

# Canada Day time to set the night on fire

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Just ask any fireworks aficionado — there's no better way to celebrate the birth of your country than setting a piece of it on fire.

"People come in here and it's not like they're buying a suit and it doesn't fit," says Ann Rastin, owner and operator of Thornhill's Victory Fireworks.

"We have customers that I see once a year who get so excited; they hug and kiss me and say they can't wait to see me next year."

The store's showroom has the pungent aroma of gunpowder, which, after 15 years in business, Mrs. Rastin says gets "in the blood".

*'It should be a fabulous display.'*

Smoking is definitely not recommended, as hundreds of fireworks of every shape and type line the walls and dozens more are in boxes awaiting shipment.

Sporting such colourful names as Wild Thing, Jumping Jack Flash, Thunder King, Big Bertha and Land of the Midnight Sun, fireworks are popular year-round for weddings, parties and religious festivals, but the two biggest days of the year are Victoria Day and Canada Day.

Canadian Pride and Northern Lights are favourites for the July 1 weekend, although exam-weary students might also enjoy lighting up a Burning Schoolhouse or two (a perennial favourite at \$2.30 a pop, literally).

Despite the fun that comes with firecrackers, partygoers should remember they're dealing with explosives.

Mrs. Rastin says her staff makes sure all customers are aware of some basic safety rules before leaving the store.

"The most important thing is to watch where your crowd is," she said. "Do not light fireworks 10 feet away from your audience. Keep them back a safe distance. They will enjoy it more because they'll get to watch it and they won't be afraid."

It's also a good idea to buy fireworks suitable for the space in which they'll be set off. A tiny suburban back yard, for example, might not be the best staging ground for a huge display.

A shortage of space will definitely not be a problem for Mrs. Rastin and her husband, Joe, on Canada Day. They've been invited to do the fireworks display for the July 1 celebrations at Downsview Park.

"It should be a fabulous display," she said.



STAFF PHOTO/MITCHELL BROWN

Thornhill's Victory Fireworks owners Joe and Ann Rastin and their staff teach customers basic safety rules when selling them fireworks.

## SAFETY TIPS

- Keep your audience back at least 30 feet for displays of fountains, wheels and strobe lights and at least 100 feet back for other fireworks.
- Always read and follow label directions.
- Don't leave fireworks unattended or close to the staging area.
- Always have water handy (garden hose and bucket).
- Never experiment or make your own fireworks and buy from a reputable dealer.
- Light only one firework at a time.
- Never re-light a dud (wait 15 to 20 minutes and then soak it in a bucket of water).
- Never give fireworks to small children.
- Dispose of fireworks properly by soaking them in water first.
- Never point fireworks at other people.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or glass containers.
- Always wear eye protection when lighting fireworks.
- Make sure your staging area is an open space with no overhead wires or trees.

## Fireworks displays in your community

### Markham/Stouffville

Markham and Stouffville are planning a chain of events to celebrate the nation's birthday Monday.

Markham's celebrations start at 3:30 p.m. with a parade organized by the town.

It starts at the intersection of Heritage and McCowan Roads and goes south of Hwy. 7 to Milne Park. There, look for singing and dancing performances, kung fu demonstrations and steel drum entertainment. The younger set can enjoy arts and crafts, face painting, games and clown performances.

Canada Day events in Stouffville are part of the Strawberry Festival, taking place in or around Memorial Park this weekend.

Festivities include bands,

music, a picnic and celebration with cake at 9 p.m. in Franklin Park Marquee.

Fireworks, of course, are the main attraction. Stouffville's starts 9:45 p.m. in Memorial Park. Markham's kick off 15 minutes earlier at Milne Park.

### Richmond Hill

Richmond Green, at 1300 Elgin Mills Rd., will hold July 1 celebrations starting at 11 a.m. Rides, attractions and performances are planned throughout the day.

Children can engage in healthy competition with the Dubble Bubble Gum contest, the three-legged race, the balloon toss, sponge throw, basketball shoot and other games.

They can also enjoy face painting, clowns, pony rides, a petting

farm and crafts.

Exhibitors, vendors, demonstrations and live performances will take place in the centre's main building from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Entertainment will be provided by Lou Moore and Friends and "Beavie" the mascot from 1 to 11 p.m. in the Bavarian Gardens.

Midway rides will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. and hot air balloon rides will be available all day.

A free skate in the Richmond Green Arena will be available from 1:30 to 3 p.m.

There will be a food pavilion and ice cold beer in the Bavarian Gardens.

The second largest municipal fireworks display in Canada starts at 10 p.m.

Admission for the day is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. Seniors and children under two are free.

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