

Local Horticultural Society celebrates its 50th anniversary

By Brian Lockhart

They are dedicated to beautifying the town and the results of their passion and dedication can be seen at 10 different gardens in Orangeville as well as in the many trees they have planted at various locations along Town streets.

The Orangeville & District Horticultural Society is celebrating its 50th anniversary as the current organization although the Society has its roots dating back over 150 years.

The Society was found on April 20, 1970, when a group of 60 people came together, elected a board of directors, and set out to enhance the Town's appearance.

While the current organization has been planting beautifying for half a century, the original Horticultural Association was established in 1874 with 94 members.

With a slogan of "Make beautiful Orangeville more beautiful," in May of 1914 the group planted a 160 trees along town streets. Many of those trees are still there and provide a canopy and shade along many of the older streets in town.

Unfortunately the Society was disbanded during the First World War. It was revived for another 15 years after the war years but the Depression again saw membership drop as resident struggled to get through difficult times.

The idea of an Horticultural Society gained interest again and in 1970 the group sought out new members.

Currently there are over 150 members in the local Society who share a love of gardening and maintaining the plant beds around town.

"We have ten garden beds that we look after," explained Society board member and Archivist, Vivian Petho. "We want to make Orangeville beautiful by planting and maintaining all the beds. Unfortunately right now we can't maintain any beds while restrictions are in place."

Ms. Petho and her husband joined the society after moving to Orangeville four years ago.

"It's been fun," Ms. Petho said. "We joined because we wanted to know more about gardening and it's also great being a part of the community."

Many people look forward to the Society's annual garden show and sale.

"The Horticultural Society has always been the unsung hero of Orangeville," said Wayne Townsend, former curator at the Museum of Dufferin. "There isn't a garden in Orangeville of note that hasn't bought a plant from the Horticultural Society. People will often show me a favourite plan in the garden, and I'll say, "where did you get it?" And they say "at the Horticultural Plant Sale."

The Society maintains gardens at Greenwood Cemetery, Alexandra Park, Orangeville District High School, Orangeville Senior's Centre, Kay Cee Gardens, the Orangeville Police station, the Fire Hall, Centre Street Community Garden, and the Alder Street Recreation Centre.

"Our Horticultural Society has changed over the years but our impact on the community is unfaltering," Ms. Petho said. "We strive to beautify the Town of Orangeville and its surroundings. The Orangeville & District Horticultural Society has been an integral part of Orangeville for a very long time."

Once the current restrictions are lifted, expect to see Society members at their gardens cleaning up the winter debris and planting new flowers to brighten up the Town.