



# The LEAFlet - Fall 2007

## TORONTO TREE TOURS COLLABORATIVE AIMS TO REACH NEW AUDIENCE

The Toronto Tree Tours are a collaborative effort of LEAF and the Toronto Public Space Committee (TPSC). The purpose of the tours is to encourage people in communities across the city to increase their awareness of the urban forest and public spaces in their own neighbourhoods. By fostering a sense of pride and ownership of public and private trees and the spaces where they grow, the program aims to reach diverse communities through unique partnerships and language translation. A Tree Tour is planned and mapped in partnership with a local group or individual knowledgeable about the neighbourhood, and incorporates local history, culture and personal stories. It highlights the magnificent trees and includes some of challenging issues facing the area. Although each neighbourhood is unique, common themes always emerge including loss of mature trees due to neglect, poor development practices, increasing temperatures with drought conditions and the threat of invasive pests. However the underlying message is that we all play an important role in making change. The simple act of watering existing trees, planting a native tree in our own yard, or contacting local politicians to ensure that our urban forest is a top priority are things the Tree Tours teaches we can do to help. While LEAF and TPSC have conducted the guided Tree Tours throughout Toronto neighbourhoods since 2006, an event this past July in the Trinity Bellwoods area marked the launch of the Toronto Tree Tours' informative and interactive website:

[www.treetours.to](http://www.treetours.to).



*Trinity Bellwoods Tree Tour, part of the official launch event held July 10, 2007*

drop-in centre at Yorkgate Mall in the Jane-Finch area, which uses the Black Creek Storytelling Parade as a model. Her work on World Water Day resulted in a collaboration with Todd Irvine from LEAF so it was a natural progression to her role as Tree Tour Coordinator when the position became available. Since starting her work with LEAF, Liz sees the city in an entirely new way. She has developed a fresh understanding of the urban forest and uses her expertise in environmental education and community arts to communicate stories of the urban forest that she herself has learned. She knows that by telling these stories and encouraging others to do the same, all of us will gain a better understanding of the issues regarding our urban forest. The Tree Tours are the perfect way to encourage and educate the public to take collective ownership of the urban forest in one's neighbourhood.

Liz says her greatest challenge to date was dealing with the time lines regarding how much work is involved in the live experience of the Tour to crafting something that can be successfully used online. The Virtual Tree Tours have the ability to reach more people. They have a map of the location and a write-up and photographs of each of the stops on the tour. Liz says her greatest success is seeing the positive response of Tree Tour participants. "People are engaged and want to do something to make a difference in sustaining the health and viability of their urban forest."



In May of this year, Liz Forsberg joined the LEAF team as Tree Tour Coordinator. While working on her Masters of Environmental Studies, she developed the Black Creek Storytelling Parade, a performance art vehicle where she animates landscapes and disseminates stories of natural, cultural and environmental history. She was hired by the Art Gallery of York University to develop a community arts project for youth from The Spot, a

*Tree Tour at the Brickworks in partnership with Evergreen*

## URBAN TREE TALES

On June 19th of this year, Michelle Firman was diverted from hanging her bird feeder by the sound of chainsaws coming from the front of her home on Lansdowne Avenue. The street is undergoing narrowing as a way to calm and slow down traffic flow. Upon arriving at the source of the noise, Michelle and her partner, Ken Wood, found two of nine Linden trees (the Linden 9, as the trees have come to be known), had been completely delimbed. The city crew was stopped from removing the trees when Ken, who suffers from asthma, chained himself to one of them saying he was willing to go to jail to protect the lindens. His neighbours supported him by bringing food and water during his vigil. For Michelle, the trees, which were planted 30 years ago by children from a nearby school, have become weapons in a neighbourhood political battle, the number one issue being the narrowing of the street. Although this rent-based section of Lansdowne houses new immigrants (8 languages are spoken at this end of the street), the poor and isolated, transient and socially challenged, the people felt a sense of community over the issue of the trees. Michelle refers to the archetypal symbolism of trees which appear in most of the world's major religious and cultural traditions—archetypal in the sense it is a deep and powerful element in the individual and collective consciousness. Some of the symbolic meaning of trees include cycle of life, family history, ancient powers, protection and life force. Michelle says that when the city chose to get rid of the trees they were “tampering with people’s connectedness and breaking the spirit of the community.” When the lindens were out of immediate harm’s way, Michelle conducted a personal door-to-door poll and found that 9 out of 10 landlords in her area did not want to get rid of the trees to allow parking for tenants or otherwise. She then went to Metro Hall to make sure the survival of the trees was secure and found the street design had been changed because of the incident and that the remaining lindens would have their soil reconditioned. She then held a Tree Party for her neighbourhood and their Lindens and intends to erect a modest shrine to the 2 delimbed trees. She calls them ‘Miracle Trees’. They are still trying to grow and overcome the hardships of all urban trees. The city of Toronto has ambitious goals to increase its tree canopy but if they want to succeed they need to protect what we have. Andy Kenney from the University of Toronto’s Forestry Program was quoted in a recent Toronto Star article saying , “the first thing you have to do is start protecting the trees that are already here and we’ve got a long, long way to go on that.”



**Linden trees, sometimes called basswood or lime tree, are an excellent choice for the urban landscape. They are especially hardy, tolerant of alkaline soils, visited by few destructive insects and exhibit a natural, pyramidal shape that requires little pruning. Lindens have a dense canopy, offering excellent shade as they mature. These trees have attractive, golden yellow fall color.**

For another urban tree tale of community members trying to save seven mature silver maples, click on [www.leafToronto.org/tdsb\\_sliver\\_maples](http://www.leafToronto.org/tdsb_sliver_maples)

## TREE CARE - HEALTHY SOIL MEANS HEALTHY TREES

The key to developing and keeping healthy soil is to mimic natural systems. Soils in natural conditions have many layers, the top two being the most important for trees as they contain the nutrients, water, organic matter, and air spaces that roots need to grow. In nature, soils are continually replenished by leaf litter. Leaving fallen leaves and lawn clippings is a simple way to get organic matter and nutrients into your soil. This organic matter, after being broken down by worms and a variety of insects and bacteria, enriches and improves the structure of the soil, which in turn improves its capacity to hold water and nutrients and to release them to tree roots as needed. By removing grass clippings, leaves that fall in autumn and other plant parts that die back in fall, we stop the cycle of natural regeneration. Applying a layer of mulch is one of the best things you can do for your tree’s health. See *Ask the Arborist* on Page 3 for tips on how to use mulch to a tree’s maximum benefit. Chemical fertilizers do not improve soil quality. By using them, you bypass natural cycles, throw the soil out of balance by reducing populations of worms and soil micro-organisms needed for a healthy soil and pollute ground and surface water. Avoid creating “pots” of rich soil by amending a small area which will only encourage tree roots to stay within the amended area and not grow into the surrounding soil. This practice will restrict the growth of your new tree and affect its health. Do not disturb soil around existing trees by digging. This causes root damage. Leave the soil intact rather than removing it, and improve soil health gradually through proper mulching practices.

## SPECIES OF THE MONTH

### Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*)

Native to eastern North America, the honey locust is a hardy temperate tree that lives about 120 years. It achieves a height of 20 - 30 meters with a spreading, irregular



crown. Its natural range extends to southern Ontario. The tree has very hard wood and durable branches with delicate doubly compound leaves that turn a bright yellow in the fall. Strongly scented, cream-coloured flowers appear in late spring. The tree's fruit is a flat legume (pod) that matures in September and October, with the pulp on the insides of the pods being edible and sweet. Many varieties of honey locust, including the thornless type which was one of the first to be developed, have been created by artificial selection and hybridization. These varieties are often exclusively male or sterile and therefore do not produce pods. Its fast growth rate and tolerance of poor site conditions like compacted soil, road salt, heat and drought make the honey locust a highly valued urban tree for places where shade is wanted quickly such as in new housing areas.

## DENDRO DEVOTION

By Marc Willoughby, M.L.Arch., O.A.L.A. ISA Certified Arborist

Match the botanical name with its linguistic source and meaning (answers on page 4):

1. acer
  2. odorata
  3. amabilis
  4. exigua
  5. serotina
  6. carnea
  7. ptelea
  8. cathartica
  9. cornus
  10. Laevis
- 
- a) Latin for smooth
  - b) Celtic for pointed
  - c) Greek for elm (elm-like in appearance)
  - d) from Greek katharo (to cleanse)
  - e) Latin for lovely
  - f) Latin for horn (hard wood)
  - g) Latin for fragrant
  - h) Latin for flesh-coloured
  - i) Latin for small
  - j) Latin for late (fruiting)

## ASK THE ARBORIST

*I have noticed that my tree has been dropping leaves. The branches are sparse and the tree has a generally unhealthy appearance. Any advice??*

A tree that drops its leaves (abscission) in what would normally be a growing season is resorting to a defense mechanism in a bid for its own survival. If the tree is not receiving enough water, its leaves are sacrificed first so that it has a better chance of survival should the lack of water manifest into a long-term drought. The tree actually builds a barrier between the leaf and the stem at the base of the leaf, cutting the leaf off from water. The leaf then shuts down and dies. Leaves are sacrificed so that the tree can more efficiently use available water to store the carbohydrates it needs to survive in the long haul, similar to a long-distance runner who eats large amounts of carbohydrates before a race. Ongoing drought means thirsty trees cannot scavenge enough water to remain healthy. Drought causes major stress. When stresses combine such as drought, lack of nutrients, insects and damage from human activities, the tree may die.

Trees that grow new leaves all summer long like birch, poplar and tulip trees are more prone to abscission than others. Although abscission is one survival technique, having deep roots is another. Oaks tend to have very deep roots as do pines. Maple trees have shallow roots and therefore are more susceptible to drought. Most trees grow shallow absorptive roots that are located in the top 12" - 18" of soil. This makes urban trees very vulnerable to a host of problems that can injure their root system. Root injury is often overlooked as the cause of decline and death of many trees. Some common causes of damage to the root system include soil compaction, root cutting during construction/excavation, drainage problems and drought.

The number one killer of newly planted trees is lack of water. A transplanted tree has had about 90% of its roots severed from its nursery location. This is a significant loss from which to recover so to ensure the success of the transplanting, the tree's moisture demands become the responsibility of property owner. For the first 3 years after planting, trees require diligent watering. Place a hose at the tree's base on a slow drip for 15 minutes, twice a week. For more mature trees, spread a soaker hose or a regular hose with no nozzle, under the tree's canopy and let the water slowly seep out for one to two hours once per week. Move the hose around under the canopy during the time the water is trickling. Never use a sprinkler to water as wet leaves become prone to fungal diseases. It is possible to over-water trees. Ensure there is no standing water under your tree. If the soil is sopping wet after watering, you may need to reduce the duration and/or frequency. Normally this is only an issue in poorly drained clay or compacted soils.

Applying a mixture of mulch, which can be composed of woodchips, leaves and compost, around your tree's base is one of the best things you can do for its health. The mulch mimics a natural forest floor, keeping the soil at the base of the tree moist, adding organic matter as it decomposes and reducing competition from grass and weeds. Use a doughnut shape when applying mulch and spread a 2" to 4" layer of it out as far as possible. When placing mulch, avoid creating 'volcanoes' where mulch is piled up around the base of the tree. This can cause decay of the living bark at the base of the tree.

## EVENTS

### LEAF Parkdale Tree Tour

**Wednesday, Aug 22, 2007 7 - 8:30 pm**  
**220 Cowan Avenue, Front Entrance**

Starting at Masaryk-Cowan Community Recreation Centre in the HOPE garden, this tour will profile the efforts of Greenest City's Youth Squad to grow organic food locally while strengthening community ties in the neighbourhood. The tour will visit a historic 150 year old pear tree and giant century-old elms. Participants will learn easy ways to start a downtown vegetable garden and learn how to grow the urban forest in their neighbourhood. Pre-register if possible at [www.treetours.to/rsvp](http://www.treetours.to/rsvp) (space is limited). For information visit our site [www.treetours.to](http://www.treetours.to) or call 416 413 9244

### Woodlot Management and MFTIP -- Free Workshops Aug 27 in Barrie, August 28 in Bracebridge and August 29 in Midland

Your forested property may reduce your taxes! The Ontario Forestry Association and the Trees Ontario Foundation are presenting these free woodlot management workshops. Landowners with over 10 acres of forest will find out how to apply for property tax relief up to 75% under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program, set objectives for their property, prepare a forest stewardship plan and identify local resources to assist in achieving their management goals. Visit [www.oforest.on.ca](http://www.oforest.on.ca) for details.

### LEAF Tree Tenders Training Session

**Tuesdays, Sept 11th and 18th; Saturday, Sept 22nd**

Ten hours of arboriculture training is offered over three indoor/outdoor sessions. The cost for all of the sessions is \$35. Visit [www.leafontario.org/workshops\\_and\\_training](http://www.leafontario.org/workshops_and_training) for full details and to register. Space is limited so register early!

### Plant Identification Workshop

**Wednesday, September 19th, 2007, 6-9 pm**

Helen Mills leads for the first hour to learn how to recognize native plants, edibles and vegetables at the EPHGC and the surrounding stewardship sites. Followed by a two-hour work bee. Contact TGC for details at 416-781-7663

### Free Eco-Garden Workshops for Communities

Volunteers run these free classes and skill shares free of charge to interested community groups. Workshop topics include Ecological Gardening Basics, Gardening with Native Plants, Troubleshooting Pests and Weeds Naturally, Water-wise Gardens and Landscapes, and Natural Tree Care. For more information or to arrange an eco-gardening workshop for your community, contact the TGC's Garden Coordinator, Ashlee Cooper by telephone at 416-781-7663 or via email [gard@ntgc.ca](mailto:gard@ntgc.ca).

DENDRO DEVOTION **Answers:**

1b, 2g, 3e, 4i, 5j, 6h, 7c, 8d, 9f, 10a

## SUPPORT TORONTO'S URBAN FOREST

We need your support to continue our work. Donations of \$50 or more are recognized with a special set of five buttons featuring five native tree leaves drawn by a local artist. Send us the form below or donate on-line at [www.leafontario.org/donate](http://www.leafontario.org/donate)



73 Bathurst St  
Suite 305  
Toronto, ON

Tel: 416-413-9244  
[info@leafontario.org](mailto:info@leafontario.org)  
[www.leafontario.org](http://www.leafontario.org)

Yes! I would like to support LEAF with the following donation:

\$25\_\_ \$50\_\_ \$100\_\_ Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

I do NOT require a tax receipt (make cheque payable to "LEAF")

I DO require a tax receipt (make cheque payable to our charitable partner "Phoenix Community Works Foundation")

OR  I would like to pay by VISA (please supply information below and indicate above whether tax receipt is required)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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VISA \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry \_\_\_\_\_

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Please return to LEAF, 73 Bathurst St, Suite 305, Toronto, ON, M5V 2P6