

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

OCTOBER 2021

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REAL Tool Library Being Launched October 1

REAL's latest project, a tool lending library, is ready to launch.

A kickoff opening celebration is happening Saturday, October 2. Organizers will be on hand to show the tools we have to offer

and explain how the library is going to work. There will be coffee and treats for those who stop by the tool library at the rear of the REAL Deal Store. Enter a draw for a free membership!

The tool library will make tools available for the public to borrow. Borrowers could be people who don't have the space for their own tools, who cannot afford to purchase tools, or who may only need the tool for one or a few uses.

We have established a set of about 60 tools, many of which are hand-held power tools, electric or battery operated. There are saws, drills, sanders, nailers, a compressor, a shop vac, a chain saw and so on. You can see a full list [on our website](#). There is even a collection of small hand tools in a tool box for those who really don't have anything on hand for their fixit projects. Our wish list was established in consultation with organizers of another tool library, who advised what tools were in highest demand. Nancy and Bill Hamilton took on the task of acquiring, assessing and repairing tools as necessary. Some had already been donated to the store, some were donated when we put out a call to the public, and a very few were purchased used from other sources such as Kijiji. A few battery chargers and batteries were also purchased to make full sets.

Those wishing to use the Tool Library will be asked to purchase a 12-month membership for \$45. We are also offering an introductory six-month membership for \$25. Tools should be picked up (and returned) Wed – Sat., 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., although reservations can be made any time during store hours, 10 am. – 5 p.m. Just phone the REAL Deal store at (613) 283-7999 or email ToolLibrary@REALaction.ca. For simplicity, all tools are borrowed for a one week period, e.g. Wednesday to Wednesday, or Saturday to Saturday, although they can of course be returned early. And members are free to reserve for another week provided no one else has reserved the tool. (continued page 3)



Full of Surprises, Some Pleasant, Others Not So Much—Gardening During COVID by David Hoffman

This was my tenth year of gardening at my community plot at REAL and you'd think I'd be on to it by now. But, just like the changeable nature of our weather, growing conditions never seem to be the same from one year to the next. Probably in part just to get out of the house, I started peas for the first time about as early as I could till the soil. Happily, the peas were a great success, yielding a small but delicious crop for eating right out of shell.

I should have stopped planting for a good couple of weeks, but no. I had to try at the same time to get results from my old favourites--mesclun, radishes, leaf lettuce--and beets thrown in for good measure. Disaster. What I did not lose to frost, the groundhog took out early, a crop failure from which I barely recovered. Later sowings of my new favourite radish, French Breakfast, came through for me but the old standard, Globe radish, failed as it did last year. An appropriately sown yellow and green bean crop failed as well each time thanks to the groundhogs or deer.

Looking back over my gardening records, I can see that I've narrowed my scope quite dramatically. Gone are kale, cucumbers, coriander, aubergines, snow peas, basil, carrots and red peppers. Some were dropped for poor performance, others from too much bounty. Thai hot peppers were tried again with no success (planted in the shade of taller plants) but the cayennes were a pleasant addition to my roster.



This was David Hoffman's 10th year at REAL's Community Garden. Plots are available to rent for \$25 for the season.

Lest you think I should give up gardening I must mention the unqualified success of my tomato crop. Avoiding the error of planting too many tomatoes too close together—a common mistake of many beginners—I concentrated on four plants, well spaced and well nourished with good mushroom compost, thanks to Trinity United's fundraiser sale. The result, aided of course by the combination of hot weather and sun at the right growing time, was a bonanza of large, tasty pinks, reds and yellows, so

heavy in fruit that by the end of the summer the sturdy branches were drooping to the ground.

Support for the community gardeners this year was outstanding: the grass around the raised beds was trimmed, the grass in the paths cut, and the water buckets filled on a regular basis. Also, three groundhogs were removed from the premises. Too bad then that not all of the original list of gar-

deners followed through with their plan to get the most from their plots. Some old regulars knew how to exploit their space with a few crops supplemental to their home garden, and several new gardeners showed skill at producing tomatoes and yellow and green beans in particular. One newcomer, Barb Vigus, demonstrated "best overall success in a wide variety of items" coming through with an excellent carrot crop (no small achievement), juicy tomatoes and a range of green edibles. Hopefully, 2022 will yield a better record across all gardens. It will be hard to better this year's tomatoes, but there is still room to make even better use of the wonderful opportunity that the REAL Community Garden offers us all for such a reasonable fee.

Tool Library Launch (continued from p.1)

Additional Charges. In fairness to all users, we will be charging a late fee of \$3 per day. Certain tools, such as a shop vac, must be returned clean, or the user will be charged a \$5 cleaning fee. And if the tool has obviously been abused or is not returned, a replacement fee will apply.

The goal of the tool library is not to generate significant profits, but rather to encourage the circular economy by promoting the use of used tools, removing tools destined for landfills and reducing the need for homeowners to purchase new tools for short term (or single use) applications.

You Can Help!

REAL is actively seeking volunteer tool librarians and/or tool doctors to help run this operation. Tool librarians would be available during tool library hours to accept new memberships, take tool reservations, loan out tools, accept returns, ensure batteries are charged and keep the library organized. A tool doctor would be familiar enough with tools to be able to test if they are working properly, perform minor adjustments and repairs, and consider new additions to the library. We are going to keep it simple with a paper system to begin with so no computer expertise is required.

While there are no additional tools we absolutely need and we have very limited space, we are open to suggestions! If you are decluttering or downsizing and have something you would like to donate, please email us to discuss. If we don't need it we could potentially sell it through the REAL Deal store if that is acceptable to you. We will also be recording comments and requests to get a better idea of what the do-it-yourselfers out there would like to have available.

We are ready to accept memberships and begin lending tools beginning Friday, October 1. We can accept payment by cash, debit, Mastercard or Visa. Find out more about the operation by using the ["Tool Library"](#) tab at the top of our webpage, www.REALaction.ca.

Rideau Shoreline Cleanup October 2**SHORELINE CLEAN-UP
ON THE RIDEAU RIVER**

Smiths Falls, ON
Sat. October 2, 2021

**Contact to volunteer and for
more details:**

(613) 284-8338
jakeharrisonwilson@gmail.com



Greener Homes and Home Energy Assessments

Before the end of the year REAL expects to have a Registered Energy Advisor ready to do home energy assessments in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville.

Through the federal Greener Homes program launched May 27, homeowners can receive incentive grants of up to \$5,000 to make specific energy efficiency retrofits to their homes. To qualify, a home energy evaluation must be completed before and after the renovation, which is where REAL comes in. Alan Leonard, who has been doing home energy audits for REAL since 2008, will not be taking on new clients until a health issue is resolved. He is, however, finishing off some post-retrofit audits on homes for which he has already performed a pre-retrofit evaluation. So REAL needs another auditor. John Appleby, who has retired from a career in energy use modelling with the Office of Energy Efficiency, Natural Resources Canada, has agreed to join REAL to provide that service.

John is currently in the Energy Advisor certification process. REAL would like to find some environmentally conscious local homeowners who would consider having a home energy assessment as part of that process. These files would then be subject to an in-depth Green Communities quality assessment review process. This will also be an opportunity for John to calibrate his blower door equipment and test software.

Ideally these homes would be of a variety of housing styles and ages. In the mix there should be examples of homes built before 1990, at least one built before 1950, two with sloped ceilings, one split level, one with more than one foundation, and one with a walk-out basement. If your home doesn't have any of these characteristics, please contact us anyway.

John's first two assessments might be appropriate for someone just interested in learning more about their home's energy requirements, and not necessarily applying for grants. The program will reimburse successful applicants \$600 for their energy assessments, in addition to whatever other rebates they qualify for from the program. REAL expects to be increasing our home assessment rates slightly effective

December 1, but Greener Homes will still cover \$600 of it.

Please note that there may be a week or two delay for the added Green Communities review time, and there is a small chance that John might have to return to your home to confirm some detail. So this might not be an ideal situation if you are not home during the day and would have a hard time scheduling visits. If you are interested in discussing the possibility with John, please contact him directly at (613) 269-3736 or jappleby00@gmail.com.



Homes qualifying for the Greener Homes rebates must be a single or semi-detached house, a row house, a townhome, all-season cottage or certain styles of mobile home.

Act quickly if you heat with natural gas and might be interested in taking advantage of the Enbridge HER incentives as well, because the Enbridge program may be concluding at the end of December. But be advised that all service organizations are scrambling to recruit new auditors to meet the demand unleashed by this program, and there may delay in booking an assessment.

In the meantime, homeowners should go ahead and [register online for the program](#). Note that you will need to provide your property tax bill number and proof of residence. There is also phone option for people who are not computer users.

REAL Deal News

Staffing. Fall often brings change in the collection of faces at the REAL Deal. We have said goodbye to Jonathan Drummond, who is returning to SFDCl, and to Alex Lumbers, who is return to St. Joseph High School in Barrhaven. Samantha Kuehl, who is continuing the garden position will be with us for a few more weeks at 15 hours a week, but has already started back at TR Leger.



"Cole 2" is the newest addition to REAL Deal staff. He started in the yard in late September.

Cole Kerfoot is a new hire in the yard, and will be with us two days a week, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Aira has returned to Ottawa U so will be with us only on Saturdays. Our cashier, Tiffany, is going to try on some new hats by working in smalls a half day and in the yard one half day. Cole Forbes, who left before summer, will be volunteering with us, and will be paid for yard duty on Friday mornings. Chester, Tim and

Heather will work the same hours as before.

It was an incredibly hot summer once again, so we thank Tim, Aira and Alex for bearing the brunt of it out in the yard! Chester did all the lawn mowing, and the whole yard was particularly well-maintained this summer.

Sales. There seemed to be a dip in activity in August for donations and sales, but they perked up once it was a little cooler, and we had some really good sale days since in late August and early September. We have had lots of furniture donations, so be sure to come take a look if you need something.

Signage. We are still working on replacing the REAL Deal sign at William Street. We have agreed on a design, production has begun, and our permit application has been made to the Town of Smiths Falls. So fingers crossed for fall installation!

Best Day to Find New Stuff

Sometimes we are asked what is the best day of the week to find new (to you) merchandise at the REAL Deal Store. We are putting out new stuff every day we are open. Donations come in continually. Some stay in the dome or yard, and some come into smalls for placement in the store. If donations come in thick and fast, some go into "the tent" temporarily. We have our "smalls vols" scheduled so that there is someone in for at least part of every day. Since COVID began, some volunteers have taken advantage of the store being closed on Mondays and Tuesdays to do sorting and pricing then. Sometimes the priority is reorganizing and cleaning those days. So while there may be somewhat of an increase in new items on a Wednesday morning, for the most part any day is a good day to shop at the REAL Deal.

But there are exceptions to every rule! Seasonal items are packed away for when people are actually looking for those things. Appliances or electronics that need to be tested may take a little longer to be put out. Dan takes the time to research anything that is particularly unique or potentially valuable. Sometimes we aren't too sure how to proceed and may take some time to think about it, or consult someone more knowledgeable. And there are still some other things we have too much of, and have to stash for a while. Wall art is a good example.

We will soon be putting out our Christmas merchandise. We accept it all year and have lots stashed upstairs. It gets put out continually as well, but there is simply not room or time to put it out all at once. So if you are looking for particular Christmas items, you should definitely be checking the store frequently.

Experienced second hand shoppers know that to get the best stuff, you need to check in often. And if you see something you think you want, best to snap it up, as there are no guarantees it will be there another day. Staff can probably advise you if it has been in the store for a time already, which could influence your decision! The REAL Deal has no maximum length of time an item can remain in the store and we hate to throw things in the garbage. So you may get lucky!

Final Depave Steps on Hold Until Spring

We are still wrapping up some details for our Depave Daniel Street project, but it won't be truly finished until next spring.



The bed closest to Ermsley St. Sept 11. The other bed is the same size but closer to Beckwith St.

Our Depave project was overseen by Green Communities Canada (GCC) and funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). REAL organized community volunteers to remove a section of pavement from Daniel St. in front of the Smiths Falls Public Library June 19. Then on July 3 volunteers planted two 25 m² beds of native plants within that space.

Our sincere thanks to Christy Melvyn who looked after the watering and weeding of the two native plant beds over this long hot summer! This necessitated bringing a hose to the Town Square each time to make use of the tap on the side of the Welcome Centre. We realized there were two long downspouts on that wall as well, so Town Staff agreed to install two rain barrels there. This means other volunteers can arrive with a bucket and spot treat plants that may need some extra TLC. (REAL supplied two recycled, food grade rain barrels from our REAL Deal stock.)



Still to come this fall is the installation of an 18" x 24" pedestal panel sign describing the project, designed by Linda Henderson-Myers. Our seventh draft is now in production, and hopefully can be installed this fall. We incorporated many photos taken by AJ Photography and Charlotte Pragnell from the work days, and it took some time to get the perfect combinations to send the right messages.

Unfortunately, due to some unavoidable delays, the bandshell funded by the late Tom Foulkes will not be installed until next spring. This of course has delayed the interlocking paths, lighting and benches that the Town of Smiths Falls has planned for the Town Square. The area surrounding the garden beds will not be seeded until that is all done. Luckily the beds look very nice on their own! Also delayed is the planting of four native trees there.

But all in all we felt the project was a success, and the Board is already discussing whether we would like to undertake another Depave project in 2022. Two potential sites have been proposed. If anyone out there has some suggestions, we would be happy to hear them. Sites should be publicly accessible, highly visible, at least 100 m², and ideally have a community of people prepared to care for them long term.



This sign, designed by Linda Henderson-Myers, is in production now and should be installed later this fall.

In REAL Life

REAL Board. The REAL Board remains unchanged for 2021-2022. Katie Hoffman will continue as President, and Karen Schecter as Vice President. Dave Thornley is our Treasurer, and Barb Hicks our Secretary. Peter Au and Donna McKenna round out the team. We have board vacancies, and can appoint new members as needed. There is no need to wait for the July 2022 AGM. So please get in touch if you would like to discuss the possibility.



Shoreline Restoration Demonstration. Plans for the September 25 planting ran into a snag when it came to light that the site chosen was actually Parks Canada land. Due to the possible presence of artifacts, Parks would like to complete an archeological assessment of the site before allowing any work there. Another site suggested by the town would have interfered with fireworks launching, and then another site within Lower Reach Park was rejected. The current plan is to complete the project on Turtle Island in 2022.



Evergreen Dedication. COVID concerns have halted plans for an October 23 dedication ceremony at Victoria Park. The paver stones will be installed this fall before October 23rd, however, and the celebration postponed until 2022. REAL is still planning to plant an oak tree in honour of Tom Foulkes in Victoria Park as well. The Rotary Club will be placing a paver stone in his memory.



Journey to Sustainability. The J2S Team's most recent webinar offerings were Wetland Appreciation in August and a follow up on Regenerative Farming in September. Attendees heard from a Montague farmer (see <https://www.harvestacresfarm.ca/>) who has embraced the Regenerative Farming Methodology. The next presentation will be on home energy, probably in November. Recordings are available for most of the J2S presentations; see the J2S page for links.

J2S maintains a mailing list if you would like to be alerted to upcoming presentations or events. Please provide your name email and postal code to Vanessa. You are also welcome to join the discussion through the Facebook Group "Journey to Sustainable Living".



Lanark County Plastic Bag Ban. Lanark County is encouraging local businesses and residents to voluntarily participate in a single-use plastic straw and bag ban, which started July 1. The initiative is part of the county's Climate Action Plan and aligns with the federal goal of eliminating plastic waste. Develop some new habits so you can say no to plastic:

- search your home – you may have lots of reusable bags already!
- leave your reusable bags near your front door or in your car
- invest in reusable bags you really like and like to use
- keep a foldable bag in your purse or pocket
- purchase a \$7 canvas tote at the REAL Deal and show your support for REAL
- invest in plastic totes for your groceries
- write "take bags" at the top of your grocery list
- try not using a bag at all if you're heading right home or back to your car.



**RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE**

Box 1061
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
info@REALaction.ca

www.REALaction.ca

**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.,
Smiths Falls ON
613-283-7999

Open Wednesday
through Saturdays

**NEW Tool Library
opening October 1**

**For Home Energy
Audits, see our website.**

**Find us on:
Facebook, Twitter
and Instagram**

Send contributions to the
December issue by November
15 to dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment



FALL ONLINE AUCTION NOV. 1 - 13, 2021



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new and
used items to
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Support
REAL's
big fundraiser
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www.32auctions.com/REAL2021

Top bidders can make their purchases
at the REAL Deal Store Nov. 17-20.
Cash, debit, MC, Visa or ask about e-transfers.

Make a REAL Difference

Please return this form to:
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Smiths Falls, ON
K7A 5A5

Or bring to
The REAL Deal

Make a Donation

☐ I would like to make
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