

Lessons From the Meadow ? Open House being held May 27

By Constance Scrafield

It is such a pleasure to have a reason to write about a day trip. Orangeville is fun anyway, and plenty is going on. Yet, a break from familiar features is a rest, and there is plenty unexpected to learn from taking a trip to the From the Meadow Farm just outside the village of Belmont.

The Daniels family, who purchased the land in 1978, are holding their annual Open House this Saturday, May 27, to celebrate 24 years in business. They are so sure of the benefits of the extensive variety of plants they grow and use on the farm that they gladly guarantee the results they claim their products will provide.

We visited the farm as old friends, having met the family at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto some years ago. We were impressed by the list of plants they used to make their creams and their encyclopedic knowledge of how various plants can treat so many ailments and enhance the balance of skin and even moods.

Certainly, the items we bought from them served us as promised and we had stayed in touch. However, it was only last week that we finally drove to the farm through pleasant countryside, so far held safe from the ravages of development, off the 401, down Road 73, posted to Aylmer, south through Belmont to Avon Road, to number 3881, a substantial sign From the Meadow to guide us in.

It is a well-groomed establishment that grows rows of much plant life that is needed and harbours a forest of more again, everywhere something good is flourishing in soil that is fed with organics, for nowhere does a chemical cross the line. The sign beside the shop door tells the history of the house and land and assures this place is a "highly bio-secured area." The long, well-trimmed grass-ways, kept manicured by the father of the family, Dave Daniels, are the paths for the busy golf carts that carry passengers the distance from the buildings into the woods, where standing burdock and fern, other plants we recognized but could not guess their virtues. Tucked away amidst the trees is a building there, too, constructed by the family and looking exactly as it should for where it is. They built it for parties and gatherings; sometimes, the older grandchildren sleep the night in the house and imagine their own adventures.

The matriarch, Brenda Daniels, climbed onto her golf cart, inviting us to do the same, organizing the back seat for me and off we went, down one of the pathways towards the forest. The family dog, Meadow, led the way except when he made his own forage, dashing in and out of sight, stopping to investigate as necessary.

We were on a mission. Brenda has learned along the months or years since we had seen her that my daughter Patricia had been severely afflicted with rheumatoid arthritis. Brenda was set to make a tincture to help Patricia "feel better."

Wait, let me be clear: this was not a "tincture" made from drugs or alcohol. This was to be a tincture made with bushes and flowers ? well, here is how our golf club journey went.

Brenda drove and stopped every little dash when she and I got out and picked and pulled on whatever she pointed to and built a pile in the back space under the seat of the cart. The pathways were quite extensive but we travelled on most of them, stopping and collecting for a long time, even picking new buds off the branch endings of pine trees.

"They're good for your too," said Brenda.

We took it all back and washed the roots and leaves with care. Then we pushed the lot into a pressure cooker, topped it with water, shut the lid and turned on the gas of the stove.

Sitting in the "cream room," we made turmeric tea and indulged in amusing conversation. Meanwhile, daughter Heather and the CEO of the firm was busy finishing the handmade bars of soap while her niece Stephanie worked at another counter.

The air became a little sweeter as the brew matured, and within the half hour, we were removing the lid to see the results and to let it cool.

As a visitor, the view is the sleepless vision of cleanliness, everything one would hope to find in a "bio-secured" place where the bounty of what is available is free of harm and there is a kindness to the very air.

Within the store and the centre of the business, which is owned entirely by women, by the bye, there are a lot of promises made about improvements to a person's skin, health, relief from headaches, arthritic pain and congestion. Calling their business a "Farmacy," they offer help for minor injuries like bruising, cuts and burns. They have several shampoos, bath products, scrubs, and cleansers ? they assure us they are "working with your skin, not against it."

The Open House will predictably offer discounts and early swag bags. Still, it is the products themselves that will amaze you, for their quality but, more to the point, for the ingredients that create them, all of which are grown on the property spread out before you.

When Brenda's tincture was ready to go into two large canning jars, lidded and boxed, we took our leave with our best wishes and headed home.

After less than a week of consuming the tincture exactly as instructed, Patricia can already walk without her "sticks," which has not been the case for more than 18 months.

"Be prepared to feel good soon," Brenda had advised her, with a smile but meaning it.

She wasn't kidding.

For maps, some information and details about From the Meadow's Open House, go to www.fromthemeadow.com.