

NEWSLETTER

ARTHUR FORD NATURE PARK NEWS



What is Arthur Ford Nature Park?

WRITTEN BY TAMMI ROBERTSON

Thom McClenaghan, previous Principal of Arthur Ford Public School, had a desire to renew the original concept of kindergarten: a children's garden for learning. He saw a large unused area of the school's property and envisioned bringing education back to nature.

He presented the idea to the Arthur Ford Home and School Association in September of 1985. The Home and School Association embraced the challenge and made it a reality.

The London Board of Education approved the drawings and proposed plans which lead to the creation of the Arthur Ford Outdoor Education Foundation Inc.

Today the nature park has grown and is well loved by the community and the school. The TVDSB maintains the grass and larger tree trimming projects at the park and volunteers from Arthur Ford PS and the community maintain the vegetable garden plots and the garden beds.

Over the coming months we will take you for a written walking tour of the nature park.



Aerial shot of the Arthur Ford Nature Park – taken summer 2020

Summer 2022 Updates and News

In June we were sad to be given the news that the TVDSB had planned on removing the vegetable garden plots. After many emails, telephone calls, in person meetings, and zoom meetings, I am happy to announce that the decision has been put on a temporary hold. There will be more meetings, but I am hopeful that the decision to remove the vegetable garden plots will be permanently postponed. I will keep you updated of any developments.

Over the Summer, we were so lucky to have 4 teams and 25 volunteers maintaining the park this summer. You will notice the volunteers really focused on raising the canopy of the gardens so that educators could see feet when students are in the walking trails. The volunteers also enlarged the pathways for ease of walking through.



What are the plans for Fall 2022?

When your students return to school, they will notice that the vegetable gardens were not planted this year while we were trying to get the TVDSB's decision reversed. We are hoping the students will still be able to plant some bulbs this fall to enjoy in the Spring.

When the leaves begin to fall, we will need as many volunteers as we can to keep up with the falling leaves. We need volunteers to aid our schools amazing custodial staff, raking leaves at the park and also in front of the school, and also cutting down the long grasses in the grass garden at the park.

We are planning an environmental presentation for staff, students, and parents in the fall. More details will be shared in the next couple months!



WE ARE ALWAYS IN NEED OF VOLUNTEERS. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED IN HELPING IN ANY CAPACITY, PLEASE REACH OUT TO TAMMIROBERTSON@GMAIL.COM

WRITTEN WALKTHROUGH OF NATURE PARK:

NORTH ENTRANCE GARDEN

WRITTEN BY TAMMI ROBERTSON, DIANE VEITCH AND ALISON FERGUSON

Over the coming months we will dive into the different areas of the park. This issue we will talk about the North Entrance Garden!

The original park design was done by Marc Lalonde in 1987, a talented Landscape Design student from Fanshawe College.

Ground-breaking Ceremony happened on October 28, 1988 with kindergartens students Jeff & Jenna helping with the planting of the Ginkgo tree (a symbol of "Good Luck").

Official Opening of the Nature Park happened on June 5, 1992 with President Sue Epstein as Master of Ceremonies in front of the main entrance garden and commemorative stone (this stone is still located at the entrance to the park located in the North Entrance Garden by the back of the school parking lot).

The wooden arbour, constructed and installed by Mr. Merklinger's Senior Construction Class at Thames Secondary School in 2010 welcomes all visitors to the park.

Every plant in the park design was chosen for a specific purpose. The Entrance Garden marks the beginning of the large Bird Garden in which plants supply food (seeds, berries, fruit and nuts), nesting and protection for our feathered friends.

A blue bird box and the donated bench from the Jack and Barbara Hay foundation complete the additions to the entrance. The plants at the entrance gardens were from a local grower and were installed by a local Landscaper.

On the left are two large groupings of Dwarf Burning Bushes and Dwarf Korean Lilacs. The former has squarish/winged bark, tiny orange fluorescent seeds and hot pink fall colour. The latter has lavender-pink coloured flowers in the spring with a very memorable fragrance. Hydrangeas complete this garden.

On the right, there are lower bushes of Privet (for berries), 'Bristol Ruby' Weigela (for Hummingbirds) and a Quince hedge (orange flowers and hard fruit), Spirea and Viburnum.

The higher background has Amur Maple bushes (seeds in Maple key clusters and red fall colour), Colorado Spruce trees (short, sharp blue/green needles, shelter, and cones for wildlife).

White Pine (soft looking evergreens with needles in clusters of 5 and "fruit" called "cones"). In Native culture, The White Pine is called the Tree of Peace. This tree is also seen in many famous Group of Seven paintings.

It may be noted that the identification plaques on the trees throughout the park have two names, a common one and a Latin/scientific one. It is the latter one that is the most important because it applies to only one particular tree all over the world with specific characteristics.



Above picture is from the ground-breaking ceremony on October 28, 1988.



Above pictures is from the official opening of the Nature Park which happened on June 5, 1992.

CONGRATULATIONS TO SUE EPSTEIN:

WRITTEN BY TAMMI ROBERTSON



Above pictured from left to right – Lori-Ann Pizzolato, Chair of the TVDSB Board to Trustees, Sue Epstein, Founder of the Arthur Ford Nature Park, Tammi Robertson, Thom McClenaghan, Past Arthur Ford Principal.

On August 19, 2022, I was honoured to attend the Nature Park Awards Ceremony, where Mayor Ed Holder was in attendance, and awarded Sue Epstein, Nature Park founder, the Sovereign Medal for Volunteerism.

Sue has dedicated the last 30 years to the Nature Park so this award was well deserved.

In Sue's speech she said that her work wouldn't of been possible without the teams of volunteers that have contributed their time, talent and energy over the years.

I am honoured to continue Sue's legacy with work at Nature Park and I agree that none of it would be possible without the amazing volunteers that continue her legacy in providing the Westmount community and Arthur Ford students an incredible outdoor space perfect for learning.

Stay tuned for future issues where we will take you for a virtual walk through Nature Park and outline the different gardens and areas of the park.