

# Why botanical garden wants our money

By CHRISTINE STANTON  
The philosophical beginning of the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) was in the 1820s, when a few men had a vision of a garden-filled access to Hamilton.

Fifty years later, the vision has become a reality, although not in the detail imagined originally by Hon. Thomas B. McQuestion in 1929.

McQuestion, with Cecil V. Langs, acquired the land known as Kerr's Gravel Pits in 1929 at the northwest entrance to Hamilton, with plans to convert it into the now famous rock garden at RBG.

Current RBG director Allen Paterson calls the 1929 entrance to the city "The Clappison's Corners of its time", complete with an ugly array of billboards and fast-food shacks.

The major renovation of the quarry began on Nov. 12, 1929, when the foundation of the rock garden was laid. But the extensive botanical showcase, envisioned by McQuestion for the entire area leading into Hamilton, was forestalled by the economic reality of the Depression of the 1930s.

Ironically, the rock gardens proceeded as a relief labor project during the Depression, and continues to benefit from similar government "make-work" projects in these difficult economic times.

During the 1930s, area unemployed workers could get in a few days' work on McQuestion's visionary project, while today the RBG makes use of government employment initiatives like Career Access, Katimavik, Summer Access and Environment 200.

"Fifty years ago, here was this marvellous place developed in such a visionary way," says Mr. Paterson. "And here it is in its marvellous maturity, still able to take advantage of a difficult economy and with a similar vision to make something attractive for the next five to 10 decades."

RBG makes use of these short-term, short-lived government initiatives, but keeps in mind the futuristic time-frame of botanical gardens. "What we plant today will be beautiful when we're 93," is how Mr. Paterson explains the time scale.

The vision required to imagine the potential of the rock gardens is evident in early photographs of the area. The bare rocks and sparse vegetation are more reminiscent of an ancient ruin in southern Europe than the forerunner of the lush, botanically significant showpiece we can now enjoy.

The rock garden was one component of Mr. McQuestion's concept that proceeded in spite of a curtailing economy, along with the highlevel bridge and the memorial garden. The gardens remained faithful to the original plan in concept, but not in detail.

"He (McQuestion) believed as I do, that a city can't call itself a city without a botanical garden. Since the Renaissance every great city has had one," says Mr. Paterson. "It's a pity about Toronto, isn't it?"

Mr. Paterson explains the visionary clearing of the area at that time has created an entrance to a city that doesn't exist in very many cities around the world.

"It's beautiful, non-suburban, non-commercial, with this dramatic marvellous view on both sides of the road."

Future plans for the gardens are continuing in the passive botanical garden tradition, with an emphasis on the maintenance of the traditional horticultural aspect, rather than active park use for sports.

Summer Canada programs have assisted the RBG with projects for a number of years, but the poor employment situation in the last two years has spurred a number of work programs applicable to the gardens. The programs allowed the RBG access to a work force it would otherwise not have had.

The seven-acre synoptic shrub collection area has received a groomed path system, as well as drainage and irrigation systems through these government programs. The Woodland Garden was built on a Summer Canada project, and young people in this summer's Katimavik program are making a nature trail on old Snake Rd.

RBG must oversee the projects and provide the money for the material. But many labor-intensive projects, such as the construction of a set of stairs from the arboretum parking lot to the picnic area, would not have been possible without the various employment initiatives.

The biggest project on the RBG horizon is a greenhouse complex to house Mediterranean and Alpine gardens for public viewing, as well as a propagation greenhouse for use by RBG botanists.

RBG is currently pursuing funding for the project, which is geared to extending the appeal of the gardens throughout the winter months to tourists as well as local residents.

"We are without a doubt the major tourist attraction to this area," says Mr. Paterson, with an estimated 750,000 visitors each year. "The tourist influx is of course particularly in the summer, but locals are beginning to see something here throughout the year. No doubt when we get the greenhouses working, people will come in to see something in flower."

The proposed Mediterranean garden will be particularly appealing to local residents because it will flower in the peak of our bleak Ontario winter, when people are desperate to see some floral color, Mr. Paterson says.

The new wing proposes classrooms, washroom facilities and a kitchen along with the three greenhouses, at a total estimated cost of \$1.3 million.

The RBG has requested half of the funding from the provincial ministry of citizenship and culture, but has not yet heard from the Province on the request. To date, \$100,000 has been pledged by the Royal Botanical Gardens Auxiliary and \$20,000 has been pledged by the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, an international organization based in the United Kingdom.

RBG also plans to make a capital grant request from Hamilton-Wentworth Region for an as yet undetermined portion of the cost, and made a similar request of Halton Region's administration and finance committee last week.

The committee voted to defer the request to the 1985 grants budget discussions, which will not adversely affect the proposed project, Mr. Paterson says.

But Halton's annual contribution to the RBG for operating costs has met with some opposition around the regional council table in the past. Although the administration facilities and some of the gardens are located in Halton, most of them are in Hamilton-Wentworth, causing some councillors to argue about the level of Halton's funding to RBG.

The \$2.4 million 1983 operating budget for RBG was funded 48.5 per cent by the Province, 31 per cent by Hamilton-Wentworth, five per cent by user fees, five per cent by contributions, three per cent by membership fees and miscellaneous and seven per cent, or \$164,000 by Halton.

There is no other Halton feature that is so unique, he argues.



Marg Roberts, house interpreter with the Ontario Agricultural Museum prepares a loaf of bread for the old-fashioned stone oven. The demonstration was one of many held at the Museum to celebrate the harvest season Sunday.

## Council briefs

### Liquid waste report

Council kept mum while receiving and filing a 150-page report on the plight of the Omagh United Taxpayers (OUT) Monday night. The group is circulating its comprehensive report on the Province's proposal to locate a major liquid waste dump in rural Milton at one of three sites under consideration. Treasurer Marg Gorman of RR 1 Hornby welcomes new members.

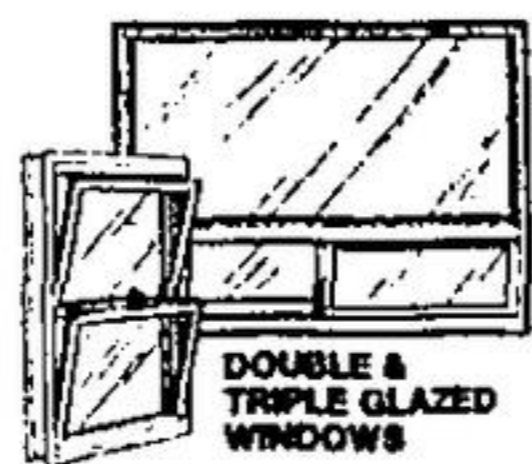
### Pit conditions

An additional condition has been attached to council's approval of two wayside pits being earmarked by the Province for aggregate extraction for the reconstruction of Highway 25 south of Acton. Usual pit operation times and truck route restrictions apply, and Councillor Pam Sheldon had council add the rider that signs outlining the truck routes must be posted at the pit gate. The Boss pit at Lot 23, Concession 5, and the Duenck pit at Lot 25, Concession 5, have been approved.

### Fire dept. report

Halton Hills firefighters battled three building fires, three open fires and an accident-related blaze during August, blaming two of them on negligence. The department's monthly report to council showed fewer calls for service than in August, 1983, and far less damage: \$6,570 this year, down from \$169,250 last year. There were no fatalities and only one injury to a member of the public.

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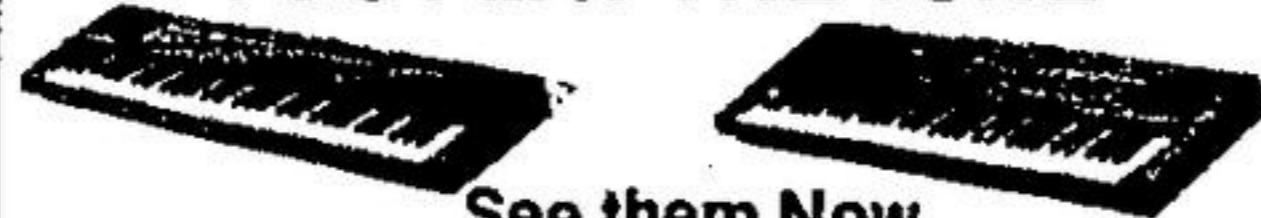


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## Family Asthma program starts

The Halton Lung Association announces the opening of their Family Asthma Program in Georgetown.

These courses are developed for families with children who suffer from asthma and provide exercises to develop physical conditioning, better breathing and relaxation techniques, as well as swimming. The parents are involved too in an educational program that runs concurrently with the children's program. Speakers include: allergists, paediatricians, nutritionists, pharmacists and others expert in the field.

The program is under the direction of Dr. R.W.T. Haddon, medical director and Mrs. Judy Woodin, physiotherapist co-ordinator to the Halton Lung Association.

Place—Georgetown Distric High School / Pool / Gym.

Time—Saturday Mornings 9.00-11.00.

Starting—October 13, 1984.

Physiotherapist—Mrs. Jayne Cavasin.

For registration information contact the Halton Lung Association at 632-8499.

## Mailing deadlines for Xmas parcels

Christmas mailing deadlines for parcels, packets and greeting cards being sent to friends and relatives overseas by surface mail have been released by Canada Post.

These surface mail deadlines for Ontario residents are as follows:

Asia and South Pacific—October 3.

Africa—October 10.

Australia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore—October 15.

Hong Kong, Poland, U.S.S.R.—October 28.

South America and Caribbean—October 29.

Japan—November 2.

Great Britain and N. Ireland, Rep. of Ireland, France, Germany (Fed.), Netherlands, CFP's, Switzerland—November 15.

Sweden—November 12.

Other European Countries—November 8.

Overseas Airmail and domestic Christmas mailing deadlines will be announced soon.

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