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OHS NEWSLETTER
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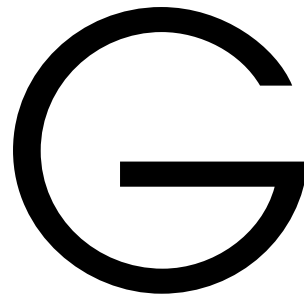
Giving Back



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by Mary Ann Smythe



ardeners are, for the most part, a generous bunch.

They are enthusiastic about sharing their experiences, and willing to give advice and plants

to their neighbours and other gardeners. But a number of OHS members go further. They contribute their time and energy to public and institutional gardens in the community. These members create or work on gardens at local schools or at their churches. The gardens, in many cases, would not otherwise exist or thrive. And other OHS members volunteer their time to help out with the Ornamental Gardens at the Central Experimental Farm and the historic walled garden at Maplelawn on Richmond Road.

The following series of articles details some of these experiences and opportunities.

We salute the dedication and commitment of these volunteers.

Their efforts benefit all of us.

Gardeners are **Sharers!**

Denise Kennedy

In September 2015 I became involved with the Riverview Park Alternative School's gardens. The teacher who had been helping had retired and no one had taken up the challenge.

I asked if I could help – the rest is history.

I trimmed, pruned, dug up, moved, cut back existing plants, and, then, started planning and planting. I mulched leaves and trucked them to the school. I planted a few bulbs and waited for spring.

Early in 2016 a homeowner in Crystal Beach emailed the OHS and offered peony roots. I dug up the roots and took them to Blaine Marchand and the peony team at the Friends of the Central Experimental Farm (FCEF) for trimming. Then I got started!

I enlisted the help of Jean Currie of the FCEF Arboretum and Lilac garden teams to assess the Korean lilac's fate and she returned many times to help clear unwanted shrubs growing in all the wrong places. A chance encounter with Edythe Falconer at an OHS meeting revealed she had planted several peonies when she was principal at that school in the 1970's!

Fortunately, the Riverview Park Community Association (RPCA) agreed to pay for a big yellow bag of soil. It was delivered and the students used their little buckets to help spread the soil on the existing beds. The chain gang was in full operation.

I transplanted many plants from my garden that first spring. Soon people from the Ottawa and Gloucester Horticultural Societies and the Ottawa Valley Rock Garden and Horticultural Society were sharing their overflow plants with me. My intention was to create a spring garden and a fall garden with seasonal perennials. There were sedums, hollyhocks and peonies already in place. My FCEF friends came to help clear beds that had been overtaken with mint, lemon balm and burdock weeds.

In the fall of 2017, Mary Reid of Green Thumb Nursery was invited to the school to instruct some 50 students between the ages of six and eight on how to plant daffodils (donated by her) in one of the beds. The children were thrilled to participate. It was a memorable day for all, adults and students. In the spring of 2018 the students were cheerfully identifying "their" daffodils. Chrysanthemums were purchased from the OHS event and planted. Then in the fall more bulbs were planted - all funded by the RPCA.

The Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton have very generous members too. Three little lime hydrangeas donated by Mary Reid made their way to the front beds. Lee Boltwood offered a cherry tree and a forsythia shrub. Fran Dennett has been a constant visitor offering valuable advice and has helped identify some unknowns. My friend Blaine donated a peony. My neighbour discarded four royal hostas that became 12 hostas in this garden and his father donated perennial herbs.

The big push came in 2019. Rob Brandon donated his overgrown banana tree to the nursery school. Soon the little tots were taking turns sitting under the tree and singing. More shrubs came from Rob's garden and Lee's. In July a few treasures were "almost free" at Loblaw's garden stall. In late summer the custodian sent an email to let me

know that the ugly overgrown hedge on the east side of the building had been taken down and the bed was ready for me and my plant donor friends! Alleluia, now the children can see outside! After spreading 10 cubic yards of soil (with the help of a friendly university professor visiting from Lebanon) over the new bed area, I went to the OHS Facebook page and asked for plants. The response was fantastic: Robb Wainwright's neighbour had sold his home, leaving a ton of hostas behind and a huge peony. We separated the plants and filled the new bed along with hostas donated by Anne Frederking, Maureen Mark, and Cathy Pearson. Again, Lee came to the rescue with more forsythias, Solomon's Seal and flowering shrubs. I transplanted a euonymus seedling (burning bush) from my garden and added lamium for ground cover.

The benefit of all this is that enrollment at the school has doubled, and the students, teachers and parents appreciate the beauty. As each school year begins, there is immense interest and appreciation of these gifts.

Just like it takes a village to raise a child, it took a community to plant these gardens. Thank you to my neighbours and friends at OHS, GHS, OVRGHS and MGOC! If you are out and about do drop by the school and check us out. ■



Before & After



The Mutchmor School Heritage Garden

Lynn Armstrong

Some gardening projects that we become involved in have a special place in our hearts.

For me, that is the heritage garden that I designed in 2003 for the front of Mutchmor School in the Glebe.

Some 17 years later, I joke that my children have now graduated university but I am still at their elementary school. Beyond the fond memories of my children's days, there are three things that keep me involved in gardening here.

The first is the amazing heritage of the building, the oldest operating school in Ottawa, built in 1895. Researching to create this garden has lead me down a most interesting path, which I am still on today, of researching Ottawa's landscape and garden history. I started that research with the OHS 1916 publication "Ottawa The City of Gardens," with its plant lists and sample planting plans which I borrowed heavily from to create the front garden bed. You can access this publication on the OHS website and it is interesting and useful reading even today. The building also inspired my design for the garden paths, as the tin ceiling patterns were reproduced in the paving stones in the garden.



Paver from mold of tin ceiling



The second element that has kept me engaged with this garden is working with the students, and their enthusiasm for growing things and exploring nature. The centre bed and rear of the east side of the heritage garden is a pollinator garden. This was easy to accomplish as many of the plants that attract pollinators are heritage perennials and annuals. A highlight for me is the annual release of the butterflies that are hatched in the classrooms. It is also rewarding to do seed workshops and start annuals under lights with the students. Milkweed has found its way into the garden and I have been letting it add to the butterfly habitat and occasionally I manage to be able to dig up a bit to give away to other Glebe gardeners and spread the pollinator corridor through the neighbourhood. Over the years, gardening friends have provided heritage-appropriate plants for the garden which also brings me joy, like the hydrangea provided by Edythe Falconer and the many plants from Sandy Garland and the Fletcher Wildlife Gardens.

The third thing that keeps me gardening at Mutchmor is the kind thanks that I get from the other residents of the Glebe who stop to talk with me while I work away, often telling me how they enjoy the garden as they walk by on their daily rounds. Some are old friends and some are people I have never met. Some reminisce about the days when they went to school at Mutchmor, and the older ones remember how they used to garden at the school gardens over by Glebe Collegiate (1916-1951) when gardening was part of the school curriculum. I like to consider my gardening at Mutchmor to be my contribution to neighbourhood beautification.

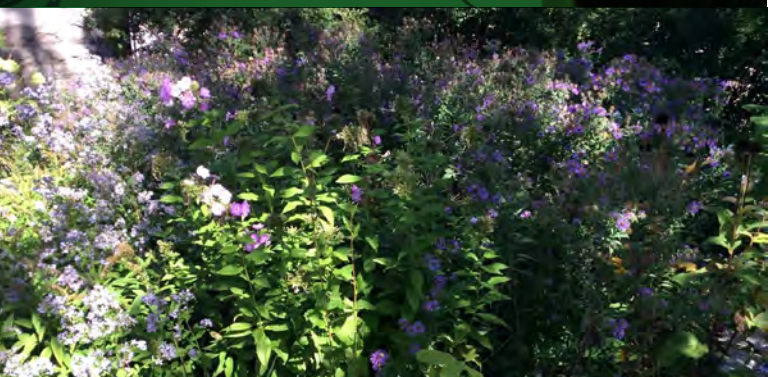
Like all gardening, there are frustrations, most particularly the disruption when work needs to be



Butterfly release by students



Seed workshop in March



The "Secret" Garden in fall ... Asters as high as an elephant's eye.

done on the building. As you can imagine, in the last 17 years the windows and roof have been replaced, bricks grouted, not to mention a major addition of 10 classrooms to the building that wiped out a lot of the garden on the west side of the front walkway including two trees. However, there is a silver lining as the trees were green ash that would have had to come down eventually and now I have new soil, a new tree, lilacs, forsythia and more sunlight.

I hope that what I have written about my experience at Mutchmor will inspire you to look for gardening opportunities in your neighbourhood, where you can share your gardening expertise and extra plants and grow your own knowledge of plants by volunteering with like-minded gardeners, many of whom will likely become new friends. The OHS has a community planting program which could help you get a project in your community off the ground, or there are groups like Friends of the Central Experimental Farm who are often looking for helping gardening hands. I also highly recommend volunteering at a school where the kids keep it interesting.

One of my favorite rewards for gardening at Mutchmor happened just last spring while I was waiting in line beside the garden to go into the Mutchmor Book Sale. Two young children excitedly asked their parents if they could go walk around the "Secret Garden." I realized then that if you are three years old many of the plants in the heritage garden are as high as you are, and that, combined with my less than formal style of gardening, had created a magical place—a secret garden. It doesn't get much better than that and I'm pretty sure the pollinators like it too. ■



The Garden at **Canadian Martyrs**

Gloria Sola

It all started after a service with a request for someone to look after the garden.

“Where is the garden?” I asked.

“Right in the front,” I was told. I looked out the door at the jumble of tall weeds, a bed of totally out of control goatsbeard, a tall, spindly yew and one forlorn potentilla. Not an encouraging sight.

After two summers, I had managed to dig out the weeds and uncover a border of variegated Hosta 'Albomarginata' and a bed of the same which were originally planted by an OHS member many years before. There were actually four yellow potentillas. In a corner, semi-hidden, was a very large blue hosta now almost four feet tall and even wider. Father Robert thought it was a very large weed. Amusingly, some parishioners have come up to me and told me how much they liked what I'd done in the garden – it had been there all along, just hidden from sight.

Along the side of the church by the parking lot — which is actually where the parishioners usually enter — is a border of very tall, overgrown

There is a group called “Faith and the Common Good” which encourages planting native species in places of worship as well as in other areas.

Physostigia (obedient plant), Siberian iris and rudbekia, donations from parishioners who had a few “extra” plants. Hiding in there, I found some phlox, sedum and coreopsis. Curtailling the very tall iris and obedient plants is an ongoing project.

Because I essentially garden alone and am not sure who will eventually take over the gardening, I have introduced only a few new plants which require minimum care and maintenance.

There have been some non-horticultural challenges. About four years ago, work started on re-designing Main Street. Besides losing some frontage, most of the front of the church was cordoned off for construction purposes for two years. The weeds which had been lying in wait took the opportunity to reclaim some of their former glory. We lost some trees and the hostas are now enduring more sun than what they like.

Sometimes things are done around the church without considering the landscaping. Last summer a powerful sump pump was installed. The flow exits into the hosta bed and is causing some serious erosion which will have to be addressed this spring.

Gardening at the church has also been a learning opportunity. There was a neglected patch by the parking lot and along the back driveway that I mulled over what to do. About four years ago, I decided to try my hand at a small pollinator garden. I read up a bit, talked to Fletcher's Wildlife Garden and OHS member Sandy Garland, and planted the small square. The plants grew all right, but aside from a small bee trying to dig a hole in the ground, I didn't see too much pollinator activity. I came to realize that the site was too small for many pollinators to find it or to think it worthy of patronizing. Thanks to Father Tim's enthusiasm for getting things done, however, the ugly chain link fence which surrounded the parking lot was pulled down last summer and the planting space was doubled.

There is a group called “Faith and the Common Good” which encourages planting native species in places of worship as well as in other areas. They gave us some native plants, including a nice tiarella and some *Monarda didyma*. I am looking forward to seeing the pollinator garden this spring/summer and seeing if we get any welcome visitors. ■

(Canadian Martyrs Church is located at 100 Main Street.)



St. Giles Gardens

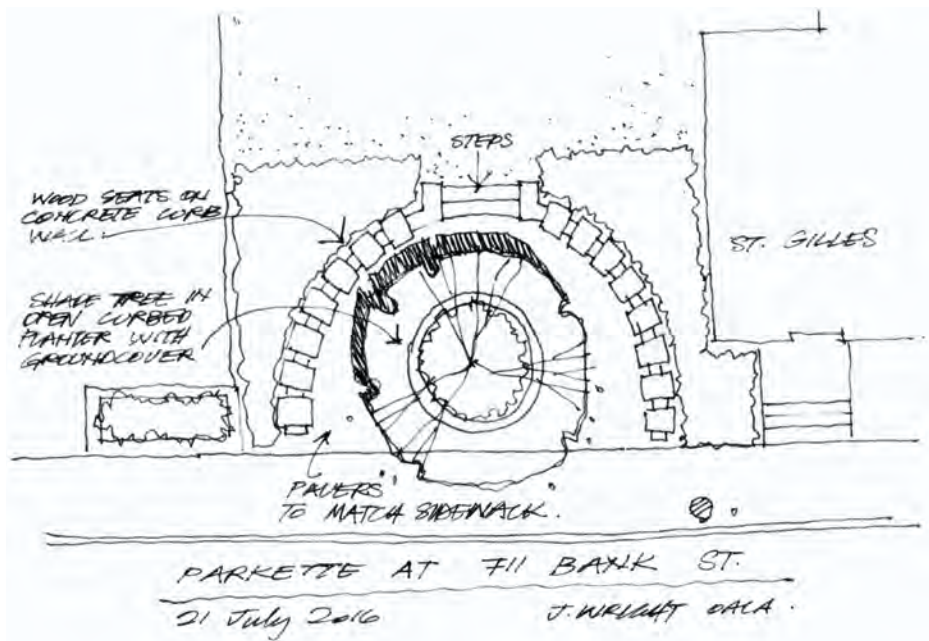
Rob Brandon

I have written this article in the hopes of providing useful information for those who are currently considering maintaining a garden adjacent to a public space. I hope it will also be of interest to those who have a front garden abutting a sidewalk.

Built in 1928, St. Giles is a Presbyterian church located on the northeast corner of Bank Street and First Avenue in the Glebe.

When I first joined the church over 25 years ago, three of us maintained the Bank Street garden. Subsequently, for a 15-year period, it was my wife Laura and I who looked after it. During the past two years, with my increasing involvement in the church's building renovation projects, James Canton of Canton Mindful Gardens has assisted us with the garden maintenance. His crew also cuts the grass that abuts the north side of the church, which is also adjacent to a carpark used by a law firm. In the distant past, relationships between the owners of the car park and the church were frosty because of property line differences. The situation worsened some six years ago because the contractor clearing the parking lot of snow piled it (with the salt) onto our grass. I raised this issue with Al Bateman, one of the owners of the building and suggested that jointly we try to improve this green space for our mutual benefit. Over a period of three years, we achieved an extension to the existing lawn, which is now named St. Giles Gardens.

Cosmos 'Xanthos'



Hardscaping Design

There are two triangular beds behind the seating area. The northern one gets a reasonable amount of sun while the southern one enjoys more shade. Over the years, I have tried to make the church's gardens as low-maintenance as possible. I have found that bulbs make a good spring showing with my preference being daffodils and alliums.

The project consists of a semicircular paved area adjacent to the Bank Street sidewalk with a small Amur maple planted in the centre and planting beds behind the seating area. This is shown in the plan (see above) drawn by John Wright, who works for Barry Hobin. (Al Bateman and Barry are the co-owners of the lawyers' building.) We also obtained interest from the Glebe Business Improvement Association (BIA) and the Glebe Community Association (GCA). It was concluded that having a green and shady space would be attractive to office workers in the neighbourhood, pedestrians walking along Bank Street, as well those waiting at the nearby bus stop.

There is a formal agreement signed by all the parties involved. St. Giles agreed to the use of the land and the private partners provided funding for the hardscaping and the street tree. The Amur maple was chosen for its ability to survive street

salt. There is an OHS connection as some funding came from the Underground Sounds funds with the support of Lynn Armstrong. The GCA was particularly interested in supporting the planting of a large tree. Planted well away from hydro lines, the red oak, when fully grown, will be a sizable tree and in small measure compensate for all the large trees that Ottawa has been losing. An existing Japanese lilac was moved using a tree spade when the two new trees were planted. The hardscaping and semicircular benches were completed in 2018 and the bed planting was started in 2019.

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St. Giles Gardens,
Spring 2018

latter I find are long lasting and bloom in late spring with the additional benefit in the summer that the dead stems are of architectural interest. I found room for two peonies, Krinkled White and another, both kindly donated by OHS members Blaine and Jamie. Unfortunately one peony was lost to a passerby in 2019.

At this point I must add that both in this public garden and in my vegetable allotment in Alta Vista I have suffered very little loss of plants over a long period of years. It will happen but not as much as one might fear. I believe the solution is not to tempt fate with unusual (and expensive) plants.

I have also found that the early pansies (I get mine from Peter Knippel Nursery) are a good purchase as they last an amazing length of time - up until the arrival of the torrid heat of August. On the poorest and thinnest soil close to the parking lot I plant nasturtiums, which are normally reliable. Because the plantings in the semicircular area are behind the seats, I try to keep the plants reasonably low. I have planted a berberis 'Nana' on the southern bed and found in 2018 and 2019 that the annual *Pennistetum setaceum rubrum* grass survives wind

and the public. I have planted Japanese forest grass *Hakonechloa* in the shady northern bed but this will take some time to develop. Over the years, I have found cosmos to be an excellent annual for the late summer and I recently planted a new soft yellow cosmos from seed. It is called 'Xanthos' and, while slow to grow, did give a fine display in late summer of 2019 and kept blooming right up until fall. I get my seeds from Swallowtail gardens, which sells a fine variety of cosmos seeds. The photo on page 10 shows the plant taken from a plant catalogue as I failed to take a photo myself. Another reliable plant for public gardens is the daylily. Over the years, I have been going out in late July to Suzanne Patry to buy examples from her magnificent gardens at Whitehouse Perennials. I have a triangular bed at the east end of the grass, which is all daylilies.

The three trees all have a cedar mulch circle and because all three were mature trees and planted by tree spade it was necessary to give them regular watering for the first two years. This was achieved by installing drip hoses under the mulch in a spiral and, if there was no rain, I would connect a hose to soak the soil under the mulch. In regard to young

trees in the urban landscape, I want to mention there is another significant threat, which is male dogs, relieving themselves on the tree trunks. I found a solution which I hope will offer some protection and it is currently installed on the Amur maple which is close to the Bank Street sidewalk. This solution is sold as Dawgtree and I bought it direct from the US manufacturer. It may be hard to get but it has worked for two years. With the high cost of a planted tree and the large number of dogs on the street this is worth the effort. A final comment in regard to watering is to consider the use of building downspouts. When I rebuilt the long

bed along Bank Street several years ago, I installed a soakaway for the water coming off the roofs using downspouts at both ends of the bed. This has really helped sustain the shrubs and clematis vines planted close to the building.

In conclusion, the recent addition of seating on the north side of the church with access to the grass has resulted now in people walking along Bank Street finding a green space to rest and appreciate trees and plants along a street where city-planted trees are unfortunately struggling to survive. ■



St. Giles garden, Daylily bed



Volunteer Muse: Lessons Learned Supervising in the Church Garden

Renee De Vry

1. CHURCH FIRST, GARDEN SECOND

Chat regularly with your spiritual leader to get ideas and strategies to deal with challenging personality mixes and keep the spirit engaged for all of your volunteers in the garden.

2. NO SENIORITY IN GARDENING

Beware of the person who tells you they have been gardening for “such and such number” of years. One person could be making the same gardening mistakes over and over for 20 years or an intense garden newbie could be your next garden-savvy team leader.

3. CHECK YOUR FINANCES REGULARLY

Finance volunteers work well into the night trying to make more out of less. Make sure they have not emptied or deleted your “dead” garden account in February. Always keep a copy of all records off-site to replace those lost or borrowed from the office or archives.

4. PLANT BULBS

Never underestimate the magic and allure of using a drill-powered bulb auger and wearing an adjustable face safety shield to interest a bored child when gardening (this works well for adults too!). Very small children benefit from a “happy soil flattening bulb dance” and ever so quietly piling leaves over the bulbs to hide them from the squirrels. You can always spend several hours replanting the bulbs upright, long after everyone has had the time of their life and gone home.

5. KEEP OPEN TO LEARNING FROM EVERYONE

Invariably, it will be that volunteer, unable to tell a daisy from a dandelion, who will share a great new tidbit about bark fungus that they learned about online.

6. GARDEN TASKS ARE FOR EVERYONE

You need people to pick up snacks/drinks, take photographs, write reports and articles, find and encourage new volunteers, build birdhouses, help with fundraising, monitor bird and pollinator numbers, take notes at meetings, give garden tours, chase away cats or deer, find even more volunteers and children to assist in removing earthworms off the paths after a rain.

7. MEDITATE FREQUENTLY

Not only will this help maintain energy levels but it will assist with the deep breaths needed when a helpful and enthusiastic volunteer has weeded out all those pesky third-year Lady Slipper seedlings that took five years to germinate.



8. LOOK FOR THE GOOD

When a frisky young beaver — a.k.a. “the aquatic engineer” — has spent the long weekend trying to move those perfectly shaped Purple Beech trees to the Ottawa River for winter munchies, pause and — after a good cry — consider the newly increased light conditions and design possibilities that have come your way.

9. LEARN CREATIVE EFFUSIVE PRAISE TECHNIQUES

Most volunteers of today will need three hours of praise for every half hour of labour. Lost is the concept that anonymous sacrifice, sweat, and service lead to spiritual development. Accept that self-sustainable people have gone the way of the Dodo and plan accordingly.

11. NETWORK! DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

Visit other Church gardens and talk to their volunteers. Share ideas. Join a group of like-minded gardeners online or get on a garden tour.

10. START SMALL OR WORK IN STAGES

There is always a big flush of volunteers at the beginning of a new project. Over time you will gain a better idea of interest and resources. Despite the best planning, there are always extra expenses or conditions one did not consider. Wait a minimum of three to five years before expanding or moving on to stage 2. Remember to complete work in a timely fashion so congregants and visitors are not staring at a construction site for months. A big one-time work party, well-documented, will help everyone feel ownership of the garden.

12. CELEBRATE IN THE GARDEN

It can be easy to become lost in the endless tasks “needed” in the church garden. Be sure to schedule parties, meetings, soft music, prayer, or children’s animal yoga in or next to your church garden. Relax for a few minutes before every task, developing intimacy with the flowers, birds and bugs. Beauty and spirit can be found in every garden if you pause long enough to look. ■

The Scent of Roses

Edythe Falconer

I became a Master Gardener in Training (MGIT) in November 1999. A year later, having completed the required correspondence courses from Guelph, the IT was knocked off and I became an MG, badge and all. Joining Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton - MGOC - was one of my best ever decisions and from that would flow many tributaries of interest and opportunities for contributing useful work in the field of ornamental horticulture.

A few years later, I was recruited as the rose advisor on a panel of relevant advisors that supported the Central Experimental Farm through its volunteer work. In a preliminary discussion with the Friends of the Experimental Farm (FCEF), I had wanted to know how much time was involved, but first I demurred, indicating that I really didn't know much about roses. I was assured that was OK. I'd only be expected to monitor the rose gardens from time to time and then report back to the meetings between regular staff and the other volunteer advisors. In the end, I agreed and this began the 11 years of my commitment, only discontinued when I started to get dizzy on hot summer days each time I bent over another bush.

There were two parts to my 11-year odyssey – negotiating the interface between regular workers and volunteer workers and learning about the roses themselves. Both parts were challenging and both were rewarding.

My first great insight was that there was no way that I would be able to do my job at arm's length. I would have to get into the gardens shoulder to shoulder with regular and volunteer staff. A rose is a rose is a rose: yes, but there are thousands of cultivars, not including species varieties. Fortunately, the gardens – Explorer and Heritage — keep only 100 or so varieties, all with varying needs and different growth habits.

Also fortunate was that I was working with the benefits of groundwork set in place by the previous advisor and an experienced team.

At the same time, I was taking additional courses from Guelph. In a fortuitous spark of intuition, I realized that my work with the roses would be ideal as the subject for one of the required projects. In my 11 years as a rose advisor, I had opted to attend weekly work sessions on a regular basis – mosquitoes, gnats and eventually Japanese beetles included. I became comfortable with the amiable politics needed to work effectively with regular staff. I met many wonderful people, chatted with visitors to the gardens, guided tours from time to time, wrote numerous articles for newsletters, prepared PowerPoint presentations on roses for MGOC, Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc. (MGOi), and FCEF newsletters. I got busy with my camera cataloguing and photographing the whole collection. Those photographs are still on the FCEF website.

In the beginning, I had thought of roses as being delicate, fussy and difficult. At the end of my rosy saga, I knew better. They are amazingly tough and enduring.

I heartily recommend volunteering at the CEF gardens. Much is to be learned from the other advisors, from the dedicated regular staff and from the plants themselves. The Farm is a living, breathing school of horticulture, free to all those who would volunteer there and immerse themselves in its beauty and utility. ■



Maplelawn Garden: **a story!**

John Zvonar,
Ann Nowell
and Eileen Hunt

On Richmond Road, in the near west end of Ottawa, lies a quiet, dignified property with a rich history.

In 2013, on the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Friends of Maplelawn Garden, a CBC interviewer asked, “What is so important about Maplelawn?” to which the reply came: “It’s still here!”

The volunteer went on to say something about how one could communicate the entire history of Bytown/Ottawa – and the attendant personalities – in this one-acre plot of land, what effectively remains of the original 200-acre grant to William Thomson almost 200 years ago. Maplelawn Garden is the physical embodiment of the power of its stories and, primarily, of the people who lived and worked here: their histories, their dreams, their aspirations and, ultimately, their accomplishments.

History

In her seminal report of 1995 on the landscape history of Maplelawn, Edwinna von Baeyer wrote that for 173 years successive owners of the site maintained its integrity and basic layout, unique in Canada. “It is the only example of a pre-Confederation, Canadian walled garden to survive so-little changed.” Maplelawn was

successively owned by three leading families in the community who participated in its political, agricultural and business life. The Thomsons, the Coles, and finally the Rochesters all had a special interest in the garden and expended considerable effort to keep it well-cultivated and (as we know it and appreciate it today) in luxuriant flower. Over the years, those three families understood this was a place of great aesthetic value and importance.

To further quote from Edwinna's tome: "The walls of Maplelawn are a living treasure. The property's timeless beauty and repose have survived through years of financial difficulties, changes of owner, urban encroachment, and the pressures of changing horticultural styles. We have very few landscapes in Canada that can claim such a long existence without major changes."

The Friends of Maplelawn Garden

Some will remember that first group meeting downtown convened by those crusaders, Ann Falkner and Nancy Smith, in the winter of 1992-

93. In retrospect, it is hard to imagine anyone, least of all the National Capital Commission (NCC), saying no to those irrepressible, fearless leaders, who boldly pronounced the establishment of the Friends of Maplelawn Garden group.

The Friends – under the tutelage of Ann and Nancy – initially took (and continue to take) great pride in this property and their work, work that has been critical to the garden's survival and to its integrity. The Friends have kept that unbroken connection back to the 1830s, contributing their time, energy and effort because of their conviction that this garden has a unique value to the Nation's capital, to this community of Westboro and, perhaps even more importantly, to all Canadians.

In 1989, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC), with its experts, scholarly evaluations and standards, recognized this as

a site of national significance: "a rare and well-preserved example of a country estate in early 19th Century Canada (HSMBC plaque)." Furthermore, as an ensemble, the house and remaining walled garden provided a clear record of the way European architectural and landscape ideas were transplanted to Canada, specifically from the Borderlands region between England and Scotland.

Over 20 years ago, Edwinna offered an appropriate and deserved 'tip of the hat':

"Thanks to the continued stewardship of the NCC and the Friends of Maplelawn, this horticultural legacy in all it's classical symmetry will continue to delight visitors with its beauty, its air of repose, and its rich historical associations."

One of the volunteers has long referred to this 'historic place' as Maplelawn Church. He noted that he had come to this conclusion early on, given that: this is a place of regular Sunday morning gatherings; it has a devoted following (volunteers and visitors); and, ultimately, it serves (at least for many) a higher spiritual purpose.

Planting Philosophy & Unique Plants

Once the masonry wall was built, the acre of garden was laid out on the same principles as similar gardens in Thomson's native Scotland: four quadrants and beds running beside the north, east and south walls.

This kitchen garden, with its fruit and vegetable bounty – and perhaps a few ornamentals – sustained the family and its farm operation. By the early 1900s it had become more a garden of ornamentals. In 1936, the Rochesters hired R. Warren Oliver of the Central Experimental Farm – both landscape architect and an ornamentals specialist – to renew the garden. Today, it is Oliver's planting plan that is still used by the Friends as the guide for the garden's ongoing restoration.

Given the absence of certain Oliver-drawn planting beds, additional plans for the missing quadrant beds were prepared in 1997 by Landscape Architect Joann Latremouille. The aim was/is to maintain a constant swath of colour throughout the flowering season from the early *Scilla* bulbs in spring to the many shades of asters in the fall, the colour palette varying from week to week as first one species and then another has its flowering period. The wall creates a microclimate so that there can be a difference of as much as three weeks in the blooming time of a species from one area to another.

Despite the neglect of many years, the early volunteers found many original species when the actual restoration work began in 1993. Some examples include peonies which are estimated to have survived for over 50 years and yet still produce magnificent blooms each spring. Other reminders of that rich horticultural legacy include *Phlox paniculata*, *Geranium sanguinum*, hostas, daylilies, oriental poppies, lupins and many small red tulips.

There is no evidence that the first plan at the hand of Oliver was ever fully implemented. Nonetheless, and as far as possible, the Friends follow it and the supplemented Latremouille plan in spite of the fact that some varieties have become hard to find and some simply will not survive the challenging Ottawa winter. Changes have necessarily been made in order to maintain the philosophy of balance, harmony and changing seasonal interest laid out by the NCC so many years ago.



The main beds are comprised strictly of perennials: the only exception is in the central circle where the focal point is a small statue on a pedestal. It is surrounded by tulips in the spring, followed by a planned planting of summer annuals which last until first frost.

Another important feature of the garden are 'structural' plantings: the conifers (or 'evergreens') such as cedars, the deciduous trees, and the large shrubs, which together provide a three-dimensional aspect and balance to the whole. Among the trees, there are several different varieties of apple, including the 'Geneva,' one of the Rosy Crabapple series developed by Isabella Preston at the Experimental Farm in the 1920s. Planted in Mapelawn possibly around 1935 with the arrival of the Rochesters, that tree died of old age in 2017. Another apple was the victim of fire blight and had to be removed. Two maples, well over 100 years of age, had both developed too much rot in their trunks and for safety's sake they were removed and replaced by two younger maples. More recently a number of shrubs have been replaced, such as lilac and mock orange (*Philadelphus*), old specimens that no longer bloomed or could no longer be adequately pruned to keep their shape.

Today?

All gardeners cherish the anticipation of another season at this time of the year. Given its early 19th century origins, Mapelawn has seen more new seasons than most, if not all, of the gardens in the National Capital Area. The challenge with this garden is to maintain its heritage character. As we know today, the garden displays an exquisite selection of plant materials orchestrated in a clear, harmonious arrangement. The seasonal successions of colour signify a clear understanding of intricate horticultural practices, providing beauty, fragrant repose, and seclusion.

Around the first of April come the first *Crocus*, *Chionodoxa*, *Scilla*, or *Vinca*. The month of

May heralds the first flush of spring flowers, with new tulips in the featured centre bed and heritage tulips in the outside borders; perennial *Alyssum*, *Phlox subulata*, and *Arabis* present themselves, while hosta and daylily leaves begin to poke through the ground. Towards the end of the month and into early June, apple blossom, lilacs, iris, oriental poppies, and the famous peonies all vie for the attention of visitors.

It is at this time that 'Doors Open Ottawa' usually takes place - this would be its 13th year - and on that Sunday alone we would typically welcome an average of 500-600 people. People are always amazed at what they discover, and time and again we hear them say that, for all the years that they have lived in Ottawa, this is their first (but not last) visit.

Later into mid-summer the panorama changes weekly with blues, pinks, whites then yellows, and finally the mauves of the fall asters.

The garden witnesses many happy occasions throughout the summer including yoga sessions, family picnics, photo shoots for grads, and wedding celebrations. Visiting gardeners from around the world, seniors and pre-school groups all marvel at the changing 'riot of colour.'

Volunteers

Volunteers are the mainstay of the garden.

Sometimes it is like magic happens overnight, as they come in shifts, when the time suits them.

Some arrive at 6.30 am; others like it hot and work in the midday sun. Volunteers are distinguished by their smart green vests, provided by the NCC, who also provide the Friends with every tool to make the job of tending the garden as safe and enjoyable as possible. The NCC also provides contractors to maintain the irrigation system and to cut the grass on a regular basis. A 'showpiece' purpose-built tool shed was designed and executed to fit in with the historic environment.

Maplelawn Garden is a delightful place at which to volunteer: with seven original volunteers (out of 35) who have come back over 27 years, you just know it's a good place to be! We have a pretty robust social life too, with a couple of informal potlucks and a traditional pizza party at season's end, plus a super Christmas lunch organized by the NCC at The Keg Manor, with whom we have an excellent relationship.

The Friends of Maplelawn Garden are always looking for new recruits and will be pleased to reach out to those visitors who may be interested.

Concluding Remarks

Gardens are always evolving, whether in the face of mild or harsh winters, early or late springs, wet summers or those hot and dry. As well, with the unexpected arrival of weeds, invasive insects, and four-legged creatures who love juicy leaves or bulbs, no two seasons are ever quite the same.

In spite of it all, the volunteer gardeners – with their indefatigable spirit – carry on. Thanks are due to those who have chosen to ‘answer the call’ and who continue to commit to looking after this special place. We, all of us, remain as the next in the long continuum of custodians who have committed to the stewardship of these grounds, Maplelawn Garden.

The ultimate reward is walking into the garden during the growing season and seeing the spectacular show that nature gives us, whether a glorious view of the whole or that embodied in a single flower. So, to all of you reading this article, at the very least, come take a stroll on a summer evening and complete it with a lovely meal on the terrace of Rochester House (the Keg Manor). ■

We await your arrival!





The Friends of the Farm:

**Helping to Preserve
and Enhance the
Public Areas of the
Central Experimental
Farm and Promote its
Historical Significance**

Mary Ann Smythe

Internationally renowned as a centre for agricultural research, the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) is a lush oasis of grain-filled fields, barnyard animals, and spectacular gardens adjacent to a stunning arboretum.

Established in 1886 as a focal point for a Canada-wide system of experimental farms to help resolve farm production challenges, the CEF has played an essential part in many research successes.

After two summers, I had managed to dig out the Marquis wheat, a frost-resistant, early-maturing strain that helped make the Prairies one of the world's greatest grain producers and was developed at the Farm. CEF researchers are also credited with developing the Preston lilacs and Explorer series of roses that still grace the Farm's Ornamental Gardens.

Considered Ottawa's "jewel in the crown," the CEF has grown to more than 400 hectares which provide an expansive greenspace with beautiful public areas to reconnect with nature. The Farm is a favourite destination for residents and tourists alike. Whether it's a peaceful walk or run through the Arboretum, a stroll through the magnificent

Ornamental Gardens, a visit to the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, or, in the winter, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing through the Arboretum, the Farm offers opportunities for everyone.

The Farm falls under the purview of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC). In the late 1980s, uncertainty about the non-research areas of the Farm gave rise to a volunteer, not-for-profit, charitable organization that would work in partnership with AAFC to preserve and enhance the public areas of the CEF and promote its historical significance and heritage value.

Established in 1988, the Friends of the Farm recruited volunteers. By 2019, 200 volunteers logged over 11,000 hours in support of the Farm. The first item on the agenda in the early days was mapping of the Arboretum. That task continued for several years and many of the maps are still in use today.

Over more than three decades, the Friends of the Farm have many accomplishments to their credit. As the Friends approached their 10th anniversary,

there was much to celebrate. After the Friends had worked tirelessly with AAFC to protect the Farm for generations to come, the government declared the entire CEF a National Historic Site, labelling it a “place of profound importance to Canada.” In 2002, volunteers completed the restoration of the peony beds; two years later, they proudly unveiled new iris and daylily beds; and, in 2005, the Merivale Shelter Belt made its debut. Located on the western edge of the Farm, the Shelter Belt recreates a boundary forest that protects the Farm fields from salt and wind, and provides a peaceful recreational path. More recently, due to the dedicated and hardworking Rock Garden team, the Rock Garden has been returned to its former glory.

The main focus of the Friends’ small army of volunteers is on assisting Farm staff in tending the Ornamental Gardens, Arboretum, and Shelter Belt. The teams traditionally work from April to early October. Volunteers represent a wide range of ages with diverse backgrounds, which contributes to the enjoyment of being outdoors, socializing, picking up gardening tips, and, importantly, supporting the community by helping to improve a public space.





The teams welcome volunteers of all abilities and, if you can't tell a flower from a weed, team leaders are on hand to offer valuable instruction and guidance. Volunteer opportunities include the following:

TWO LILAC TEAMS focus on weeding, pruning and deadheading the Farm's lilacs, which include 800 specimens and 325 varieties.

THE PEONY TEAM focuses mainly on cultivating and weeding the ever-popular plants, as well as supporting them with hoops, recording flowering dates, and, in the fall, removing hoops and stems.

TWO ROSE TEAMS assist staff with maintaining and rejuvenating roses through fertilizing, pruning, weeding, and replacement. The work requires some bending and kneeling.

THE IRIS AND DAYLILY TEAM works on bearded and Siberian irises and daylilies. The work involves digging, replanting, weeding and clipping.

THE MACOUN MEMORIAL GARDEN TEAM carries out general plant maintenance in this special garden established in the 1930s. The team keeps annuals and perennials looking fresh throughout the summer, as the Macoun Garden is a favourite for wedding photos.

THE ROCKERY TEAM tends to plants, including conifer trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals,

tucked into the rocks of the Ornamental Gardens, and also removes grass and also invasive plants that pop up between rocks and flagstones.

THE HOSTA TEAM tends a secluded, shaded garden along a path leading from the Arboretum circle. There is some digging involved, and the team gets a break in July-August when the hostas need little care.

THE PERENNIALS TEAM covers a wide range of plants - both perennials and annuals. Tasks involve deadheading, weeding, and digging. The gardens are not shaded so volunteers must be able to work in the hot summer sun.

THE SHELTER BELT TEAM oversees the strip of trees and shrubs along Merivale Road. There is grass to be cut, weeding, watering, and planting to be done, so physical strength is an asset.

THE ARBORETUM TEAM focuses on the many shrubs and plants among the trees, pruning, edging and weeding. A big benefit is watching the ceremonial guard for Parliament Hill practise directly across the river.

Besides gardening tasks there are many other opportunities to lend a helping hand to the Friends of the Farm. There's a whole raft of special events that depend on volunteers to organize and deliver. If you are an avid reader, perhaps you would like to sort books for or work at the mammoth June book sale, or help unload donated books at the drop-off in October. Maybe the chance to serve tea at the popular Victorian Tea in June is appealing. Various volunteer positions are also available at the May plant sale or the 'Art on the Farm' event in August.

A few hours a week or a few hours once a year, your time and contribution are important to us and greatly appreciated. ■

For more information contact the Friends:

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ABOUT US

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