

[If you are having trouble viewing this email, click here.](#)



## Winter 2013 ESP e-newsletter

Our events are just starting and we are kicking them off with our Environmental Volunteer Expo. Please see the article below or the event side-bar in this e-newsletter for more details or "like" us on Facebook to keep up-to-date!

[ESP Facebook Page](#)

## Environmental Volunteer Expo

Are you looking for an exciting volunteer opportunity? Or want to reconnect with an organization? We have a great event for you!

On March 2nd, we are hosting our 3rd Annual Environmental Volunteer Expo at the Petticoat Creek Community Centre. The expo is a networking event to help Pickering residents connect with the active volunteer organizations in the area. The doors are open from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to chat with the organizations or stop and listen to the "Two Minutes of Fame" scheduled throughout the day.



The organizations involved include:

- Altona Forest Stewardship Committee
- Ajax Pickering Board of Trade
- Bloomers and Britches Heritage Gardening Club
- City of Pickering
- Durham Sustain Ability
- Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters
- Ontario Power Generation
- Pickering Horticultural Society
- Pickering Ribfest – Environmental Volunteers
- Rouge Park
- Rouge Valley Foundation
- Toronto and Region Conservation

Please contact Mary Williams for more information: 416-661-6600 ext. 5753 or email [mwilliams@trca.on.ca](mailto:mwilliams@trca.on.ca)  
Or visit our website: [www.trcastewardshipevent.ca](http://www.trcastewardshipevent.ca)

## Environmental Volunteer Expo

Date: Saturday, March 2, 2013  
Time: 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
Location: Petticoat Creek Community Centre - 470 Kingston Rd. Pickering, ON L1V 1A4

Looking for an opportunity to volunteer, but not sure what is available? Come out to the third annual Pickering Environmental Volunteer Expo and get connected with the perfect volunteer opportunity. Drop in or stay to hear the organizations present their "Two Minutes of Fame."

For more information contact Mary Williams - 416-661-6600 ext. 5753 or [stewardship@pickering.ca](mailto:stewardship@pickering.ca)

## Winter Waterfowl at Ajax Waterfront

Date: Saturday, March 16, 2013  
Event Time: 10:00a.m. - 12:00p.m.  
Location: Rotary Park Pavilion, 177 Lake Driveway West, Ajax

Many ducks spend the summer breeding in the Arctic and migrate south to Toronto for the milder winter. Join us to learn about and view some of these spectacular winter 'snowbirds.'

Please register at the [TRCA stewardship event](#) website or contact the Stewardship Hotline 416-661-6600 ext 5660

## Spring Cleaning

With spring right around the corner, many of us will be starting to think about spring cleaning. As you clean and organize your closets, basements and garages, try to keep in mind ways to dispose of your unwanted items in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner.

If you find yourself with items that you no longer want, but that are still in good condition, please consider donating them to a local charity. There are many to choose from. Clothing drop-off bins are located throughout the city. Some charitable organizations will even schedule pickups at your home to collect clothing, toys or kitchenware.

If you have a bicycle that's just collecting dust in the garage, considering dropping it off at an [Africycle](#) collection point this April. Africycle will refurbish old bicycles and deliver them to communities in Africa. This provides these communities with a sustainable mode of transportation while keeping bicycles out of landfills.

Have you come across old fluorescent light bulbs and tubes, found old paints, varnish, stains, or a un-used rusted propane tank? In addition to year-round collection of Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) at its [Waste Management Facilities](#), Durham Region invites residents to drop off special and hazardous waste for free at special collection event on Saturday, April 13 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Pickering Recreation Complex (arena parking lot). For information on what HHW is visit [www.durham.ca/waste](http://www.durham.ca/waste).

If you have a cell phone you'd like to dispose of, you can drop it off in the Phone Apes collection bin located in the Pickering Nuclear Information Center, open weekdays 9:00am- 3:30pm. The [Phone Apes](#) Cell Phone Collection Program is run by the Toronto Zoo. This program aims to keep recyclable materials out of local landfills, while helping the Toronto Zoo raise funds to help save gorillas in Central Africa.

For more information on waste collection in the [Durham Region](#), including the collection of hazardous household waste, please visit the [Waste Management website](#)

---

## The Challenge of a "new" Garden

John and Tricia Harvey

While moving house is always a challenge, planning and designing a new garden is fun in comparison. Our "new" house is actually 13 years old and has a yard that really hasn't had much done to it – a lawn and apple tree – that's about it.

## Lush Lawns

Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2012  
Time: 7:00p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Location: OPG Information Centre, 1675 Montgomery Park Road, Pickering, ON

Lawn care expert Sabrina Selvaggi will explain how to choose the right grass varieties, and how to mow, water and fertilize for optimal health.

Registration is free, call to reserve your spot; 905.683.7575 or email [customercare@pickering.ca](mailto:customercare@pickering.ca)

---

## Gorgeous Gardens

Date: Saturday, April 6, 2013  
Time: 10:00a.m. - 12:00p.m.  
Location: Pickering Recreation Complex, O'Brien Rooms, 1867 Valley Farm Road, Pickering  
Held in the O'Brien Rooms at the back of Pickering Recreation Complex. Take Diefenbaker Court.

Join the experts of Durham Master Gardeners as they walk you through how to get your garden ready for spring.

Registration is free, call to reserve your spot; 905.683.7575 or email [customercare@pickering.ca](mailto:customercare@pickering.ca)

---

## Vertical Vegetables

Date: Tuesday, April 9, 2013  
Time: 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Location: Petticoat Creek Community Centre, 470 Kingston Road, Pickering, ON

Local expert Ken Brown will share innovative, simple and inexpensive ways to use vertical space to increase the amount of foods that you can grow.

Our last yard was in a new house with similar needs so we are off again, starting from the beginning and digging up the whole area. We will use the same resources that helped us achieve a great yard last time.



Pickering provides many helpful workshops throughout the year, including our favorite for small yards – Vertical Vegetables – presented with immense enthusiasm by Ken Brown. His website offers useful advice on how to create a wonderful garden of native plants and fresh vegetables – [“Gardening Enjoyed: Gardening – Vegetables to eat. Flowers to Appreciate”](#).

So here we go again, planning a garden with vegetables mixed in with native flowers and shrubs resulting in the 3 “B”s – birds, bees and butterflies PLUS seasonal flowers and vegetables for us to enjoy.

Roll on the Spring.

---

## The Opossum

Bob Hester

Photo by G.L. Twiest, Mammal Image Library, [American Society of Mammalogists](#)



I first encountered a live Opossum in Waterloo a few years ago. I had driven my daughter back to university after she had spent a weekend at home and arrived in Waterloo after dark. The other students she was living with were in the driveway of their house looking into the porch attached to the house. Some were even taking pictures. An Opossum had gotten into the porch, attracted by the garbage they kept there between pickups. They had never seen an Opossum before and did not know what it was or what to do. They did not realize that they were blocking the animal's only escape route and that it was afraid and just wanted to get away. It was cowering in the corner of the shed, trying to sound and look aggressive, snarling and showing an impressive number of teeth. I advised them to turn off the porch light, go into the house and as soon as it could, the opossum would make its escape. Half an hour later, we looked into the shed and the opossum was gone.

Encounters with Opossums (*Didelphis virginiana*) are becoming more frequent in southern Ontario in recent years. Their distribution is extending north as the climate warms: the range of the species expands northward after mild

Register is free, call to reserve your spot 905.683.7575 or email [customercare@pickering.ca](mailto:customercare@pickering.ca)

---

### Take Pride in Pickering

Date: Saturday, May 25, 2013  
Time: 10:00a.m. - 12:00p.m.  
Location: Alex Robertson Park

Join Environmental Stewardship Pickering and Ontario Power Generation for a day of planting native wildflowers and learning about the environment. We will be extending and enhancing our wildflower garden in Alex Robertson Park and lead you through environmental booths. A barbeque lunch will follow. Please bring a trowel and gloves if you have them. Students...earn community service hours for this activity.

For more information please visit [TRCA Stewardship Event](#) website

---

### Rouge Days

Rouge Days will be returning for it's 5th year on June 6th- June 9th! There will be great event filled with family-friendly activities, hands-on demonstrations, nature hikes, wildflower planting and much more.

For more information go to the [Rouge Days website](#)

---

winters and retreats back to the south after severe winters. The net movement in recent years has been to the north. Opossums are not well adapted to severe winter weather, losing the tips of their ears and tails, and even toes, to frostbite. A very severe winter will kill all Opossums in an affected area.

An adult Opossum is about the size of a large cat, but with shorter legs. Males are typically heavier than females. It has a long, pointed muzzle and a long scaly tail. Its short fur is pale grey with longer white hairs protruding. The hair on its face is short and white. Its legs and tops of its feet are black and its toes are white. Its paper-thin ears are black. Opossums are most often seen as roadkill since they are typically nocturnal (active at night) and are clumsy, slow movers.

Few Opossums live in the wild beyond 2 years of age. Their maximum lifespan in the wild is about 3 years.

Opossums are solitary animals. They live in dens built in brush piles or in abandoned burrows of other animals such as skunks or groundhogs. They do not dig their own burrows. Opossums can also den in hollow trees or logs, or even under decks and in sheds. An Opossum den is well-lined with dry leaves and grasses, which provides valuable insulation in winter. Underground burrows are particularly important in the colder parts of their range. Opossums do not hibernate, but spend extended periods in their dens when temperatures are below freezing.

Typical Opossum habitat is moist woodland near water. Our local river and creek valleys provide an abundance of this type of habitat.

Opossums eat a wide variety of available plant and animal material: insects, earthworms, toads, snakes, frogs, bird's eggs and nestlings, mice, shrews, moles, fruits, berries, nuts, seeds and shoots. They will eat garbage.

Opossums are unique among North American mammals in their reproduction. The females have a fur-lined abdominal pouch in which their newborns are cared for until they are weaned. A newborn opossum is born after only a 13 day gestation. It is hairless and pink, the size of a honey bee. Each newborn in a litter must climb from the birth canal to the pouch, a distance of 40 to 50 millimetres. At the birth of her young, the mother sits in a way that assists the young as they move to the pouch. Inside the pouch there are 13 nipples. Each of the young that successfully attaches to a nipple remains attached to the nipple for most of its time in the pouch. At this age, the young opossums have separate swallowing and breathing passages, allowing them to feed and breathe simultaneously. After 60 to 70 days in the pouch, the young begin to detach from the nipples and crawl around outside the pouch. At 90 to 110 days old, the young are fully weaned.

The Opossum's natural predators include coyotes, foxes and large owls. Many are killed by domestic dogs and cats. Many are also killed by automobiles. There were two road-killed Opossums near our home adjacent to the Rouge valley last fall.

Playing possum is a well known behavior of opossums. When threatened or afraid, the animal pretends to be dead (with lips drawn back and teeth bared) as a way of defending itself. It can remain like this for several hours before moving off. So, if you find what appears to be a dead opossum, the best strategy is to leave it alone and, if not dead, it will escape.

Opossums cause little damage and are little threat to humans. They are not as fearless or aggressive as raccoons. There are things that can be done to minimize our interaction with Opossums. Do not leave pet food out at night. Clean up bird feed spilled on the ground. Keep shed and garage doors closed. Keep garbage in a place not accessible to animals or, if outside, ensure that the garbage can lid is secure. These measures will help ensure that animals are not attracted to our houses, where they may be exposed to increased risk of injury or death due to dogs, cats or traffic.

Much of the information used in this article is taken from The Natural History of Canadian Mammals by Donna Naughton. This excellent reference work was published by the Canadian Museum of Nature and the University of Toronto Press in 2012.

---

[Click here to unsubscribe.](#)

[www.trca.on.ca](http://www.trca.on.ca)

FOR MORE DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT:  
The Environmental Stewardship Pickering  
hotline at 905-420-4660, ext. 2212  
[stewardship@city.pickering.on.ca](mailto:stewardship@city.pickering.on.ca)