

Sharing a Smile!

Dr. Jasmin Fitch, daughters Vivienne and Emily, and husband Jeff are all smiles as they celebrate living in Stouffville. Wally, the family dog, is too shy to smile! Dr. Fitch practices dentistry at Stouffville's Park Drive Dental Centre...



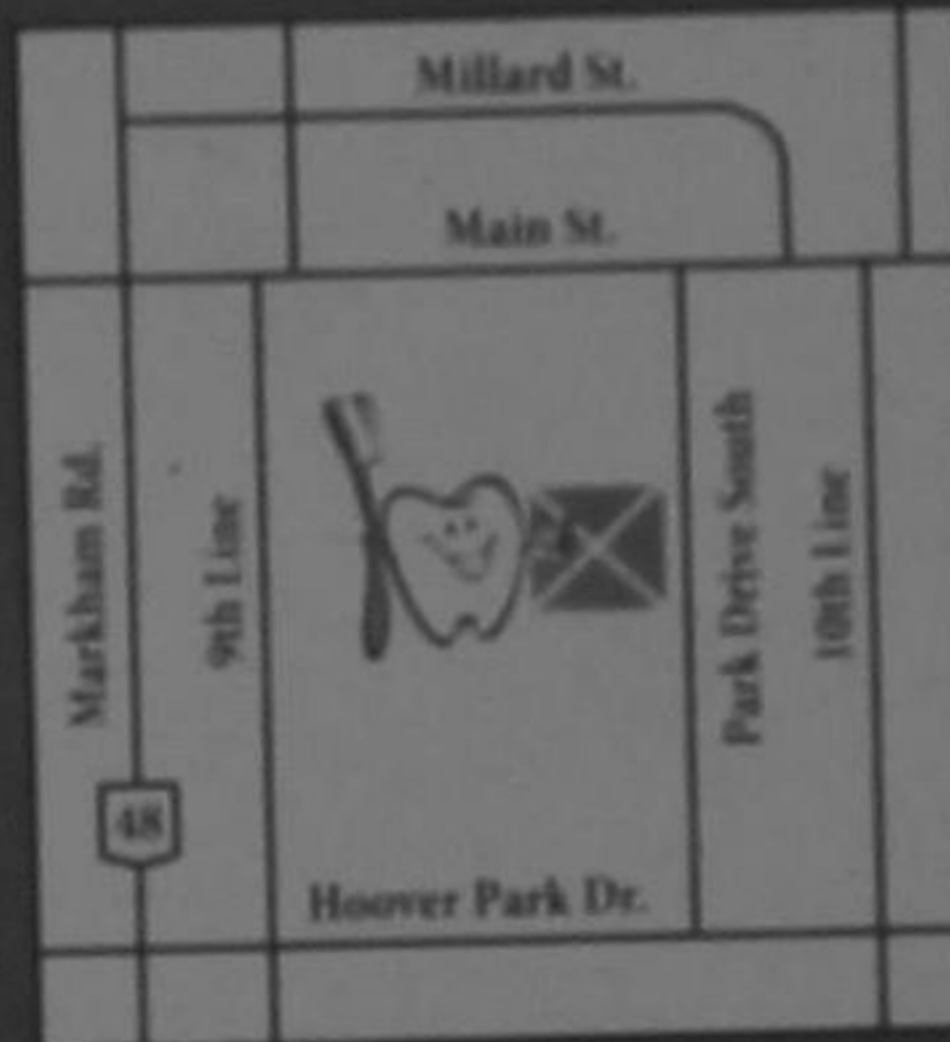
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McWhinnie's World

Ring In The New

By Jill McWhinnie

As Canada becomes more culturally diverse, we learn about new year festivities in other lands. Some may be surprised to know that our own celebration on Jan. 1 is of relatively recent origin.

In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar introduced a solar-based calendar to replace the ancient lunar-based Roman version. The Julian calendar established New Year's Day as January 1, marking the beginning of the civil year, when newly-elected Roman consuls began their term. They dedicated the day to Janus, the god of gates, doors and beginnings, who had two faces, one looking forward to the future, the other looking backward to the past. January is named in his honour.

Roman pagan celebrations associated with the January 1 new year were rejected by the Medieval Catholic church and the date in Medieval Europe was changed from Jan. 1 to March 25, so that the new year would generally coincide with Easter.

In 1582, the Gregorian calendar, established by Pope Gregory XIII, restored January 1 as New Year's Day. Although most Catholic countries readily adopted this calendar, European Protestant countries did not do so until much later. The British, for example, waited until 1752 before it, and its American colonies, made the change.

January 1 does seem an appropriate day to begin the new year. December 21 is the Winter Solstice in the Northern Hemisphere, the shortest and darkest day of the year. By January 1, the days are already brighter and longer. This return of light and renewal underlies many of our new year customs.

A baby as a symbol of the new year was present in ancient Greece and Egypt, but German immigrants are credited with

introducing the Baby New Year to North America. A baby wearing a diaper, sporting a sash depicting the incoming year and a top hat, is found on cards and magazines, and often personified at New Year's Eve parties. The baby is shown beside an old man holding a sickle and hour glass, Father Time, who represents the passing of the old year.

On New Year's Eve, *Auld Lang Syne* is sung in the English-speaking world. It was first published by Scottish poet Robbie Burns in the 1796 edition of the book, *Scots Musical Museum*. It became a new year's tradition after Canadian band leader Guy Lombardo played it at midnight at a New Year's Eve party at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City in 1929.

Scotland has also given us the tradition of "first footing". At midnight on New Year's Eve, or Hogmanay as the Scots call it, a tall, dark, handsome man should be the first person across the threshold, bearing a coin, a lump of coal, whisky and shortbread. This superstition may date back to the Viking era. A blond Viking showing up at a Scot's door at new year's or any other day, was not a good thing.

Hoppin' John, a dish consisting of black eyed peas, hog jowls and mustard greens, is eaten for luck in the southern United States. In Denmark, it is considered good luck to smash dishes at the front doors of friends and neighbours at new year's. In Mexico and South American countries, wearing yellow underwear at new year's is reputed to bring luck and happiness.

However you celebrate, it's a time to pause and like Janus, look back on the year that has passed, and look forward to the one to come with hope, joy and positive expectations.

Happy New Year and Hogmanay!

Garden Wisdom

By Donna McMaster

When the blustery, frigid winds of January blow across my garden, there is nothing that cheers me more than a good garden catalogue.

I am immune to the many websites that I can access on my computer and use them only for research. For me, you cannot replace those luscious pages full of eye candy. I do realize I am showing my age and catalogues have become a thing of the past, but I cling to them, and dream the month away.

January's only other redeeming quality is that the days are actually getting longer and soon green sprouts will appear through that tangle out there.

A very wise idea is to look carefully at the skeleton of your trees, especially deciduous

trees like Japanese maples that have now lost their leaves. It becomes clearer where there may be damaged or broken branches, where branches intersect or cross each other. Branches should not rub together and will be damaged if they do. Decide now which one should go. In fact maples could be pruned now if you are so inclined, because sap will not be running so early in the winter. Don't prune maple or birch any time after the end of January. After that you must wait until June.

Stay warm. Next month we will talk about seeds.

Donna McMaster is a master gardener and a member of the Stouffville Garden Club, which will be offering monthly hints for your gardening calendar.

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