

GROWING



TOGETHER

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A member of the Ontario Horticultural Association

www.cobourggardenclub.org

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Cobourg Horticultural Society Celebrates 150 Years 1850 - 2009

President Digs to Find CHS History

This is a brief story of the search for our Society's founding date. When I joined the CHS Executive two years ago, I noticed that in two Ontario Horticultural Association publications there were conflicting dates for the founding of the Cobourg Society, 1863 and 1868. I set off on a journey to discover which date was correct, and began the search with the newspaper archives at the Cobourg Library. I found that the first indexed reference to the club was in 1861, with the tantalizing wording,

"With next Tuesday arrives again our Horticultural Exhibition, which promises to surpass anything of the kind ever held in Cobourg, considering the backwardness and the cold of the season. The interest which is manifested in these yearly exhibitions is truly gratifying..."

From then on, we knew that the Society was clearly up and running, and holding annual exhibitions by 1861. The Executive decided to amend the founding date of the Society to 1860, in the absence of any more concrete evidence of the actual date. We changed all documentation to 1860, including the beautiful needlework banner made by Mina Clappison. The Executive began to develop plans for the Society's 150th anniversary celebrations in 2010, which is also the 150th anniversary of Victoria Hall.

Last October, however, **Carol Evans** came across an article from 1859 in the club's archives, which are maintained by **Christine Van Rooy**. This was an article reprinted from the original in one of John Jolie's TODAY IN HISTORY columns in *The Cobourg Star*. It reads, in part:

"The Horticultural Society in Cobourg was organized and had their first exhibition on this date, July 6, 1859. 500 attended the show. The Cobourg bank, gas light illumination and the paintings made it a memorable occasion..."

This was a great find. Carol Evans located a further article from July, 1859, written by the Society's Secretary, *George Coventry*, describing the first Exhibition in wonderfully florid Victorian text and detail, including all the categories for Flowers, Fruits and Vegetables, and the (all male) prize winners. It began:

President: Sarah Holland
Treasurer: Judy Newman

Vice President: Helen Lackey
Editorial: Judith Goulin

Secretary: Carol Farren
Newsletter Layout: Vikki McEachran

"The monotony of life was very pleasingly diversified by the first Exhibition of this newly organized Society, which took place in Mr. Scott's large room, adjoining the Post Office..."

So, now we had a "newly organized Society" in July 1859, but we did not know when the actual organization had taken place, a year earlier perhaps, or just a few months before. If it had been a year earlier, we could possibly have missed the 150th anniversary. With some trepidation, I delved further back in the microfiche records of *The Cobourg Star & Newcastle District Gazette* at the Library. The newspaper, published twice a week, has a great mix of international and local news, land grants, ships arriving and advertisements for cures for all manner of ailments. I was thrilled that amongst all of this the following notice popped out, exactly what I was looking for, in the **Wednesday February 9, 1859**, edition of the paper:

Cobourg Horticultural Society

We are happy to be able to announce to our readers that the above Society is now an accomplished fact. A number who favored the formation of such a society met together last Thursday evening and having placed G.M. GOODEVE, Esq. in the chair and F.G. CALLENDER in the post of Secretary, proceeded to business.

The first matter discussed was the choice of a President, Dr. Beatty, A.A. Burnham, Thos. Scott, and W.H. Kittson, Esq. were named, Dr. Beatty and Mr. Kittson were present and both positively declined the office, which was finally conferred upon THOMAS SCOTT, Esq. The other offices were disposed of as follows;

Vice President - G.M. Goodeve, Esq.
Secretary - F. G. Coventry, Esq.
Treasurer - David Burn, Esq.

It was then resolved - That the number of the Committee of Directors be nine, and that five be a quorum. The following are the names of those elected:

Committee - Messrs. B. Losee, F.G. Callender, A.J. Burnham, John Tame, John Roberts, W.H. Kittson, G. Bennett, A. McDonald, Geo. E. Jones.

The meeting shortly afterwards adjourned.

("Last Thursday evening" was **Thursday, February 3rd, 1859**, the date therefore of the actual founding. The Executive were relieved to learn that we had NOT missed the 150th anniversary, but this discovery was made in November, and it meant that we needed to speed up the planning process! The first opportunity to celebrate will be at the February 4th 2009 general meeting, **150 years and one day** from the founding date. (Mina Clappison is, yet again, kindly changing the Society's banner.)

You may have noticed that a stone has quite recently been donated and installed in the Society's Millennium Garden at the Five Corners, and a plaque is ordered to attach to the stone, identifying the garden as one of the club's projects. We plan an unveiling ceremony in the spring. It will be one of the opportunities in 2009-2010 for members to come together to celebrate 150 years of volunteer contributions to the community by the stalwart members of this Society, and to honour the founders, whose names appear above, for their foresight in getting it all started in the first place.

Congratulations to all who have been involved over many years - the legacy of the club's work can be seen throughout Cobourg, in the public parks we help to maintain and in the gardens of all of our members. It is indeed something to be proud of as we celebrate this 150th anniversary.

Sarah Holland
President

Coming Events

Canada Blooms	Metro Toronto Convention Centre Toronto	March 18-22
Successful Gardening Show	International Centre Toronto	March 19-22
OHA District 4 Spring Get Together	Lakefield	March 21
Victoria Hall Lecture (see details below)	Victoria Hall Cobourg	April 8
OHA Annual Meeting	Campbellford	April 25
For the Love of Gardening	Evinrude Centre Peterborough	April 9-11

Food, Farms and the Future...
Where Do We Grow From Here?"

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Wednesday, April 8, 2009
7:30 pm.
Victoria Hall Concert Hall
Tickets: \$20.00
Concert Hall Box Office
905-372-2210

Thomas Pawlick, author "The End of Food" and Gaye Hoskin, 5th generation local farmer, address the issues surrounding the production, distribution and marketing of our food. Learn how you can support and advocate for a nutritious, and appetizing food supply in Northumberland County.

The evening includes: an information market of local food producers, door prizes and complimentary refreshments.

As always, we are indebted to Carol Evans and her committee, Ruth Tessier and Jeannette Paziuk who work hard every year to find a worthy recipient for the CHS scholarship.

Travis Wins Scholarship

Travis Greydanus of Grafton attended St. Mary's Secondary school in Cobourg until he graduated in June of 2008. After submitting his essay and website form to the Cobourg Horticultural Society, he won our \$500.00 scholarship.

Travis stated that he has always been interested in agricultural machinery and the growing of crops. During his high school years that he became one of his father's employees and was responsible for some of the family harvest. To further his learning in the field of agriculture during this period, Travis took a farm equipment course and also learned more about chemical usage through the University of Guelph.

Last fall he began his studies at University of Guelph's Kemptville Campus where he will take two years of study related to Agricultural Business. He plans to return home and work for his father until such time as he will take over the family farm.

Upon receipt of his scholarship funds his happy and thoughtful personality shone through. Travis was wished every success in his chosen field and assured how much the people of the earth appreciate the efforts of those who work in the field of agriculture. **Carol Evans**

Gardening is Not for Sissies

Beware of Plants Bearing Sap

I never thought that gardening *was* for sissies, but an incident which happened during a clean up session really drove this point home. I learned the hard way about one of the many hazards of our noble hobby, gardening.

My goal one autumn afternoon was to cut down as much plant material as I could in order to give my gardens a tidy look for the winter. Since I only had a few hours, I was furiously chopping plants and hurling them into the wheelbarrow. My allotted time was just about up when my eye began to water non-stop like a leaky tap. "I only have five more minutes of work," I said to myself and I reasoned that all those tears would flush out whatever was in my eye anyway, so I carried on until my tasks were done. The eye however, had other plans. It didn't stop leaking even though I rinsed it every hour with an eye solution. When I woke up to a wet pillow in the middle of the night that was not good news. The next day was more of the same, but leaky taps don't run forever, do they? By the second night I became alarmed when my eye was extremely sensitive to light and very sore. My alarm escalated when I consulted the Internet.

The plant I'd been flinging around with careless abandon is Donkey Tail Spurge and some of its milky sap had found a target in my eye. I learned on a website that: "Donkey Tail Spurge exudes a caustic latex sap which can cause redness, swelling, blisters, blurred vision and blindness when it comes into contact with the skin and eyes." It was time to call in the experts and I wasn't thinking of Master Gardeners.

Early the following morning I called my eye specialist who agreed to see me right away. My distress was immediately apparent to him. Not only did my eye look bad, but a close examination revealed that there were blisters on the inside of my eyelid. No wonder I felt like there was a log in my eye. "Blisters on the inside of the eyelid will do that," the doctor said. The good news was that there was no permanent damage to my vision, but it took two days of rest and lots of antibiotic eye ointment before the discomfort went away.

Looking back at the title of this article, in the case of its author and victim perhaps a more apt name might have been **Beware of Saps Bearing Plants!**

Judith Goulin

Vermiculite May Pose Asbestos Hazard

The mineral vermiculite is an extremely effective soil conditioner for moisture retention enhancement. Avid gardeners praise the material for being inexpensive and easy to incorporate into different garden arrangements. However, there may be a darker side to the mineral that is now becoming manifest. Unfortunately, many vermiculite deposits are known to contain not only the targeted mineral, but also hazardous asbestos.

Vermiculite occurs across the globe in mineral form and is mined not only for commercial and private gardening uses, but also for commercial insulation materials and industrial compounds. The origin of the mineral is another mineral known as biotite. Over millions of years of age and weathering, biotite will become vermiculite. Biotite would often be found in close proximity to another mineral known as diopsid, which over millions of years and the same weathering conditions would eventually become asbestos, a known carcinogen.

Most asbestos products were banned in the late 1970's by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and Environmental Protection Agency. In 1989, a total phase out asbestos was enacted but eventually overturned. Today, products which contain more than one percent asbestos are considered asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) and are banned.

When vermiculite is mined, often so too are trace amounts of asbestos dust. In Libby, Montana, W.R. Grace, a specialty chemical and mineral company was mining thousands of tons of vermiculite each year. When the mine's employees and residents of the town began to become ill with [mesothelioma](#) (an aggressive form of cancer known only to be caused by asbestos exposure) and other respiratory conditions, it became clear that asbestos contamination had become a major issue in commercial vermiculite mining. While W.R. Grace was mining vermiculite before existing regulations were in place, the fact is that even vermiculite which contains less than one percent asbestos is potentially hazardous to human health.

Asbestos, prior to being regulated, was used in a myriad of industrial capacities. It had unique insulation qualities and proved to be particularly adept at preventing temperature transfer. For this reason it was used in thousands of construction materials. When asbestos exists within a solid construction compound, it poses no true hazard as the fibers cannot be released. It is only when the compound is rendered "friable," or able to pulverized by human hand pressure, that the material is hazardous. Residual asbestos dust, as was found in the Libby vermiculite, is already friable as it is not in any stable compound.

For this reason, today most vermiculite manufacturers will label their product as "non dusty." It is important to use only vermiculite which is labeled as such. Those who encounter a great deal of residual dust in their vermiculite should likely dispose of the material and be careful not to disturb it. Asbestos cancer is among the most devastating malignancies known and [mesothelioma treatment](#) is typically limited to palliative therapies to ease symptoms. Fortunately, asbestos exposures due to vermiculite can now largely be avoided by being conscious of the material you are working with and identifying potentially hazardous vermiculite granules. Vermiculite can be used both safely and effectively if certain precautions are undertaken. **James O'Shea**

References: Environmental Protection Agency: *Asbestos Regulations and History*
Consumer Product Safety Commission: *Asbestos: Risk and Assessment*
Environmental Protection Agency Libby *Amphibole Asbestos*

Gardening, with its many attendant dangers is definitely not for sissies.

We are very saddened to learn of the death of Kay Mann, a much beloved Life Member of the Cobourg Horticultural Society.

Always smiling, she had a hearty laugh and a kind heart. She had a gift for making people feel welcome. Kay took an active part in garden club activities. As well as being an avid gardener, Kay was a great animal lover.

During the past few years Kay had been unable to attend garden club meetings because of her failing health, but she was always eager to receive our newsletter, *Growing Together*, so that she could keep up with club activities.

Kay Mann will be remembered for her enthusiasm, her smiles and laughter, and above all, her kindness.



**Some Recent Discoveries
From
CHS Archives**

Co-incidences: what wonderful surprises they bring. Members **Carol Evans** and **Judith Goulin** were looking through some CHS archival material when they saw an old newspaper photo of a woman they thought looked familiar. Off they went to the floral department of the Cobourg A&P, and sure enough they were on to something. When they met Sandy Winkler in the store they were pleased to learn that she was a great source of information about the Cobourg Horticultural Society in the sixties because her father, Art Lescard, was president of the club at that time. In the photo mentioned above, Sandy is pictured giving a demonstration at a CHS meeting. At that time the garden club met in the Market Building.

Art Lescard is remembered for his many contributions to the Cobourg club. He planted a centennial garden on Division Street near 401, maintained gardens at the Cobourg District Hospital on King Street and initiated the floral clock in Victoria Park. Always interested in horticulture, he enjoyed a career as co-owner of Denton Florist. For many years the Denton Florist trophy was awarded in our club. Sandy has several scrapbooks filled with clippings of this earlier chapter in CHS's history which she very kindly lent us so that we could photocopy them. We are indebted to her for filling in some of the blanks in our history.