

Bounty of native plants up for grabs as Garden Aurora's plant sale returns



If you're looking to add native flowers and greenery to your garden this year, look no further than Garden Aurora's annual plant sale.

The popular fundraiser for the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society, which regularly draws line-ups of gardeners well before they open their doors, is set to return this weekend after a two year hiatus due to the global pandemic.

Garden Aurora will take over the parking lot at Aurora Home Hardware on Sunday, May 29, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., with member gardeners offering plants taken from their own thriving gardens.

"This is very exciting because we haven't had fundraisers for two years," says Garden Aurora's Cindy Scuiithes. "Gardening took off like a bullet during the pandemic. More people are interested in planting and growing their own food and it is a really good activity for parents to do with their children where children can learn how things grow."

It's still a "mystery" what varieties of plants Garden Aurora members will produce from their gardens ahead of the sale, but Ms. Scuiithes says participating growers have been asked to emphasize native plants, herbs and vegetables, and, of course, non-invasive species.

"Native plants are going to survive our winters," says Garden Aurora's Donna Lewis. "They're going to survive droughts; they're going to survive extreme weather events a little bit better than the exotics. Having said that, the exotics or the non-native plants that we have available for sale will be grown in Aurora and should be suitable for most people's yards. Our price point will also be a little bit easier on people's pocket books."

"With native plants," Ms. Scuiithes adds, "you don't have to replace them every year. Some of the exotic plants won't survive over the winter, some only have a shorter lifespan of three to five years, and then they should be replaced."

Native plants in home gardens, ornamental or otherwise, are also a boon for local biodiversity, they say, offering native bees a better chance of doing the pollination that is so desperately needed.

"The whole thing is about biodiversity; the higher the biodiversity the healthier the environment," says Ms. Lewis. "The healthier the environment, the healthier the people. Across all spectrums, if we plant more native trees, we're going to have more native birds nesting in our yards. Birds won't nest normally in a Norway maple because they get no benefit from it as there are not that many insects eating it - except maybe the spongy moth!"

As more and more people turn to gardening at home, Home Hardware is as eager as ever to partner with Garden Aurora in making the plant sale possible.

Sarah Fleming, Paint Department Manager for Aurora Home Hardware, says she too was bitten by the gardening bug at the start of the pandemic and it was an easy choice for the business to step up and help support the Garden & Horticultural Society.

“Because of the pandemic, I enjoy gardening more, too,” Ms. Fleming says. “I spend more time in my garden now than I ever did just because it brought my stress level down and gave me more of an appreciation, too, for all the different types of plants I wasn't even aware were out there. I think it is good [Garden Aurora educates] people who are coming to the plant sale as well. Customers won't only go away with a beautiful plant, but they will go away with knowledge, as well!”

The Garden Aurora Plant Sale will take place Sunday, May 29, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Aurora Home Hardware (289 Wellington Street East). Sales are cash only and change is appreciated.

In addition to bringing the Plant Sale back to patrons after more than two long years, Garden Aurora is also hard at work planning for their next big event: a return to their annual Garden Tour, featuring an array of beautiful, creative, and unique local gardens.

The tour is set for June 26.

“This will be the first time in two and a half years for our Garden Tour, which will showcase a bunch of different gardens and give people a bunch of different ideas of what's possible,” says Ms. Lewis. “These aren't commercially-made gardens, they're all owner-maintained so it shows what you can really pull out of your hat! Plus, Garden Aurora members will be able to explain what plants are there, the owners will be there to explain some of the pitfalls they had. Gardening is always an adventure; sometimes there is serendipity that gets involved. You might not think something will work and it turns out to be the best thing ever!”

For more information on these and other upcoming Garden Aurora events, visit gardenaurora.ca.

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