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Welcome to the first edition of the ESP e-newsletter

Environmental Stewardship Pickering (ESP) is a collaborative partnership. We are dedicated to providing the people of Pickering with environmental leadership, support, training and the tools they may need to build their own capacity to take action and improve their neighbourhood! Our ESP partnership includes the inkind and financial support of the City of Pickering, Ontario Power Generation, Pickering East Shore Community Association, Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, Durham Sustain Ability and Toronto and Region Conservation.

This e-newsletter will aim to keep you informed of our upcoming events and share some interesting facts and stories about your community.

We hope that you enjoy our e-newsletter. If you have any comments or questions, please email stewardship@cityofpickering.com

Thank you and happy reading!

Lush Lawns Naturally

Michelle Pongracz (City of Pickering)

Maintaining a healthy lawn and garden is your best defense against unwanted weeds and pests. Try the tips below to create a healthier lawn that is safe for all living things.



Feed the soil

Apply organic fertilizers in late summer or early fall to further improve soil fertility and increase its organic matter content. These slow-release products will not burn grass, nor will they contaminate ground and surface water. Apply compost, either store-bought or homemade, throughout the growing season. This product adds macro- and micro-nutrients to the soil, and increases microbial activity that will decompose thatch – a layer of dead and living stems and roots that forms between grass plants and soil.

Water wisely

Your lawn needs 2.5 centimetres (1 inch) of water a week. Rain often provides this amount or more. When this is not the case, water deeply once a week during early morning or early evening. Avoid watering at night as cooler temperatures and standing water invite disease.

Mow high with a sharp blade

Mowing high is good for your lawn. A cutting height of 7.5 centimetres will shade-

Lush Lawns Workshop

September 23rd, 2010

Where: Pickering Council Chambers, Civic Complex

Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Do you ever feel like a slave to your lawn? Attend this workshop and learn how to keep your lawn looking good, even through the driest days. Experts will explain how to choose the right grass varieties, and how to mow, water and fertilize for optimal health.

Please register for this event at www.sustainablepickering.com or contact the Customer Care Centre at 905-683-7575

Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup

September 25th, 2010

Where: Millennium Square
Meet at the pedestrian bridge at the south end of Liverpool Road.

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Join the City of Pickering and Toronto and Region Conservation as we take part in the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. Help us get rid of thousands of cigarette butts, plastic bags, bottles, cans, and food wrappers that end up on Pickering's shorelines. When we all do it together it can make a huge impact.

out sun-loving weeds, encourage grass root development, and keep soil cool and moist. Keep your mower blade sharp to ensure a clean cut and a healthy lawn.

Rake Less

Leave clippings where they fall. They are the perfect fertilizer – free, convenient and full of nutrients. They boost soil fertility by up to 30 per cent and provide soil with much needed moisture and shade.

Overseed

Overseed every year, ideally in the fall. Dense turf will crowd out weeds like dandelions and crabgrass. Avoid Kentucky blue grass, which needs lots of water and fertilizer and is highly susceptible to grubs. Choose hardy, pest-resistant, drought-tolerant (labelled as endophytic or endopyte-enhanced) perennial rye and fescue grass blends suited to your yard's light, moisture and soil conditions.

Pull weeds by hand

Spring is a good time to hand-pull weeds like dandelions while the soil is damp and their roots are not so long and tough. Get a weeding tool (fork or claw designs work well) and the job will be faster and easier. Then add some compost and grass seed on the spots you've weeded.

Check your lawn regularly

Regularly inspecting your lawn means you'll notice right away if a problem arises. Consider having your soil analyzed every few years to determine your soil pH and type. This will assist you when planning your lawn care needs.

More helpful information about maintaining a natural lawn can be found at:

www.sustainablepickering.com

www.trca.on.ca/yards

www.additupontario.ca/en/index.php

*** Please join us on September 23rd for our Lush Lawns Workshop to learn from an expert on how to care for your lawn in the fall to have that lush lawn next spring! All the information is on the Event sidebar in this newsletter. Hope to see you there!**

Small groups make a big difference

Tricia Harvey (Pickering resident)

Have you ever thought about getting involved in your community? It can be as easy as getting your neighbours organized to do a clean-up around your home or to plant a few wildflowers in the common garden. In recent months, I have had the opportunity to engage my neighbours in activities around my community.

Our development is a condominium of town houses with both private and common ground. Since the condo was completed four years ago, a group of us have been holding clean-up days each spring. We focus our efforts around our condominium, which includes a creek that runs through the east end of the development. In the past couple of years, we have included a planting day in our community activities to try to bring back native plants to the area. We choose native wildflowers that grow well locally. These plants are either purchased by the condominium or donated. On all occasions we have been supported by the City of Pickering.



Please register for this event at www.sustainablepickering.com or contact the Customer Care Centre at 905-683-7575

Take Pride in Pickering

October 30th, 2010

Where: Alex Robertson Park - Sandy Beach Road, south of Bayly Street. Meet in the parking lot on the west side of Sandy Beach Road.

Time: 9:00 a.m - 12:00 p.m
(come in good time to plant a tree, they go quick!)

Join Toronto and Region Conservation, Ontario Power Generation and the City of Pickering for a fun day of planting native trees and shrubs. The planting will help to extend the natural habitat for birds and mammals.

A barbeque lunch will follow.

To register, please call 905-420-4660 ext. 2212 or sign up online at

www.trcastewardshipevents.ca

Environmental Volunteer Expo

November 20th, 2010

Where: West Shore Community Centre, Pickering

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Looking for an opportunity to volunteer, but not sure what is available?

Come out to the first Pickering Environmental Volunteer Expo and get connected with the perfect volunteer opportunity!

This year we had a native wildflower planting on May 15th. The plants were donated by Councillor Littley and our new landscaping company, HideAway Landscaping. Residents of the condominium came together to plant the wildflowers, do a litter clean-up and enjoy a communal barbeque. Our efforts have attracted more birds in the yards, squirrels, and even a sporadic visit from a beautiful fox passing through.

Our example demonstrates that even as a small group, anyone can make a positive difference to their environment.

The Way of the Worms - Vermicomposting

Arnold Mostert (City of Pickering)

Environmental Stewardship Pickering was pleased to have had Cathy Nesbitt speak at the 2nd Annual Environmental Leadership Forum on Vermicomposting. Cathy is a Worm Advocate and Founder of Cathy's Crawly Composters (established in 2002). The business specializes in vermicomposting, which is indoor composting with worms, and organic diversion to help reduce the amount of waste going to the landfill. Organic material is recycled by vermicomposting with worms and produces beautiful black castings. Castings are a high grade natural soil enhancer, one of the best fertilizers available anywhere.



Cathy told some wonderful and incredibly funny stories about the roots of her business; how she took home compost from her previous employment, how she tried to get coffee grounds from everyone's favourite donut shop (unsuccessfully) to compost, and how she got trunk loads of waste produce from the local grocery store (including tonnes of bananas), all for the sake of trying to divert the material from the landfill and for feeding her worms.

The worms used for vermicomposting are red wiggler worms. They are in the same family as earthworms. However, earthworms draw food down into their burrows, which can be up to 6 feet deep. Red wiggler worms prefer to scavenge food just 6" to 12" below the surface, making them perfect for a composting environment. These worms are most active at temperatures between 16 to 28 degrees Celsius and eat less when the temperature is below this range. For this reason, indoor composting works best for our northern climate.

Cathy provided general instructions and advice on how to start vermicomposting;

- Setup with bedding of shredded newspaper, brown leaves/straw, egg shells, and soil.
- The worms prefer to be in the dark and do not like to be disturbed, so it is best to feed them only once or twice a week.
- The worms eat about half of their weight daily.
- If you have a lot of food scraps, it's best to wait a few days before adding more.
- Bury the food under a couple inches of bedding and in different locations in the composter.
- Add additional bedding when it is difficult to bury the food scraps.

Find out what volunteer opportunities are available that fit your personal interests.

Drop in for a few minutes or stay to hear the organizations present their "Two Minutes of Fame", scheduled throughout the day.

To register, please visit www.sustainablepickering.com or for more information please email: stewardship@cityofpickering.com

Your Event Here!

We would like to add your group events to our event listing on the ESP e-newsletter.

If you have an upcoming event for the spring season please send in the details and we will put in the next e-newsletter.

Have your event information in by **January 31st, 2011** to mwilliams@trca.on.ca and we will be able to accommodate your request.

Thank you and good luck with your events!

- Crushed egg shells should also be sprinkled on top of the bedding once a week to counter the acidity in the food scraps.
- When the bedding has almost been consumed by the worms, it's time to harvest and start again.

Cathy's Crawly Composters is located in Bradford, Ontario. They do sell bins for composting, the red wiggler worms and other associated vermicomposting products. There is also a wealth of information regarding vermicomposting on their website: www.cathyscomposters.com. Check it out and happy composting!

The Importance of Biodiversity

Bob Hester (Durham Sustain Ability)

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. It is intended to raise awareness of the incredible variety of life on Earth, its value to us and the urgent need to protect it.



The term biodiversity describes the variety of life on Earth: on land, in the air and in the water. The biological diversity that surrounds us sustains us. It provides us with food, clean water, clean air, medicines, wood and other raw materials. The life that existed on Earth millions of years ago provides us with the fossil fuels that we use to run our economy. The complex biological diversity that we now see around us is the result of millions of years of evolution from the time that life first appeared on our planet. In Pickering, we have, in the Rouge Valley, on the Oak Ridges Moraine and elsewhere, remnants of the biodiversity that once existed here.

Biodiversity is much more than birds and butterflies. It encompasses the whole planetary ecosystem, with plants at its foundation. The plants take carbon from the air and energy from the sun to make their own food and to produce the oxygen that we breathe. The plants serve as food for animals which, in turn, serve as food for other animals. Decomposers such as fungi and bacteria recycle nutrients and energy from plant and animal debris so they can be used by other living organisms.

All human activity depends on the Earth's biological diversity and affects that biodiversity, positively or negatively.

The continued existence of many of the plants and animals with which we share this planet is currently under threat. As of May, 2010, there were 602 species listed as at risk in Canada, up from 380 in 2000. Biodiversity loss disrupts ecosystem functions, making those ecosystems more vulnerable to disturbances, less resilient and less able to supply the living resources and waste assimilation on which we depend.

The root cause of biodiversity loss is unsustainable human population growth. This impacts biodiversity through habitat loss and fragmentation, pollution, overharvesting and introduction of non-native invasive species. Habitat loss and fragmentation is caused by land use change, chiefly through habitat removal (forestry, wetland drainage, urbanization, industrialization). As climate change advances, it will increase the negative effect these factors have on biodiversity.

Urban residents are somewhat insulated from the consequences of biodiversity loss due to our lifestyles. We get our food from supermarkets and our clean water

from treatment plants. It is not immediately apparent to us that species in this country and around the world are threatened by the processes that provide us with the goods and services that we want.

What can we do to protect biodiversity? We can become more aware of the biodiversity that surrounds us and of the species that are most in need of protection. We can step more lightly on the Earth through lifestyle and consumer choices that minimize our impact on biodiversity. We can improve our local environment by naturalizing portions of our properties and participating in local environmental stewardship programs such as tree plantings, wetland improvements and removal of invasive species.

Scientists are warning that we are on the verge of a mass extinction never before seen on this planet. Individually we cannot do enough to make a measurable difference, but collectively we can. Do we want to be part of the problem or part of the solution? The choice is ours.

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FOR MORE DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT:
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