

EVENTS ALONG THE ROCK

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted.



▲ Niagara Parks Floral Showhouse in Niagara Falls opened the annual Cyclamen Display on Jan. 18. The display runs to March 4. PHOTO PROVIDED.



▲ Mary Dagg, daughter of Anne Innis Dagg, subject of the film *The Woman Who Loves Giraffes*, answered questions after the Jan. 22 screening at Halton Hills Eco Film Fest in Georgetown. The film's executive producer Paul Zimic looks on.

GAZETTE

Growing Canada's Biggest

By Kate McGowan

As evidence of damaging climate change grows across the world, we all feel the sense of urgency to act. What can we do to help in Niagara, the Escarpment and beyond? One simple answer is: grow native plants. Native plants are beautiful, hardy, low-maintenance species that can support up to 100 times more wildlife than “traditional” exotic plants. By selecting native plants for your yard or even a balcony container, you can take the first steps in restoring the

Southern Flying Squirrel, Rusty-patched Bumblebee and Monarch Butterfly. Not only is the Carolinian Zone home to one-third of Canada's at-risk plants and animals, it's also home to a quarter of our human population. With the region's population projected to grow significantly, so will our impact on nature and the health of wildlife.

Carolinian Canada and WWF-Canada have therefore launched www.inthezonegardens.ca, with free native garden guides for easy access to expert advice and an online tool to help track your efforts and impact for wildlife.

The Carolinian zone in southern Ontario includes the southern part of the Niagara Escarpment. With the warmest climate in Canada, the Carolinian zone is the northernmost reach of plants and animals whose ranges extend south to the Carolinas in the U.S.



landscape in your area.

Landscape restoration is one of the first building blocks of reversing climate change. Its role is important in areas where biodiversity is rich and in need of protection, and those threatened by development. Situated at the southeastern end of the Carolinian Zone, Niagara faces both challenges.

The Carolinian Zone stretches west to Windsor and north beyond Toronto. It is a hotspot for biodiversity, with more species of rare plants and animals than anywhere else in Canada, including Blanding's Turtle,

As your native plant garden grows, you'll see a diversity of caterpillars, butterflies, birds and bees return to help rebuild a resilient ecosystem. As gardeners track their progress, the tracker aggregates the size and type of restored landscapes across the zone, giving a big picture of the difference homeowners are making. Together we really can grow Canada's biggest wildlife garden.

Portrait of a Garden

David Bannister and his family live just north of Pinery Provincial Park on Lake Huron. Their home is in a

Wildlife Garden



◀ David Bannister's garden includes natural areas and a water feature. PHOTO BY DAVID BANNISTER.

forested area with pine, oak, maple, witch-hazel, dogwood, and Shagbark Hickory. When their house was built 35 years ago, the developer was under strict rules to maintain as much of the original woodland as possible, so building a shady garden was the obvious path forward. David created a plan soon after moving in, and carved out areas that would remain natural, leaving space for pathways, a deck, perennial garden, water garden and shed.

In addition to species already growing in the forested area, such as Wild Geranium, Columbine, and Fringed Polygala, David planted Trilliums, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Hepatica, Bloodroot, Trout Lily, Foamflower, Dutchman's Breeches, Mayapple and many ferns.

Deer, squirrels, Raccoons, rabbits and many kinds of birds had always frequented the gardens and woodland, but the variety and volume of wildlife really increased when a water garden was added about 20 years ago. Many more types of birds appeared,

and there were occasional visits from Coyotes, foxes, Opossum, Skunks, frogs and one Ermine who made itself at home for four months!

Over time, the lawn naturally transitioned to other shady groundcovers and the trees have continued to mature and fill in spaces where construction brought in more light.

While the garden beds and woodland plants are grazed on by wildlife, David has built caged, raised vegetable beds to feed the humans in this landscape, too, ensuring that this garden helps both wildlife and humans thrive.

You can find growers of native plants at inthezonegardens.ca. In the Zone has partnered with growers across southern Ontario to label their native plants, making it easier to select plants that benefit the environment. The In the Zone tag assures that the plant is native and grown from seed collected locally and ethically. The network of native plant growers and retailers is growing, so it's becoming easier all the time to find native plants.

Do you have a native plant garden? Share how you're building healthier habitat for wildlife and people. Email contact@inthezonegardens.ca.

David Bannister's garden was first featured in the December 2019 edition of In the Zone newsletter.

TO HELP GROW CANADA'S BIGGEST WILDLIFE GARDEN, VISIT:

In The Zone: inthezonegardens.ca
Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority: www.npca.ca
Carolinian Canada's annual Green Expo
Go Wild Grow Wild: gowildgrowwild.ca
on Saturday, April 18, 2020, at the Western Fair District Agriplex, London

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