

SPRING/SUMMER 2011



Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world and all there ever will be to know and understand.

~ Albert Einstein

tidbits

Ecology Park Market Hours

Starting Tuesday, April 26, our Garden Market is open weekly at these hours:

Tuesday 1-5 pm

Thursday 1-5 and 6-8 pm

Sunday 1-4 pm

On opening in spring, compost, mulches, garden supplies and selected trees are available for sale. Perennials, annuals, shrubs, herbs, vegetables and other food plants are available starting Sunday, May 22, at the annual Spring Plant Sale.

Friends of the Ecology Park

An annual membership gives you a 10% discount on all plants and garden supplies purchased at the Ecology Park.

Bountiful Backyard Berries

by Andrea Hicks

Whether you are an avid vegetable grower, a flower lover, or a house-plant killer, if you have some outdoor space and a bit of time you can provide yourself and the birds, with tasty treats from your backyard.

Berry producing shrubs come in all shapes, sizes, and growing needs so they are a great addition to any yard – plant them in an orchard, as part of your flower garden, or as a stand alone shrub in your front yard. There are a number of berry choices, and as with any plant, be sure the needs of the species match your planting site. Most berry producing shrubs require full sun, so open areas are best. Below are several options to get you started, a number of which are available for purchase at the Ecology Park garden market.

Common Elderberry is a fast-growing native shrub which can grow up to 10 feet high. They can often be found growing along side streams or rivers in damp soil, although they can also tolerate drier conditions. The delicate white flowers appear in June and by August you will have a harvest of dark purple berries. To ensure good pollination and bountiful harvest, plant at least two shrubs. Elderberry wine and jelly have been popular uses of the berries. This is a low maintenance shrub that only needs some compost and occasional pruning of old wood to thrive for many years.



Common elderberry (Sambucus canadensis) is a native shrub that bears heavy clusters of small, sweet berries in August.

Gooseberry is a hardy, compact shrub that produces round, striped berries which begin green and slowly ripen to bright pink/red by mid-summer. They are self-fruitful, so you don't need to plant more than one for cross-pollination. There are several cultivars and most are well suited to the Ontario climate. Gooseberry prefers full sun and well drained but not dry soil – insufficient moisture will cause the berries to form improperly. The berries can be tart and so they are ideal for pies and jelly. Prune out old stems every few years to encourage fresh new growth.

Saskatoon Berry is a tall shrub native to north-western Ontario and Manitoba, reaching up to 15 feet, and is one of the few berry producers that grows well in both sun and shade. It is also an early crop with berries ready for eating in June or early July. It is a very hardy shrub and grows best in well drained soil. The berries resemble blueberries and are suitable for all the best berry uses: pies, jam, jelly, and snacking!

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Currants have long been a popular backyard berry shrub because of their compact size and abundant berries. Both black and red varieties are available, which offer slightly different flavors but are equally delicious. A cross between Gooseberry and Black currant also exists, called Jostaberry, and offers the larger size of the Gooseberry with the flavor and colour of the current. Currants require rich moist soil so be sure to add compost to the hole before planting and mulch well to keep the soil cool. They can tolerate partial shade and will grow well under larger trees. Every year, prune out roughly 1/3 of the oldest branches to ground level after fruiting or in early spring to encourage robust new growth. Harvest begins in mid summer and will keep you busy trying to use all the berries!

Raspberries, both wild and domestic require a bit more maintenance, but can reward you with bumper crops. Wild red raspberries need full sun and moist, well-drained soil. Wild black raspberry thrives in part shade and moist soil. While the berries of both are small, they are rich and flavourful. Both spread quickly and require some careful taming. Each raspberry cane lives for two years, blooming and fruiting only on two year old canes. Older canes and excessive new canes must be pruned out every year to prevent the formation of a prickly, impenetrable thicket! Domestic raspberries produce larger berries and taller canes, but still require annual pruning and thinning to thrive.

All these shrubs are popular with both humans and birds so be sure to keep a close eye on them to make sure you get to the berries before the birds do!



Raspberries, whether wild or domestic, provide tasty treats in your own backyard.



Of Special Concern

by Andrew Jobes

You've probably heard the phrase "the canary in the mineshaft," but do you know where it comes from? Miners used to bring canaries into underground mines with them, because the birds were sensitive to poisonous gases and would get sick or die before the miners did. In this way, the canaries provided an early warning that something was wrong and the miners could leave the area before they got sick.

In our last newsletter, I introduced you to species at risk in Ontario, what the different categories of risk are, and some of the reasons why a species might be at risk. One of those categories was Special Concern, a group that acts much like the canaries did in the mineshafts. Special Concern species are those whose populations we need to pay attention to, with the thinking that if we watch them closely enough we might be able to detect real problems and fix them before they get too big.

There are several Special Concern species in the Peterborough area, including the Monarch (butterfly), the Snapping Turtle, and the Northern Map Turtle, and here are some things you can do to help keep them from becoming threatened or endangered and ensure that they remain an important part of Peterborough's natural heritage:

- Monarch caterpillars feed on Milkweed. Leave milkweed plants where they are,

instead of picking them. If you live in the city, you might even want to plant some Common Milkweed, Swamp Milkweed or Butterfly Milkweed (butterfly milkweed is pictured above).

- Many turtles lay their eggs in sand or fine gravel, which is often found on roadside shoulders. Hundreds of turtles get hit by cars during the nesting season each year. Drive carefully and look out for turtles during the spring and summer, and slow down if you see one.

- The Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre (KTTC) helps take care of injured turtles. Visit their web page to find out what to do if you find one (www.kawarthaturtle.org).

- Snakes like the warmth of pavement during the summer, and they often spend time basking on roads. Drive carefully and look out for snakes on hot summer days, and slow down if you see one.

- Natural shorelines are important to turtles for habitat and nesting. If you live on the shoreline of a river, lake, or stream, keep the shoreline natural, instead of replacing plants and shrubs with concrete or rock.

Special Concern species are important. If everyone does his or her share, we can prevent them from becoming Peterborough's canaries in the mineshaft.



Garden Design Basics

by Cathy Dueck

One of the most challenging, but also most exciting aspects of gardening is deciding where to place plants in your yard. Combining colour and texture, using light and shade, considering the flow and change of the seasons can all seem overwhelming challenges to a novice gardener. At the same time, these complexities make gardening endlessly fascinating, since there is always more to learn, no matter what your level of experience.

While garden design is a complex topic for weighty books and extensive courses, there are a few basic principles that can help anyone get started.

- **consider the location of the sun throughout the day** - patterns of sun and shade are critically important when choosing appropriate plants and placing them where they'll thrive; remember that the sun moves throughout the day, so take note of changing sunlight patterns; sun-loving plants require 6-8 hours of full sun daily
- **arrange plants by height** - if you're arranging a wide bed of plants, place the tallest at the back, mid-height plants in the middle, and short plants along the edge; if the sun shines from behind the bed, make sure the tall plants don't cast shade on the shorter ones in front
- **place plants in clusters, rather than individually** - while it's more expensive to buy several of the same plant, there's a much greater visual impact from a cluster of plants than only one or two
- **aim for a "layered" design** - a really pleasing, long-term design incorporates trees, shrubs and non-woody plants (flowers, grasses etc.); since trees take the longest to establish, look for locations where a tree could shade your house in summer, or provide a shaded oasis for summer refuge in the garden; banks of shrubs can be low-maintenance and add year-round structure to the garden
- **perennials and bloom times** - while perennials come back year after year, each perennial blooms for a short time; you'll need a selection of perennials that bloom in spring, early and mid-summer as well as fall
- **foliage plants and annuals round out the season** - grasses and other plants with various coloured and textured leaves add interest to the garden, whether perennials are in bloom or not; annuals must be planted every year, but they bloom all season
- **focal points** - a bench, a sculpture, a pathway, an arbour or a pond can all add drama and focus to a garden
- **start small** - don't try to do everything at once, unless you've got lots of money or considerable experience; if it's too challenging to plan for the whole yard, start with a small flower bed until you build some confidence, and expand your skills over time; it's easy to move smaller plants later as you become more familiar with your setting and fine-tune your ideas
- above all, have fun with your yard!

Beginner Birdwatching

Are you a beginning bird watcher or someone who has never explored the world of birding but would like to? Join Sue Prentice and Andrew Jobs as they introduce you to the fascinating and rewarding world of bird watching.

This 20-hour course will provide participants with the knowledge and skills to identify local birds on their own, including selecting and using field guides and binoculars and learning what to look for when trying to identify an unfamiliar bird in the field.

The course will begin with a two-hour, classroom-based evening session on Tuesday, April 19, followed by hour-long bird walks in local parks every Thursday morning from 7:00 to 8:00 am from April 21 through June 16. There will also be three 2-to-3-hour Saturday morning field trips on April 30th (Miller Creek), May 14 (Presqu'île Park), and May 21 (Trent Nature Sanctuary).

Cost \$120: all proceeds will go to fundraising for the Peterborough Urban Ecology Centre; please make cheques payable to Andrew Jobs. Registration is limited to 20 participants, so reserve your space early! Call Peterborough Green-Up at 705.745.3238 to register.

tidbits

Tree Subsidies Again This Year

During the month of May, we're glad to once again subsidize the purchase of a suitable tree for property owners in the City of Peterborough. A list of approved species is available from the Green-Up office, along with a coupon and new tree selection factsheet.

One tree per property is eligible for a 50% subsidy, to a maximum rebate of \$50. **First come, first served** - a limited number of coupons are available. You can pick up a coupon and information at the Green-Up office on Aylmer St.

Volunteering

The growing season is a busy time of year for the Ecology Park and Urban Forest program. Wednesdays are volunteer days at the Ecology Park, so drop by any Wednesday (weather permitting) between 10 am and 5 pm and we'd love to give you a job! The Urban Forest program is also looking for help with neighbourhood tree inventories. You can learn a lot about our local trees, and help collect important information for their future care and management. Stop by or email the Green-Up office to let us know your contact info so we can match you with a job you'll enjoy.

We'd also love some extra hands to help with the plant sale on May 22, anytime from set-up at 9 am to clean-up at 4 pm.

Summer Kids' Camp

This year, we're partnering with the Camp Kawartha Environment Centre to host a two week Day Camp from August 8 to 19. Exciting day-long programs for kids from 9-12 years. \$375 for the two weeks. Registration and further info on the Camp Kawartha website at www.campkawartha.ca/summercamp/registration.php.

Earth Adventures and Group Visits

August is Kids' month at the Ecology Park this year! "Earth Adventures", our popular afternoon program for kids 5-9 years will run once again on Tuesdays and Thursdays, August 2, 4, 23 and 25. \$7.00 per 2 hour session.

Group visits of children and youth from camps and daycares are also welcome during August. Contact Johanna Hart at 705-745-3238 ext 217 to arrange dates and program details.

workshops and events

All events (unless otherwise stated) are at the Ecology Park

BEGINNER BIRDWATCHING

Tues, April 19 (7:00 to 9:00 pm)
First evening of a 20 hour series on introductory birdwatching (see page 3 for details). Cost \$120. Call 745-3238 ext. 212 to register.

MARKET OPENING - Tuesday, April 26 (1:00 to 4:00 pm) Our garden market officially opens for regular hours for sales of compost, mulches and selected trees and garden supplies.

COMPOSTING WORKSHOP

Thurs, May 12 (6:30 to 7:30 pm)
Paula Anderson (aka "The Compost Queen") will help you start a new compost pile or fine-tune an existing one. Start the gardening season on the right foot!

BUILDING AND USING COLD-FRAMES - Sunday, May 15 (2:00 to 3:00 pm) Coldframes are like tiny greenhouses that can be used to stretch the growing season, harden off tender seedlings, and protect sensitive plants. Join Amanda and David of Tall Tree Farm to learn how to build and use cold frames. Kits will be available to purchase.

SPRING PLANT SALE - Sunday, May 22 (1:00 to 4:00 pm)

This popular sale is an important fundraiser for the Ecology Park. There is always an amazing selection of plants for every garden and help to make the perfect selection!

WATER IN THE GARDEN - Sunday, June 12 (2:00 to 3:30 pm)

With water metering in Peterborough, and rural residents on well-water, there's plenty of incentive to learn how to garden with less water. Cathy Dueck will discuss xeriscaping and drought-tolerant plants, and Paul Halasz will demonstrate retrofitting and connecting a rainbarrel, drip irrigation and other water-saving tricks of the trade.

ART IN THE GARDEN - Saturday and Sunday, June 25 and 26 (10:00 am to 4:00 pm) Local artists will display their work and create new pieces throughout the day. This is an event of the Garden Route, a collective of local growers and garden centres in the Peterborough region, of which the Ecology Park is a member. Visit the website for further details, at www.gardenroute.ca

TOUR OF THE ECOLOGY PARK -

Sunday, July 3 (10:00 to 11:00 am) Join us for a holiday weekend stroll through the Ecology Park and its many gardens. Hear the stories behind the gardens and the inside scoop on building a beautiful, healthy outdoor space.

WILD FORAGING - Sunday, July 17 (2:00 to 3:00 pm) Verity Barrett will guide this exploration of the fascinating world of edible wild plants.

20th ANNIVERSARY GARDEN PARTY - Wednesday, July 20 (7:00 to 8:30 pm) We invite the Ecology Park's many friends, visitors and supporters to join us in celebrating 20 years of environmental leadership in Peterborough.

TREE IDENTIFICATION - Sunday, August 14 (2:00 to 3:30 pm)
Trees are often the least recognized but most important part of gardens and greenspaces. This workshop will cover the basics of recognizing local trees.

FAMILY DAY - Saturday, August 20 (10:00 am to 4:00 pm) This year we've expanded our popular "Family Night" to a whole day of family-centered fun and learning. Stay tuned for details.

PROPAGATING NATIVE PLANTS
Sunday, Sept. 11 (2:00 to 3:30 pm)
Growing your own plants is a great way to enhance your garden and learn about our natural heritage. Gavin Trevelyan will explore the basics of native seed collection and propagation.

SPECIES AT RISK IN ONTARIO - Sunday, Sept. 25 (2:00 to 3:30 pm)
Biodiversity is nature's capital, and we can't afford to lose it! Join experts from the MNR to learn about local species at risk and how to protect them.



Peterborough's Ecology Park
is on Ashburnham Drive
beside Peterborough Utilities

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www.greenup.on.ca

www.ecologypark.greenup.on.ca



CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP IN PETERBOROUGH

The first "Ecology Garden" in Peterborough was a small demonstration site on Rogers Street in the summer of 1991. Since then, we've grown into an Ecology Park that has hosted thousands of programs for local children, propagated thousands of native plants to beautify and strengthen the community, and welcomed countless visitors who came to relax, to learn and rejuvenate. This season we're hosting many special events to recognize this milestone. We hope you'll join in the festivities!

