

Annual plant sale ready to bloom ahead of milestone year for Garden Club



By Brock Weir

Over the past 99 years, the origins of the Aurora Horticultural Society's annual plant sale have become lost to the mists of time, but one aspect has not: the knowledge that you're going to get a good plant at a good deal!

Members of the Horticultural Society, which marks its 100th anniversary next year, are hard at work in their gardens this week, digging out, re-planting, and otherwise preparing plants flourishing in their own local gardens to share with other local gardeners ? whether seasoned gardeners with full-blown back-yard paradises or beginners looking to spruce up their apartment balcony with a colourful planter.

Once again, the Society is teaming up with Aurora Home Hardware to make the annual plant sale a reality.

It will take place Sunday, May 28, at the Wellington Street East store, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

?'Home Hardware is very helpful with us,' says Society member Hilka Parker, of their partnership which is now in its second year. The Plant Sale has been held at various locations around Aurora for years ? from the Legion, to the Aurora Public Library, to Town Park ? but rising costs to rent out or permit these locations has proven a challenge. Luckily for the Horticultural Society, Home Hardware was able to step up to the plate with an attractive offer and has been getting their hands dirty, along with the gardeners, to realise the sale.

?'It is hard to find good space in Aurora,' says Society member Judy Ryan. ?'But we're hoping for sunshine because last year was a challenge.'

Recalling last year's plant sale, the women share harrowing tales of rain, high winds, and even having to chase down a few airborne plants upturned by Mother Nature.

Mother Nature has already presented the gardeners with a few challenges already, with cold and wet weather conspiring to make local gardens a bit behind what they should be at this time of year, but, for the participating gardeners, it is time to get cracking.

?'Gardens grew really well last year and we asked our gardeners, with a minimum of two weeks ahead of time, to dig your plants, put them in pots, label them, keep them watered and in the shade; then, come sale day, the plants will have settled into their pots and look robust,' says Ms. Ryan. ?'Things have been slow [in the garden] so far, but the sale is a week later this year and we hope plants will do better with that extra weekend.'

The Annual Plant Sale, along with the yearly Garden Tour, is one of the two key fundraisers for the Aurora Horticultural Society, which meets up monthly to share tips, advice, and learn from keynote speakers.

Now in its 100th year, they are brainstorming ways to make the milestone anniversary a memorable one in 2018, including expanding the Garden Tour to include one garden for each decade, all in Aurora, and hosting horticulturalists from as far north as Lake Simcoe and as far south as Lake Ontario to converge on Aurora for a convention.

Right now, however, the focus is getting those little pots of transplanted plants to hit that state of ?robustness? by the time May 28 rolls around.

While there are garden centres around Town which also sell plants, the Society reminds potential gardeners that, with them, you're

going to get a deal on plants priced between \$3 and \$5, and plants that are most likely to stand the tests of time ? and local weather. ?These are plants you know are going to grow because they grow in this neighbourhood,? says Ms. Ryan. ?Secondly, if you're starting a garden, putting in a lot of plants is expensive, so this is an economical way of doing it. Thirdly, the people selling the plants are gardeners. We can talk to you all about the plant, with knowledge, before you buy it.?

For more information on the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society's annual Plant Sale, visit www.gardenaurora.ca or call 905-713-6660.