

FRIENDS *of the* Central Experimental Farm

Fall 2024 Newsletter | Volume 36 No. 4

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Pathways to the Trees at the Central Experimental Farm

By Joan Butcher

Pathways to the Trees at the Central Experimental Farm, the much-anticipated Friends of the Farm publication paying tribute to the Farm's remarkable tree collection, will be launched shortly. Featuring more than 800 stunning colour and archival photos, the volume profiles 125 tree species that can be found in the Arboretum, on the Farm's main campus, and in its western Shelterbelt. The book's text and accompanying maps lead you along eight different walks of tree exploration that you can take, and profiles selected trees by detailing and illustrating their shape, leaves, flowers, bark, and fruit, as well as growing conditions and native habitats.

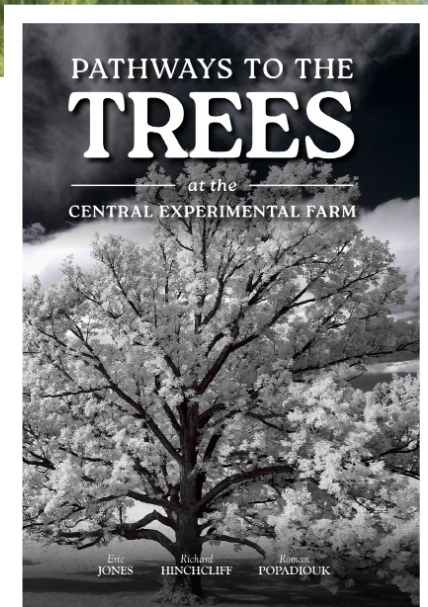
To some extent, this new tree book is a follow up to the Friends' popular *For the Love of Trees: A Guide to the Trees of Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm Arboretum*. Authored by Richard Hinchcliff and Roman Popadiouk, the 2007 publication went through three reprints. It was decided not to issue a fourth since a fair number of the trees featured in the first book have died and been removed, and there are new specimens to showcase. This book also looks at trees outside the bounds of the Arboretum. With another tree expert, Eric Jones, joining the writing

team, there was an opportunity to bring a fresh eye to the structure and content of the book and add new commentary about both the trees and the Farm.

THE TRIUMVIRATE OF AUTHORS

Eric Jones has a degree in Forestry from the University of Toronto and spent much of his career at the Canadian Wood Council. He was delighted to find that after retirement, the Friends of the Farm afforded him so many opportunities to work on tree-related projects. Having just served his second term as President of the Friends of the Farm, Eric continues to be devoted to learning about trees. "There are many unanswered questions, such as how trees interact with the environment, and how they evolve over time" he remarked. He is also very skilled at disseminating information about them. Stay tuned for information about the tree tours he organizes at the Arboretum and there will undoubtedly be new and fascinating articles on tree lore forthcoming in future newsletters.

Richard Hinchcliff, the author of *Blooms – An Illustrated History of the Ornamental Garden* and co-author of *For the Love of Trees* and of the 2021 book *Building Canada's Farm* (with Patricia Jasen), is



also well known as the editor of this newsletter. He notes that photography has always been a passion for him, and he learned a lot from his father, a well-known photographer in New Zealand. He has learned from many others, most notably the wonderful nature photographer Freeman Patterson. Although he began photographing the Farm in 2002, he declared that he "has never ceased to be inspired by its life and beauty."

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Message from the President Message de la présidente

DIANNE CALDBICK

*President, Friends of the Central Experimental Farm
Président, Les Amis de la Ferme expérimentale centrale*



For me, Fall is the season that most represents change. At the

Central Experimental

Farm, our volunteer gardening teams are winding down their work, helping Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada put the gardens 'to bed' for another season. The leaves on the Arboretum's trees are turning, ablaze with the colours of Fall. And soon the stream in the Arboretum will be all-but-empty, as Parks Canada drains the Rideau Canal in preparation for winter.

For the Friends of the Farm, this Fall brings a very particular type of change, as we move our offices from Building 72 (in the Arboretum) to Building 75 (adjacent to the Ornamental Gardens). We make the move with mixed feelings. There's nostalgia for Building 72, the Friends' first 'home', which saw us through years of growth, accomplishments, challenges, and camaraderie. And there's anticipation—excitement and hope for our next chapter as we settle in to our new quarters in Building 75. For more about our move, see page 4.

I encourage you to come to the Farm and enjoy the colours of Fall. The Arboretum is full of wonderful and interesting trees, some dating back to the late 19th century, when trees and shrubs from North America, Europe, and Asia were planted for testing. You will now find about 3,000 trees in the Arboretum, including some specimens beyond their typical climate zone and thus unusual in the National Capital region.

The Arboretum's trees are highlighted in a new Friends of the Farm book which will be available for purchase in October. *Pathway*

to the Trees at the Central Experimental Farm builds and expands on our popular 2007 tree book, *For the Love of Trees* (which is no longer in print). Our new book includes commentary on the history and landscape of the Farm, as well as details and photos of the trees. We trust that it will help inspire the awe and appreciation for trees and for the Arboretum that we in the Friends feel. For more about this new book, see page 1.

Enjoy Fall on the Farm. We look forward to welcoming you to our new 'home' in Building 75!

À mon avis, l'automne est la saison qui signale le plus le changement. À la Ferme expérimentale centrale (la Ferme), nos équipes de jardiniers bénévoles mettent fin à leur travail, aidant ainsi Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada à « mettre les jardins au lit » avant l'arrivée de la prochaine saison. À l'Arboretum, les feuilles des arbres s'enflamment de couleurs automnales. Et bientôt, le ruisseau qui y coule sera presque tari, alors que Parcs Canada s'apprête à drainer le canal Rideau à l'approche de l'hiver.

Pour nous, Amis de la Ferme, cet automne apporte un type de changement très particulier puisque nous déménageons nos bureaux du bâtiment 72 (dans l'Arboretum) au bâtiment 75 (adjacent aux jardins ornementaux). Nous faisons le saut avec des sentiments mitigés. Il y a de la nostalgie à l'égard du bâtiment 72, la première « maison » des Amis (notre « chez nous ») qui a été témoin d'années de croissance, de réalisations, de défis et de camaraderie. Et il y a de l'anticipation, de l'enthousiasme et de

l'espoir face à notre prochain chapitre, alors que nous nous installons dans nos nouveaux quartiers du bâtiment 75. Pour en savoir plus sur notre déménagement, voir page 4.

Je vous invite à visiter la Ferme et profiter des couleurs de l'automne. L'Arboretum regorge de magnifiques arbres, sûrs de captiver votre intérêt, certains datant de la fin du 19e siècle, lorsque des arbres et des arbustes d'Amérique du Nord, d'Europe et d'Asie ont été plantés à des fins d'essai. Actuellement, il y a environ 3 000 arbres à l'Arboretum, dont certains spécimens dépassant leur zone climatique typique et leur présence étant plutôt étonnante ou inhabituelle dans la région de la capitale nationale.

Les arbres de l'Arboretum prennent la vedette dans une nouvelle publication des Amis de la Ferme, laquelle sera offerte au public en octobre prochain. Celle-ci, « *Pathway to the Trees of the Central Experimental Farm* », prend appui sur le populaire livre sur les arbres publié en 2007, « *For the Love of Trees* » (qui n'est plus imprimé), et est présenté en accompagnement ou complément de ce dernier. Ce nouveau livre comprend des commentaires sur l'histoire et le paysage de la Ferme, ainsi que des observations et photos au sujet des arbres. Nous sommes confiants que ce livre vous inspire le même émerveillement et estime à l'égard des arbres que nous chez les Amis ressentons. Voir page 1 pour connaître d'autres détails au sujet de ce nouveau livre.

Venez célébrer l'automne sur la Ferme. Nous nous réjouissons à l'avance de vous accueillir dans notre nouveau « chez nous » à l'immeuble 75!



Leaves, which are fully developed before flowers come out, are glaucous-green above and light green underneath. Their width and length are approximately equal. An unusual feature is the waxy, leathery, white upper surface beneath the leaf.

leaves, only on moist sites with fertile, well-drained soils, such as lower slopes or valley bottoms. In drought conditions, they do not drop its leaves permanently.

A GROW-STOPPING LANDSCAPE TREE
Tulip Trees have been planted in gardens all over the world. The distinctive shape of the leaf is an ideal clue to identifying the tree. The unique flowers, hidden high in the canopy, are held like cups of yellow, orange, and green. The flower, deep yellow at the bottom, is held between the upper and lower petals. The tree's height grows because the yellow in the fall, and the tree's life is in the fall, not the spring. The tree grows like an oak and has a more rounded top than a maple.

Tulip Trees are often called Yellow Poplar in reference to the wood which ranges from reddish-brown to yellow and white in color. It is thought to be used for Yellow Poplar, there is an relationship to the poplar species.



This double-colored Tulip Tree tree looks like a yellow poplar. The tree's life is in the fall, not the spring.

Right: The leaves become more rounded when the tree grows taller.

Right: The leaves become more rounded when the tree grows taller. The tree's life is in the fall, not the spring. The tree grows like an oak and has a more rounded top than a maple.



ABOVE:
A sample profile (of the Tulip Tree) in the book.

Continued from page 1...

Roman Popadiouk completed formal training in the USSR as a forester, biodiversity manager, and dendrologist (a scientist who studies trees). Before coming to Canada, he published two monographs on East European broadleaf forests as the author of several chapters. He has worked on research projects with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, in Nova Scotia, and British Columbia. In Ottawa, he promotes propagation of trees and regularly leads tours of the Arboretum. He co-authored the first tree book with Richard Hinchcliff. His scientific background and willingness to pitch in have enhanced many of the Friends' Ornamental Garden, Arboretum, Merivale Shelterbelt, and general volunteer initiatives.

CARING ABOUT TREES BENEFITS US ALL

Although many people feel an instinctive attraction to them, trees are too often taken for granted. It is common to see healthy, mature trees being destroyed when development occurs. Trees benefit people in so very many ways. They beautify the environment, provide cooling shade, privacy, and protection from erosion, help clean the air, and enhance our sense of peace and well-being. Trees on a lot also enhance your property's value. In our cities, we need more trees to lessen risks associated with heat, flooding, and pollution. In the country, we need to work harder to try and protect trees from fires, insects, and diseases. Our survival is linked to trees.

CHOOSING TREES

Pathways to the Trees provides some good practical information on trees for those who are considering planting them. The book's tree descriptions include need-to-know information, such as whether they are fast-growing, resistant to wind damage, tolerant to harsh climate events, requiring plenty of space or light, etc. Eric Jones notes that the Arboretum's role as a testing ground for trees has shown that some trees that have not been considered viable in the local climate can actually do well. Examples include River Birch, Yellow Buckeye, Black Gum, Shagbark Hickory, Black Maple, Three-Flowered Maple, Pawpaw, Sweetgum, and Sycamore. There are also local native trees that could be planted more in the city, such as Ironwood, Red Spruce, Hornbeam (aka Blue-beech), Butternut, Witch Hazel, and Swamp White Oak.

SO MANY REASONS TO BUY THIS BOOK

Love to stroll in the serenity and beauty of the Farm but can't distinguish between a maple and an oak? Use this book on your next walk, follow some of the paths it outlines and prepare to become more attuned to trees and their habitat. You are certain to learn some fascinating tree facts. For instance, did you know that, when you walk among trees, you should try to avoid the area around the tree known as the drip line? This is a ring around the outer limits of the tree where most of the rainwater falls off the canopy. It is the area where the trees' feeder roots go to get moisture and nutrients and should not be unduly disturbed.

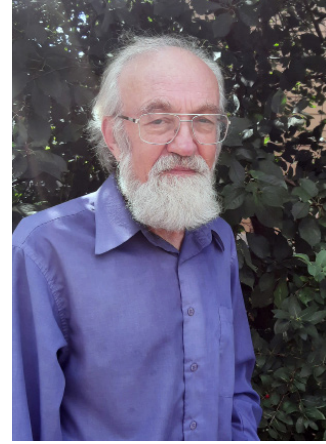
Even if you are tree savvy, the book gives you many details about trees and the Farm that you might ordinarily overlook. It encourages you to take a longer gaze at trees and see things that you have been missing.

If you are not able to enjoy a visit to the Farm, perusing the book is a visual treat on its own. It features a wonderful layout of photos and drawings, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Kat Bauer (Kat B Design). The glorious cover photo by Raymond Roy ensures that this volume will look very impressive on your coffee table.

Pathways to the Trees is well-written and thoughtfully organized so as to present information in a manner accessible to many different audiences – from seekers after scientific detail to those who prefer a browse through wonderful pictures of nature.

Eric Jones provides one of the very best reasons for owning this book. "This book speaks for trees because they can't do it themselves. Buy this book to hear them talk!"

Joan Butcher, a former communications director for the federal government, is a Friends of the Farm volunteer on the newsletter.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Eric Jones, Richard Hinchcliff, Roman Popadiouk

Building 75 seen from the Macoun Memorial Garden.

The Friends' Office Is Now Beside the Gardens

After 36 years at Building 72 in the Arboretum, Friends of the Farm are now at Building 75 beside the Ornamental Gardens. It was formerly known as the Cereal Crops Building (see page 5). We are on the second floor, looking out over the Macoun Memorial Garden. The controlled-access entrance to the building is near a small parking lot off the NCC Driveway.

Please note that our phone number and email address remain the same, but our mailing address is now:



Building 75
Friends of the Central Experimental Farm
Building 75
960 Carling Ave.
Ottawa ON K1A 0C6

We welcome you to our new quarters!

WHERE TO GET THE NEW BOOK

Pathways to the Trees at the Central Experimental Farm will be available to the public on October 17, either online or by coming to Building 75 Tuesday through Thursday (10-2).

PLEASE CHECK OUR [WEBSITE](#) OR FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM FOR UPDATES.

Photo by Sandra Joseph



Yoga in Nature Makes Its Gardens Debut

By Sandra R. Joseph

This summer, the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm hosted a new event, Yoga in Nature, at the Ornamental Gardens. It was a wonderful blend of yoga and the outdoors, drawing people who wanted to relax and connect with nature. The event was incredibly popular, selling out quickly both times it was offered.

The event was free for participants, making it an accessible opportunity for anyone looking to enjoy nature and improve well-being. The session, led by Kathrine Selkirk, a qualified yoga instructor, offered the participants a perfect blend

Blaine Marchand leading the peony tour. Allen Brown

Ornamental Garden Tours

By Linda McLaren

The 2024 Ornamental Garden tour program focussed on five gardens – the Macoun, Rock, Heritage Rose, Explorer Rose, and Peony gardens – with two tours planned for each. Unfortunately, the last rose garden tour on August 17 was cancelled due to the depredations of the Japanese beetle, which left no blooms in either garden.

These tours are guided by the garden team leaders or experienced team members, who have become very familiar with the gardens that they so carefully tend. They talk about the various plants and often touch on other characteristics of their respective gardens, i.e., its design, history or topography. Our gardeners can also advise about insect and disease problems.

As well, the Friends of the Farm can arrange tours for organizations that request our assistance. This year, a group attending a university class reunion came by in July and were able to take a look at the Macoun, Rock, and Heritage Rose gardens before they had to go on their way. The Kanata

Seniors Council organized a tour to show Kanata seniors some highlights of the CEF through a brief tour of the Ornamental Gardens, the Tropical Greenhouse, and the Shelterbelt. This will help them to plan their own visits in the future. One organizer of this tour was a former AAFC employee who wants others to know what is available to see at the Farm. These customized tours are led by the Gardens Director or other team leaders.

The tours are free, but we do request donations to the Friends to help support our work. The goal of the tours is not to raise funds, although we very much welcome them. Our primary goal is to introduce people to the varied, beautiful gardens of the Central Experimental Farm, and encourage them to make further visits on their own.

Linda McLaren, a long-time member of volunteer garden teams, is the Friends of the Farm's Director of Gardens.

of mental relaxation and physical challenge.

The first session took place on a beautiful sunny day. Participants gathered on the farm, surrounded by trees and flowers, as they practiced yoga in the warm sunlight. The calmness of the surroundings, in concert with the sounds of birds and the gentle breeze, made the experience even more peaceful. Everyone, from experienced yogis to first timers, enjoyed the chance to move their bodies and clear their minds in such a lovely setting. It was a day of pure relaxation and connection with the earth. Pure Yoga Studios generously donated a one-month unlimited membership, which we raffled off to our participants. One of the lucky attendees walked away with this fantastic prize.

The second session, unfortunately, had to be cancelled due to bad weather, disappointing the many people who had eagerly signed up. Despite this, the excitement from the first event was maintained, indicating how very much people appreciated the chance to do yoga in such a beautiful outdoor space.

The success of the first "Yoga in Nature" event has inspired plans for more sessions in the future. Many are already looking forward to the next opportunity to unwind, stretch, and enjoy the natural beauty of the Farm. This event proved to be a perfect way to enjoy the summer while focusing on wellness and nature.

Sandra Joseph, our new volunteer Event Coordinator, expertly crafted and organized the "Yoga in Nature" sessions, offering a serene opportunity for participants to relax and connect with nature in the Ornamental Gardens.

Henri Goulet talking about insects.



Promoting Biodiversity in Tree Tours

Text and photos by Eric Jones

The first 2024 Friends of the Farm event was a joint tour in April with the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF), timed to coincide with their City Nature Challenge on Biodiversity. Participants were encouraged to download the iNaturalist app to help them identify and record species of plants and animals. The tour leader, James Page of CWF, spoke about the concerning rate of loss of biodiversity and the importance of keeping track of threatened species.

Eric Jones of Friends of the Farm followed in May with a Tree Identification tour. The group visited some representative species, looking at consistent traits for identification as well as characteristics that can vary from tree to tree. Leaves, flowers, fruit and bark, as well as the shape and form of the tree, were examined. The discussion also touched on the concept of "nativeness" as it applies to trees.

The June tour had a different slant, focusing on the insects found on trees in the Arboretum. Henri Goulet, honorary research associate with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, drew attention to the worrying decline of insect numbers in the area and globally. He used a net to sweep some vegetation to sample the insect population and talked about the specimens he found.

In July, naturalist Owen Clarkin led a tour highlighting rare trees and shrubs growing

at the Arboretum. Some were rare only in Ottawa, while others were generally rare in eastern North America (e.g., rare native plants and/or plants rarely cultivated here). Owen's talk used these examples to highlight and generate interest in rare plants generally. He hopes to foster a more varied and interesting cultivated landscape and promote conservation of rare trees.

Clayton Shearer shared his enthusiasm for Gymnosperms in August. The tour started at the Tropical Greenhouse to look at an *Auracaria* species and continued across the Experimental Farm campus with Ginkgos and many conifer specimens. The tour leader covered the ancient history of plants from the Devonian period forward and discussed the anatomical and reproductive differences between the Gymnosperms and flowering trees. The tour ended at the plot where two Sago Palms (*Cycad* species) are located.



Clayton Shearer sharing his enthusiasm for gymnosperms.

The Cereal Crops Building (foreground) in 1890, with the original Main Barn.



The Cereal Crops Building

Completed in 1889, the Cereal Crops Building (now known as Building 75) is one of the three oldest buildings in the core campus of the Central Experimental Farm. (The others are the two Heritage Houses, one on Maple Drive, the other on Birch Drive.) With attached greenhouses, Building 75 was built for seed testing and other experiments with field crops.

Dominion Cerealist Dr. Charles Saunders had his office in the building, which means it was associated with one of the great research success stories of the Farm — Marquis wheat.

For more on Building 75, check out the Friends of the Farm's book entitled *Building Canada's Farm*.



Arboretum volunteers, Spring 2024. In front are Ian Dublin and Lisa Moore (kneeling), and Carrie Bolton (standing). In the back are Brian Lindblom, Greg Bannoff, Dan Fonda, Blair Jarvis, Kevin O'Connor, Warren Manning-Dewar, and Alison Harvey. Other members, including Eric Jones who took the photo, are Susan Bailey, Sarah Lane, Margaret Navarro, and Roger Roberge, as well as student volunteers.

At Work Amid the Trees

by Eric Jones

You may have caught a glimpse of volunteers at work in the Arboretum and wondered what they were up to. Here's a look at what's involved in being on the Friends of the Farm Arboretum team of volunteers.

Our main focus has always been to control fast-growing invasive weeds such as dog-strangling vine (pale and black swallowwort) and European buckthorn (both common and glossy varieties). These and other invasive plants grow extensively throughout the city and eastern North America. If unchecked, they take over great swaths of green landscape, and reduce the numbers of other plants and wildlife. In the Arboretum, they become densely entangled with planted trees and shrubs, compromising the growth of many species.

More recently, our volunteers have also helped with efforts to restore some of the woodland area of the Arboretum, mulch the shrub beds, and add small plants at selected locations.

This year, the Friends of the Farm Arboretum volunteers divided into two teams. I lead the Wednesday team, which has its hands full with the work of maintaining and

enhancing the area around trees and shrubs. Blair Jarvis heads up the new Tuesday team, formed in order to give the group the flexibility to take on other tasks as needed. Examples of these tasks may include:

- Checking on trees added through the CelebriTree and previous tree donor programs;
- Recording tree bloom times (a task which might lead to the formation of a third team), and using the collected data to look for trends;
- Testing assorted ground cover species to see if they can inhibit growth of invasives;
- Continued restoration of the woodland area; and,
- Using GPS info to map data for general use.

As we move forward with these activities, we may re-organize further and seek volunteers to help make them happen. In the meantime, if anyone wants to assist us with any of these tasks, please let us know at volunteer@friendsofthefarm.ca or 613-230-3276.

*Eric Jones, past president of the Friends, is co-author of the new book **Pathways to the Trees at the Central Experimental Farm** (see page 1).*



Black Cherry. Eric Jones

CelebriTrees—A Continued Success

By Elizabeth Atkinson

In September 2023 the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm launched the CelebriTree Program as a pilot initiative aimed at determining whether there was an interest in re-establishing a sponsored tree-planting initiative in our beautiful Arboretum. The pilot also served as a way to explore how such a modernized program might work. Turns out, there is indeed a high level of interest, and even excitement, in seeing new trees planted that will augment this historic collection. Many view this initiative as a way to recognize individuals who have enjoyed, cherished, and perhaps contributed to the Arboretum's upkeep and enhancement.

We also experimented with using technology as a means to keep the application process efficient, accurate, and fair. We know that not everyone is completely comfortable with electronic processes, so we provided a phone-in process as well. We used GPS locators to position the CelebriTrees on the CelebriTree webpage map and positioned QR codes at the site to allow Arboretum visitors to learn about the trees and the program while visiting the tree. We created a tree tag that is considerate of the growing tree and the environment.

By all measures, the 2023 pilot was a tremendous success! Thank you to all the 2023 applicants for helping to define and deliver this important new program. Based on last year's learning, we were able to enhance the CelebriTree webpage and refine our process for the 2024 trees.

WELCOME 2024 CELEBRITREES!

Our beloved Arboretum is now home to 20 new CelebriTrees sponsored through the 2024 CelebriTree program. Purchased by the Friends, the trees arrived in the spring as part of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's annual tree order. The CelebriTrees were selected in consultation with AAFC whose staff expertly sited and planted the saplings. With our great summer growing conditions this year, the young trees are thriving.

The 2024 CelebriTrees comprise a variety of species, including maple, hickory, crabapple and cherry trees, as well as birch, chestnut, hawthorn, magnolia, oak, linden, ironwood, and jack pine. Visit the CelebriTree website to learn more about each of the trees and their specific location.

As the CelebriTree Program evolves, we intend to develop tours that may include some of the donor trees. For the time being though, you may take a self-guided tour using the website map on your phone and the CelebriTree QR code on the tree plaques.

NEW ARBORETUM TEAM

A new Arboretum team was established this spring (see "At Work Amid the Trees," page 6). One of its tasks is to assist in keeping an eye on the trees from our donor programs. This team of volunteers will help to ensure that the CelebriTrees look their best. This includes ground-checking activities such as weeding around the trees. The team will also monitor the condition of the CelebriTree tag as the tree grows.

Please contact info@friendsofthefarm.ca for additional information or to volunteer.

Elizabeth Atkinson, Director of Programs for the Friends, launched the CelebriTree program.



100 Years Ago at the Farm

A New Greenhouse

A new greenhouse, decked out with choice chrysanthemums, was formally opened on Saturday, November 8, 1924, by Lady Byng of Vimy, wife of the Governor General. As reported the following Monday in *The Ottawa Journal*, "Her Excellency expressed her great pleasure at being present at such a happy occasion and told of her lifelong interest in horticulture. The great skill shown by Mr. James McKee, greenhouse specialist, in having brought the plants and flowers to such a high degree of perfection was warmly appreciated by Her Excellency.

"The chrysanthemum show, and with it the new greenhouse, was then declared open, after which Her Excellency spent some time in studying the collection of more than 100 varieties of apples, originated at the Farm. She expressed the hope that some of these may be grown successfully at her home in England."

"When the Byngs left Canada in October 1926," wrote Alexandra Reford (this newsletter, Winter 2023, p. 12), "they returned to Thorpe Hall where Lady Byng built her 'Canadian garden', made up of plants she had discovered in her tours across the country." Perhaps she

tried growing apples bred at the Central Experimental Farm?

"BETTER THAN EVER"

The display of chrysanthemums at the show in 1924 was "better than ever before, and there are more of them." (*Ottawa Citizen*, November 7, 1924) The many varieties together formed "a gorgeous display" in the new greenhouse, built for the experimental work of the Horticulture Division.

"Two very attractive chrysanthemums, originated at the Farm, are the 'Lady Byng', a lovely single pink variety, and the 'E.S. Archibald', a very fine single of an attractive shade of brown. Some of the largest blooms are of that now well-known sort, the 'J.R. Booth'."

Visitors to the Mum Show in 1924 could also see a greenhouse devoted to geraniums and another one filled with ferns, as well as the exhibition of apples originated at the Farm that caught the eye of Lady Byng.

*The greenhouse that was opened in 1924 is now known as Number 11 and is next to the Tropical House. It is used, for example, to store tropical plants and prepare annuals to be planted in the Ornamental Gardens and around Farm buildings. For more about this and other greenhouses at the Farm, see the Friends of the Farm book entitled **Building Canada's Farm**, available through our website boutique at <https://friendsofthefarm.ca/home/boutique/>.*



Macoun Memorial Garden Volunteers

Some of the enthusiastic volunteers in the Macoun Memorial Garden team in the spring of this year. Back Row, left to right: Thanet Hardwick, Linda Lewis, Kate Hadden, Linda McLaren, Sylvie Lapointe, Bev Nowosad, Joanne Kingsley, Elaheh Saniinejad. Front Row, left to right: Cathy Oikawa, Debra Hauer, Anne Darley, Janet Buske-Wichser, Rhonda Daman, Karen Walker, Madeline Estrada.

Photo credit: Charlie Senack, Kitchissippi Times

One of Bill Wegman's hybrid peonies on display at the Whistling Gardens, Wilsonville, Ontario. *Nick Maycher*

An Adventure with Peonies

By *Blaine Marchand*

In 1965, when Bill Wegman and his wife bought a house in Manotick, then considered a distance from Ottawa, a friend gave him roots of pink, white and red peonies. A curious person, Bill wanted to learn more about these plants that grew relatively quickly and produced an abundance of fragrant blooms.

He consulted a well-known book on peonies and one of the things he took note of in its chapter on breeding was the statement that there was no point in trying to hybridize peonies because only one in 1,000 achieve successful results. Bill gave this some thought and then decided that hybridization was worth the effort, given the wide variety of peonies produced over the centuries.

When he retired in 1995, after a lengthy career as an electrical/communications

engineer, he had the time required to breed peonies. He joined a gardening group on the nascent internet so he could learn more about hybridization techniques. In 2000, by chance, he heard an interview with Mary Pratte on CBC Radio during which she was talked about the fledgling Canadian Peony Society (CPS) and how she and George Vorauer, both volunteers with the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm, were about to revamp the peony gardens at the Experimental Farm, which had been decimated after a harsher than usual Ottawa winter. Bill contacted Mary, who urged him to come and learn more about peonies by volunteering with the weekly Thursday morning peony team at the Farm.

On June 16 and 17, 2001, the Canadian Peony Society held its annual peony show and annual general meeting at Rideau Hall. Bill decided to attend and enter one of the

peonies in his garden—'Nick Shaylor'—into the show. Not only did Bill's peony take First Prize Lactiflora Double White category, but it was also selected by the judges as the Grand Champion on the Court of Honour. Bill was tickled "white!"

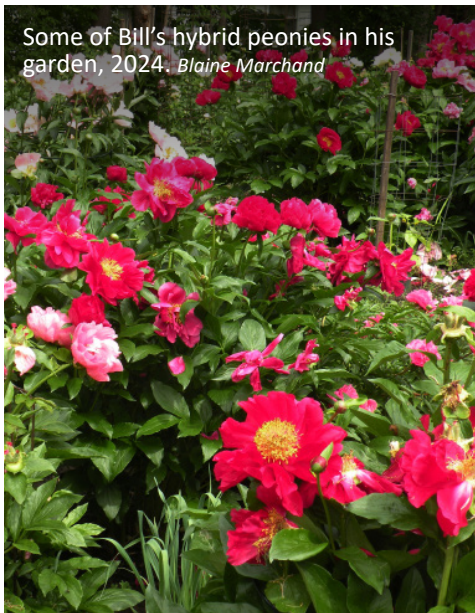
The following summer, Bill decided to follow up on Mary's invitation and joined the peony volunteer team. He stresses that working as a volunteer in the peony garden provided him with the perfect opportunity to learn more about peonies from Mary and George, among others. It also helped him understand how they had chosen the different varieties to include in the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) gardens, including assembling an impressive collection of peonies hybridized and introduced by A.P. Saunders, the son of William Saunders, first Director of the CEF.

Bill had also heard about the American Peony Society (APS) website and began reading up on the hybridization of peonies, in particular how A.P. Saunders used pollen from certain varieties of species peonies to cross with lactiflora peonies. At the time, the CPS also had a species peony discussion group on the internet, which he joined to further his education.

Bill says humbly that he was merely "a hobbyist" and that he had no specific goals in terms of what he was trying to achieve in hybridizing peonies. But he quickly learned that certain peonies are "studs," as he says with a laugh, so he bought three "stud" peonies created by D.L. Reath – 'Lemon Chiffon', an herbaceous hybrid lemon-yellow double peony introduced in 1981; 'Blushing Princess', a light pink semi-double whose parentage includes an A.P. Saunders peony, introduced in 1991; and 'The Mackinac Grand', a radiant red semi-double, introduced in 1992.



Friends of the Farm peony team, 2010. Bill Wegman (fourth from right) is holding awards won by CEF peonies at the Canadian Peony Show that year. Mary Pratte is at the far right. *R. Hinchcliff*



Some of Bill's hybrid peonies in his garden, 2024. *Blaine Marchand*



Bill in his peony garden, 2024. *Blaine Marchand*

Bill points out that in making crosses over a 10-year period, he came to realize it is not just the flower's shape and colour that you need to strive for but also a plant whose strong stems will support those blooms. In that time, he tried to achieve a semi-double or fully double flower on an upright plant that would be a standout in the garden.

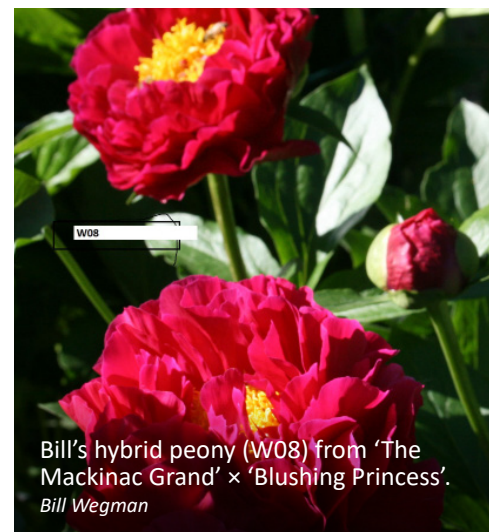
At the CPS show at Rideau Hall, June 19-20, 2004, once again, one of his entries into the category of Best Lactiflora, Double, 'Doris Cooper' (Cooper, 1946) took pride of place on the Court of Honour. While cutting peonies that he entered in the show and while giving a tour of his gardens to the CPS members from across Canada who attended, he came to realize how important fragrance was. He still has a strong memory of the lactiflora peonies in his garden at twilight filling the air with evocative scent. But Bill admits that achieving scent is difficult as it is often lost when hybridizing, and he feels it is not yet something he has achieved.

Two of Bill's peonies are now among the peonies in the CEF garden. One double (W05) with delicate blush petals resulted from a cross between 'The Mackinac Grand' and *Paeonia macrophylla*. The latter is a species peony that originally grew in the western Caucasus in Georgia and was used by A. P. Saunders in his hybridization work on peonies in the 1900s. The second peony (W08) of Bill's in the CEF garden is a cross between 'The Mackinac Grand' and 'Blushing Princess'. This cross produced red semi-double flowers held high on strong stems.

In addition to hybridizing, Bill for many years coordinated the peony seed exchange offered by the CPS. For Bill, growing peonies from seed allows him to access potential offspring that resulted from particular crosses in which he is interested. Each of such seedlings is unique and,



Bill's hybrid peony (W05) from 'The Mackinac Grand' × *Paeonia macrophylla*. *Bill Wegman*



Bill's hybrid peony (W08) from 'The Mackinac Grand' × 'Blushing Princess'. *Bill Wegman*

therefore, a surprise. In 2011, Bill became the peony team leader at the Farm and for 11 years the volunteers on the team benefitted from his in-depth knowledge about peonies.

At the recent 2024 AGM of the CPS, Bill was presented with the inaugural John Simkins Award recognizing his contributions to the Society. The tribute, in part, read:

"His work as a hybridizer is legendary. His work ethic has continued to strengthen the livelihood of Canadian bred peonies. His seeds offer purchasers the opportunity to grow unique seedlings that have the potential to be very interesting plants. Bill uses excellent parents, and seeds from hand pollinated crosses that are not usually available anywhere else.

"Bill has been most generous by donating his creations to local gardens in plants, seeds and roots. His unassuming manner of accomplishing so much, and willingness to share information with

those interested, is truly stellar. His work will not go unnoticed for future generations, a tribute to his research, and keen interest in producing Canadian peonies for us to enjoy."

Bill says that he has started close to 1,000 seedlings in his garden since he began. At the same time, he feels that maybe a dozen of them are "decent" and only one is particularly "worthy." He adds, however, that hybridization is a slow process and the space in his garden is limited. And with age, he finds tending his peonies is more of a challenge. In 2023, he stepped back as peony team leader although he remains a stalwart member of the team. Bill continues to press on with what he calls his "adventure with peonies." His peony offspring grace Whistling Gardens near Brantford, Ontario, and are prized in private gardens among peony aficionados he counts as friends.

Blaine, a member of the Friends' peony team, has close to 900 peonies in his own collection.

Dr. Malcolm Morrison welcomes walkers on the tour.



HERITAGE OTTAWA WALKING TOUR: The Scientific Landscape of the Central Experimental Farm

By John Zvonar

Heritage Ottawa (HO) recently hosted a walking tour of the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) that showcased the vital importance of the scientific research being done there. An enthusiastic group gathered at the Tropical Greenhouse on the evening of 17 July. As Heritage Ottawa's Martin Rice noted, "the farm showed beautifully as the skies cleared and temperatures moderated."

A BIT OF HISTORY

Following Martin's welcoming remarks, another HO member, John Zvonar, provided a brief introduction to the Farm. In the words of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC):

"Since its establishment in 1886, the Central Experimental Farm has contributed substantially to the development of Canadian agriculture through scientific research, experimentation, and practical verification. It would become the headquarters of a national system of experimental farms, as its central location and administration served to address a range of national agricultural issues."

Fast forward to 1997 when the CEF was designated a National Historic Site of Canada (NHSC). As a cultural landscape, the more-than 400-hectare farm reflects the 19th-century philosophy of agriculture. Care was taken to integrate an administrative core and a range of other buildings with the arboretum, ornamental gardens, display beds, and experimental fields – all within a picturesque composition. Further, as a rare example of a farm within a city, the site has become a symbol of the central role agriculture has

played in shaping the country. Its national significance also rests on the ongoing scientific research being conducted here.

The plan of the Farm is based on three clearly defined zones:

- a central core of administrative, scientific, and functional farm buildings and spaces;
- experimental fields, plots, and shelterbelts; and,
- an arboretum, ornamental gardens, and experimental hedges.

Each zone boasts unique heritage values and character-defining elements.

AN IDEAL TOUR GUIDE

The primary leader of the evening walkabout amid the experimental fields and plots was Dr. Malcolm Morrison, a research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) since 1988. He received a Bachelor's degree from Macdonald College, a Master's degree from the University of Saskatchewan, and a PhD from the University of Manitoba. His AAFC roots run deep, as he was raised on a research farm in Morden, Manitoba where his father was a director.

As a crop physiologist Dr. Morrison uses phenomic tools (e.g., infrared and 3D imaging) to characterize plant growth and development in response to abiotic stress. Abiotic refers to things in the environment that are not living, such as sunlight, water, pH, type of soil, etc. Furthermore, he focuses his research on cold and drought tolerance in soybean, wheat, and corn in order to improve yield, raise the nutritional and marketable value of food while decreasing anti-nutritional factors. For his work, he has been recognized as

both a Fellow (2012) and a Distinguished Agronomist (2016) of the Canadian Society of Agronomy.

KEY PLAYERS DURING THE FARM'S EARLY YEARS

Dr. Morrison began the tour by describing some of the personalities associated with the creation and evolution of the Farm since 1885. These included then Minister of Agriculture, John Carling, and William Saunders, Canada's foremost authority on agriculture. Carling's request of Saunders for an assessment of agricultural research resulted in a report that "formed the blueprint for the location of experimental farms in Canada and their function (incl. botany, entomology, forestry, plant propagation, agronomy and livestock)." And, as Dr. Morrison continued: "The research success of the Experimental Farms, their beauty and their importance to the Canadian Farmer is his lasting legacy."



Dr. Morrison and soybeans.

Dr. Morrison describes the important research at the Farm being done to improve the climate change resiliency of plants.



Wheat and beyond with Dr. Morrison.



Carling and Saunders bridged three worlds: farming, politics, and science and shared a vision that a natural program of agricultural research and education for Canadian farmers would make agriculture more profitable, increase food production in the growing nation, and support the settlement of the Prairies.

Dr. Morrison also recounted the hiring of notable scientists over time including James Fletcher, William Macoun, Joseph Grisdale, and Frank Shutt among others.

SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGHS

As we strolled backstage at the Farm, Dr. Morrison told us about the advent of and innovations in the development of hardy strains of wheat that would be so influential in expanding Western Canadian agriculture. These successes would ultimately affect the story of bread worldwide, the first globalized crop! One of the foremost scientific breakthroughs made on the Farm included the world-renowned Marquis wheat (for which Saunders' son Charles is given credit), justly celebrated for its early ripening and drought resistant characteristics, its fantastic gluten strength, and its bread making qualities. "To this day, all bread wheat varieties in North America have Marquis in their pedigree."

Tour participants also learned the curious origin stories of instant (and fluffy) mashed potatoes and frozen foods at the Farm. Dr. Morrison offered some insight into the development of cold-tolerant genes for corn – "expanding the frontier of corn production in the country" – in effect, responding to the mandate of AAFC to extend growing regimes.

Dr. Morrison succeeded in packing a great deal of information into a short period of time. Field 1 was visited, where a "very large experiment examining the effects of tillage and crop rotation (corn, soybean, wheat) on plant growth and yield" is taking place. As our guide noted: "Tillage is used to control weeds, cycle carbon

and nitrogen, incorporate fertilizers and pesticides, and dry out the soil. If you don't till, you decrease farm costs and may improve soil structure."

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

The Farm's contributions to research on climate change was also described. According to Dr. Morrison, the earth had long been in equilibrium but with the recent "pumping of energy into the system," more CO₂ has been added and our planet has now been put into disequilibrium. So, research on the Farm has focused on increased moisture stress as the climate continues to change.

"For crop agriculture, climate change means increased variability in temperature and precipitation. We have found that over the last 100 years, precipitation irregularity has increased. That means that the precipitation we have been getting comes in large rainfall events spaced further and further apart. Crops need ways to grow through cycles of moisture abundance and moisture stress." The breeding programs that continue at the Farm are, in part, focused on addressing moisture stress.

One method proposed to sequester CO₂ is to lock it up in the form of soil carbon by not tilling the land. Since corn, soybean, and wheat constitute a significant component of Canada's GDP, much testing and increased investments have been devoted to examining this theory.

As the tour wound down, Dr. Morrison spoke of the oat breeding nursery field and the positive link between oat bran and human digestive systems (dietary fibres, in particular, beta-glucan levels). Furthermore, he cited the important and serendipitous working relationship that the Farm has had with the Civic Hospital to help further the study of ways to improve human cholesterol levels.

In his speaking notes, Dr. Morrison outlined that a goal of the walking tour would

be to communicate "William Saunders' conception of a what a research farm should be, how it functions and what services it provides to the Canadian farmer." The last half of the tour covered the new crop varieties that have been developed with improved cold tolerance so as to allow crops to grow where none existed.

It was clear that everyone participating in the "Scientific Landscape of the CEF" walking tour now has a much better idea about the Saunders' story and what goes into crop breeding and the adaptation to climate change. It is abundantly clear that the Farm is not just a dog walking park! Summing up as the sun was setting, Dr. Morrison stressed the importance of working for the public/greater good, the need for scientific curiosity, food security, and national prosperity. These objectives are all actively and enthusiastically pursued at the Farm.

Many thanks are extended to Dr. Malcolm Morrison for sharing a fraction of his knowledge and enthusiasm for the Farm. The lucky tour participants have greatly enhanced their awareness about what takes place on this gem of an acreage in the Nation's Capital. It is to be hoped that more people will come to learn about what's new in science at the Central Experimental Farm.

[Note: All quotes are taken from the speaking notes provided by Dr. Malcolm Morrison.]

John Zvonar is a Landscape Architect who has worked in Heritage Conservation his entire career with a focus on nationally significant cultural landscapes across the country and abroad. He is a longstanding and avid volunteer at Maplelawn Garden.

Heritage Ottawa has been advocating for the protection of the Central Experimental Farm for decades and continues to do so.

Photos by John Zvonar

Photo: Ginkgo tree on the main CEF campus lawn. R. Hinchcliff

Befriending 'Gink'

Letter to Friends of the Farm from Annette Wetmore, Fredericton, New Brunswick.

"I attended Carleton University in the late '80s and in one of my plant biology courses we were required to 'befriend' a tree from the Central Experimental Farm. Each week we had a different assignment about our tree, and we were encouraged to visit it on a regular basis to make notes, etc. I befriended a Ginkgo tree and even after the course was completed, I would still go to visit him regularly (maybe less so in winter lol).

"That befriending of my tree (I was completely unoriginal and just called him 'Gink') has been a part of my life for years. When I got married, we bought a Ginkgo and planted it in our back yard – an over-eager but well-intentioned teenager accidentally weed-whacked it and it did not survive.

"I also get silly excited whenever I encounter a Ginkgo in my travels and drive everyone around me crazy as I recount facts.

"The trips to the experimental farm are some of my best memories when I was attending university."

The Ginkgo is one of the trees featured in the new book *Pathways to the Trees at the Central Experimental Farm* (see page 1).

Early memories of the Farm are always welcome at newsletter@friendsofthefarm.ca.

For the stories behind our CelebriTrees, visit <https://friendsofthefarm.ca/celebritree-explore/>.

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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.

The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm publish the Newsletter (ISSN 1702 2762) four times a year (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall). All members receive the newsletter and it is sent by regular mail or e-mail.

Consider joining us!

Find our membership form on the website by using the QR code to the right:
<https://friendsofthefarm.ca/become-a-member/> and pay by PayPal, or send in a cheque.



Benefits include discounts on Master Gardener lectures, discounts at some local nurseries, one free admission per group per visit 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/.



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