

■ ENVIRONMENT: Few people give them much thought

# Tour puts trees in spotlight

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Sun Times staff

People were reminded during a tree tour Saturday that although trees may be everywhere, we don't always pay them enough attention.

Todd Irvine led about 50 people on a walk through the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's arboretum near Inglis Falls.

He lamented that a 250-year-old tree would often be the oldest thing in a city, yet it's the old buildings that are usually prized and celebrated most.

Irvine is an arborist with Local Enhancement Appreciation of Forests (LEAF), a non-profit group in Toronto that offers planting and tree-care advice.

"One of the drawbacks of an arboretum is that it becomes like an artifact, like going to a museum," he said. "I think it should be a place where we can recognize what's possible."

He recommends anyone who intends to plant a tree to visit an arboretum to get ideas of the kind of tree they'd like.

He also praised municipalities such as Toronto for recognizing the need to preserve tree cover and passing tree-cutting bylaws.

Tree planting at the arboretum began in 1964 with a Norway spruce and Austrian pine shelter belt to the north and west on the conservation authority's 12-hectare site.

There are 60 different species of trees and shrubs represented in the oldest section of the arboretum, more than 256 individual plants. Of these, 36 species are native to Ontario. Examples include the white birch, typical of Canada's northern regions, and the tulip tree, found in extreme southern Ontario, and exotics such as the katsura tree and the devil's walking stick.

The original section, called Trees of the World, is at one end of the grounds, while the newer



Todd Irvine, an arborist from Toronto, stands under a rare ginkgo tree from China that grows in the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's Trees of the World arboretum. Irvine was on hand Saturday afternoon to give a public tour and lecture about trees.

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section is planted solely with trees common to Grey-Bruce.

Randy Lidkea, a volunteer with the Arboretum Alliance and a tree expert himself, said it's easy to be complacent because trees are everywhere.

But the canopy covering our world is slowly shrinking, he said. Sometimes it's by natural forces, such as the damaging snow and ice storm that forced Harrison Park to close briefly because of the tree damage in

February 2006. Other times it's development, such as a proposal to build a big box-type store beside Home Depot in Owen Sound, on a site containing a butternut tree listed as at-risk by the Ministry of Natural

Resources and which the conservation authority has raised concerns about.

Self-guided tour maps of the arboretum are available at the conservation authority office and at a kiosk on the grounds.