developed 28 new varieties, including "naked" oats. The naked oat story continues.

Eileen Reardon



Dr. Vern Burrows

Three years ago, Dr. Vern Burrows, Research Scientist Emeritus, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, registered his naked oat variety 'AC Gehl'. This special oat is both hull-less and hairless.

Grown in Manitoba, the oats were initially marketed as Cavena Nuda, or Canadian Naked Oats (the botanical name for oats is *avena*). The crops did remarkably well through some very wet seasons, performing more like rice. This sparked an idea and Naked Oats began to be marketed also as "Rice of the Prairies."

With a pleasant taste and texture, Rice of the Prairies has twice the protein of white rice, 10 times the fibre and 8 times the iron. It is gluten-free and is being used in recipes for all meals of the day.

## "Nourish" for food banks, other hunger-relief initiatives

Dr. Burrows relates the story of a visit to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada by a representative of a "small soup company." The visitor noticed a container of Rice of the Prairies and asked for about 50 lbs for testing. The "small" company was Campbell's Soup Canada, which was looking for ways to be more relevant to people's dietary needs.

The testing resulted in a canned soup that is rich in protein, fibre and minerals, and Campbell's invited Dr. Burrows to a tasting. With naked oats at 10% of total ingredients, he knew it would be nutritious, and "it tasted pretty good," he says. But then came the big surprise - Campbell's intended to give the soup away.

This February, Campbell's announced that "Nourish" was in production and that 100,000 cans would be donated to Canadian food banks. It is "a meal in a can," with a pop-top lid, no water to be added, and eaten hot or cold. At the



Cavena Nuda, Rice of the Prairies

launch, Dr. Burrows learned that after the 100,000 cans were distributed, Nourish would be sold in stores, with profits going to food banks and hunger-relief initiatives around the world. The Haiti disaster zone, adds Dr. Burrows, is an excellent example

of where this meal in a can could be used.

## "Couldn't have done it without the oats"

"Research has been helping farmers develop, grow and protect crops, and the naked oat is an excellent example of how this research is growing new market opportunities," says Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Minister Gerry Ritz. "We are delighted that our innovative variety is part of Campbell's new product."

The President of Campbell's Soup Canada told Dr. Burrows that there wouldn't have been enough protein and dietary fibre with wheat, rice or other grains. "I'm thrilled to hear them say that they couldn't have done it without the oats," says Dr. Burrows.

Much has happened in the three years since Dr. Burrows registered his new naked oat variety. He knows that 12 tons of Rice of the Prairies has been shipped to a U.S. com-

pany for further experiments. Bred in Ottawa, grown in Manitoba, feeding the hungry - where next for naked oats?



Dr. Burrows at the launch of Nourish

Richard Hinchcliff

canadianmanufacturing.com

## NEW MEMBER REGISTRATION FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FAX #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

## INTEREST IN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

YES ☐

NO ☐

## TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

FAMILY ..... \$45/year  
 ADULT ..... \$25/year  
 SENIOR/STUDENT ..... \$20/year  
 BASIC CORPORATE ..... \$250/year  
 NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION ..... \$25/year  
 INDIVIDUAL LIFE ..... \$200  
 SENIOR COUPLE LIFE ..... \$250  
 DONATION ..... \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque or money order payable to: "Friends of the Farm." A receipt for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations of \$10 or more.

We are located at Building 72 in the Arboretum. You can visit us or mail this part of the form with your payment to:

**FRIENDS OF THE CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM**  
**Building 72, Central Experimental Farm**  
**Ottawa, ON K1A 0C6**

Telephone: (613) 230-3276

Fax: (613) 230-1238

Email: [info@friendsofthefarm.ca](mailto:info@friendsofthefarm.ca)

Website: [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca)



## Why “Y Gee Las?” *(continued from Page 12)*

A modest amount of pruning will keep weigela in good shape and ready for next spring's performance. Once their blossom period is over don't wait! Deadhead right away and streamline form at the same time. Deadheading directs energy into their health and vigour rather than into formation of seed, and working on form at the same time will prevent cutting off next year's prom attendees. Every two or three years it's a good idea to remove one or more old stems to encourage plant rejuvenation.



R. Hinchcliff

Weigela 'Mme Couturier' in the Arboretum

## Weigelas in your garden

Because of their steady increase in variety of colour and form, weigelas can now play a greater number of roles in your garden – tall at the back of the border, small at the front, a main feature in a free-standing bed surrounded by complementary companions, small along walkways, and collections of themselves just about anywhere.

Choices of complementary companions are many. Do we want companions that look good with weigelas in bloom and/or companions that do their thing after the weigelas are finished showing off? Here are some suggestions either way: hostas, lamium, pulmonaria or similar groundcover plants, small or medium flowering annuals,

and low- to medium-height sedums. Lady's Mantle and Coral Bells can also be effective associates.

The following weigelas are hardy in our zone and readily available at most gardening outlets. Each is fascinating in its own way.

*Weigela florida* 'Courtalor' - Carnival

Weigela – 5' x 4', leaves good fall colour, flowers in pinks/whites

*Weigela florida* 'Elvera' - Midnight Wine

Weigela – dwarf, burgundy foliage, pink flowers

*Weigela florida* 'Minuet' - Minuet Weigela – dwarf, green foliage, reddish pink flowers

*Weigela florida* 'Polka' - Polka Weigela

– 4' x 5', masses of large pink flowers

*Weigela florida* 'Red Prince' - Red Prince

Weigela – 6' x 6', green leaves, bright red flowers

*Weigela florida* 'Rumba' - Rumba Weigela – 3' x 6', dark green leaves, dark red flowers

*Weigela florida* Samba' - Samba Weigela – 3' x 3', purple-tipped leaves, pink flowers

*Weigela florida* 'Tango' - Tango Weigela – 2-3' x 2-3', purple foliage, red flowers with yellow throats

*Weigela florida* 'Verwig' - My Monet Weigela – dwarf, variegated leaves in green, white and pink, pink flowers

*Weigela florida* 'Wine and Roses' - Wine and Roses Weigela – 3' x 3', dark burgundy leaves, rich pink flowers.

My advice? For your first weigela, start with *W. florida* 'Verwig', an exquisite mounded dwarf. After that there'll be no stopping you.

Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener

## How to Find a Tree or Shrub in the Arboretum

A tree or shrub is a major purchase for any garden, so it's important to choose the right one. A properly planted and maintained tree can last for a century or more. How will it look when mature and how big will it get? You don't have to guess – you can probably see it at the Dominion Arboretum!

One way to find certain selected trees is to follow the maps in the Friends' book *For the Love of Trees: A Guide to the Trees of Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm Arboretum*.

Now you can also consult an online tree and shrub Location Guide, a new website feature at [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca), under "Collections." This [Location Guide](#) is intended to help visitors find all of the Arboretum's shrubs and trees, some dating back as far as the late 19th century. Trees and shrubs in the

Guide are listed by English and French common names, by botanical name, and by selected groups. A map is provided for each.

The Arboretum is on the east side of Prince of Wales Drive and is administered by staff at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. It's a living collection of trees and shrubs, which means new specimens are planted from time to time and others are lost. For example, of the 17 trees around the Farm that were either lost or damaged by the high winds this April, three special trees at the Arboretum were destroyed. The Location Guide will be updated periodically.

Eric Jones conceived and created the Location Guide. Richard Hinchcliff prepared the website and contributed the photographs.

## Why “Y Gee Las?”

**F**ads and fashions affect all parts of our lives, including our horticultural choices. Plants, too, can wax and wane in popularity. However, as with movie stars, if they're good enough they stay on to survive the whims of public preference and ascend to become worthy icons of their “profession.”

A plant's “profession,” as most humans would believe, is to please us by being attractively dressed from wardrobes containing a thousand changes, easily grown, excitingly exotic and yet energetic enough to flaunt its beauty for an entire season. If the plant is edible, even better. On a scale of 1 to 10, I'd give weigela an 8 at least!

### Growth of a proud weigela consortium

A native of Asia, where as many as 12 species were once found, weigela travelled to England in the 1800s where it enjoyed its first great wave of popularity. Victorians loved it! But then it gradually fell out of favour, settling down quietly but productively as a horticultural back-bencher. In other words, it remained a solid staple on nursery and garden centre inventories. Commercial buyers loved it, and they continued to purchase it by and for the millions!

While quietly maintaining its reliable economic status, weigela busied itself making important contacts with venture groups in the form of entrepreneurial hybridizers. Aided and abetted by



‘Minuet’ weigela, bred by Dr. F. Svejda at the Central Experimental Farm (see Page 1)

painstaking propagators, weigela did solid market research, enhanced its public profile and danced happily through the 1900s. So successful was its business plan that it now boasts more than 200 “branch plants,” many of which are readily available at our local garden centres.

From a mere dozen “grandparent” plants, the Weigela Family has grown into a consortium of more than 200 cultivars. These proud progeny boast, on the one hand, compact little individuals and, on the other hand, sturdy shrubs that impress with heights up to 12 feet. In the taller weigelas, the arching foliage characteristic of their forebears remains. Weigela leaves are now available in several shades of green, many tinged with maroon or darker green, or in dramatically variegated patterns. Fall colour has improved, too.

### Carefree and long blooming

Product expansion has widened the range of blossom colour and form without sacrificing the attractive trumpet shape - one of the most endearing characteristics of the species plants. Ask the hummingbirds and the butterflies!

They love them! All this is not enough for the Weigela Family. It has also extended its hardiness range to include Zones 3 to 8. Better yet, its classical carefree ways have been maintained. It is still easy to look after and is still relatively problem free.

Weigelas are deciduous shrubs that flower in spring and early summer with an exceptionally long blooming period. Some of today's cultivars “one-up” that performance with a small second bloom later in the year. They show up at the spring prom at about the same time as lilacs but stay on longer by as much as a month. The thick clusters of tubular flowers come in every shade from white to wine-red, and - surprise - also in yellow!

### Planting and pruning

Planting is best done in spring or early fall. Weigelas are not particular about location but are more likely to bloom best in full sunlight. Their taste in soil pH hovers on the line between acidic and alkaline at 6.8-7.7 and they benefit from regular top ups of compost mixed with well-rotted manure. Soil with good drainage is a must.

They also like a good deep watering about once a week if Nature has not already obliged. They don't mind urban pollution.

*Continued on Page 11*



‘Rosabella’ weigela at the Arboretum

R. Hinchliff

GrassLovers, davesgarden.com