

Wendy Thomas knows how your garden grows

By Flavia Testa

As summer approaches, gardeners everywhere are eagerly working in their gardens, planting flowers and vegetables. Green thumbs or not, you should make your way to Oxbow Books at 2 p.m. Saturday to meet the author of "The Ontario Gardener's Resource Guide", Wendy Thomas.

This new guide can help to find gardens, nurseries, garden centres, gardening associations and societies all over Ontario, and much more.

Wendy Thomas grew up in Kettleby, New Market and Toronto, Ont. She did not have a particular interest in gardening until she went to England, where she acquired a strong liking to it.

Thomas is a graduate from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute's Journalism program. She is now a freelance editor, a writer and a gardener.

The idea for the making of this guide came from the publishers, Whitecap Books. When Thomas was approached to see if she might be interested in the job, she eagerly accepted.

She quite literally dropped everything she was doing and began working full time on the guide. The guide was supposed to focus on the metro Toronto area only, but Thomas decided to expand the area. The problem was, as she pointed out, "where do you start to draw the line?" Eventually the guide included all of the province of Ontario. Thomas's research began in June of last year and she completed her work in less than a year.

Thomas traveled around the greater Toronto area and also to Sudbury, Thunder Bay and the Niagara area to collect information. In the rest of the province she hired people to do research for her.

Most of the information she received was taken from the Civic Garden Centre Library. Thomas also mailed away for information. She hired a press clipping service which helped her collect information from gardening columnists and nurseries.

The guide is basically a directory, a kind of "yellow pages" for gardeners of any level. It offers information for the novice gardener and the experienced gardener - it has something for everyone. You can find addresses, business hours, prices, payment methods, shipping facilities of gardening centres, services, societies and much more.

Like any writer, there are some problems that you always run into. She was afraid of what people's response might be toward this

guide. "What if they don't like it?" she asked herself. The other problem she was faced with was leaving certain information out.

There were so many different associations, people and gardening centres in Ontario that she could easily have missed someone. This was a fact that Thomas had to face; she could not write about everyone. Now that she has completed her work she said: "Yes, I would make some changes. Maybe lengthen the index, put in more cross references. Next time I'd also like to get around more."

Overall, Thomas found everyone she worked with was "friendly and helpful", which made her work much more enjoyable.

This is the first time Thomas has written and had a book published. She enjoyed the experience very much. "It's a wonderful way of earning a living. Everything worked well, everybody responded with a lot of enthusiasm, especially in Northern Ontario. It's nice to be part of a network, and it is wonderful to be helping set up a network too", she said. Although she is not actively pursuing a writing career, Thomas intends to continue writing.

Watch out for this up and coming author. "The Ontario Gardener's Resource Guide is unique to its kind, it may contain something that could help you next time you want to plant a garden!"

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