

# Explore five senses at new children's garden in Norval

By **Nelia Raposo**  
Special to The IFP

The Lucy Maud Montgomery Children's Garden of the Senses will offer a new way to explore nature and literature in Halton Hills when it opens this spring.

Cement paths have been poured around raised stone flower beds at the Norval site, located at Guelph and Mary Sts., thanks to a \$169,500 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) to create a garden that will appeal to all five senses (scent, sight, sound, taste and touch). OTF is an agency of the Government of Ontario that awards money to non-profit organizations.

Last week, Kathy Gastle and Eileen Foley of The Norval Community Association (NCA) were there to plant bulbs with a few other volunteers.

NCA created the first phase of this heritage garden in 1992. It is inspired by the life and work of Canadian author L.M. Montgomery, who lived in the village from 1926-1935. She is the author of many novels but is best known for her Anne of Green Gables and Emily of New Moon series.

"People may not realize that her writing is so sensory. We want to translate the literary

inspiration into the garden design," Foley, a local resident and the garden's landscape architect, said.

Foley's voice rises and falls passionately when describing how the garden will have interactive nodes along the main path. Each node will focus on a specific sense. Some features include: rock garden, woodland trail, spiral garden, checkerboard garden, hummingbird and butterfly gardens, along with a log bridge and waterfall.

A fenced children's programming area is also planned. It will include planter boxes, a garden shed, totem poles for painting, hopscotch stepping stones and play equipment that appeals to all children including those with visual or hearing limitations, Foley said. Signage throughout the garden will include Braille.

A portion of the grant money will pay for an education coordinator who will lead volunteers in planning activities for visitors.

Gastle hopes the refresh will introduce this community space to a new audience.

"Montgomery understood the value of being in nature, that it rejuvenates the soul. When she was creating in her mind, she would be out in nature," Gastle, the association's president, said.

The goal is that the sensory garden will allow individuals of all ages and abilities to enjoy the therapeutic value of horticulture build a connection to the area's cultural heritage and enjoy active living activities.

"It is a public garden. It blooms with colour from spring to fall with bulbs that we are planting today to kick start it," Gastle said. "It is truly a fantastic project and there won't be anything like it."

This project has already received community support from many local business sponsors but more resources are needed. The group is always looking for volunteers.

Ideally, NAC would like to add some bronze statues of children reading and playing including characters from Montgomery's books.

The closest thing to this garden, Foley said, is the Franklin Children's Garden on the Toronto Island Park. It is inspired by Franklin the Turtle from the celebrated book series written by Paulette Bourgeois, illustrated by Brenda Clark.

The Toronto garden is divided into seven sections where children can enjoy gardening, storytelling, exploring wildlife and visiting seven child-accessible sculptures from the Franklin the Turtle series.



**Eileen Foley, project manager and landscape architect, is helping transform the Lucy Maud Montgomery Children's Garden in Norval to appeal to younger people. The big reveal is set for Spring 2016.**  
Photo by Nelia Raposo

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