

MARKET MUSINGS

By Jan Freedman

The arrival of spring heralds the return of the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair to its outdoor location on Wells Street and the Town Park.

Opening day is Saturday, May 3, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the theme for the day is bees.

Our bees are in trouble, dying at an alarming rate, and that affects us all since bees are responsible for pollinating approximately one third of the food that we eat.

Therefore, the food supplies that are dependent on pollinators are threatened.

The honey bees, which originally came from Europe, are vanishing from their hives in what is termed, 'colony collapse disorder' and our native solitary bees are also disappearing at a dramatic rate.

There are several reasons why this is happening. Stresses include pests, pathogens like viruses, land use practices reducing the kinds of foraging bees can feed on and, of course, pesticide exposure.

The main culprit seems to be the neonicotinoid seed treatment of corn and soybean seeds, which has led to significant bee mortality. You can be sure that the beekeepers are actively working to convince the government to do something to make changes to these practices, but we will not get into politics here.

There are some things that you can do in your garden at home to help the health of the bees. Plant a pollinator-friendly garden, leave patches of bare soil, rocks and brush piles for use by ground-dwelling native bees.

You can install bee hotels around your yard by drilling holes in wood blocks and creating reed or bamboo bundles. Most importantly, you can change or eliminate the way you apply pesticides. Don't use them on plants that are blooming. Apply them at night when bees are less active. Spray from ground level to reduce drift and create buffer zones next to agricultural areas. Stay away from herbicides since they reduce pollinator food sources by removing flowers from the landscape. Finally, let yourself be guided by the goal of planting wildflowers that provide a succession of blooms and indulge in natural gardening free of chemicals.

This season the Lucy Maud Montgomery Society is joining the Aurora Farmers' Market on four days, the first of which is opening day. The LMMSO is a not-for-profit organization that owns and operates the National Historic Site that was Lucy Maud Montgomery's first home in Ontario, in Leaksdale.

The Leaksdale Manse was the first home she could call her own. In 1911, she moved to the prosperous farming community soon after marrying Ewan Macdonald, a Prince Edward Islander, who had become the community's Presbyterian minister one year earlier. Montgomery lived at the Manse for 15 years and raised two sons there. She wrote 11 of her 22 novels there and her personal journals tell her story.

At the Market on May 3, July 5, August 2 and Sept. 27, they will be serving tea (from Sassy Chameleon) and scones (from Nutmeg Bakery) in their makeshift tea room. I encourage you to drop by for a few moments to rest and have tea.

Here is a recipe for scones that the Lucy Maud Montgomery Society provided:

Ingredients;

2 cups all-purpose flour

¼ cup sugar

4 tsp baking powder

½ tsp salt

½ cup cold unsalted butter, cubed

1 egg

¾ cup milk

¼ cup currants or raisins

In a large bowl whisk together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. With a pastry blender cut in butter until coarse crumbs appear and then mix in currants/raisins.

In glass measuring cup beat egg with fork and add enough milk to make 1 cup, stirring to blend. Remove 2 tbsp. and set aside.

Pour remaining mixture all at once into centre of flour mixture. Stir with a fork just until dough comes together to form wet dough.

Shape into a ball. Transfer to a lightly floured surface and pat into a scant $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thickness.

Using floured 2 inch round cutter, cut out biscuits. Repeat with scraps once. Place on parchment lined baking sheet and brush with reserved milk mixture. Bake in 425F oven until risen, golden and firm to the touch, about 14 minutes. Enjoy!

In addition, on opening day we are delighted to bring you some young Scottish dancers from the Spiller School of Highland Dancing. The school has been part of the Aurora community for over 20 years. During that time their classes have been held in various Aurora locations, but the Royal Canadian Legion has been their home for the last 10 years.

The Dance Director, Kaye Spiller, is a former Australian National Champion, a member of the British Association of Teachers of Dance and an Adjudicator with the Scottish Official Board of Highland Dancing. Kaye has taught in Australia, the United States and Canada and has judged the World Highland Dancing Championships in Scotland and the Champion of Champions in Australia. Her students will be dancing for us at 10:30 and 11:30 in the morning. And, they will have a bagpiper with them! You won't want to miss this.

On opening day there will be bee-themed activities for the children, bee-themed cupcakes and bee-themed arts and craft activities for the children and the adults can learn more about the plight of our honey bees from our well informed apiarist.

See you at the Market!