

FALL - 2020

LAND CARE NIAGARA

Official Newsletter

Message from the Stewardship Director

Dear Landowners, Volunteers, and Friends,

Summer has come to a close!

Please enjoy our newest edition of the Land Care Niagara e-newsletter which will provide you with updates from our organization as well as stories from around the environmental world. Over the past few months, we have welcomed a new Board Member and an Environmental Technician to the team! We continue to strengthen partnerships with organizations, agencies and individuals in the community, engage new landowners in our projects, and connect with the citizens and youth of Niagara.

Working through the global pandemic we have continued implementing our core programs and projects while keeping our team and community safe. We are busy working with local landowners and Forests Ontario to plan for our 2021 Rural Tree Planting Program. We were also successful in receiving a new grant through the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Seed Grant program to address the issues facing our forests in Niagara. Many new landowners and volunteers worked with us to continue maintaining our Re-Leaf Tree Nursery, and plant more trees across the Region. We encourage you all to continue becoming actively involved in the environment to make a positive change in your community.

Please share this e-newsletter with friends and family and stay tuned on our social media platforms for regular news and updates! Land Care Niagara Council and Staff would like to take this opportunity to say thank you, take care, and wish you the very best over the winter of 2020 and into 2021!

Warmest wishes,
Barry Porter



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Welcome New Members

We are very excited to welcome Melissa Watkins to our Board of Directors!



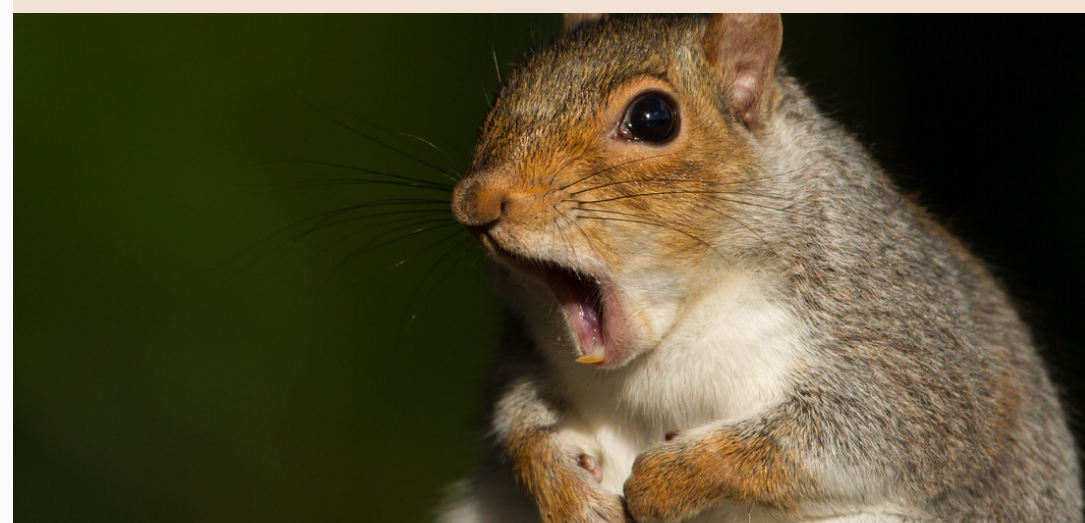
Melissa Watkins earned her Honours degree in Business Management and Organizational Studies from the Western University, specializing in Finance and Administration. From there, she continued her studies at Fanshawe College, where she graduated with Dean's Honours in Accounting. Shortly after, Melissa joined an Architecture Photography company where she travelled and photographed architectural structures across Canada and abroad, and cataloged a collection of images spanning 40 years for donation to the National Art Gallery of Canada. She also spent eight years working with Henry's Photography Equipment in Sales and as a Purchasing Analyst. Currently, Melissa is a dedicated accounting and management professional for Woodbecker Inc., where she manages project budgets up to \$25M and acts as the Chief Financial Officer overseeing all administrative, financial and legal aspects of the business. In her spare time, Melissa enjoys practicing the arts of dance, photography and film. She's excited to work with Land Care Niagara to carry out environmental initiatives and join efforts to ensure a healthy planet for future generations.

Don't Feed Wildlife!

With winter fast approaching you may have noticed a few extra furry friends in your yard, at your campsite, or perhaps while hiking the local trails. As the chipmunks, squirrels, groundhogs and other creatures prepare for the winter, you are more likely to see them out in search of food to store in caches or build body fat to get them through the long, cold months ahead.

While it may be tempting to feed that cute little chipmunk nuts, seeds or other foods, doing so creates more harm than good for both the animal and yourself. Animals that are fed by humans may become dependent on these food sources. Additionally, although we may think that foods such as peanuts or seeds are appropriate to feed wild animals, oftentimes these foods are unhealthy for wildlife as they are usually processed, high in calories, and not found in the animal's natural diet.

On the flip side, feeding wildlife can also cause harm to yourself and others. Animals that are fed often by humans may learn to associate humans with food, which can cause these creatures to become aggressive and also pose a problem to your neighbours, other campers or hikers. We ask that, instead of feeding the wildlife, we all try to enjoy these creatures from a safe distance.



Community News: Interview with Spencer Ray



Landowner: Spencer Ray

Spencer Ray started on his path to becoming a "Stewardship Ambassador" when he contacted Land Care Niagara in 2011, interested in enhancing his property in Grimsby. Spencer reforested 8 acres of his property, planting 15,945 trees over a 3 year period. Never could he have envisioned all of the subsequent projects he would undertake, how rewarding it would be to naturalize his property resulting in a place where nature and recreation could function in harmony and even lead him to invest his time volunteering on the board for Land Care Niagara! We interviewed Spencer to hear more about his experience.

What initiated this work on your land?

"I first wanted to do this type of work for my field dog training business. The area was predominately cattle pasture and hay fields dominated by cool season grasses and legumes. The area lacked the year round habitat requirements for upland game and the dense cover needed for a field dog to properly apply themselves. What little cover there was consisted of invasive shrubs."



Can you tell us about the process?

"The first major habitat project was a tree planting in 2012. We did two more subsequent plantings (2015 & 2016)."

How did you find out about the rural tree planting program?

"I got in touch with LCN through a Ministry of Natural Resources contact who told me about the Rural Tree Planting Program."



Community News: Interview with Spencer Ray



How has your land changed over time and what results have you seen?

"In addition to the reforestation, I added several wetlands plus a few acres of tallgrass prairie. It's changed immensely over the past 8 years. It's been a win-win for biodiversity and my business, which is rarely the case. I have areas to train, ride horses, hike and enjoy."

Are you happy you took part in the program?

"Absolutely, I've been able to add a lot of habitat and overall character to the property with the tree planting program. I believe it's also contributed to the property value as the areas I have planted, along with the wetlands we built feel like a park oasis."

Any tips to prospective landowners thinking of doing this type of project?

"SITE PREP, SITE PREP, SITE PREP is the best tip I can give. Deal with invasive species, drainage issues, etc. before planting as it's difficult to do afterwards."



Did this project then lead you to get involved with volunteering on the LCN board?

"Stewardship evolved into an interest on its own for me. It led to getting involved with LCN. The stewardship director at the time thought it would be beneficial to have someone who has completed a lot of stewardship projects on the board and I was happy to bring along some different insights and experience."



Special Feature: Forest Fragmentation

What is forest fragmentation?

Forest fragmentation is the break up of a large, continuous forested area into smaller disconnected forested areas or patches. Largely the result of human activity, these forest patches become separated by roads, agricultural lands, hydro corridors, and urban development.



What impacts does fragmentation have on our forests?

The main threats that fragmentation poses to forests is loss of gene flow between forest patches, and edge effects. Forests that have adequate gene flow are more resilient to things like pests, pathogens, invasive species, and climate change. When a forest is broken down into smaller areas that are completely disconnected from one another, wildlife movement is inhibited. This acts to reduce genetic variation and adaptive capacity to environmental stress. Edge effects are changes in the environmental conditions along the edge of a forest patch adjacent to the area that separates them, such as a agricultural land or residential area. Forest edges tend to receive more light, less moisture, and experience more temperature fluctuations than the forest interior which is cooler, moister, and more uniform. These microclimate changes alter the composition of plant and animal species found at forest edges in favour of those able to tolerate harsher conditions such as non-native, invasive species of wildlife and vegetation. These effects penetrate into the forest interior, thus the smaller the forest patch the greater impacts edge effects will have on biodiversity.

In partnership with the
Ontario Trillium
Foundation we at Land
Care Niagara
are working to address
forest fragmentation in
the Niagara Region!

*Read about more about this project on
page 7!*

What is Land Care Niagara doing to help?

Land Care Niagara is addressing the issue of forest fragmentation with support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Seed Grant program for our project called "Data Gap Analysis of Fragmented Forest Parcels in the Niagara Region. Our goal is to map existing forest cover, identify fragmented areas, and target tree planting initiatives in suitable areas that will reconnect isolated forest patches.

Fragmented forests
experience lower
adaptive resilience
and increased
biodiversity loss



Project Updates: Re-Leaf Tree Nursery

Land Care Niagara’s Re-Leaf Tree Nursery has had a very busy summer!

Many of our larger trees have found new homes with landowners across Niagara who are dedicated to keeping our forests healthy and diverse. Over the last few months, we were able to supply and plant over 250 trees! With help from volunteers, Land Care Niagara staff, and our dedicated board members, 40 of these trees were planted at Fireman’s park in partnership with the City of Niagara Falls.

Volunteers from the Graduate Ecosystem Restoration Program at Niagara College, along with many private landowners have taken the time out of their busy schedules to assist us with nursery work. They've spent many hours keeping the grounds and pots weed-free, fixing up our irrigation system so that it's in top notch shape, and planting trees across the region. Before the nursery closes for the winter, we plan on finishing laying our walkways with landscaping fabric and gravel to help keep our paths safe and weed-free come spring. LCN staff have also been busy participating in tree planting events hosted by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. We are always happy to get involved with initiatives that help increase native biodiversity and enhance the natural areas within Niagara.



We would like to thank all the landowners who have helped fundraise for the continuation of our Re-leaf Nursery and to all of our volunteers for dedicating their time to help us maintain our nursery grounds. All your hard work has helped us continue our mission of restoring urban canopy cover across Niagara! The trees thank you too!



Project Updates: Seed Grant

Our “Data Gap Analysis of Fragmented Forest Parcels in the Niagara Region” Project funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation is off to a great start! The goal of this project is to determine the current state of forest cover in Niagara, and locate suitable areas for tree planting that will have the most success in increasing forest cover and reconnecting fragmented forested areas.



Two partnership meetings have been held to review the details of our project and to consolidate available data to ensure our restoration efforts are prioritized where work is needed most. With the help of our partners and dedicated volunteers, we have successfully planted over 400 trees at our first site in the Upper 12-Mile Creek Watershed. These trees will help increase forest connectivity and provide valuable habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Using advanced mapping technology, we will continue to identify areas of high priority for reforestation and afforestation, and begin preparing plans for additional tree planting sites to be carried out in Spring 2021.

Thank you to all of our partners for helping make our first planting through this project a success!

Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

Trout Unlimited: Niagara Chapter

Niagara College

Haldimand Stewardship Council





Project Updates: Rural Tree Planting Program

We have successfully completed all survival assessments for the properties that we planted in 2016 and 2019. Majority of our sites had a success rate between 70 and 80% which is great news for our forests. Many landowners across Niagara have committed to be a part of the Rural Tree Planting program in 2021 and site plans and seedling orders are quickly underway! We look forward to working with everyone involved to get another 32,000 trees in the ground in an effort to help increase native forest canopy cover on private lands throughout the Niagara region. If you wanted to be a part of the program but missed the deadline this year, it is never too late to reach out to us and start planning for 2022!

If you are a landowner interested in being a part of the tree planting program visit Forests Ontario website to register, or contact us at info@landcareniagara.com for more information.



REASONS TO TREE PLANT:

- **Offers shade, buffer, or windbreak**
- **Enhances wildlife habitat**
- **Protects soil, water, & air quality**
- **Restores native forest cover**
- **Mitigates Climate Change**
- **Leaves legacy to descendants**
- **Increases property value**



Announcements - Events - Updates

Contest Winners

We held two contests this summer for the chance to win a Land Care Niagara prize pack including a native tree from our Re-leaf Nursery! Congratulations to Chris Gonsalves for winning our Plastic Free July Contest, and to Gregary Grant for winning our Nature Photography Contest! Stay tuned to our social media pages for more chances to win.



Student Project

We will be working on a project to assist in the recovery of 4 Species at Risk bats and Gray Ratsnake, all of which are Endangered in Ontario. Two students, Tessa Anderson and Michelle Nieroda, from the Ecosystem Restoration Program at Niagara College will be carrying out a landscape level analysis, mapping potential sites for bat roosting habitat. This work will set the framework for the next steps of the larger project, stay tuned for more on this exciting project!

Awards

We are thrilled to have been selected for this year's Environmental Award presented by the City of Niagara Falls. This award is given to those who have made a significant contribution towards the protection or enhancement of the cities environment. We greatly appreciate this recognition!



Volunteer Opportunities

Our Nursery is ready to be closed up for the winter and we would like to thank everyone who dedicated their time to volunteer with us. We will be beginning work at our Woodworking for Nature Workshop and will send out volunteer opportunities for that soon. If you would like to be added to our volunteer list, please let us know!

