

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEBRUARY 2022

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## The Sinclair Family's Urban Food Forest by Beth and Craig Sinclair



A fond memory of my first experience of a food forest was when I was a young girl. Living on the East Coast, my father would take us every year to the blueberry barrens where we would walk among tall trees and weave through bushes to get to the most decadent tiny, sweet, wild blueberries that grew in the forest. I have loved continuing the tradition with my father and my own children all these years later.

After Craig was injured at work 14 years ago, he needed to find a new path forward. Unable to teach, read, or venture far from our property, he chose to invest in what he could impact at home, like REAL's founding principle, "Think Globally and Act Locally". He walked around town and was excited and saddened by the Town's tree canopy. He investigated and saw the potential. He researched, he noted the symbiotic relationship between robins and grubs, and the interconnectedness of the natural world. He realized we could do better. He planned, inventoried, prepared the soil and selected trees and shrubs that provide food for people, animals, and insects. We bought locally-sourced native fruit-bearing shrubs. We planted cold tolerant, blight resistant fruit trees where we had full sun.

When we started to learn more about naturalizing our yard and its potential, a Food Forest became part of the scope of plan. When we bought plants, shrubs, trees, etc. we intentionally purchased native species and edibles. We designed our yard based on "Southern Ontario's Old Growth Forests". We included Supercanopy trees, canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs and saplings, decaying wood, ground cover, organic litter, pits and mounds, cavity trees, and snags.

*continued inside...*



### Urban Food Garden (continued)

We chose not to plant individual trees and shrubs, but to create an interconnected, small scale, densely planted native food forest over our entire town yard using the “Miyawaki Method”. Our food forest was created using a permaculture mindset. It is intended to preserve, protect and restore natural abundance with a healthy habitat and native organic food for our family and the other wildlife we share this world with.

Planting a vegetable garden has been a part of our lives for many years. We have enjoyed tapping our trees to make maple syrup as well as picking the chokecherries and lilacs on our property and making jam. There isn't anything much tastier than salsa made from the vegetables from your garden. One of the greatest benefits of transforming our yard has been sharing the bounty of what we grow with friends and neighbours.

As part of our Food Forest, we now have ground cherries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, juneberry, hackberry, persimmon, black chokeberry, wild plum, pear, peach, nannyberry, grapes, wild raisin, Canada Plums, a variety of apple trees, and butternut squash, planted throughout our property and much, much more.

Three years ago our yard was all grass with seven large trees. Now we have five large trees and hundreds of seedlings, shrubs and flowering plants for pollinators. We look forward to collecting raspberries, cherries, and blackberries this year. In three years we look forward to harvesting blueberries, apples, pears, and plums. In five years we look forward to picking persimmons. And 20 years from now we look forward to us and our children being able to collect acorns to make flour. Beyond that we hope for walnuts and butternuts. In 100 years, we hope our hemlocks will become mature and produce their first crop of cones and seeds. We depend on nature and nature depends on us to preserve, protect, and nurture one another. That is why we have planted a food forest on our yard.



*Blueberry picking in the naturalized yard of the Sinclairs suburban Smiths Falls home.*

### Miyawaki Forests

Miyawaki forests are tiny densely planted urban and suburban forests grown with a method developed by the Japanese botanist [Akira Miyawaki](#). Instead of planting trees far apart so that they won't compete for nourishment, water and sunlight, Miyawaki found that by planting trees closer together, the plants compete and grow a lot faster than any single tree planted on its own. The forest can mature in as little as 20 years rather than 100 years. These forest plots boast a minimum diversity of 30 locally native species divided into four structural layer categories; canopy trees, sub-canopy trees, arborescent trees (small understory trees), and shrubs. Miyawaki forests have been successfully grown in Japan for over 40 years, but are now being planted all over the world.



## Home Energy Assessments in the K7A Region

We are pleased to report we have a certified Registered Energy Advisor (REA) doing home energy audits for REAL. John Appleby, a resident of Merrickville, is now accepting bookings for residents within the K7A postal code. The audits are required for the Greener Homes Program.

The federal Canada Greener Homes Grant was announced in May 2021. Qualifying homeowners are eligible for grants of up to \$5000 to perform home energy efficiency retrofits to their homes. These grants come with an additional \$600 to assist with the cost of two EnerGuide home energy evaluations.

One audit is required before the renovations are started, and the second takes place after the retrofits are made to establish that energy savings have been made and give your home a new EnerGuide energy efficiency rating. Renovations made before the initial assessment will not qualify. Your REA will help you assess your options for renovations, and help you get the most value for your money. Once the



required documentation of the expenses is submitted, the homeowner can expect payment within 90 days.

There are many businesses out there that do home energy evaluations. As a local, environmental non-profit, REAL has no hidden agenda in performing the assessments. We want you to achieve energy savings that will not only save you money, but reduce your greenhouse gas emissions, benefiting us all.

Homeowners should begin by registering for the program with Natural Resources Canada using the online portal. Note you will need to provide a property tax bill number that must match the name on the application. There will be an opportunity to select a service organization based on your postal code. If your address is within the K7A postal code you will be able to select the Rideau Environmental Action League. A referral will be sent off to John who will contact you about booking a time for your audit. The pre audit costs \$450, and the post audit costs \$250. Six hundred dollars will be reimbursed for those qualifying for the program.

Please consult the [NRCan website](#) and [REAL's website](#) for basic information before contacting John Appleby with more specific questions. He can be reached at (613) 784-9320 or by email at [jappleby@REALaction.ca](mailto:jappleby@REALaction.ca). Note that NRCan provides a phone option for people without computer access to the portal.

## Air Quality Monitor Available to Lend

REAL has acquired a simple monitor for measuring home air quality that it is willing to lend.

The Temtop M2000 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Air Quality Monitor operates on a rechargeable battery. With it you can measure fine particles (PM2.5), coarse particles (PM10.0), carbon dioxide (CO2) and formaldehyde (HCHO), as well as temperature and humidity.

A little video on how to operate it is [available here](#). Please contact [kthoffman@cogeco.ca](mailto:kthoffman@cogeco.ca) if you would like to arrange to borrow it.



**REAL Deal by the Numbers : Feb. 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022**

The REAL Deal store was closed for the first two weeks of February and another 10 weeks over April, May and the start of June.

Materials Donated: 34.2 tonnes  
 Ewaste Collected: 38.4 tonnes  
 Buyers: 763

**Top Five Donor Munis. (by Weight):**

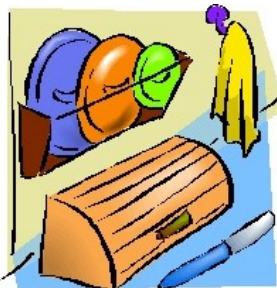
1. Smiths Falls (40%)
2. Rideau Lakes (26%)
3. Montague (9%)
4. Drummond/North Elmsley (DNE) (6%)
5. Other (5%)

**Top Five Buyer Munis. (by weight):**

1. Smiths Falls (36%)
2. Rideau Lakes (13%)
3. Other (11%)
4. DNE (5%)
5. Perth (5%)

**Top Sales Departments (by revenue):**

1. Décor (18 %)
2. Furniture (16%)
3. Housewares (12%)
4. Sports and Leisure (8%)
5. Doors and Windows (7%)

**Top Sales Departments (by quantity):**

1. Housewares (27%)
2. Décor (19%)
3. Music and Video (12%)
4. Sports and Leisure (9%)
5. Seasonal and Specials (8%)
6. Books (6%)

**Sales over the week (\$):**

Wednesday 24%  
 Thursday 22%  
 Friday. 24%  
 Saturday 30%

**Notes:**

*12 weeks is a a big chunk of the year!  
 We did not accept donations or e-waste during those closures.*

*We still managed 82% of the sales predicted, and 76% of the e-waste expected. We did fill a bin every one or two weeks when we were open.*

*The 763 represents buyers, not browsers. There were more people in the store than that who did not make a purchase. We have many customers who come to the store multiple times a week!*

*Buyer and donor breakdowns are similar to previous years except that the "other" category is moving up (last year it was 9%). This means more people from outside Lanark, Leeds and Grenville (LLG) are coming to the store. This is particularly the case on Saturdays.*

*Sales from the dome and yard encompass many categories: hardware, reno, doors and windows, some sports and leisure, and some furniture.*

*There is lots of volume in housewares and books, music and video, but with so many inexpensive items (often .50 or 1.00) it understandably doesn't add up to as much in sales. Conversely, furniture quantity is just 1.3% but generates 16% of the revenue.*

*Saturday is our busy day, and is often the time when people from outside LLG come. This group often comments that our prices are very reasonable. This group are often visiting a number of second-hand stores in the region.*

## REAL Deal News

The REAL Deal got off to a slow start in January, but we were thankful to be open. It is normally a slow time of year, COVID was keeping many people from circulating, it was very cold many days, and very snowy! A few days in January we closed the yard, and customers could only access the dome from



within the store. It is just too cold for our staff to be out there waiting for something to happen. Although staff normally clear the snow from the yard, we had outside help to remove the snow after two of the heavier snowfalls.

We were discouraged to experience two break-ins early

in the year, resulting in the loss of tools, a heater and our snowblower, not to mention the damage caused by the thieves breaking in. If you ever notice suspicious activity in our yard after hours, please contact the Smiths Falls Police. We are in a relatively isolated location and it is a little too easy for people to take advantage of the situation.

Since our last issue, Greg Charette has rejoined the yard staff. So now we have Tiffany, Aira, Arnold and Greg handling the yard. Tim Dupras has moved on and Cole has moved to Ottawa. Staff will be increasing their efforts to keep everything outside priced and marked consistently. Please note all purchases must be made inside the store at the cash. With extra time on their hands, yard staff have done a great job reorganizing and tidying the dome. Inside, Heather and Brittany do cash, and Chester puts in four hours a day.

Thankfully donations picked up a bit at the start of February. Please think of us when you are decluttering or downsizing. We accept a wide range of household and renovation materials, and will do our best to get them into someone else's hands for a

reasonable price. There is no residency requirement as for some operations. But note we do have the right to refuse any donation if we can't use it, it is in bad shape, it doesn't work, it is missing parts, is out of date or we just don't think we can sell it. Sorry, sometimes these things are ready for the garbage! Please consult our website, or call or email us if you need to check if we will accept it.

Donations should be taken to the back of the property to the gate opening in front of the green dome. In the rare instances when the gate is closed due to snow or extreme cold, bring donations to the customer doors under the yellow awning. While we do put some items out on the free table, we do not encourage customers to do that. We want the chance to assess it, thank you for it, weigh it and make some money from it. Thanks for your cooperation!

Note that everyone in the store must wear a mask! The rules in Ontario have not changed in this regard. We want to keep our shoppers, staff and volunteers safe. If you refuse to wear a mask you will be asked to leave, no exceptions. We do have some masks available for those who have forgotten to bring one.

Recent promotions have included lighting and chairs. We also did our annual "free the cookbooks" weeks, as we get way too many of those. There was quite the selection of Valentine's Day items too. We find we have an empty aisle in January once the Christmas stuff is packed away, so we have put out mismatched cups and saucers and silver items for the crafters out there. If you want some at other times of the year, please ask. The wall art is selling, making room for some newer selections, so be sure to take a look when you come to the store.

Remember to keep an eye on Facebook Marketplace for some of the rarer and more valuable items we have for sale. Some of those you will find in the vintage area of the store, but others have been stashed away for safekeeping, so please ask if you are not finding the item, and we will be happy to show it to you.



## Tool Library News

The Tool Library is up to 23 members now. We haven't had a lot of business so far, but those who do use it are very appreciative. One new member commented when he brought back the tile cutter he had borrowed that his \$45 membership had already paid for itself. He was considering purchasing the same model for over \$300, the worked great, and he wouldn't have had anywhere to store it when he was done.



We have added several new tools since we opened, including a paint sprayer, wallpaper steamer, finishing nailer, and router/spin saw. We also record when people ask for something we don't have, so we will know what tools to watch for if they are offered, or if we would consider purchasing one for the collection. So, yes, we are open to tool donations!

Jim McVeety, who volunteers to staff the library on Friday mornings, will check it over and decide if it is in good working order and we could use it. Unfortunately, space is a bit of an issue, so we are unable to accommodate larger equipment.

If you haven't already done so, there is a [short survey on our website](#) we are asking people to complete so we can better understand what people are looking for.

You can browse our tool catalogue [on our website](#). As the library is located in a corner of the store, we operate on store days, Wednesday through Saturday. We would appreciate people borrowing and returning in the hours 10 – 1, but we will do our best to help you at other times. If you have questions, want to reserve a tool, or keep a tool beyond the one week period, email [toollibrary@REALaction.ca](mailto:toollibrary@REALaction.ca) or phone the store at (613) 283-7999.

## Spring Fundraising Event

A spring event is in the works that will complement our annual truckload rain barrel sale. REAL will be offering composters, mushroom compost, butterfly themed items and some seeds.

REAL ordered 50 composters through the Town of Smiths Falls and will have them for sale on the chosen Saturday in May. Those that don't sell will be available through the REAL Deal Store. Backyard composting is easy, a great way to reduce your household waste, and is black gold to your plants!

Trinity United Church will be on hand to sell bags of mushroom compost, as they were last year, to raise funds for their own projects.

The monarch garden team has been setting aside butterfly and pollinator themed items which it will sell to help support a third monarch garden on the property. There is quite the collection of tea towels, mobiles, trinket boxes and the like decorated with butterflies, bees and other insects. Seeds collected from last year's plants will be available also.

For the fourth year, rain barrels will be available to order online through [rainbarrel.ca](http://rainbarrel.ca) to for pick up at the REAL Deal that day. People can pay by MC, Visa or debit in advance, or by cash at pickup.

If you want products or replacement parts other than the standard grey or terracotta barrels, you definitely want to order ahead. Last year several items like coloured barrels and rain tanks quickly sold out, so be sure to place your order as soon as you decide.



Photo: Matt Benoit

*In REAL Life*

**Membership Renewal.** February is membership renewal time in the REAL world! If you are on our current list you will be receiving a reminder notice by email along with our annual report. We will send a copy to those on our MailChimp list as well. We prefer memberships be paid by cheque or etransfer, but PayPal is also an option if you want to use a credit card. If you are paying by cheque and want to save a stamp, use the black mailbox by our front door. Memberships are \$15 for individuals and \$20 for families. Many members also include a donation with their payment. REAL is a registered Canadian charity and can issue tax receipts. If you don't receive a message from us about membership, [contact Karen](#).



**Keurig Coffee Pods.** Do you use a Keurig coffee machine? We have refillable pods at the REAL Deal available for you to try free of charge. Just ask at the cash. They are easy to use and cut down on unnecessary plastic and other waste. And thank you for not bringing us your used pods!



**Summer Jobs.** Applications to HRSDC, the federal summer jobs program, were due on January 22 this year. We have applied for two students for 11 weeks each, one for inside the store and another for the yard and other outdoor tasks. While there is no guarantee REAL will receive the funding, students who are interested could send us their resumes now. Use [info@realaction.ca](mailto:info@realaction.ca), and include a cover letter.



**Pitch In is Coming.** We are expecting that the COVID situation will have calmed down enough for the annual litter cleanup to proceed this year, as it didn't really happen in 2020 or 2021. We are planning a shoreline cleanup component as well. A tentative start date of April 16 coincides with Easter this year.



**Journey to Sustainability.** Be sure to watch for notifications of the next Journey to Sustainability (J2S) Zoom workshops. A tour of the REAL Deal and introduction to other services available there will be the topic on Thurs. March 17. Other sessions being considered are the Town's new Tree Canopy Policy and Miyawaki Forests. Most presentations are taped; links are on the [J2S page of our website](#).



**Lanark County and Climate Action.** Lanark County has received an award for its bold climate action plan and collaborative approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They recently received the 2021 Sustainable Kingston Innovation Award, and are working towards a Climate Action Plan. A local group, Climate Network Lanark is asking that Lanark County and Smiths Falls cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. If you would like to add your signature in support, head over to their website, [climatenetworklanark.ca](http://climatenetworklanark.ca).

**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  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our  
new Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits in  
the K7A region, contact John:  
jappleby@realaction.ca

**Find us on:  
Facebook and  
Instagram**

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

**REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment**

You are welcome to drop off end-of-life electronics by the black bin at the REAL Deal Store during store hours. They will be recycled responsibly in Ontario.

**What We Recycle**



Display Devices



Drones



Home Audio/Video Systems



Desktop Computers



Home Theatre In-A-Box (HTB)  
Systems



Cameras & Security Cameras



Vehicle Audio/Video Systems  
(aftermarket)



Portable Computers



Personal/Portable  
Audio/Video Systems



Musical Instruments &  
Recording Equipment



Floor Standing Printers &  
Printer Cartridges



Video Gaming Systems &  
Peripherals



Computer Peripherals  
routers, Cables, Chargers, USB



IT & Telecom Equipment  
Hard Drives, Servers, Microfilm  
Readers, Binding Machines,  
Postage Franking Machines &  
Check Filler Machines



Desktop Printing/ Multi-  
Function Devices, 3D Printers  
& Printer Cartridges



Phones  
Telephones, Cellular & Smart  
Phone Devices, Pagers

**PLEASE - Do not place in front of bin doors - Small cords and cables OK**  
**Do not leave electric or random items - No tapes, CDs, DVDs, VHS etc.**  
**Ask inside or phone 283-7999 if you need clarification**

**Make a  
REAL  
Difference**

Please return this form to:  
REAL  
Box 1061  
Smiths Falls, ON  
K7A 5A5

Or bring to  
The REAL Deal

**Make a Donation**

☐ I would like to make  
a donation of

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

A charitable receipt for  
income tax purposes will  
be issued. To donate by  
credit card, go to  
[www.Canadahelps.org](http://www.Canadahelps.org).

**Volunteer**

☐ I want to help

**Become a Member**

I would like to become a member

- ☐ Individual membership \$15  
☐ Family membership \$20  
☐ Student membership \$5  
☐ Corporate membership \$50

**Join our Email List**

Use the green signup button on the  
bottom of our homepage.

**Contact Information**

Name .....

Street/RR Address .....

Town, Province .....

Postal Code .....

Home Phone .....

Work Phone .....

Best time to reach me .....

Email address .....