

AMBITIOUS PROJECT TAKES ROOT

COMMUNITY CHALLENGED TO PLANT 65,000 TREES

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Halton Hills is about to get a lot greener. A local new environmental group, aptly named Trees for Halton Hills, has launched a challenge for residents and businesses to plant 65,000 trees throughout the community in the next five years — one new tree for every citizen of the municipality.

"We know that global warming is changing our weather and is a threat," said group chair Ann Lawlor. "One way we can all take action is by nurturing the trees that sustain our environment and our lives."

To get everyone inspired, Trees for Halton Hills has created a native tree and shrub arboretum in Joseph Gibbons Park on Delrex Boulevard that officially opened earlier this month in con-

junction with the challenge launch.

The green space contains 21 different species of trees — including rare ones such as paw-paw and cucumber magnolia — and about a dozen shrub varieties that were planted this spring by Trees for Halton Hills volunteers.

Signs that identify each species have been installed with links to the group's website to provide further details.

"It truly was a labour of love," said group member Hal Watson. "We thought this was a way to educate the community about the importance of native tree species and shrubs."

He added that Trees for Halton Hills hopes the arboretum will motivate residents to do plantings on their own property. If they do, the trees can be registered at 65000trees.ca to count toward the community grand total.

Lawlor said the group thinks that "trees have super powers" with all that they do, such as mod-

erating the temperature, helping the ground absorb water during storms, buffering winds and absorbing carbon that pollutes the air.

"Native trees are also essential for our region's unique biodiversity," she said.

Ultimately, the group's vision is to have a "low-carbon, green community, which is known for its beautiful natural landscapes, extraordinary urban forest and fresh, clean air," said Lawlor. The volunteers are aiming to realize this through promoting the environmental benefits of trees, sourcing and distributing seedlings and young trees for planting, and targeting sites for planting in parks and at schools, churches, businesses, etc.

Joined by Mayor Rick Bonnette, councillors and Credit Valley Conservation, the 65,000 tree challenge launch also included a pledge from the municipality and conservation authority to plant thousands of trees to increase the urban tree canopy in Halton



Melanie Hennessey/Metroland

Ann Lawlor (left) and Hal Watson of Trees for Halton Hills are joined by Woody the tree to launch the community planting challenge.

Hills.

Community planting events will be planned to give residents a chance to pitch in.

Funding for the arboretum came through the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative, which is being facilitated by community foundations across the country. Sue Lawrenson of the Community Foundation of Hal-

ton North said the new arboretum "builds a pandemic-resistant space for the future."

"Public spaces are the glue to our communities," she said. "They enable a feeling of belonging, of social cohesion and encourage our sense of collective identity."

For more information, visit treesforhaltonhills.ca.

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