

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

JULY 2026

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Honorary Memberships Awarded at June 18 AGM

Two long-time REAL members were recognized at our June 2026 Annual General Meeting for their exemplary volunteer contributions. Honorary REAL memberships acknowledge a member's long-term commitment to REAL. This brings to 12 the number of people REAL considers influential in the development of REAL, and in many cases, continue to be an integral part of our organization. Congratulations to Marje Fletcher and Diane Pearen.



Marje Fletcher and Diane Pearen, pictured here with Board Members Barb Hicks and Karen Schecter.

Marje Fletcher. Marje Fletcher was one of REAL's original members when the organization began in 1989. She served as board secretary and was involved in many of the early projects, such as the monthly recycling depot and Environment on Display. As an artist she designed REAL's first promotional brochure, and various event posters, and continues to help assess some of the more valuable art donated to the REAL Deal. It was Marje's suggestion to create a monarch butterfly garden to celebrate REAL's 30th anniversary in 2019. Its success led to two expansions of the garden. Marje also helped plan the gardens that were established at Town Square as part of the 2021 Depave project. She and others continue to meet most weeks through the gardening season to maintain the downtown and REAL Deal pollinator gardens. The sign in the monarch garden was her work, and the store's roadside sign was a collaboration of her and her husband Bruce. As with most busy volunteers, her contributions have not ended there. She is always willing to lend a hand when needed.

Diane Pearen. Diane Pearen's association with REAL began when through her work with Lanark County Social Services she was placing Ontario Works clients requiring

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Pocket Forest Preparations at RMEO

The base for three new pocket forests has been created at the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario, across the road from the REAL Deal.

A pocket forest is a smaller version of mini forest. A variety of plants is densely planted with native species following the Miyawaki method, and quickly becomes a mature forest. We hope the pocket forests will demonstrate something that more people can try in their own yards or on their own properties, as they only need to be 7 square metres to be effective.

Volunteers worked the morning of April 27 to lay the necessary layers. First cardboard was laid down and wet. Then came a layer of well-composted leaves, a layer of topsoil and finally a layer of wood chips. Thanks

to the Town of Smiths Falls for providing the compost and soil and delivering it that day. The wood chips were already on site. Now we wait 5-6 months for the layers to mature into suitable forest soil.

The forest will be planted in the fall. Each of the three pocket forests will demonstrate a different type of forest, as there are about six combinations that are suitable for this area. Signage will be added to explain the purpose of the plantings to visitors to the museum property. Wagon rides given by museum volunteers will pass by the forests.

This pocket forest demonstration is funded from a generous donation made by Brooke Henderson to the Rideau Environmental Action League.



Honorary Members (continued)

work experience at the REAL Deal Store, probably about 2006. These placements were essential to store operations before the store was able to have paid staff. Now retired, she continues to support the REAL Deal through the Health and Safety committee, interviewing new volunteers, contributing food for many occasions, and being a listening ear when needed. She is part of the REAL Deal Committee that oversees REAL operations, and participates in many ways, one of which is filling in for the store manger when necessary. Outside of the REAL Deal, Diane has participated in various fundraisers, the monarch garden, the Christmas dinners and more. Diane is always eager to put her hand up and volunteer whenever things need to be done, even in difficult situations, and is always a positive and optimistic voice.

We are grateful for the support and dedication of these two super volunteers.

Rain Barrel and Native Plant Sale 2026

This year’s native plant sale went well although we don’t have a final total yet. The plants from Natural Themes looked great, and we had some very enthusiastic (and early arriving!) customers. Here is [List of Plants Ordered](#), if you are interested, although we did add some to the collection at the last minute that are not listed just because there was room in the van! Prices were \$5 for the 3 inch and \$7 for the 4 inch pots. Not all the plants sold, so those ones have been planted in the monarch garden. The shrubs and tulip trees, however, we would still like to sell and add to our fundraising total. Most were \$20, although larger pawpaw, tulip and catalpas were more.

Thanks to Dave Hicks for driving down to Frankford to pick up the plants, and to everyone who helped prepare for the sale and assist customers on the day: Joanne Constantine, Betty Couch, Marje Fletcher, Beth Graham, Barb Hicks, and Dale Horeczyk. Thanks to Donna McKenna for organizing the sale.



The rain barrel sale experienced a major snafu when the rain barrels could not be delivered before the sale. Our customers were very understanding. However, we had very little notice that were arriving shortly after 5 p.m. on the sale day. This required some scrambling to find people to unload the truck, and as it happened, this took place in a torrential downpour. Two three hour windows were organized to distribute the barrels on the following Wednesday and Saturday.

We had about 60 preorders, and ordered in an additional 40 barrels to sell to other people on the sale day or throughout the season. All but a few of those have also sold already. We even sold the 20 barrels

we had left over from last year early in the season. So that is approximately 120 rain barrels sold this year, a respectable number, as we earn \$10 per barrel.

Thanks to the volunteers who changed their plans last minute and got very wet to help out with this fundraiser: Diane Pearen, Lauralee and Peter Merkely, and Barb and Dave Hicks. It is a confusing fundraiser financially, trying to keep the many styles of rain barrels straight, keeping the money for the monarch garden and REAL Deal store separated reasonably accurately, and applying sales tax added where necessary. So thanks also to the regular REAL Deal staff for following along. A few filter baskets and two 3.5 foot flexible downspout pieces remain if you are interested.

We will decide early next year if we feel we can take on this fundraiser on again. If there are any REAL members out there who enjoy this type of thing and would like to run the 2027 sale, we’d love to hear from you.

Tulip Trees Just \$25

We have several tulip trees left over from our June 6 native plant sale. Liriodendron tulipifera is native to Southern Ontario, but can be grown here in Eastern Ontario if you treat it right. The spring blooms are large tulip shaped yellow-green flowers with orange centres. The fruit is cone-like clusters of winged seeds. It needs lots of room, requires moderate moisture, and moist, well-drained soil. It can grow to 60-90 feet, 30-50 feet wide. We have reduced the price to \$25 each. Find them outside directly behind the store.



Backyard Pocket Forest

By David Thornley



David and Joan Thornley's backyard forest this spring.

It seemed so simple, to build a forest in our backyard. We had a bare spot where we had taken out a couple of old, weedy trees. Now we could add a forest of native trees.

We started building our 7 square meter Pocket forest in the spring of 2025, by laying the forest floor. We used bags of leaves from our yard and our neighbours. We then made several trips to the Smiths Falls Compost Site, to pick up compost soil and wood chips. The compost soil goes on top of the leaves,

then the wood chips.

We left the forest floor for the summer, watering it through dry periods. Just like REAL's miniforest in Hyland-Corbett Park, we will be planting 3 trees per square meter, so that the tree roots work together, and the trees grow more quickly to get sunlight.

To pick our trees, we used the Little Forests Kingston site (<https://littleforests.org/blogs/pocket-forests/pocket-forest-kits>). They have several types of forests, and identify the trees that you need for each. We picked the Butterfly Banquet forest, but as we are fairly close to our house we selected understory and shrub layer trees only (no canopy layer).

In the fall of 2025, we laid string on posts to identify the 7 squares on the forest floor. My son-in-law helped us to plant the 21 seedlings that we had purchased from Steve at Diggin It Nursery.

As we were planting we added Root Rescue Transplanter (containing Mycorrhizal fungi) dissolved in water, to each hole. Then we put plastic tree protectors around each tree to prevent animals from eating the trees in the winter.

So far, so good. We lost a couple of trees during the winter, but the others are doing well. And it was so easy to do.

Evergreen Avenue and Environmental Awards

Two new granite stones were dedicated at an Evergreen Avenue event at the Smiths Falls Legion July 7. One was to honour Michael and Ann Quigley and the other to recognize Robert Lee Hitchins. Bill Widenmaier was also recognized for his service to the Evergreen Avenue Committee.

REAL took the opportunity to present two environmental awards. Montague School was recognized for becoming a Blue Community School for their outstanding leadership in water stewardship. The the Rideau Roundtable's EcoLiteracy program was commended for fostering knowledge and passion for a sustainable future in youth.

More photos, taken by Chris Uhlig, are available on the [Evergreen page of our website](#).



Montague teachers and students receiving their environmental Award from REAL

REAL Deal Frequently Asked Questions

Ten Longer Ones

Q: Where do you get all this stuff?

A: From people like you! Most of the goods for sale in our store are donated by private individuals, downsizing and decluttering. We do not buy it and we do not accept materials on consignment.

Q: What do you accept?

A: REAL gratefully accepts donations subject to approval. Items must be clean, in good repair and in sellable condition. Please [consult our list](#), call (613) 283-7999 or [e-mail the store manager](#).

Q. Do you provide charitable receipts?

A. We are a registered Canadian charity and can provide charitable receipts for cash donations, but are not set up to give receipts for material donations.

Q. Why can't we negotiate prices?

A. From our past experience, negotiating prices takes too much staff time. We feel our prices are reasonable. They are reviewed periodically and reduced if the item is not selling

Q. Why do you weigh everything?

A. We weigh items being donated and purchased from the store so we know how much waste we have diverted, even if it is temporarily, from area landfills.

Q. Why do you ask customers where they are from?

A. We want to be able to report back to those municipalities how much waste has been diverted from landfills by their residents. We also like to know the breadth of the community we are serving.

Q. Do you accept returns?

A. No, all sales are final. The only exception is an electric/electronic item that doesn't do what it should, then we could give you a store credit.

Q. Where do I take my donations?

A. Preferably to the back gate, there are yard staff in orange vests to help you.

Q. How come this item isn't priced?

A. Lots of reasons. It only just came in, the sticker fell off, it's part of a set and it's written on another piece, it's there but it's hard to see, some unscrupulous person removed it, it's one of the items that has a set price (e.g. books are a dollar) etc. Please just ask.

Q. Can I see what you have online?

A. We post some of our more unique or valuable items on Facebook Marketplace, and use our REAL Deal Facebook page to mention any special promotions. But with the variety and quantity of materials we handle, we are unable to keep an updated inventory online.



Ten Really Quick Ones

Do you charge sales tax? No.

Do you take debit and credit cards? Yes.

Do you let pets in the store? Yes.

Are you open? If the Open flags are out, yes. If they aren't, no.

Do you do pickups and deliveries? No.

Can I leave this at the cash? Yes, if you would like your hands free to continue to shop.

Can I go outside? Yes, go see what's in the yard and dome!

Can I use your washroom? Yes.

Is the stuff on the free table really free? Yes.

Can I tell my family and friends what a great place the REAL Deal is? Yes.

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

Local HHW depots are seasonal or even just a once a year thing depending on your municipality. Take note of these days so you don't have to hang onto it those materials for another year. And please, do not bring this kind of stuff to the REAL Deal!

Smiths Falls, Perth, Carleton Place, Beckwith, Mississippi Mills, Drummond North/Elmsley or Montague: Use the depot at 128 Patterson Cres., Carleton Place, Saturdays 8 a.m. until noon until Saturday, Sept. 6.

Merrickville Woford and Rideau Lakes: There are three dates, open to all residents of Leeds and Grenville, Gananoque and Prescott, but not Brockville:

- 1) Sat. July 6, 8:30 – 2:00 at the Lombardy Fairgrounds
- 2) Sat. August 15 at the South Leeds Patrol Garage 8:30 – 2:00 or Delta Fairgrounds 8:30 – 2:00 p.m. and
- 3) Saturday, Oct. 24 8:30 – 2:00 at the Spencerville Fairgrounds or North Grenville Patrol Garage 8:30 – 2:00. See this poster or call (613) 342-3840 ext 2425 for more info.

Tay Valley and Lanark Highlands: The one day HHW depot is Saturday, July 18th - 8:30 am – 2 p.m. at the Lanark & District Civitan Club, 2144 Pine Grove Road Lanark, ON K0G 1K0

Be prepared to show proof of residency.



Household hazardous waste is any product that is poisonous, corrosive, flammable or explosive. Examples are:

Aerosol Containers
Air Tanks
Alcohols
Antifreeze
Automatic Transmission Fluid
Barometers
Beverage Gas Tanks
Butane Lighters
Camping Fuel

Car Wax (with solvent)
Chlorine Bleach
Concrete Etchers
Drain Cleaners
Fertilizers
Flea Collars/Spray
Fluorescent Tubes & Bulbs
Fungicides
Gasoline/Diesel Fuel
Herbicides
Insecticides
Ketones
Lead Acid
Linseed Oil
Lubricating Oil (30L or less)
Medical Lab Gas Tanks
Mineral Spirits
Mothballs

Used Oil Filters
Paint/Stain
Paint Stripper
Paint Thinner
Pesticides
Paints and Coatings
Photographic Chemicals
Pool Chemicals
Portable Fire Extinguishers
Propane tanks & cylinders)
Primers
Propane Tanks
Rechargeable Batteries
Single Use Dry Cell Batteries
Solvent
Specialty Gas Tanks
Thermostats
Turpentine

Used Motor Oil
Windshield Washer Fluid

Do not take to the HHW depot:
Fluorescent Light Ballasts
Pharmaceuticals
Smoke Detectors
Tires
Construction Waste
Electronics

You can bring electronics to the REAL Deal year round.

In REAL Life

Pitch In and Shoreline Cleanups. Thanks to everyone who participated in our Pitch In and Shoreline Cleanup events April 18 to May 2. The public turn out was down somewhat this year, particularly for the shoreline cleanup, but those who did come out got a lot done. Thanks to the Town of Smiths Falls for collecting the bags so efficiently. As promised, we awarded some prizes in the form of Tim Horton gift cards. Two groups, WAK and Smiths Falls Scouts, and two individuals Ginette Demers and Lewis Koluk, were the winners.



Books. Book prices were raised slightly effective March 1, 2026. This will put the prices more in line with other area used book retailers. Now both soft and hard cover books are \$1 or 3 for \$2.00 and magazines are .50 or 3 for \$1.00. We have more books donated to us that we can sell, so have a coloured dot system so we have an idea of how long we have had them. We free some when the shelves get too tight, so be sure to check the cardboard boxes on the tables outside for some interesting titles.



New Faces. Welcome to Ethan Chenier, our summer hire, who started with us on June 24 and will be with us for 9 weeks. He will be working outside in the dome and yard. Ethan also did some volunteer work at the store in the past. He has been hired thanks to a federal Summer Jobs Canada grant. Also joining the team is volunteer Shelley Leach, who will be working in smalls, sorting, pricing and displaying incoming donations. Shelley is an artist, so will be able to help us assess the art that gets donated, and perhaps move some of it along onto other people's walls.



Turtle Crossing Signs. Thanks to the Town of Smiths Falls who responded to our request to have some "Turtles Crossing Road" signs on either side of the William Street property. All eight of the turtle species in Ontario have been designated as Species at Risk and road mortality is a major threat to them, second only to habitat loss. So keep an eye out for these slow moving creatures. Find out more at <https://ontarioturtle.ca/turtles/>, and acquaint yourself with how a turtle can be moved safely.



Seeds for Sale. Apparently some of you have already been asking! Brian Conlon from Your Independent Grocer dropped by the store on Saturday with a large quantity of vegetable, flower and organic seeds. Because it is late in the season, we will be selling them for \$1 a packet or 3 for \$2. For now they are in display racks under the third window in the store. Thanks to the YIG for thinking of us once again! They are a popular store addition.



Gardening Tools. Getting ready for some yard work and don't have what you need? Take a look at what we have in our [Tool Library](#) before buying something you might only use once or twice. We have garden clippers, a hedge trimmer, ladders, leaf blowers and loppers. For a membership fee you can borrow whatever you need for a week at a time. We have over 100 tools that will be great for other home repair or renovation projects, too.

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
Tool Library**

**Find us on
Facebook and
Instagram**

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

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

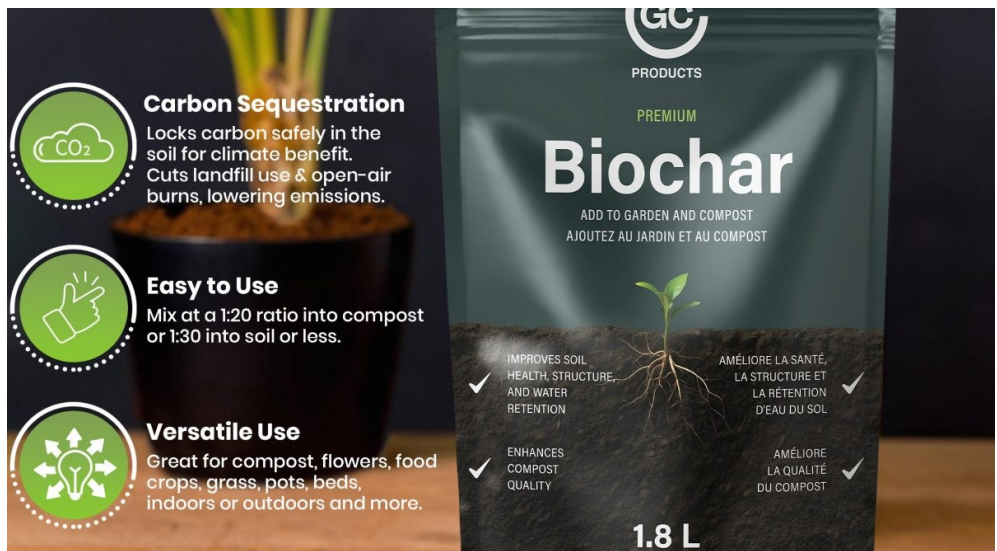
Get Your Biochar at the REAL Deal

Check REAL's "garden centre" directly behind the store for pouches of Biochar. Biochar is a natural, high-carbon soil amendment made from sustainably processed wood. You can use it to enhance soil health, retain moisture/nutrients, and support microbial life for stronger plant growth. It is suitable for lawns, gardens, potted plants or even your compost pile. Just mix it in with your soil at the suggested ratio. Biochar is a long-lasting soil amendment that doesn't break down quickly like compost or mulch, so you don't have to buy more every year.

This biochar is a truly local product, made from Osgoode forestry wood residue, primarily fir and poplar, in Osgoode, Ontario by Green Carbon Products.

Biochar helps fight climate change by capturing and sequestering carbon in the soil for generations. Find out more on the website greencarbonproducts.com. Or [check the FAQs](#) on REAL's website.

We are selling the high carbon biochar in convenient 1.8L resealable bags for \$15.00 per bag, tax included.



Carbon Sequestration

Locks carbon safely in the soil for climate benefit. Cuts landfill use & open-air burns, lowering emissions.



Easy to Use

Mix at a 1:20 ratio into compost or 1:30 into soil or less.



Versatile Use

Great for compost, flowers, food crops, grass, pots, beds, indoors or outdoors and more.

**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.

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

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Name

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Town, Province

Postal Code

Home Phone

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Best time to reach me

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