



# MAKING A NOISE IN THE NURSERY INDUSTRY: **Restoring Native Maples**

Native maple trees are gradually disappearing from the countryside. Niagara Escarpment resident Ken Jewett founded Maple Leaves Forever (MLF) with the goal of restoring mighty native maples to the Canadian landscape.

Old maple trees turning colour in early October along a country road in the Niagara Escarpment.  
PHOTO BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT.



**H**ave you noticed how country roads are lined with big old hardwood trees about 40 feet apart? It's as if long-ago farmers and landowners were following a landscaping style guide. Yet these trees are not just the result of fashion. There was a financial benefit to planting them. In 1883 the Ontario Tree Planting Act gave 25 cents per tree that was still alive three years after planting.

"But the subsidy applied to roadways, where wind and snow interrupted traffic," writes Patricia Bowley in her academic paper on farm forestry, published in 2015 in *Scientia Canadensis*, 38.

It was an influential piece of legislation. According to the 2018 Environmental Protection Report by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, that Act resulted in the planting of 75,000 new trees. Often, these trees were transplanted from interior forests and given space to grow large on the edges of properties.

### The Problem

After 130 years of serving as wind and snow breaks, these majestic trees, many of which are native maples, are gradually dying out and not always being replaced. Cultivars and invasive species are increasingly being chosen. Norway Maples and Manitoba Maples are less than ideal.

"Our advice to landowners is to plant the right maple for the right place," says Deb Pella Keen, executive director of MLF. "The Norway Maple is non-native. We should be encouraging native species that have grown and adapted to local conditions over millennia. That's good ecological management. If people are going to plant trees, they should plant native species."

Ken, who is 90 years old this autumn, declares "The Sugar Maple is the most desirable," he says. "Respect



▲ Ken Jewett and his beloved Amy in front of a favourite maple on the driveway of his Larch Hill estate in the Niagara Escarpment. Amy was his loyal companion until she passed away this spring.



▲ The view from a room: a vast panorama of spectacular maples turning colour in autumn, plus Scottish Highland cows at left and in the shade at right, make an impressive picture from a window at Larch Hill near Mulmur. The cows are pets, with Lucy being the mother and Erica, the daughter.

▼ Fiery maples line the laneway and are reflected in the lake at Larch Hill.







▲ Native maples glow in the afternoon light along a road in Mulmur.

the Canadian native maple. It's our emblem, it's on the flag, on our currency. Plant a Sugar Maple, not a Manitoba Maple or one from Oregon."

#### It's Personal

Ken's commitment to native maples extends to Larch Hill, his country home in the Mulmur area of the Niagara Escarpment. Largely forested, the property offers peaceful privacy, long walks or drives by utility vehicle along laneways and paths, and a clear lake to swim in or boat on. Everywhere are the maples he loves.

On entering the house, the most powerful element is a large picture window with a view to the massive,

rolling Escarpment hills and valleys, dense with trees that in autumn are stunning in their colours. Opposite the huge window, maple syrup making is honoured with a large painting of a late-winter sugaring-off scene from horse-and-sled days. From this cherished room Ken and his wife Edie can observe the annual magical cycle of the seasons and the change to the forest scape. This love of the maple led to MLF.

#### The Program

The MLF program gives a rebate on purchase. After buying native maples from an authorized nursery and a partner with MLF, you can apply for a 25 per cent rebate

on the cost of the trees. MLF provides a list of nursery partners who help ensure that certified, native, seed zone specific Sugar, Red and Silver Maple seedlings are available to be grown into trees. They must be grown in Ontario from seed of known genetic sources.

The maples must be planted in single rows along rural roads in Ontario, laneways, property boundaries or along the edges of fields. At least 10 and no more than 50 trees per person per year, may qualify for a rebate. Trees must be at least five feet in height. Either bare-root stock or container-grown saplings are eligible. There are two planting periods each year, spring and fall.



▲ (Top right) Ken prefers the Sugar Maple over all others.



► A bench beckons on the maple-edged laneway at Larch Hill.

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▲ Ken treasures this painting by Armand Tatossian, entitled “Sugaring Party”.

The COVID-19 pandemic may have caused nurseries to change their procedures for purchases. It’s best to check with your chosen nursery. For details about fall 2020 and spring 2021 planting, see the website [www.mapleleavesforever.ca](http://www.mapleleavesforever.ca).

#### Accomplishments

Ken founded MLF in 1997, because, as he says in a video on the website, “I saw that native maples were disappearing from the landscape. I wanted to reintroduce and restore the native Canadian maple tree to its rightful place on Canada’s

rural landscape. The maple leaf is Canada’s national and arboreal symbol. As such we should encourage the planting of native maples in this country as a symbol of national pride and identity.”

Ken counts as a big success, getting the National Capital Commission in Ottawa to commit to planting native Canadian maple trees when maples are wanted.

“Ottawa is showing leadership in planting native maples,” he says.

As a partner with Forests Ontario, which shares the vision of restoring native trees, MLF is a supporter

of Ontario Envirothon, an environmental competition for high school students. MLF is also a founding member of the Highway of Heroes Living Tribute.

#### Millions Spent

By the end of 2019, MLF has financially supported the planting of 127,599 native Canadian maples, which is estimated to equal more than 730 miles of Ontario roads that are lined with maples.

“That money comes from me,” says Ken. “We put \$2 million into this. Small as we are, we’re making a noise in the nursery industry.”

► Maples at Larch Hill at the height of their fall colour



▲ A red maple leaf in the fall. PHOTO BY GLORIA HILDEBRANDT.



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