

# GREEN INVESTMENT – old style

- By Robin Reily



## Enhancing Your Green Portfolio into the New Year

For each issue of the Mirror I've written articles which balance humour and information in the hope of encouraging South Marysburgh residents to grow more of their own food. I intend to keep this mix but spoiler alert...this one is short on humour.

The National News recently reported that the annual cost of feeding a family of four in 2022 has risen to \$16,000. Why might this trend continue? The number of people to feed increases every year while the amount of farmland declines—one recent example is the passage of provincial bill 23, enabling more farmland to become urbanized. Rising demand and declining supply is often a recipe for inflation—add to this deteriorating soil fertility and falling numbers of pollinators.

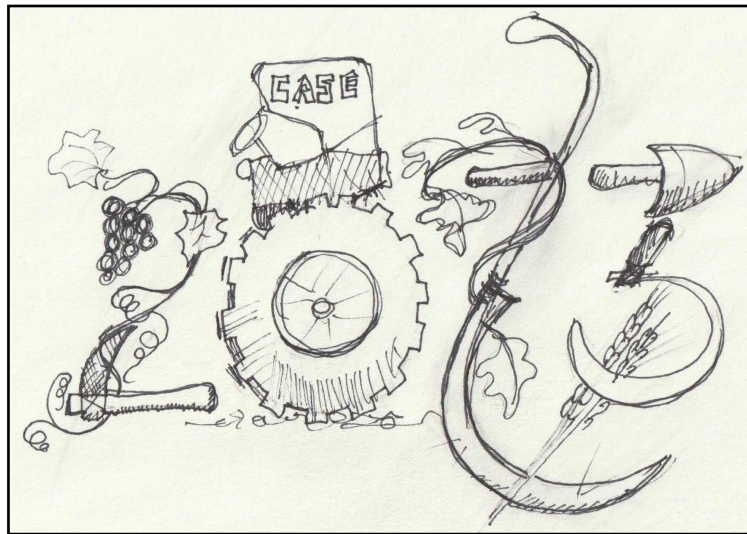
Climate change is forcing droughts across many of the world's agricultural areas, reducing food production. A northern country like Canada will likely run counter to this pattern as warmer temperatures may expand Canada's arable acreage northward...although our thin glacially-scraped soils have limited fertility. Climate change and global trade are fueling the spread of many destructive insects. As an example of what is just around the corner, spend a few minutes on the Internet to learn about the 'Spotted Lantern Fly'.

Climate change and food costs are interconnected in other ways. The comparatively low food prices we have enjoyed for the past few decades were largely the result of fossil fuels. Crude oil is the foundational ingredient in the making of synthetic fertilizer. Fossil fuels have also allowed every type of food to be moved across the world, year-round...often from places

with cheap labour. If, as the result of some unprecedented effort to address climate change, the world agrees to limit fossil fuel use, that will probably mean more expensive and curtailed fertilizer use and higher transportation costs.

Reflecting on this situation is what motivated me to write these columns under the heading 'Green Investment'. Producing a portion of your own food requires an investment of time and money. But the return on that investment includes satisfaction, exercise, nutrition and savings. What are some steps to sustain your long-term 'green investment' portfolio?

- 1) Improve your soil each year with things like compost, wood ashes, manure and cover crops.
- 2) Get some perennial plants started...berry shrubs may only take a few years to establish but fruit trees could take a decade.
- 3) Gather some equipment and learn to maintain it.
- 4) Build skills and knowledge through research and experience.
- 5) Promote local biodiversity to sustain pollinators as well



- as the birds and animals that keep damaging insect and rodent populations in check.
- 6) Make a plan to maintain a water supply, for example rain barrels, cisterns and ponds...the County in summer is one of the driest areas in Ontario.
  - 7) Build a community network...people with skills and resources that you can collaborate with.
  - 8) Support local growers who are already raising local sufficiency.

Some of these steps can be started right away while others could be incorporated into a new year's resolution. Of course not everyone has the land, health, time and funds to take on this challenge. Community groups, local libraries as well as innumerable YouTube sites are valuable information sources to tap over there winter (or consider tapping into a local maple tree...I didn't say no humour!). Community gardens and free seed exchanges (watch for the Seedy Saturday event in late Winter) are worthy endeavours. Those of us who can grow a little food locally could set aside a little produce for those that can't—the makings of another New Year's Resolution. We are fortunate to live in a country with a strong social safety net. It is not essential to grow some of your own food but if the idea appeals to you, the benefits could become increasingly evident over the course of the coming new year.