

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JULY 2023

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Tree Planting at Local Schools

Six area schools now have five new trees each in their yards thanks to an ambitious planting project by REAL.

While tree planting has always been a goal of REAL, this particular project was one of the handful conceived for our 30th anniversary year in 2019. Our goal was to plant 30 substantial sized trees somewhere in the area, but various factors kept that from happening. We decided 2023 was the year! Peter Au and Donna McKenna got the ball rolling. Last fall Board members wrote to local schools to see if they were interested in working with us on this, and for most of them it was a resounding yes! REAL enlisted the help of Beth Sinclair, who has a keen interest in planting, and connections with the Chimo and SFDCI school councils. Other schools expressing interest were Montague, Lombardy, D.J. Schoular and St. Francis. Our aim was for a spring planting, ideally May. The funds for this project were donated by the late Tom Foulkes.

The next step was to source and order the trees. A list of native trees available to us was given to the schools, who made their own selections. This was important as some schools had already done some of their own planting, so had unique requirements. The 30 trees we ended up ordering from Green Acres were: butternut, white pine, white spruce, oak (white, red or bur), hickory, sycamore, maple (sugar, silver or Norway), basswood and white birch, most in the 5' – 8' range, in 10 or 15 gallon pots.

Beth worked with the schools to ensure everything was set to go. In particular, every school had to preselect the location for each tree and arrange a “locate” to ensure the tree would not interfere with any underground pipes, wires or drainage.

Before we knew it, the first planting day took place May 31 at Duncan J. Schoular, and was quickly followed by Chimo (June 2), Lombardy (June 8), Montague (June 13), SFDCI (June 16) and then St. Francis on June 20. The trees were delivered to each school two-three days in advance of the planting.



Tree Planting at Local Schools (continued)

Craig Sinclair generously made himself available on each of the days to lead the planting. There is much to know about tree planting to maximize the chances of survival, and Craig patiently explained the process and ended up digging many of the holes. At each school a group of students was excited to participate in the planting. Usually a principal, teacher or school council representative was on site as well. Donna McKenna or Barb Hicks attended each planting on behalf of REAL and brought along the metal stakes and cedar mulch for the base of the trees.



Duncan J. Schoular School

Occasionally a tree site needed to be shifted a bit, for example when bedrock was found too close to the surface. Montague School's yard proved the greatest challenge in terms of soil compaction; digging the holes was very difficult. Two evergreens provided for Lombardy School were planted by Green Acres, as the tree weight and hole size would have made it extremely difficult to plant manually.

At SFDCI, additional trees from other sources were also being planted that day, some of which were incorporated into an indigenous medicine wheel garden. There the iLeads, (Indigenous Youth Leadership) team assisted with the planting and did a tobacco offering for each new tree. It was great to watch teachers and students from Chimo work alongside the high school students in planting the trees at SFDCI's Reconciliation Forest.

The challenge of course remains to ensure the trees are adequately watered over what will likely be a hot dry summer. Originally we were going to leave this

responsibility to the schools, but decided to take the additional step of having Craig look after them for the summer. Some schools do not have an outside tap accessible to the yard, so this will be a challenge. The trees are quite widely scattered across the school yards. Tree watering bags have been purchased to simplify the process. The bags are filled with water that is slow released to the tree. In September the watering responsibility will fall to each school. The stakes will be removed after the first year and saved by REAL, maybe for another tree planting!

Special thanks to Beth and Craig Sinclair for their enthusiastic involvement in this project. We couldn't have done it without them! We are also grateful for the flexibility and special consideration given by Ryan Vander Meer of Green Acres. Board member Donna McKenna spent many volunteer hours preparing for this project, sourcing materials and attending the plantings, and made sure this special anniversary project came to fruition, and that shady trees will be in our local schoolyards in the future.

Tom Rankin Joins REAL Board

We are pleased to welcome Tom Rankin, who joined the board at our Annual General Meeting June 22. Tom and his wife Marion Forster have been supporters of REAL for many years. Tom has a wealth of experience with boards and leadership in the community and health care sectors.

Tom is retired from 27 years in the Ontario Government. After his retirement he worked for volunteer boards in the Health Care System including: The Access Centre for Community Care for Lanark, Leeds and Grenville; The Rideau Community Health Centre; The Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres; Cancer Care Ontario's South East Region and the South East Local Health Integration Network. He has also been on the board of the Merrickville Public Library.

We look forward to getting to know Tom and working together for the local environment.

Keeping Your Cool by Alan Leonard

With the coming of the hottest part of summer you may be wondering how to escape the incessant heat. Even a central AC can struggle to maintain a reasonable cool. Running AC all the time is expensive and only part of the answer to a cooler home. For the many who have no cooling you can be at the mercy of the outside temperature. There are some things you can do to minimize heat buildup and reduce the temperature somewhat.

Roof Overhangs. Good roof overhangs, especially on the south side, really help by shading windows from the high angle mid-day sun but are not as effective against the lower angle eastern morning and western afternoon sun that shine directly into the house. Awnings can also help but again they don't help with low angle sun but can take the place of roof overhangs for southern sun. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that you will be able to remove an existing window even if it is on the west side and really contributes to the 'solar oven' effect.

Window Type. Getting 'better' windows often doesn't help because in this climate most windows sold have a low-E coating that reflects heat back into the house. This is great in the winter but can be counterproductive in summer. With expert help you can choose replacement windows with the right characteristics to reduce solar heat gain in summer and/or increase heat retention in winter. There are also window films that can be installed on existing windows that are effective at reducing heat gain. Using light colored drapes and blinds closed in the daytime does help reflect some light out of the windows but once sunlight goes through the window only some of the light is reflected out and most becomes heat that is trapped in the house.

Windows and Blinds. Closing windows and blinds during the day and opening them at night can help reduce daytime heating but this strategy will not work as well when the temperatures are not much lower at night. If there are hot days and cool nights it is effective to open lower windows on the windward side and upper windows on the leeward side as soon as temperatures and humidity fall at night. Cool the house at night and reduce heat gain as much as possible during the day.

Fans. Fans can be helpful when directed right at you and the evaporative and convective cooling they provide is great for the person in the airstream. As temperature and humidity rises fans get less effective as less and less moisture can be blown off the skin, cooling the person. Ceiling fans (blowing down) are only effective for the people in the room (again from mostly evaporative/convective cooling) and do not cool a room. If anything they may add heat from the fan motor if left running continuously. Run ceiling fans only when there are people in the room.

Insulate and Draft Proof. One of the most effective things you can do is to insulate and draft proof your house. An under-insulated attic is one of the worst culprits for summer heat gain and the easiest to retrofit with additional insulation. Think of the ceiling under the attic as one huge radiator that conducts and radiates the attic superheat at you unless the ceiling is well-insulated. Air seal the attic from the house and top up the attic insulation.

Humidity. Effective cooling comes from reducing both air temperature and humidity. Cool air that is humid feels clammy and very humid air is not good for you or your house. A good, well-designed and sized air conditioning system will lower air temperature while removing much of the moisture from the air. It is doing the same thing that a dehumidifier does but it doesn't add heat to the house. If you have a damp basement you may need to run a dehumidifier even if you have an AC but it is best if most dehumidification is done through air conditioning.

Heat Pumps. An air conditioner is an air source heat pump that only cools. Air source heat pumps extract heat from the house during the summer and heats the house by extracting heat from outside air in the winter. This may seem impossible in the depth of winter but many highly efficient heat pumps can heat a house when the outside temperature is -25 degrees C. If you are replacing or installing an air conditioner then consider installing an air source heat pump and get very efficient heating and cooling from the same equipment. The Greener Homes/Enbridge HER+ programs have incentive grants of up to \$5,000 for installing a heat pump, as well as incentives for air sealing and insulation.

Shoreline Cleanup April 29 by Jake Wilson

The 2023 REAL shoreline clean-up event took place on Saturday, April 29. It was part of the Pitch-In week, which is a nationwide initiative to clean-up garbage in our communities. It was a cold and rainy spring day, but the volunteers' passion to make a difference for the river and the community was greater than any desire to avoid discomfort.

The event took place in Smiths Falls, picking-up garbage along the shoreline of the Rideau River. It started at 10 a.m. with 9 volunteers from the area.

They started the morning session around the Bascule Bridge along the shoreline and parking area. Once we finished cleaning around this area, we continued the morning behind the Heritage House Museum along the side of the Rideau River near the Old Slys overflow dam.

The second phase of the clean-up started at 1 p.m. at the boat launch near Edmonds Lockstation off of Jasper Avenue, near its intersection with Eric Hutcheson road. 10 community members came out to help with this part of the clean-up, 5 of them continued from the morning session.

In total, there were 14 volunteers who came out for the clean-up effort. Thank you all very much for your commitment on a cold rainy day, and for helping us make a difference!

We worked hard and filled many garbage bags. Everything put together totaled 372 pounds of mostly plastic garbage.

Last year and the year before we went to these same places to clean up trash. Last year we picked up over 400 lbs from these areas. These are clearly problem spots which should be addressed by the community, and those who use these sites need to do a better job of keeping them clean! This is a bit of an understatement, considering the large mass of trash that is removed every year.

23 large garbage bags were gathered in total, along with other miscellaneous pieces of trash including tires and other pieces of plastic and metal. The garbage was disposed of by the Town of Smiths Falls as part of the Pitch-In initiative. Unfortunately, because most of the recyclable materials are so dirty, they can't be recycled (and sometimes some of the clean stuff doesn't get recycled anyway), we decided not to put in the extra work to sort them this year.

Here are the total amounts collected:

General Garbage (23 bags)	321 lbs
Scrap metal	21 lbs
1 tire	18 lbs
Other garbage	12 lbs
Total	372 lbs



Left: Councillor Chris McGuire. Above: Some SFDCI students cleaning up off of Jasper Road.

Smiths Falls is Still Pitching In by Shannon Hicks

This year marked the 56th year of Pitch-In cleanups taking place across Canada. REAL has been participating in Pitch In since 1989, and organizing community wide cleanups since the early 2000s. From April 15th to 29th individuals and groups once again cleaned up Smiths Falls and surrounding areas. We were once again pleased with the turnout this year.

Of the several groups that conducted clean ups this year, new to us was the Smiths Falls and Perth District Hospital groups, who cleaned up around their respective sites. The three divisions of the Smiths Falls Scouts – the Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts cleaned up three sites and collected a total of 18 bags of garbage. The WAK Youth Program and The Church of Latter Day Saints did cleanups as well. SFDCI's environmental club did a cleanup of Lower Reach park and their schoolyard, collecting 4 bags of recyclables and 15 bags of garbage. Chimo Elementary school cleaned up their school yard as well as surrounding streets, collecting 4 bags of garbage and 1 bag of recyclables. Community Living did a cleanup and entered both of our contests, so we are very pleased to award them one of our prizes this year. We really appreciate the participation of groups in Pitch In, as they make a big difference in large spaces that need extra help.

Many individuals also participated, cleaning up around their homes and the streets they frequent. It's a great thing to do for the community and the environment, and we are quite grateful to all the individuals and families who pitched in this year as well. Special thanks to the Town of Smiths Falls staff for picking up the filled bags.

Part of the fun of Pitch In is the peculiar items you might find. Here are a few of the most notable: a commemorative spoon, a toy riding horse, a sink stopper, a \$5 bill, a horn, a sled, a bike, a grill, vodka bottles, and a very large spool.

Certain items were found in great supply – bottles, cans, fast food wrappers, plastic bags, disposable cutlery, coffee cups, cigarette packages, takeout containers, cardboard. However, there were many fewer face masks found this year than last.

In our BINGO reply form we received some thoughtful comments that are worth sharing. In response to, "Was there anything that surprised you while cleaning up?"

- "...the amount of garbage on the streets in such a small town."
- "...just how much people throw away."
- "...all the plastic bottles that were not recycled."

In response to the question, "Is there a message you would like to say to those who litter?"

- "Someone might think twice about littering, if they had to clean it up".
- "Next time you throw that plastic bottle out, think of how many years that plastic will stay on the ground."
- "Take pride in where you live and treat it like it is your own temple – keep it beautiful."

Thank you for the responses we received this year. And thank you to our members, volunteers, and contest participants - we hope to see you pitching in again next year!

To learn more about The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, visit <https://shorelinecleanup.org/>. To learn more about Pitch In Canada, <https://pitch-in.ca/>



Some of this year's Pitch In participants in action.

Greening our World Roundup

Monarch Gardens. The Monarch Team has had several work sessions at the REAL Deal to get the gardens in shape. Some plants were lost over the winter, so the team has been making some replacements, especially adding milkweed for the benefit of monarch butterflies. Some non-native State Fair zinnias (an annual) were added for some immediate colour. Poplar seedlings are becoming a problem, let us know if you have any non toxic solutions for that. We also spend a lot of time removing horsetail. Many hands make light work, so if you like to garden and have some free time on Wednesday mornings, please contact Donna McKenna so she can include you in the email group advising of workdays.

Phase Three Beds. Thanks to Bill Hamilton for constructing some new raised beds for the next phase of our monarch project. Once they are stained, lined with landscape fabric and filled, the group will be able to do some planting. The end goal is edible and medicinal native plants, but we may not be able to locate everything we need this late in the season. We will likely put some herbs in there for now. If you have any ideas or even cuttings of native medicinal or edible plants to contribute, please get in touch.



The "Phase 3" beds built by Bill Hamilton, near the Community Garden, will be for edible and medicinal native plants.

Downtown "Depave" Gardens. The group was happy to be able to access the downtown "Depave" gardens for a cleanup. Access was restricted as workers were busy completing the band shell, laying the

interlocking brick path, laying the sod and completing some plantings. Benches went in the last few days of June, as did the four native trees REAL purchased from Green Acres: a mountain ash, a basswood, a white birch clump and a hemlock. Be sure to stop by for a look, as the Town Square is looking very nice! We are proud that our Depave Daniel St. project in 2021 was a part of the transformation.



A view of one of the native gardens at Town Square, with the band-shell in the background, taken June 20.

Oak Trees. REAL took advantage of some end of year sales at Gemmell's Garden Centre last year and purchased four oak trees. The Town of Smiths Falls has agreed to plant them. While the pickle ball court near the seniors centre and the Cataraqui Trail were possibilities, we recently learned that beavers took down four of the trees planted last year as part of a shoreline demonstration project. So the oaks will be planted on Turtle Island, with more protection this time!

Compost Demo Site. One of our new community gardeners, Tristan O'Reilly, will be managing the compost demonstration site this season. He and last year's coordinator, Greg Charette, have added some doors to the three bin composter. Tristan will make sure all contributed compostable materials make it to the right compartment, and are layered, turned and watered if necessary. Tristan is working on some signage, and a vermicomposting option, and has attended an informative all day Food Soil Web workshop on June 20. Watch for a compost workshop for residents led by Tristan in early August.

In REAL Life

Climate Protection Working Group (CPWG). Peter Au, board member, will be representing REAL in this new group established by the Town of Smiths Falls to provide advice and recommendations to Council on the development of the Town's Climate Action Plan. The committee allowed for three to six citizens, so Peter volunteered. The other members are Susan Brandum; Danielle Shewfelt; Steve Gauthier; Karl Grenke, Staff Resource/Senior Planner; Shawn Pankow, Mayor and Peter McKenna, Councillor. The inaugural meeting was June 20.



Customer Ask. Thanks to Dan Andress for including REAL once again in this initiative. It had been an annual fundraiser that fell off during COVID. Over the period May 28 to June 3 customers going through the cash at the Smiths Falls Independent Grocer were asked if they wanted to donate a couple of bucks to their local environmental organization. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the \$437.75 collected.



Evergreen Avenue. This year's commemorative event is planned for Sunday, September 17 from 1-4 p.m. at the Legion. So far two Community Builders, Jack Traynor and Hal Botham, and one WWII veteran, John Halpy, will be honoured. You can see a list of all the stones that have been placed [here](#).



REAL Community Garden. Our 12 community garden plots have all been allocated, and we have added a number of new gardeners to the mix. Animal interference hasn't been too bad this year, although many gardeners have chicken wire or other barriers around their plots. Note that these plots are for those gardeners exclusively; please do not take any produce from those plots.



REAL Tool Library. Business at our Tool Library has been picking up lately. See the website for a [list of what we have available](#); the first page is a summary. You have the option of calling the store (613) 283-7999 or emailing ToolLibrary@REALaction.ca if you would like to reserve a tool in advance.



Garden Fundraiser. Our May 27th fundraiser went well, but we still have more to sell if you missed the big day. Thanks to Lauralee Merkley for her excellent organization of the rain barrel sale. We had pre-orders for 78 rainbarrels, for which we earn \$10 a barrel, 9 1000 L rain tanks and assorted parts. Another 75 barrels were ordered to sell through the REAL Deal. They are \$55 for the grey ugly ducklings and \$65 for the regular grey or terracotta barrels, plus tax. The native plants from Naturaide in Winchester attracted a lot of interest. Those that were unsold, primarily milkweed, we kept to plant in our own monarch gardens. Seeds collected from last year's gardens are still available for \$2 a package. We probably won't have any earth machine composters left by the time you read this, but some municipalities still have them. And there is still lots of bagged mushroom compost for \$10 a bag. Please pay cash and we will pass the money on to Trinity United Church.

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

www.REALaction.ca

**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.
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Open Wednesday
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**Ask about our
new Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits,
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jappleby@realaction.ca

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



Wetland Awareness Tours



About the tour

Take a tour around the Swale, a provincial significant class 1 wetland on the west side of Smiths Falls. Leave with a much deeper appreciation for all that wetlands provide, and feel good knowing that we contributed to meaningful research. Tours take place in Voyageur Canoes which can accommodate individuals and groups of any size up to max 28 participants.

Tour activities:

- Tour in our voyageur canoes
- Learn about the economic, health, and environmental benefits of wetlands
- Learn about some of the plants and wildlife you find in a wetland
- Participate in citizen science activities including:
 - Turtle Tally
 - Frog Watch

Tour info

Tour Length: up to 1.5 hours
Times: 10:30 am, 1 pm, 3 pm
Dates:
Saturday, June 24
Saturday, July 22
Cost: by donation

**For more info & for booking,
Contact:**

- ☎ (613) 327-9018
- ✉ rideauexperience@ridearoundtable.ca

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