

Community Tree Planting kicks off busy ? and colourful ? spring for Arboretum



Armed with shovels, soil and seedlings, volunteers set out from Optimist Park over the weekend to help the Aurora Community Arboretum plant nearly 500 trees and shrubs.

The first community planting day to be held since the start of the global pandemic, it's the start of a busy season ahead for the volunteer-led greenspace, one which includes new initiatives and building on ones that rolled out as the fall wound down.

"For the past two years we haven't been able to have this at all due to COVID," says Irene Clement of the Arboretum. "We have had to have such constraints, small groups, and not being able to go out to our normal volunteer base, so it is really nice to be able to welcome people back."

People coming back to the Arboretum this spring will be welcomed by a symphony of colour.

By the time volunteers arrived to participate in the planting, the Arboretum's Field of Gold ? an expanse of thousands of daffodils ? was reaching its zenith, ready to give way to Flora Aurora, the Arboretum's collection of flowering trees and shrubs that has become a landmark of Lambert Willson Park.

"Flora Aurora goes all around the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, from the Soccer Dome to where the baseball diamonds are," says Ms. Clement. "We have flowering trees and shrubs that come out at different times; it's not like having 1,000 lilacs, it's better because every week you have something that is starting to bloom. Some of the magnolias come out quite early and they are spectacular, and we have so many kinds of flowering crab apples and all kinds of shrubs ? 350 different species of flowering trees and shrubs.

"People can start watching that and go back and see what's in bloom because you will see something different ? and you might be surprised by what you find!"

While Flora Aurora is something that can be enjoyed by anyone walking through the Aurora Community Arboretum, if you want to explore with a guide, a special Bird Walk will be led by the Arboretum on May 28 at 8 a.m.

"Our guide is an excellent birder," says Ms. Clement, of the walk which will take participants throughout the Arboretum space. "If you're a bird enthusiast or want to learn something about birds, or are picking it up as a hobby and you don't have a clue on where to

look and what it might be, it is great for beginners as well as advanced. Anyone who has an interest in learning about birds or increasing their knowledge about birds, it's one of the best ways to go out with an experienced birder who can tell you all about it.

The birdlife in the Aurora Community Arboretum recently got a hand-up this past February when volunteers installed a floating nesting platform for trumpeter swans in the centre of the large stormwater pond near the Arboretum's Hollandview Trail entrance.

Later this year it is hoped that, weather permitting, they can finally install an observation shelter for park users to observe the swans at the same pond, a project that hit a weather snag last season.

The swans aren't the only ones set to get a lift at the Arboretum in 2022. Plans for the late summer include the construction of a frog pond close to its northern boundary near the Town's leash-free dog park.

“We have to work with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority [to realize this],” says Ms. Clement. “It's an area that is low and marshy. It's too wet right now [for construction] and that will be more of a late summer project when the area dries up somewhat.”

Once complete, the Arboretum hopes the frog breeding pond will have a “dipping platform” that will allow kids to get up close to the action and serve as an educational resource.

“The Arboretum is a great natural area to go and explore,” says Ms. Clement. “But, with summer, it will be nice for bicyclists to be cautious. There are a lot of people who use the trails, so just be aware to not go fast; slow down and enjoy the flowers, the trees, and watch out for pedestrians and enjoy nature.”

For more information about upcoming Arboretum events, including the Bird Walk, visit auroraarboretum.ca.

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