

Retired gardener trusts public with his plants

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

The day Walter Kuettel was born, the gardens of Switzerland broke into bloom.

The son of a gardener, Mr. Kuettel lived in a little house on a large estate in Switzerland. Mr. Kuettel can't remember when he learned the ABCs of gardening. They're in his genes, in his soul and in his heart.

Whether it's the graceful Siberian iris or the stately Lady fern, Mr. Kuettel has a natural talent for making almost nothing grow into a thing of beauty.

In the spring of 1945, World War II was drawing to a close. At the same time, 15-year old Walter was enrolling in a three-year apprenticeship in gardening and landscaping.

In 1951, the young gardener left Switzerland and came to Canada. "I got a job on a farm in Quebec," said Mr. Kuettel.

"I didn't speak any English. I worked for room and board and \$10 a week. I stayed about a year."

Realizing he wasn't about to get rich on the farm, Mr. Kuettel moved to Toronto and landed a job with a landscaping firm.

Meanwhile, Valeria, a farmer's daughter had one goal: To get as far away from the farm in Switzerland as possible.

While working as a dental nurse in Switzerland and later in England, she'd been writing to her friend Walter. She

decided to emigrate to Canada.

"I came to Canada and Walter and I were married a year later," she said.

With a shoestring and an old 1939 Dodge car, Walter's Landscaping Ltd. was established in Thornhill in 1954. "That old Dodge was something else," said Mr. Kuettel.

"I'd remove the back seat and pile my wheelbarrow and lawnmower in, then cut grass and tend flower beds.

"On Sundays, I'd put the seat back in, put a blanket over it and take Valeria for a little drive."

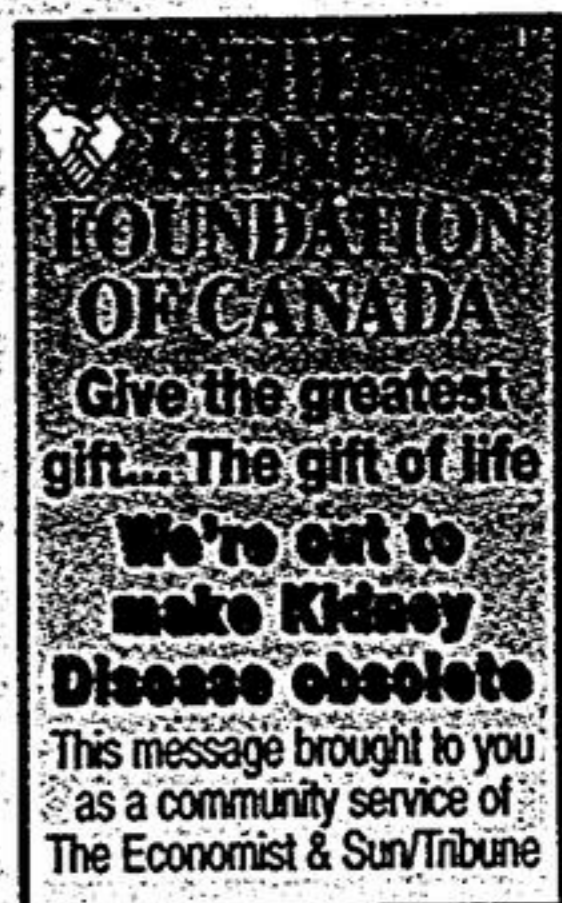
Mr. Kuettel drives a new car now. The business grew to handle million-dollar

landscape jobs.

The family also grew. The couple have five children. All five attended university. Three of the children live in the United States.

Mrs. Kuettel has worked shoulder-

See SELF-SERVE, page 16.



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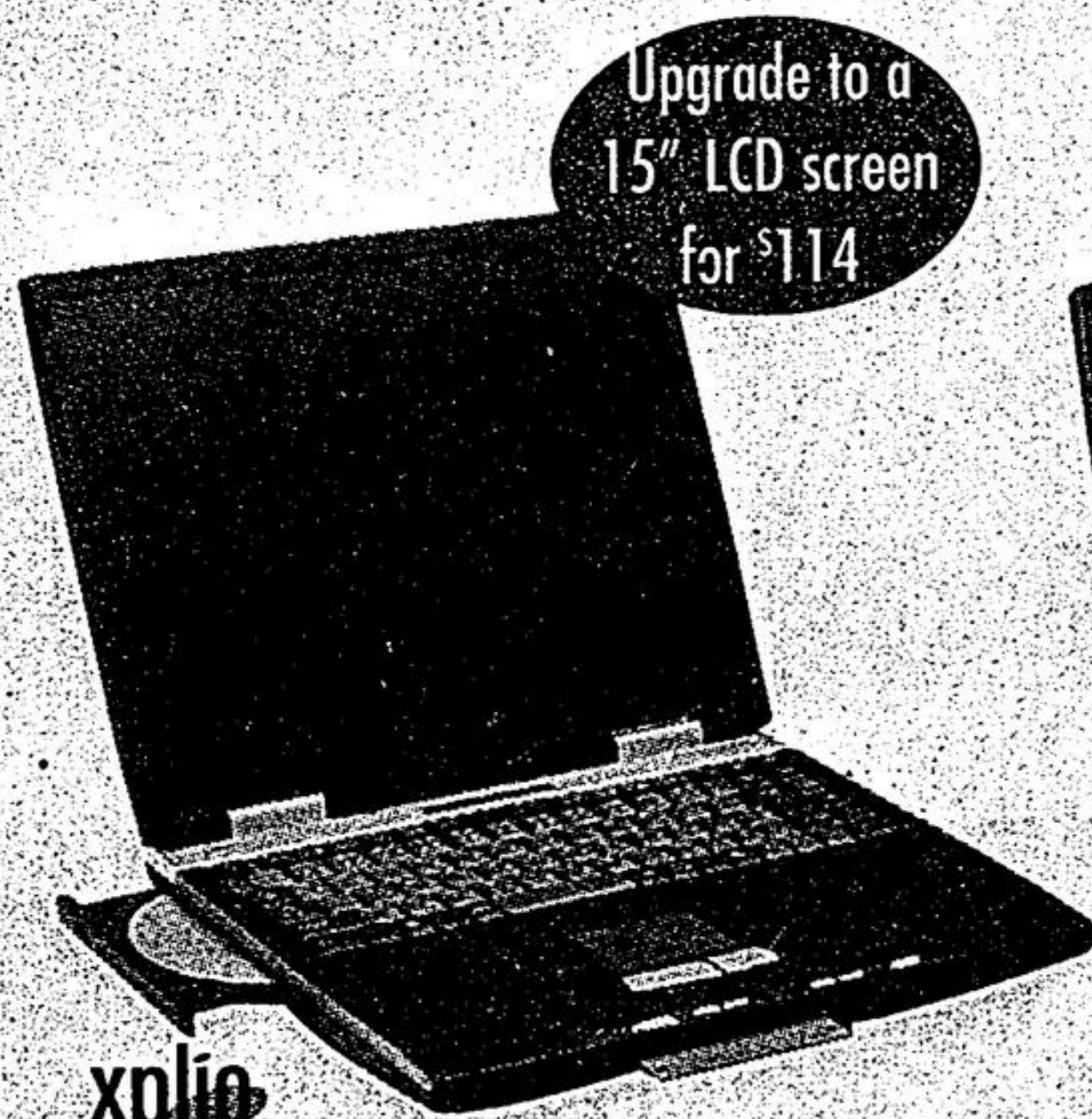
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Garden tour raises money for Aphasia Centre

BY CHRISSIE O'BRIEN
Special

The York Durham Aphasia Centre is offering an eight-stop garden tour to tap into the region's growing horticulture trend and raise much-needed cash.

"Look and Learn" takes place June 22. It's a self-guided tour of area gardens with a map provided by the aphasia centre.

At each stop on the tour the owners of the garden and a volunteer from the centre make informative presentations.

Some of the gardens are new but several are historic and on Mennonite routes.

Dennis Flanagan, who hosts television programs on HGTV and WTN, will begin and end the tour with discussions at 10 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. called Courtyards in Small Spaces. The talks will take place at the Aphasia centre at Parkview Village 12184 Ninth Line in Stouffville.

"Mr. Flanagan is a precious resource," said Ms. Wells. "He can do anything with a garden."

The tour will help the aphasia centre continue to provide long-term community care programs to adults with aphasia, after brain injury or stroke.

"We assist adults in the Markham, Stouffville and Newmarket areas with speech and language especially through our group communication program," said Anne Wells, a representative of the center.

Tickets for the tour can be purchased in advance at Flanagan's Folk Art and Stouffville IDA Pharmacy - both on Main Street Stouffville - and at the York Durham Aphasia Centre. Tickets cost \$15 each or \$25 for two.