Lakeshore Eco-Network

MAKE THE PLANET GREAT AGAIN

Lakeshore Eco-Network Newsletter, June 2025

Gordon McBean on Climate Resilience
Making our voices heard on Bill 5
Diana Beresford-Kroeger on fighting climate change by planting trees
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LEN Lets Loose on Ford

A group of enthusiastic protestors turned up at the corner of Highway 21 and Main Street in Grand Bend on May 24 to let our community and our Premier know what we thought about Bill 5. We had fun and got lots of honks and waves from the passing cars. Of course the Bill still passed, and now the push is on to get it repealed. And then there's Carney's Bill C-5!













Diana Beresford-Kroeger Visits Exeter



Diana Diana Beresford-Kroeger and Huron Waves artistic director John MIller

One of the world's leading botanists and science communicators participated in the Huron Waves Music Festival on June 14, speaking to a sold-out audience. Her conversation (with me!) was followed by a wonderful harp concert inspired by her words.

Beresford-Kroeger is the author of several books about trees and the author and presenter of the feature documentary *Call of the Forest.* The eighty-year-old is a lively and often unexpected conversationalist with wide interests and an extraordinary depth of knowledge. Growing up in Ireland, she was introduced by her relatives to the ancient wisdom of the Celts and tasked by them to take it with her to the "New World."

She pursued an education and career in science early on and proudly points to the development of an artificial blood product used in surgery and cancer treatment. "I have an embarrassment of degrees," she says with a grin. "Just ignore them and say that I'm Irish and hopeless!" She left her academic career in the early 1980s to live on a 160-acre farm in Eastern Ontario, continuing her research and stewarding an arboretum of rare trees of North America.

Ireland had no trees when she was growing up, as English overlords had removed them. When she came to Canada, she noticed that grand old trees were disappearing quickly and took on the challenge of saving them. Her books are an attempt to make complex scientific knowledge about trees and nature accessible to a general audience. When asked why trees are important, she replies simply, "Hold your breath for ten minutes and let's see how many of us are alive. Without the trees, you wouldn't be – they are the oxygenators of the planet, producing 60% of the oxygen we breathe." Trees are also an important source of many medicines. She advises taking a walk around a White Pine once a month to help reduce the risk of cancer and says Sassafras 'bathing' can help prevent clotting.

She is a tireless advocate for climate action, saying, "We just can't hand this world over to our children and say we've done nothing. I will not accept that." She proposes a simple recipe for reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. "If every person on the planet plants a tree for the next six years, we'll stop climate change, bringing CO2 from 420 ppm down to the 300s. We will have equity in our atmosphere, a north and south pole, and glaciers on the top of mountains." She insists that it costs nothing to plant acorns, advising a pinch of baking soda to discourage hungry squirrels.

Beresford-Kroeger's favorite tree is the copper beech, noting that in Ireland they are often planted on hills, where they provide "a rosy glow" when the sun sets behind them. She is very interested in restoring Canada's Kingnut Hickory, a native North American tree that sequesters carbon and produces food and medicines.

After a break, the audience was treated to a concert by harpist Sharlene Wallace. The music was inspired by Beresford-Kroeger's

book, To Speak for the Trees, which includes an ancient alphabet of trees, and was composed by Wallace and Frank Horvat. “It’s easy to be all doom and gloom about everything happening in the world today,” said Horvat at the event. “But there’s a lot of inspiration and hope in Diana’s writing.” The songs in the composition are named for eight of the trees in the alphabet.

More Words of Wisdom, from *Our Green Heart*, Beresford-Kroeger’s latest book



“Every leaf is a perfect case of intelligent design in nature. Every leaf from every plant is a living thing complete with its own DNA. In a basic sense, it is a solar platform with a mobile arm.”

“Much of the molecular machinery of forests have been removed; more trees are being cut as you read this. The carbon with its fast-action pair bonding is now left with only one place to go, and that is into the heavens..,The phenomenon of heat is biting at our heels. We must stop this monster in its tracks. We may not understand the process and solutions in all their complexity, but the trees and forests do.”

“Today, in this climate of destruction, unity of thought must be recaptured. People of the world must learn to appreciate the wonder of their own human biodiversity and use it as a medicine to mend their torn spirits.”

Building Climate-Resilient Communities: Dr. Gordon McBean at LEN



Dr. McBean and LEN’s Carolyn Young

In 2021, the UN Secretary General António Guterres issued what he called “Code Red for Humanity,” noting that “The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable.”

That didn’t come as a surprise to Dr. Gordon McBean, LEN’s guest speaker on May 29. McBean has been studying climate change since the 1980s. His extraordinary career includes stints as Assistant Deputy Minister with Environment Canada, Chair of the World Climate Research Program, co-founder of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and President of the International Council on Science. He and his colleagues in the IPCC received the Nobel Peace Price in 2007 alongside Vice President Al Gore.

Dr. McBean’s address focused on how to reduce the impact of extreme weather events at a community and homeowner level.

Among the things we learned from Dr. McBean:

- In 2022 there were 15 catastrophic weather events in Canada, with insured losses totally $3.4 billion. In 2024, insured losses from extreme weather in Canada were $8 billion.

- The impact of hazardous events depends on vulnerability, exposure, and the nature and severity of the event. Adaptation is how we can reduce exposure and vulnerability.
- Some communities in Canada have produced high-level adaptation plans but few have implemented them. We need community mobilization and engagement.
- We need an ambitious and strategic National Adaptation Strategy involving all levels of government, the scientific community, and other partners.
- To be climate resilient, communities need integrated assessment and surveillance and warning systems for extreme events.



- Homeowners should:
  - Review the risks of likely extreme weather events
  - Understand your house's vulnerabilities
  - Get advice from your local government
  - Take steps to protect your house by consulting resources from the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction

Dr. McBean finished with a plea for climate change action – both adaptation and emissions reduction. "We must build on science," he said, "to address climate change for our children and grandchildren and for people all around the world."

B*oad members (from right) Rosalind Chang, Janet Kurasz, Carolyn Young, Lynn Tremain, Pat Morden and Max Morden, with Dr. McBean*

Another Successful Tree Sale

The sale at Lambton Heritage Museum on May 3 may have been our best attended yet – clearly the message about native species is getting traction. Thanks to our wonderful vendors for their fabulous offerings and expertise.





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Invasive plant of the month

Focus on Lily of the Valley – *Convallaria majalis*



Lily of the Valley is a perennial herbaceous groundcover plant native to Asia and Europe. It needs little attention after establishing, as it grows from underground rhizomes that spread horizontally with amazing speed in either full sun or full shade. Lily of the Valley has broad, green leaves and delicate, sweet-smelling white flowers that resemble tiny bells on stalks, standing about 18 cm tall.

All parts of the plant are toxic and may irritate the skin. If ingested, the plant can cause abdominal pain, vomiting and irregular heartbeat.

Due to its invasive nature, Lily of the Valley forms large colonies which out-compete native species for moisture, sunlight, nutrients and space. It is found in urban parks and ravines, and more remote settings of natural woodlands of southern and central Ontario.

Lily of the Valley has low wildlife value, and our native pollinators take little interest in its nectar and pollen.

If this plant brings back wonderful memories and you cannot bear to give it up, try this:

Take one small clump and place it in a pot, so it is contained and cannot travel. When the flower is spent, cut it back, so it will not go to seed.

How to Manage Lily of the Valley

Managing Lily of the Valley is challenging but achievable with persistence and a multi-step approach:

- **Manual Removal** For small populations, dig up the plants and roots before they set seed, and remove manually. You may need to do this for several years before the seedbank in the soil is depleted and because even small pieces of rhizome can re-grow. Alternately, cut the plants back weekly with a lawnmower. This will prevent seeds from developing and may eventually kill the plants. Do not put the plants in the compost or municipal green waste.
- **Smothering**: Another option for small or larger populations is to cover infested areas with tarps or cardboard to block sunlight. This can be started any time of year and the process can take up to two years to complete. Check progress each season.
- **Herbicide Treatment**: Difficult to reach, or large areas may be treated by herbicide. Use herbicides only as a last resort, following local regulations to minimize environmental harm.

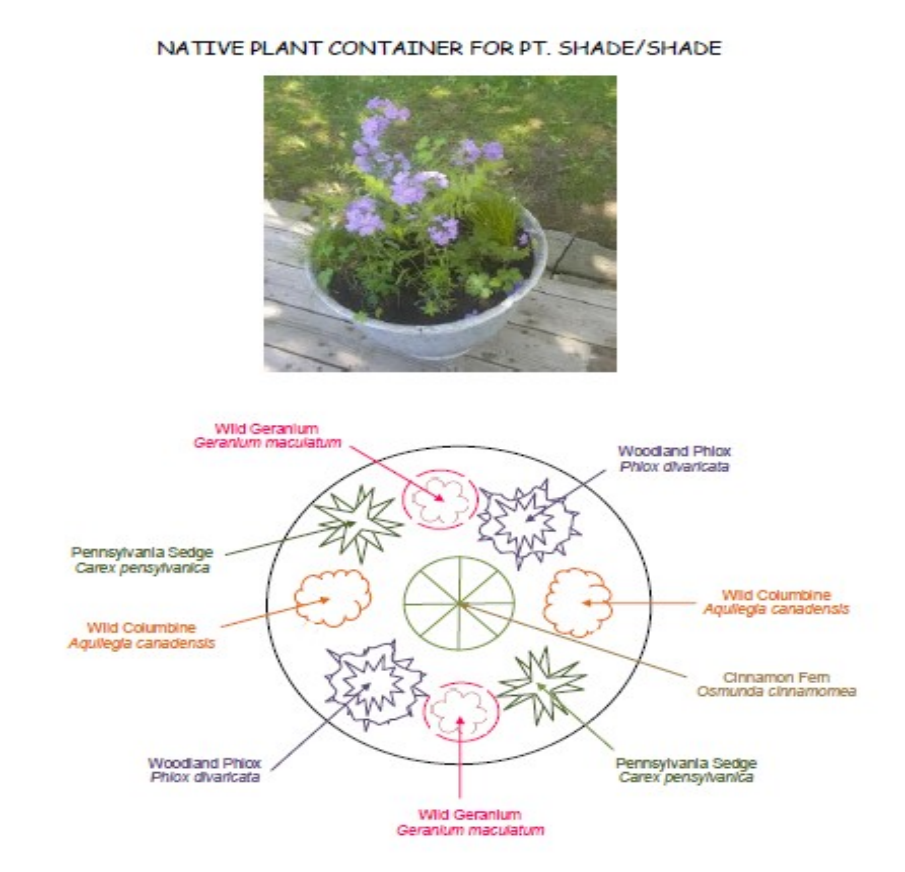
After removal, replant the area with regionally appropriate native plants. This step is essential to prevent reinfestation and to restore ecosystem health. Native plants will also attract pollinators and wildlife, improving biodiversity in your garden.

A good choice would be Foamflower – *Tiarella cordifolia*.

Our thanks to Renee Sandelowsky for this important information.

Container Planting with Natives

Wondering if there's an alternative to geraniums and petunias in your containers? Janet Kurasz says yes, you can use natives! Here's one suggestion.



A special note: Freeze-thaw cycles over the winter can severely damage and even kill perennial plants in containers. They don't have the protection from their roots being in the ground which reduces those fluctuations while snow provides additional insulation. Essentially, the ground stays frozen and the plants remain dormant. Container plants, at the end of the growing season, can be "heeled in" the garden for overwintering. Other options are to insulate the containers - large raised beds can be insulated with styrofoam insulation; large round containers can be insulated with bubble wrap (a good way to recycle this material). The containers can be moved to an unheated garage, large shed, 3-season room, or tucked away in the corner of the garden with leaves piled around as insulation. I collect my leaves in bags and use them to insulate my containers. In the spring, after I have consumed the compost from my composters, I empty the bags of leaves into the composters. I use the compost to amend my container soil.

Upcoming Events and Help Please!

We are planning to continue our Climate Cafes and educational events in the fall, and we're also working on a major tree-planting proposal – stay tuned! If you've got ideas for programming, share them at patmorden@hay.net

As you can see, I'm not adept at designing newsletters – if this is your thing and you'd be willing to help, please let me know.