

ONTARIO HORTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

2026 ANNUAL MEETING & CONVENTION

Hosts: Districts 4 & 17

GARDENING
for Life



JULY 24-26, 2026

SPEAKERS



Garden Ontario®

Plenary Speaker

Friday, July 24 - 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Ben Earle – Feed Durham Project:

Building Community Resilience Through Local Food Innovation

Ben is a systems-focused nonprofit leader dedicated to strengthening food security and reducing poverty through practical, community-driven solutions. As President and CEO of Feed the Need in Durham, he leads a regional network supporting thousands of people each month while helping partners build capacity and navigate complex operational and social challenges.

Ben also serves as the Chair of the Region of Durham's Poverty Response Action Committee, guiding collaborative strategies that address the structural drivers of poverty. Nationally, Ben contributes to policy development as a Director with Basic Income Canada Network, advancing evidence-informed approaches to income security.

Rooted in a background of policy analysis, applied research, and program design, Ben is known for translating complexity into clear, actionable strategies that centre dignity, equity, and long-term community resilience.

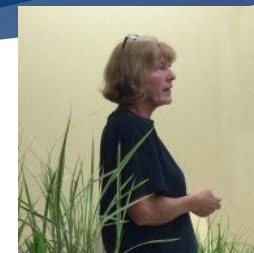


Seminars

Friday, July 24 - 1:30 pm - 2:30 pm

My Garden, My Life – Anna Mizyn of Anna's Perennials

Anna is originally from Poland and came to Canada in 1989. In Poland, she spent 2 years at Horticultural College and worked at the local farmer's co-op. After moving to Omemee in 1994, her gardens were growing and soon she started selling a few plants and seedlings from that location and thus Anna's Perennials was started. In 2006 Anna and her family moved to rural Lindsay and her gardens expanded.



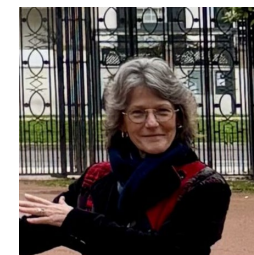
Homegrown Conservation: Transforming Gardens into Resilient Wildlife Habitat – Thomas Luloff

Thom is a Professor at the School of Environmental and Natural Resources, Fleming College. He has spent his career in wildlife science completing his degrees in Medical Science from Western University and working on research projects at the Toronto Zoo and the Advanced Facility for Avian Research. He is the Senior Wildlife Biologist at the Kawartha Wildlife Centre. Thom is also a Master Gardener who lives with his family on a 50-acre property which he has turned into a grassland conservation project.



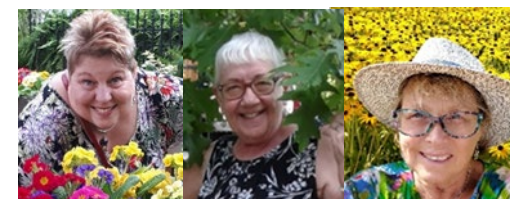
The Blossom Trail – Sarah Cowley

Sarah Cowley is an artist who lives and works in Beaverton. Her formal studies have been in the fields of Horticulture and Medicine. She has worked overseas participating in agricultural projects and has travelled extensively. Sarah lives a life of exploration which is reflected in all she does.



Judges on Judging – Judges Update #1 – OHA Judging Committee Catherine McGill, Rose Odell, and Penny Stewart

This session will review the Elements and Principles of design and include interactive discussion on the areas of the Elements and Principles that provide the most challenges to Judges on the Show Table. The newly created Judges Record Form will be reviewed as well.



Seminars

Friday, July 24 - 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

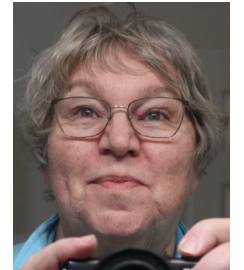
From the Vegetable Patch to the Show Table - Judges' Update #2 – Ken Brown

Ken Brown is a horticultural consultant, writer and photographer. He holds a BSc. in Horticulture and was the first Superintendent of Horticulture at the Toronto Zoo. He owned an interior landscaping company for 20 years, building and maintaining a variety of interior gardens. He is a certified horticultural judge and a frequent speaker at horticultural meetings and seminars. Ken can be reached through his informative web page www.gardening-enjoyed.com where you will find a wealth of advice, tips and updates or check out his ezine "Dallying in the Dirt".



Volunteer Recruitment, Retention and Succession – Doris Cassan, Director D7

Doris has a background in hospital healthcare management with some teaching and Long-Term Care experience. Doris joined the Arthur District HS after seeing volunteers working in the park gardens and thinking "That looks like fun!". Retired since 2012 she now spends time in D7 Leadership and volunteer presentations at the Seniors Centre for Excellence.



Mary-Jane Pilgrim – Growing Well: How Gardening Supports Longevity, Health and Happiness

Mary-Jane Pilgrim joined the Peterborough Hort Society and the Peterborough Master Gardeners over 10 years ago and loves getting out and meeting other gardeners to "talk plants". The love of gardening is probably hereditary as she grew up in a large farm family with Dutch immigrant parents. MJ was the president of the society in Peterborough for 8 of the last 10 years and now serves as the Past President. She is currently one of two coordinators for the Peterborough & Area Master Gardeners. While not too applicable to this talk, MJ enjoys cycling, playing squash and making/fixing stained glass windows.



The Benefits of the Honey Bee -JoAnn Poirier

JoAnn Poirier is a Durham Region beekeeper. JoAnn has been the honoured custodian of the bees in her care for going on 20 years. As a beekeeper she is happy to share her knowledge with others, in hopes of inspiring curiosity and appreciation of these amazing insects. JoAnn is a current member of the Ontario Beekeepers Association, the Central Ontario Beekeepers Association and the Durham Region Beekeepers Association.



Friday, July 24

5:30 pm - 10:00 pm

Welcome Event BBQ and Silent Auction Trivia Quiz with M.J. Pilgrim and Tunes From Our Local Talent



Districts 4 and 17 are pleased to Invite You to join us for an evening of food, fun, trivia, tunes and a Silent Auction as part of our **Welcome Event**. We will provide you with the opportunity to mix and mingle with friends from across the province.

PLEASE JOIN US (even if you aren't able to attend the BBQ) to join with friends and explore your horticultural knowledge at the **Horticultural Trivia Quiz** emceed by Mary-Jane Pilgrim (there will be prizes!) and **tunes** by musicians from across District 4 and 17 curated by DJ Papa B. You will be surprised to hear who turns up on the playlist.

The **Quiz** will be a lighthearted but challenging evening to "test your knowledge" on all things horticulture. Great for putting your plant smarts to the test with a group of your newest friends. The first team challenge will be the creation of a clever team name! Bonus: Prizes!!!!

The **Silent Auction** brings together an exciting selection of items from across the host Districts. We know there will be bidding wars to bring home these unique offerings!

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Be Sure to Join Us for the Fun!

Plenary Speaker

Saturday, July 25 - 11:00 am - 12:00 pm

Urban Farming in Schools and Non-Profit Neighbourhoods - “We Grow Food Edible Garden Project”

Carol Vandersanden and Michelle Perry

We Grow Food was founded in 2013 by Carol who is a chef and urban gardener. Two years later, she was joined by Michelle who has a background as a child and youth worker and is now the Director of Operations and a facilitator for We Grow Food.

With over 125 gardens throughout Durham Region, We Grow Food is providing hands on experiential learning, installing edible gardens and educational workshops to support the growing of food within their communities.



Botanical Drawing Workshop

Saturday, July 25 – 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Botanical Drawing – Bert Liverance *Please Note Registration is required for this **two-session** workshop and there is a \$20 kit fee, payable upon registration. This workshop is limited to 50 people.*

Bert Liverance is an award-winning artist who has trained world-wide. He has been recognized by the McMichael Gallery among many others and has designed floral coins for the Royal Canadian Mint. Bert creates floral paintings so alive, you think you can smell them. His work has been featured in publications, galleries and juried exhibitions throughout North America, and his paintings are in museums, embassies, public and private collections around the world.

Bert will lead the participants through four different drawing exercises using pencil to help the participants understand form, light and texture, while learning about light vs. shadow, proportion, edge and tone. The second half of the presentation will use watercolour to see light and colour through exercises and a final project. A description of the exercises will be provided to the registrants. All materials required will be supplied in the kit.

(This double session is limited to 50 people. It requires registration and purchase of the \$20 kit.)



Seminars

Saturday, July 25 – 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm

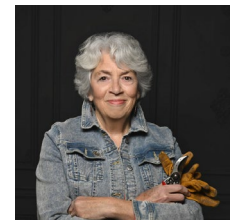
Attracting Wild Birds to Your Garden – Paul Oliver

Paul Oliver is the founder of the Urban Nature Store and a passionate advocate for connecting people with the natural world. For over two decades, he has helped communities create bird-friendly backyards through education, quality products, and hands-on advice. Paul is known for his engaging presentations, practical expertise, and enthusiasm for urban wildlife. He inspires audiences to transform ordinary gardens into thriving habitats that support birds, pollinators, and local biodiversity across Canada and beyond.



Little Forests, Big Impact – Ingrid Janssen

Ingrid Janssen is horticulturist, speaker, blogger and master gardener. She has both ornamental and food production gardens on her country property and has been a dedicated native plant gardener for over 35 years. Ingrid received her Horticulturist Diploma from the University of Guelph and is an active member of several horticultural and plant societies. She is one of the directors of Little Forests Durham, a non-profit organization working to bring Miyawaki mini forests to all communities of Durham Region.



Programs to Inspire and Educate Youth – Mary Beerman, Stephanie Smith and Clair Yates

Mary Beerman and Stephanie Smith are the Youth Leaders for the highly successful Cannington Horticultural Society Youth Group. They will be joined by Clair Yates who is the Youth Representative on the CHS Board. Together they will discuss how they inspire, challenge and educate young gardeners.

Seminars

Saturday, July 25 – 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

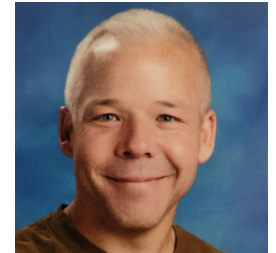
Building Biodiversity with Native Plants – Paul LaPorte

Paul LaPorte is the owner of the Ephemeral Ark Nursery, where he specializes in the propagation of native woodland species. He currently serves as Chair of the Ontario Native Plant Growers Association, is a member of the Ontario Biodiversity Council, and is an active contributor to the Southern Ontario Seed Strategy. He consults regularly with municipalities, non-governmental organizations, land trusts and horticultural associations on invasive species management, ethical seed collection/propagation and establishment of orchards, all to build biodiversity with native plants.



G.L. Roberts CVI Horticultural Program and Pelargoniums – William Grainger

William Grainger attended U of T, initially headed towards a career in medicine or research in infectious diseases. After taking a detour into teaching, he decided that his heart was helping teenagers learn biology, horticulture and life skills in general. He created courses in horticulture before the government had even begun penning the “Green Industries” curriculum. Over the years William has hosted gardening radio shows, spoken widely on pelargoniums and even created his own TV show “Growing with Grainger”. He grew pelargoniums in his teens but began obsessively collecting them about 15 years ago. He has hybridized dozens of new varieties some of which can be found around the globe.



Vermicomposting– Ryan Vieira, Little Worm Farm

Ryan Vieira is the owner of Our Little Worm Farm, a small vermicomposting operation based in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario. He collects spent coffee grounds and other organic materials from local businesses and processes them using composting worms to produce nutrient-rich worm castings. Ryan sells his compost and worms at local farmers' markets plant sales and events organized by horticultural societies. He also provides information and practical guidance to help others get started with vermicomposting at home.



Awards Dinner and Guest Speaker

John Kintare, Executive Director, Kawartha Land Trust
Saturday, July 25 - 5:30 pm - 10:00 pm



ACTING GLOBALLY, LOCALLY – The Power of Your Local Land Trust

John Kintare is the Executive Director of the Kawartha Land Trust and sits on the Ontario Land Trust Alliance Governor's Board.

At heart, John is a nature lover and permaculture enthusiast who is dedicated to integrating elements of complex systems working to provide benefit to both the environment and the people who rely on it.

He believes that communities working together can effect great change and create a lasting impact on our shared landscape.

Gladys McLatchy Speaker - Sponsored by the Richmond Hill Horticultural Society

Plenary Speakers

Sunday, July 26 – 11:00 am – 12:00 pm

The Creation of Four Winds – 60 Years of Gardening

Rodger and Grace Inglis

Grace's father purchased Four Winds in 1949 and envisioned a landscaped garden inspired by the dramatic setting of the 34-acre property. He shared his ideas with his family but sadly passed away before he could act on them.

Rodger recognized Four Winds potential and with Grace's background in Fine Arts and diploma in Landscape Architecture they began the planning and work, each contributing their unique experiences and strengths.

Join us as Rodger and Grace explore and explain the remarkable transformation of Four Winds. As Grace explains, 'the fate of many landscape designers is not to see their ideas made into reality. I am in the fortunate position of seeing (and living along with) a design suggested by the site, soil and the vegetation actually come into being. It is an exciting experience.'

This unique presentation offers a lifetime of gardening insights, ideas and a wonderful journey through over a half-century of gardening.



THANK
YOU

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