



At the Forks

The Magazine of the Friends of the Don East

Spring 2006

Getting Active, Getting Involved

There are so many ways that each one of us can help to restore and preserve the Don and our common watershed, and this certainly remains true for those interested in getting more actively involved than making those ever-valuable donations and other gestures of support to groups like ours. Even when considering a more active role, there are opportunities of varying levels abound!

The simplest way to get your hands dirty with us is by coming out to one of the several planting events we hold each season, and for roughly two-hours of fun you get to leave a physical lasting mark on your local community and environment – There's really nothing quite like returning to a site where you yourself have put some trees in the ground, and seeing the fruits of your labour growing and becoming more impressive year-after-year for more than a lifetime.

Even easier for when you'd prefer not to get dirty at all are one of our many walks, hikes, workshops and other educational events where you can come

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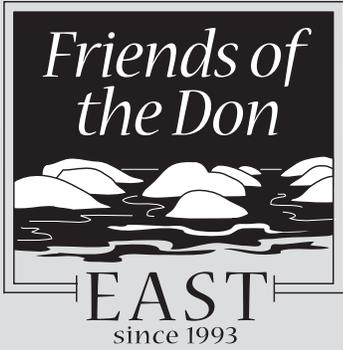


Before your next trip to the garden centre, instil the following thought in your mind: I'm going to use native plants! What is a native plant, and why are they important? Native plants are those which are "native" to our particular area, having evolved here naturally over great periods of time. The alternative is "non-native" or exotic plants which have been artificially introduced by humans – either accidentally or intentionally – beginning with the earliest settlers to the region. Exotic species are prevalent in our parklands and our very own gardens, and they create a number of very significant problems and challenges.

The benefits of native plants begin with their beauty and variety, but there are many other reasons to use them in your garden as they:

- are easier to grow and maintain – After all, nature 'designed' them to live and thrive here!
- are hardier and more disease-resistant, requiring less fertilizers and better helping to eliminate any use of pesticides;
- conserve water, and even help to improve local water quality by better filtering storm water;
- increase biodiversity and provide valuable food and shelter to attract creatures like butterflies and songbirds to your garden.

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President's message.

Welcome to spring 2006! What a season this promises to be for FODE and its members.

In this issue of 'At the Forks' look for details on how you can support FODE by purchasing premium or family memberships; by buying our T-shirts, Hats and more; or by supporting us through on-going donations.

We will also launch a new version of our website this spring, with many exciting new features.

Look for details on a greater variety of events than ever before including many new partnership with like-minded organizations.

Additionally, this spring we are committed to planting over 1,000 trees, shrubs and wildflowers; and installing the first-ever interpretive signage in Taylor Creek Park.

That has been made possible in large part due to the support of Home Depot Canada and the Evergreen Foundation, the City of Toronto through Parks & Forestry programs, as well as a major individual donation by member Frank Casula. They all deserve our thanks. For a full list of our events see page 6.

Please join us at our upcoming events, and consider volunteering to assist us in staffing those events, like the upcoming 'Hike the Don' in partnership with the Toronto & Region Conservation Authority, or by volunteering in any of a number of other capacities in the on-going operation of our organization.

It would also be wonderful to see as many of you as possible at our annual fundraising dinner in the fall, it promises to be our largest ever! Call us this season for all the details and to purchase your tickets now.

It is only with the dedication of members, financial supporters and volunteers that FODE can deliver programs to restore the Don Watershed. Your interest and assistance can and does make a real difference!

I look forward to seeing you all during the upcoming season,

James McArthur, President



Join us for our **Annual Fundraising Dinner**

Help support our organization in
this key fundraising drive for us.
Enjoy a full course meal and free beer/wine on the
beautiful back patio of Allen's. Don't miss it!

Full details at
www.fode.ca
Order your ticket today!

ORGANIZATIONAL Update

There are many exciting things in the works for this season, some having been completed and released over the past few months and others still coming through the summer. The first one to mention is a new membership structure that was approved at our Annual General Meeting last November which has seen the introduction of two new membership classes – Premium and Family – to our program, along with a number of new benefits being added for all of our members; Please see our membership page at the back of this newsletter for these details. An overall expanded membership support program will be rolled-out over the coming months to further complement this and add increasing

from "Getting Active"



out and educate yourself on any one of a gamut of topics directly pertinent to your own local neighbourhood, all the while enjoying and learning about the beautiful surroundings of any of our outdoor events. For the indoor-types there exist a number of ways to help with planning, policy or other support-related tasks to help FODE fulfill its mandate to our community.

But all of these roles and opportunities are fairly well-known to those familiar with our organization, yet there are so many more ways that anyone can get involved and more active with the work that we do. One of the most exciting of all of these is becoming a steward of a local green-space in your community.

What does it mean to become a steward of one of these areas? Well that is

entirely up to you! FODE has a stewardship program in place that can be entirely customized to each interested person. Interested in looking after new or existing plant material and exercising that green thumb? We'll teach you whatever you may need to know and get you equipped to do the job. Want to do some wildlife monitoring, be it bird-watching or scanning for indicator species such as frogs or owls? We'll get you trained for it and guide you along the way. How about water quality monitoring and sampling? Our creeks and streams surely need it (to make an understatement)! Benthic invertebrate sampling? Air quality monitoring using lichens? Whether these terms are even familiar to you or not, we'll get you up to par and out there doing it, wherever and on whatever schedule suits you!

The opportunities to get involved in your local community and doing your part (however you choose to define that) towards helping our environment are truly boundless through any one of our volunteer programs. Even if you have something else that you are interested in doing similar to one of our programs – or not, but in-line with our mandate and objectives – we would love to

work with you to help equip you with the knowledge, any training, equipment, resources and support to see the goal accomplished. Whether you would like to work as part of a team or on your own, we'll find the time that works best for you, and your level of involvement is always up to you from regular outings on a weekly or monthly basis to coming out a couple of times per season or even per year.

So whether you want to play in the dirt, wade in the water or simply keep an eye on a local green-space with nothing more than a walk through a nearby park and report back any sightings or disturbances to us, we encourage you to get formally involved and do what you can to make a real difference in the Don. Our natural areas could really use your help, and you'll receive the heart-felt thanks of both your neighbours and our environment!



value to our members.

Another big announcement comes with our new watershed-wide, cross-organizational website released this spring; See page 7 for full details on this great new resource designed for the local community-at-large.

The 2005 year was a great success for FODE, with more events and more public engagement than we have ever had before. In total we held well over 40 unique events directly drawing the participation of literally thousands of new people! We have also expanded, and will continue to expand this coming year, the focus of our audience reach demographically-speaking; For example with our expanded work with children and school-groups through both classroom visits and trips out into the field with classes for

educational tours, plantings or stewardship activities. We continue to look for new ways to get our kids involved and more than anything interested in their local environment.

Another highlight of the past year was our annual fundraiser, held with all new sponsors to yield great reviews and a wonderful evening for all who attended. We look forward to an even larger-scale event this year, this time spilling out onto the award-winning patio of Allen's, and with even more sponsors and freebies!

We sincerely thank everyone for their participation in 2005 and hope to see even more of you out at our events this year. And for all those who are not already a "Friend of the Don", we truly hope that you will consider becoming a member and lend us your vital support today!

Spring Tips for Natural Care

Some basic tips to help you care for your lawn, garden and trees naturally, without the use of pesticides!

Visit our website for more tips, advice and support on natural care!

	Late April - Early May	May - June	July - August
 <p>Lawn Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply organic soil amendments; topdress and overseed • monitor for weeds; spot hand weed • raise mower height to 7.5cm (3"); sharpen blade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fertilize if needed after first burst of grass growth • identify weeds and hand weed as necessary • cut lawn before weeds begin propagating seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water grass every 2-3 weeks during extended droughts • avoid mowing during droughts
	Spring		Summer
 <p>Garden Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remove dead plant material on perennials • add a fresh layer (5cm) of compost on garden beds • plant new material by the end of May • apply mulch to new plantings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prune fast-growers • monitor for weeds; remove weeds and replenish mulch • monitor for pests 	
<p>Tree Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor for pests • prune dead or damaged branches if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure trees, especially young ones, are properly watered during droughts • protect trunks and roots from lawn equipment 	

Source: Pesticide Free... A Guide to Natural Lawn and Garden Care, Toronto Public Health

Around the Forks

Other news and happenings in the Don

Mouth of the Don: The Toronto Region Conservation Authority is leading the initiative to restore the mouth of the Don to a natural state. A requirement of the process is to complete an Environmental Assessment, a two year process. Currently the TRCA is in the process of completing the Terms of Reference for the EA. This includes a description of the alternatives for the project, including deciding precisely which route/path the river should follow. If you are interested in finding out more about it, visit the project website at:

http://www.trca.on.ca/water_protection/don_mouth/default.asp?load=whats_new

Lower Don Flood Protection Project: One of the biggest issues with the lower Don River is the potential for catastrophic flooding. 50 years ago, Hurricane Hazel caused the Don to overflow its banks and flood most of downtown as far west as Bay St. To prevent this from happening a recently completed study has approved the creation of a levee to be constructed on the west side of the river south of Queen St. East. During construction the Lower Don Trail will be closed from now until the Spring of 2007. The Bayview Extension south of Queen St. will be closed as well. When completed, the bicycling trail will have a new tunnel underneath the railway overpass as well as a new connection to the soon to be rebuilt West Don Lands.

Don Valley Brick Works: Evergreen, a local non-profit group is in the process of starting a major restoration project at the Brick Works. They intend to renovate most of the buildings and transform this space into, among other things, a local centre for environmental sustainability. They are still actively fundraising but they hope to start work early next year. If you have visited the Brick Works recently you might think they have already started work but the construction is unrelated to Evergreen. The work currently being done is to replace the asphalt driveway just north of the parking lot with a brick covered piazza as well as placing new stairs down from the Belt Line trail. This will provide a better link between the Brick Works Quarry Gardens and the surrounding green space. Work is expected to be completed in early spring.

For more information on the Evergreen project, visit www.brickworks.ca.



from "Go Native" oncover

The key to the benefits that using native plants will bring to your garden comes down to the fact that they are adapted to the local conditions on your property, more naturally looking after themselves; they require less water, they're better suited to local soil conditions, they can better withstand local weather conditions including droughts and freezes, and they're much more capable of coping with diseases and resident insects or 'pests'. All of this and more translates into less time and money required of you while more easily achieving and maintaining that beautiful garden you love!

So how do you go about selecting and obtaining native plants? There are many guides available out there, be it in a book from your local library, a magazine, on the internet or perhaps most easily directly from us! (FODE will have a new resource guide on our website by the time you're ready to plant this spring, and members may even contact us directly for personal assistance and discounted rates on published guides from our partners. We'll also be selling a limited amount of native plants ourselves this spring - See the sidebar for more information.) Unfortunately not many garden stores are adequately-equipped to answer your questions or assist you in selecting/obtaining your native plants. One thing to be careful of is the use of the term native - A plant that is native to a state in the U.S.A., another province or even

northern Ontario may not (and often won't!) be native to the Toronto area, so a little bit of research may be required.

Once you know some of the plants you would like to obtain, the next step is finding a reliable nursery that sells them (or somewhere where you can go to browse various options if you'd rather not choose your plants ahead of time). This is another area where we'd encourage you to use us as a resource, especially if you encounter any difficulty; we can help to point you in the right direction, or even to obtain the plants themselves (again, see our calendar for opportunities to purchase plants directly through us). And by all means please encourage your local nurseries to carry native plants! It is important to stress that you should never collect or remove any native plants from the wild or from local parks, as not only are they unlikely to survive transplantation but they may be a threatened or endangered species in the wild.

What's next? Well once you have your new native plants home, planted and established in your garden, you may want to learn how to spot non-native invasive species trying to creep into your yard so that you can remove those. Also consider sharing your knowledge and experiences with friends and neighbours; most of us purchase these damaging non-native plants without knowing about the consequences and too many nurseries continue to sell these to the uninformed, so spread the word! But your next and last step is by far the most important one: Sit-back, relax and enjoy the beauty of your native plant garden!



Native Plant Sales

This spring FODE will be selling local native plants directly to our members and the public. We're making it as easy as possible for you to find the absolute best plants for your garden! Come get your plants on May 13 at the Leslieville Tree Festival (see calendar for details), or see our online calendar for other possible dates

Spring 2006 EVENTS

Note: All events will happen rain or shine so please dress appropriately. Put this list on your fridge

Saturday April 15: 10:00am-1:00pm Annual Spring Fling at Todmorden Mills Todmorden Mills, 67 Pottery Road

The 8th Annual FODE Spring Fling – Kick-off the season with our regular clean-up operation at Todmorden Mills, followed by a BBQ and interpretive walk of the Wildflower Preserve.

Saturday April 22: 10:00am-12:00pm Earth Day Clean-Up

Donora Park, Donora Dr. east of Dawes
Mayor Miller and Councillor Davis' Community Clean-Up Day in partnership with FODE will venture into Donora Park to spruce-up the park and pull all that litter out of the neighbouring ravine – Come lend a hand!

Sunday April 23: 10:00am-12:00pm Nature's Spring Awakening along the Don Just west of Taylor Creek Park—See website or call for detailed directions

Join Task Force to Bring Back the Don Habitat Restoration Team member Steve Gahbauer to explore flora and fauna along Taylor Massey Creek. This hike begins at the Forks of the Don and ends at Victoria Park Ave. between St. Clair and Danforth.

Sunday April 23: 12:00pm-2:00pm Halsey Plateau Tree Planting Foot of Halsey Ave., Dawes Rd. north of Danforth Ave.

Join our first public planting of 2006! Help us plant a few hundred trees to start naturalizing this open-grass area next to Taylor Massey Creek.

April 24 - 30 Operation: Clean Sweep

We'll be taking school groups out throughout the week to clean-up their neighbouring green spaces as part of Pitch-In Canada Week. If you are interested in getting your (or your child's!) school or class involved, please let us know!

Sunday April 30: 11:00am-1:00pm South Goulding Estate Tree Planting

The final planting of our South Goulding Estate Naturalization and Signage Project, made possible by Evergreen and The Home Depot. Come plant a few trees and see the work that has been – and is yet to be – done!

Tuesday May 2: 7:00pm-9:00pm Ask the Arborist with LEAF Stan Wadlow Clubhouse, 373 Cedarvale Ave, Woodbine & Cosburn

Learn how trees function, what they need and how you can help them thrive from a certified arborist.

Information also on natural care practices. Co-hosted by LEAF and Councillor Davis.

Saturday May 6: 10:00am-12:00pm Donora park planting

A planting of a different sort for those who prefer a smaller shovel! Help plant-up the new garden beds at Donora Park. Made possible by the Toronto Parks and Trees Foundation.

Saturday May 7: 9:00am-1:00pm Hike the Don

If you prefer to enjoy the annual Paddle the Don event without risking a dive in the river, this event is for you! Hike alongside the paddlers in one of 3 timeslots from E.T. Seaton Park to Todmorden Mills, with "finish-line" activities awaiting. In partnership with the TRCA.

Please pre-register with us for this event.

Saturday May 13: Afternoon Native Plant Sales @ Leslieville Tree Festival Leslie Grove Park, corner of Queen St. and Jones Ave

Having a hard time finding native plants for your garden? Just in time for the start of your gardening, we will have a variety of native plants for sale from our booth as you come to enjoy displays, music, art, vendors, kids activities and more in this day of tree celebration!

Tuesday May 16: 7:00pm-9:00pm Natural Gardening Workshop Stan Wadlow Clubhouse, 373 Cedarvale Ave, Woodbine & Cosburn

Learn about the issues surrounding home pesticide use and how to care for your green spaces without them. With resources provided by Greenest City and the City of Toronto, this workshop will teach you all about the city's pesticide by-law and how to achieve and maintain healthy and vibrant lawns, gardens and trees the natural way!

Saturday May 20: 10:00am-12:00pm The Don Valley's History—Just west of Taylor Creek Park—See website or call for detailed directions

Learn about the old homesteads, paper mills and other industries, and various other human activities in the Valley in the 30s and 40s before the DVP. Led by Task Force to Bring Back the Don guest leader Bill Lewis, who is the current program director for the Rouge Valley Conservation Centre.]

May 29 - June 11 Bike Week

FODE will be hosting bike tours through some of our parks and green spaces as part of the City of Toronto's Bike Week. See our website for

details of the different rides available for a different take on our interpretive walks!

Thursday June 1: 10:00am-12:00pm Canadian Rivers Day Water Walk Start at Chester Subway Station and conclude at Chester Spring Marsh.

Follow a raindrop's journey to reach Lake Ontario on a Water in the City Walk with us and led by RiverSides. Learn about Riverdale's urban history, lost streams, storm sewer infrastructure, and its impacts on the Don River. You'll also see what homeowners can do to help protect and restore the Don River!

Saturday June 13: 1:30pm-3:00pm Heritage Toronto Goulding Estate Walk Parking lot on East side of Dawes Rd. just north of Crescent Town Rd.

Join us on this Heritage Toronto tour around the last surviving structure of the Dentonia Park Farm, where the Massey family helped pioneer pasteurization in dairy farming. The surrounding green space boasts some of the largest Oaks to be seen along Taylor-Massey Creek and is home to both serious challenges and several lovely restoration projects.

Sunday July 9: 1:30pm-3:00pm Heritage Toronto Brickworks Walk Brickworks, 550 Bayview Ave.

An industrial site since the latter part of the 1800s, the Brickworks is now being transformed into a valley wilderness park. Hear how this site has influenced the history of the city from pre-colonial days to the present.

Sunday July 15: 10:00am-11:30am Summer in the Don Valley Just west of Taylor Creek Park— See website or call for detailed directions

Join leader Steve Gahbauer to explore the sights and sounds of nature in the summer in the Don Valley with a walk from the Forks of the Don northward into E.T. Seaton Park.

Saturday August 26: 1:30pm-3:30pm Heritage Toronto Mouth of the Don Walk Corner of Don Rdwy. and Villiers St.

Come explore the mouth of the Don River, a severely degraded area that has played such a core role in the history of our city but has been the sad victim of urbanization. Learn about its history, current state, and many exciting plans for the area.

Fundraising Dinner! Allen's, 143 Danforth Ave.

Our Annual Fundraising Dinner just keeps getting bigger and better! With our new sponsors from last year and even more, come enjoy the fantastic food, service and locale of the award-winning Allen's - With a full-course meal in Toronto's best-voted outdoor dining space under the leaves of century-old willows! Free beer (including Organic Lager!) provided again by the Don's own Mill St. Brewery, and likely wine as well for some more variety! Come mingle, laugh and enjoy while supporting us in this crucial fundraising drive.

See www.fode.ca or
contact us at **416-657-2800**
for more information



Volunteer Linkages System

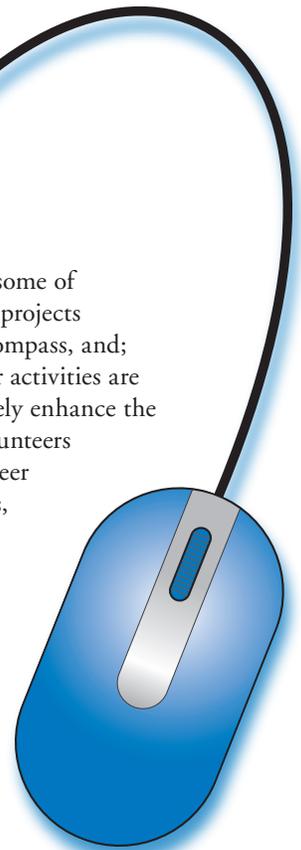
This spring, FODE is releasing an entirely redesigned and updated website to vastly improve the experience for visitors to our site. Besides a new and improved look and feel, there are a great many new tools and resources for visitors to take advantage of, leading to a more dynamic and engaging experience. Connected to this release but yet independent of the FODE website itself, we have released an entirely new online initiative called the Volunteer Linkages, Collaboration and Resource Sharing System (VLCRS).

For volunteers and other members of the public, VLCRS has created a new online community that brings different volunteer groups and their resources together in one place to allow people to easily discover the many varied organizations in their community, including their activities and volunteer opportunities.

The goal of VLCRS is to make clear which organizations exist within the community, including: what the mandates of these organizations are; what their geographic areas of operation

are; what some of their specific projects and activities encompass, and; what specific volunteer activities are being undertaken. The idea is to ultimately enhance the experience of the public and involved volunteers by logically presenting the various volunteer initiatives that exist in their communities, to make it clear – in a straight-forward and simplified manner – how different initiatives might fit in with one another and opportunities to become involved.

VLCRS is a project that has been made possible by funding from the Ontario Network of the Canada Volunteerism Initiative. We hope that you are able to take advantage of this new site this season!



Friends of the Don East is a membership-based charitable organization working to protect and enhance the Don River and to encourage the establishment of healthy and sustainable communities within the watershed.

Our primary mandate is the design and delivery of educational and community involvement programs to protect the natural heritage and ecological integrity of the Don watershed.

Friends of the Don East wish to thank the following for their support:

**THE ONTARIO
TRILLIUM
FOUNDATION**



**LA FONDATION
TRILLIUM
DE L'ONTARIO**

**TORONTO AND REGION
Conservation**
for The Living City

Member of Conservation Ontario



Join Today Membership/Donation Form

Yes! I want to help protect and restore the Don River watershed. Please enrol me to an annual Membership for just \$25

Name: _____
 Address: _____ Apt.#: _____
 City: _____ Province: _____ Postal Code: _____
 Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Membership:

(Choose from one of our membership types)

Standard
 \$25

- All of the benefits listed below
- a 15% discount on all FODE merchandise
- a full tax receipt

Unwaged / Student
 \$10

- All of the benefits listed below
- a 15% discount on all FODE merchandise

(for unwaged individuals or students only)

Premium
 \$40

- All of the benefits listed below
- a 25% discount on all FODE merchandise
- a free FODE t-shirt
- a tax receipt for \$30

Family
 \$50

- All of the benefits listed below
- a tax receipt for \$45
- a 25% discount on all FODE merchandise
- 2 free FODE t-shirts
- Optional children's educational and game newsletter inserts

MEMBER BENEFITS:

At the Forks Free subscription to the At the Forks newsletter magazine

E-Newsletter Receive our monthly electronic newsletter as well as other e-mail updates on important issues affecting our natural areas

Merchandise Discount Enjoy a discounted price on all FODE merchandise, plus select special rate offers on resources and merchandise from some of our partner groups

Free/Discounted Event Rates Receive a discounted rate or free access to fee-based FODE events, including specialized workshops, seminars and so on

Access to FODE professional support services
 As a member you can receive additional support and advice for questions that you may have about natural gardening, greening projects, improving your personal and home's toll on our watershed, and anything else we can help you with

Online Discussion Forum Take part in our third-party hosted discussion forums, allowing you to read and share views on topics related to our parks and valleys with other interested members

Voting Rights Have a vote at FODE general meetings

Charitable Receipt Receive a charitable tax receipt for all membership fees (less the value of any merchandise received – see below for details)

Make a Donation to Help Support Our Work. *Your financial assistance will directly help with such initiatives as protecting and restoring natural areas, planting trees, and educating and engaging citizens throughout the watershed!*

Donation Amount:
 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$200 Other \$ _____

One time only Annually Quarterly Monthly

Please check here to receive a charitable receipt (available for donations over \$25 only)

Friends of the Don East is a registered Canadian charity. (Charity #884323403RR0001).

* Note that automatic recurring donations can only be made by credit card.

I would like to pay by:

Cheque (please make cheque payable to Friends of the Don East)
 Credit Card
 Visa MasterCard American Express

Card Holder Name: _____
 Card #: _____
 Expiry: _____ Security code: _____
 Signature: _____

I authorize FODE to charge my credit card for the amount

Detach and mail the membership form along with your payment to Friends of the Don East to:

Friends of the Don East
P.O. Box 65124–
358 Danforth Ave
Toronto, Ontario M4K 3Z2

I received the newsletter through ...

Mail a Library
 an event Others _____