



THE MERIVALE SHELTERBELT

THE CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM

From the 1890s, the northern and western boundaries of the Central Experimental Farm were marked by thousands of trees, part of the Farm's plan to assess tree suitability and planting practices for use in windbreaks in Canada. These trees were removed as the city expanded and streets were widened. Only a small portion of the original shelterbelt at the north end of Fisher Avenue remains.



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MAP OF THE SHELTERBELT



The plan for the Merivale Shelterbelt was developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) to shield the Farm's fields from the elements and traffic along Merivale Avenue. Shelterbelts help to reduce soil erosion and salt damage of the adjacent experimental fields caused by the strong north westerly winter winds. In addition to its practical farm-related purpose, the Shelterbelt provides greenspace for the city and removes pollution from the street and the surrounding area. Urban trees are an essential tool for cleaning the air and water.

In 2005, AAFC asked the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm to take on the Shelterbelt project as key to protecting and enhancing the western edge of this important National Historic Site. The Friends raised funds for the project by soliciting donations from the public and offering donors a plaque in a pavilion near the southern end of the path through the Shelterbelt. The pavilion incorporates wooden slabs to echo the barn of the Scott family farm that once stood on this corner, and it also includes a sitting area. The donor project was a successful way of getting the job done in a relatively short time.



On September 9, 2005, the Shelterbelt and the supporters' pavilion were officially opened by Her Excellency the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Governor General of Canada, and His Excellency John Ralston Saul. The Friends' donor program ran from 2005 to 2018. In 2017, at the northern end of the pathway, AAFC planted a selection of trees to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary.

Trees such as Colorado spruce, red oak, maple and walnut were planted together with shrubs



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such as lilac, honeysuckle and serviceberry. A leisurely path weaves through the beds of trees and shrubs, offering a picturesque start or finish to a walking or biking tour of the Farm. (See diagram above).

Under AAFC's guidance, a Friends of the Farm team has been working hard to add to the collection and to maintain the trees and shrubs to ensure their survival in such an exposed area. The work includes planting, watering, weeding, installing tree guards, spreading mulch and protecting trees and shrubs from winter damage.

As you walk along the pathway, you'll notice signs that identify some of the trees so visitors can learn more about them. Benches invite you to pause, rest and enjoy the vista and, in the far distance, the cityscape. Breathe in the scent of earth, pines and flowering shrubs.

AS THE CEF NATIONAL HISTORIC MANAGEMENT PLAN SAYS,

"The commemorative intent of the Central Experimental Farm is encompassed in the following historic values: its distinctiveness as a cultural landscape... incorporates such features as long stretches of lawn and fields, gently rolling land... and winding pathways that encourage outdoor enjoyment and provide leisurely changes of experience. The orderliness and neatness which are so characteristic of the Farm are not only pleasing to the eye, but are also critical to the Farm's scientific pursuits."



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