

ReLeaf Stratford Project Report



December 2022

ReLeaf Stratford Project Report 2022

ReLeaf Stratford was initiated as a project of the Stratford and Area Master Gardeners (SAMG) to celebrate “The Year of the Garden” in 2022. Our goal was to plant 2022 native trees and shrubs in our community. Stratford and Area Master Gardeners (SAMG) is a local group of Master Gardeners with 15 members. Our organization serves Perth, Oxford, and Huron counties.

To help manage our fundraising, we received assistance from Master Gardeners of Ontario, the provincial umbrella organization that supports and oversees all Master Gardener groups in Ontario. We also received support for our planting projects from the City of Stratford Parks, Forestry and Cemetery Manager, Quin Malott, and from Karen Pugh, Resources Specialist at the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA).

We developed a number of significant partnerships which contributed to our project’s success. Thanks to the following organizations: Stratford & District Horticultural Society, Rotary Club of Stratford, Kiwanis Club of Stratford, Stratford Field Naturalists, Canadian Federation of University Women Stratford, Stratford Perth Tree Trust, Perth County Sustainability Hub, Stratford Public Library and Stratford District Secondary School for your support.

As ReLeaf Stratford developed these partnerships in the community, our meetings expanded to include members from the Stratford Perth Tree Trust, Perth County Sustainability Hub, the Stratford Horticultural Society, and the City of Stratford Energy & Environment Committee. Along with the Stratford and Area Master Gardeners, these members played an important role in our project’s success.

ReLeaf Stratford Committee members

Don Farwell, Leslye Glover, Elizabeth Spedaliere, Jim Fitzgerald, Nancy Burnett, Carolyn Schmidt, Liza Mischler, Felicity Sutcliffe, Craig Merkley.

Community Education

There were 2 key components to our education strategy: public speaking engagements in the community and a partnership with the Stratford Public Library to deliver a virtual speaker series, “Creating Nature Inspired Gardens”.

This series featured speakers with expertise to develop gardens that are ecologically diverse and support pollinators, birds and wildlife:

- Dr. Stefan Weber: From Seed to Seed: Conserving and Restoring Native Trees February 10, 2022
- Sean James: Layered Designs for Natural Gardens March 10, 2022
- Cathy Kavassalis: Small Trees for Small Spaces April 14, 2022
- Dr. Victoria MacPhail: Native Plants for Pollinators May 12, 2022

The speaker series was an effective way to reach gardeners to provide education on the importance of native plants in our ecosystem. The total number of attendees for the series was 707 and there were 1516 views of the videos of the speaker presentations in the two weeks following their individual presentation. Exit survey results indicated that participants learned,

were more confident in their learning, were able to apply what they learned and to share that information with others.

Speaking Engagements were held with the following organizations:

The Stratford and District Horticultural Society
The Woodstock Horticultural Society
St Marys Horticultural Society
Perth County Sustainability Hub
Stratford Field Naturalists
Woodstock Field Naturalists
Canadian Federation of University Women Stratford
Stratford & District Secondary School (SDSS) Environmental Club
Green Industries Class SDSS
Probus Club

Spring 2022

ReLeaf Members participated in community events during Earth Week including a Climate Momentum event in the square at Stratford City Hall and an Earth Day event organized by the Canadian Federation of University of Women at Gallery Stratford. Our participation allowed us to highlight our first native tree and shrub sale, our tree planting days at the TJ Dolan Natural Area and to recruit volunteers.



ReLeaf Native Tree & Plant Sale held at Avondale United Church April 30, 2022

Native Tree and Shrub Sale

The first ReLeaf Native Tree and Shrub Sale was held on April 30, 2022. Over 700 native trees and shrubs were sold. Advanced sales of 360 shrubs and trees provided a significant boost to our total sales. We appreciate the organizations that supported our efforts through advance sales: The Stratford Horticultural Society, Kirkton Horticultural Society, Kiwanis Club of Stratford, Stratford District Secondary School Environment Club, Avondale United Church, and of course our own SAMG members. We had a wonderful turn out from the public and our only difficulty was selling out of popular species within the first half hour of the sale.

The species selected were chosen using the list of recommended native trees, shrubs & vines for naturalization projects in the Upper Thames River Watershed <https://thamesriver.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/Native-trees-shrubs.pdf> and input from ReLeaf members. Our group was also mindful to complement rather than compete with the Festival Hydro Tree Power event which was selling 8 species of native hardwood trees.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Number Ordered
<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>	Chinquapin Oak	12
<i>Cornus alternifolia</i>	Pagoda dogwood	50
<i>Cornus racemosa</i>	Grey dogwood	50
<i>Amelanchier canadensis</i>	Service berry	50
<i>Viburnum lentago</i>	Nanny berry	50
<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	Chokecherry	50
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	American elder	50
<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	New Jersey Tea	50
<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i>	Witch hazel	50
<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	Bush honeysuckle	50
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	Chokeberry	50
<i>Salix discolor</i>	Pussywillow	50

There were also a few specialty items: Black Maple, Cherry Birch, Paw Paw, Blue Beech, Hop Tree, Basswood and Redbud.

Spring Planting Projects

Thanks to TD Friends of the Environment for a grant of \$6025 for our tree and shrub planting. The City of Stratford recommended Dufferin Park bush and TJ Dolan Natural Area as areas in need of restoration and biodiversity.

Suppliers indicated there was limited availability of native trees this year. The Upper Thames River Conservation Authority also confirmed there appeared to be a very limited quantity of small trees available from vendors for planting projects this year. Based on this information, SAMG made the decision to purchase all 400 trees for planting in the spring, rather than deferring a portion of the tree purchase to the fall when the supply of native trees was likely to be very limited. Even with ordering early, we needed to make substitutions from our submitted planting list as Gray dogwood and Swamp White Oak were unavailable.

We ordered the following native species to be planted in these two locations:

Botanical Name	Common Name	Number Ordered
<i>Cornus amomum</i>	Silky Dogwood	50
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red Osier Dogwood	25
<i>Acer saccharum</i>	Sugar Maple	75
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i>	Hemlock	50
<i>Carya ovata</i>	Shagbark Hickory	50
<i>Quercus muehlenbergii</i>	Chinquapin Oak	50
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Saskatoon Serviceberry	50
<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>	Hackberry	50

In preparation for our planting days, we completed a walk of the planting sites with our project advisors, Quin Malott and Karen Pugh. We found the dead ash trees had not been removed from the Dufferin Park bush and that it would not be possible to plant there.

There are many areas in the TJ Dolan Natural Area that the City of Stratford and the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority are trying to reforest, which aligned perfectly with the ReLeaf Stratford project goal of planting more native trees in the Stratford area. We worked with Quin and Karen to find suitable planting locations at the TJ Dolan Natural Area for all 400 trees we had ordered.

Our planting days were arranged for May 17 and 18. Trees were delivered on May 16 and the City of Stratford provided a secure lock up for tree storage and delivered trees and mulch to the upper area of TJ Dolan Natural Area off Lorne Avenue on May 17. Volunteers arrived from the Stratford and District Horticultural Society, Kiwanis Club of Stratford, Climate Momentum, Canadian Federation of University Women Stratford Chapter, Perth County Sustainability Hub, Perth County Tree Trust, and our own SAMG members. Additional members of the public, inspired by our community project, arrived to help out as well.

Karen Pugh was on hand to help volunteers sort the trees and to confirm the desired planting areas. Karen gave the volunteers planting instructions and helped with the logistics of efficient planting.

On May 18th volunteers from the Stratford Field Naturalists, Stratford and District Horticultural Society, ESL students from Stratford and District Secondary School and their teacher as well as members of the public joined SAMG members to plant Sugar Maple and Hemlock, shade tolerant species suitable for this shady, understory area. The City of Stratford had asked us to plant the trees along the main path and fill in open areas along the trail that had become unsanctioned paths.

Follow up with Quin Malott from the City of Stratford confirmed the City of Stratford was very satisfied with the project planning and execution. There has been periodic monitoring of the trees during the late summer and fall. There will be a more in-depth monitor conducted in the spring of 2023.



Karen Pugh explains correct tree planting technique to volunteers May 17 2022

Rotary Tree Planting Donation

In honour of the 100th anniversary of the Rotary Club of Stratford, the Stratford Rotary Club Environment Committee organized the donation of 100 trees to be planted in the TJ Dolan Natural Area to support the ReLeaf Stratford Project. Species planted included 34 White Oak, 33 Red Oak, and 33 Hackberry. The Stratford Rotary Club Environment Committee secured an additional 25 River Birch and 25 Paper Birch to bring their donation to the ReLeaf project to 150 trees. Rotary Club members and secondary school students planted these trees on May 25. We greatly appreciate the support we received from the Rotary Club of Stratford and their Environment Committee.



Rotarian Shawn Malvern and his daughter plant trees May 28 2022

Community Donations of Seedling Trees

Trees were donated by the ReLeaf project to a number of community organizations including the Stratford Perth Tree Trust, Stratford District Secondary School, and Stratford Horticultural society.

Trees were also made available to the public in exchange for a donation to our project. At the Climate momentum Earth Day event at City Hall, Don and Felicity had sugar maple seedlings available. At the Stratford Farmer's Market, Jim and Don had Redbud, Basswood, White Pine, White Spruce, Balsam Fir, Sugar Maple and American White Cedar available.

Fall 2022

Stratford Perth Tree Trust Fall Fest

The Stratford Perth Tree Trust is a registered charity committed to identifying and preserving mature trees in Stratford and Perth County. ReLeaf Stratford Committee members attended their Fall Fest at the Stratford Perth Museum to plant 3 Redbud trees, provide information on planting native trees and to tell people about our upcoming fall planting project.



Young tree planter helps dig a hole for a Redbud Oct. 16 2022

National Tree Day

On September 21, National Tree Day, SAMG members planted a large Sugar Maple tree at the Rotary Hospice of Stratford Perth in honour of health care workers. On hand were Lana Burchett, Executive Director and Dennis Young, Past Chair of the Rotary Hospice of Stratford Perth. Thank you to Drummond Brothers Landscaping for their donation of time and assistance in transporting and planting the tree.



Left to Right: Don Farwell, Jim Fitzgerald, Lana Burchett, Leslye Glover, Nancy Burnett, Dennis Young

Avon River John St. Weir Planting

Felicity Sutcliffe of the Energy and Environment Committee shared the UTRCA 2017 Watershed Report card on the Avon River. One local action for improvement recommended in the report card was considering naturalizing the Avon River between the John Street Weir and Thomas Orr Dam. Riparian habitats support high numbers of wildlife species and provide an array of ecological functions including water quality protection. Native trees and shrubs provide important biomass and biodiversity for pollinators and for birds. This planting will create a buffer of native shrubs and trees for erosion control, create habitat for pollinators, birds and wildlife.

Subsequently, the ReLeaf Committee approached Quin Malott from the City of Stratford to see if our group could undertake a planting along the Avon River as recommended in the UTRCA report card. Quin was supportive and the City of Stratford agreed to support our application for funding to the Community Foundation of Stratford Perth. Our planting plan was supported by the UTRCA.

Community members were generous in supporting the ReLeaf Stratford project with donations totalling \$2,364.25. These funds were used to purchase the following native shrubs for the river bank naturalization.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Number Ordered
<i>Cornus racemosa</i>	Gray Dogwood	12
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	Black Chokeberry	20
<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	Bush Honeysuckle	20
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Canada Elderberry	30
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>	Common Ninebark	30
<i>Cornus amomum</i>	Silky Dogwood	15
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red Osier Dogwood	30
<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	Fragrant Sumac	30
<i>Spiraea alba</i>	White Meadowsweet	12
<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>	High bush Cranberry	15
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Red Raspberry	10

On September 7, we were notified that our grant application had been successful and we were to receive \$5200 from the Donald McTavish Conservation Fund held within the Community Foundation of Stratford Perth. This fall, we used \$1312.10 of this grant to purchase native shrubs to add to those purchased by public donations. The remainder of the grant will be used to purchase native trees and shrubs to continue this planting project in the spring of 2023.

The following shrubs were purchased for this fall planting.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Number Ordered
<i>Viburnum lentago</i>	Nannyberry	5
<i>Cornus racemosa</i>	Gray Dogwood	5
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	Black Chokeberry	15
<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	Bush Honeysuckle	15
<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	Canada Elderberry	15
<i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i>	Common Ninebark	15
<i>Cornus amomum</i>	Silky Dogwood	15
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	Red Osier Dogwood	15
<i>Rhus aromatica</i>	Fragrant Sumac	15
<i>Spiraea alba</i>	White Meadowsweet	5
<i>Viburnum trilobum</i>	High bush Cranberry	15
<i>Salix bebbiana</i>	Bebb's Willow	5
<i>Ceanothus americanus</i>	New Jersey Tea	5
<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>	Button bush	5

On October 1 over 40 volunteers gathered to plant along the Avon River from the John St. Weir to the Railway overpass on the north side of the river. We appreciate the support we received from the general public as well as members of the Stratford and District Horticultural Society, Kiwanis Club of Stratford, Stratford Field Naturalists, Stratford Perth Tree Trust, Stratford District Secondary School Environmental Club, Climate Momentum, and Avondale United Church. Some candidates for Stratford City Council also participated in this planting day. Two members of the public participated in planting our tree #2022 to reach our goal. With this planting, ReLeaf Stratford planted 2,243 native trees and shrubs this year.



Over 40 volunteers planted shrubs along the Avon River



Mac, Jamie, Bill and Jess plant tree #2022

Media Coverage

Media coverage included a CTV interview, radio interview on CJs 107.1, and articles in the Stratford Beacon Herald, Stratford Times and Stratford Today, and Stratford Now.

Speaker Series

<https://www.stratfordbeaconherald.com/news/local-news/speaker-series-kickstarts-year-of-the-garden-in-stratford>

Native Tree & Plant Sale

<http://stratfordtimes.com/cmsb/uploads/april.pdf> p.5

<https://www.stratfordbeaconherald.com/news/local-news/gardeners-in-stratford-continue-tree-planting-push-with-weekend-sale>

<https://kitchener.ctvnews.ca/stratford-group-aims-to-plant-2-000-native-trees-and-shrubs-this-year-1.5883308> This interview was broadcast across Ontario.

Community Donations of Tree Seedlings

<http://www.stratfordtimes.com/cmsb/uploads/mayonline.pdf> p. 8

Tree Planting TJ Dolan Natural Area

<https://www.stratfordtoday.ca/local-news/community-members-gather-to-revitalize-tj-dolan-natural-area-5378745>

<http://www.stratfordtimes.com/cmsb/uploads/mayonline.pdf> p. 24

<http://www.stratfordtimes.com/cmsb/uploads/june.pdf> p.5

<https://www.mystratfordnow.com/91266/new-trees-to-be-planted-in-tj-dolan-natural-area/>

<http://www.stratfordtimes.com/cmsb/uploads/june.pdf> photos p. 5

Tree planting at the Rotary Hospice

<https://www.stratfordtoday.ca/local-news/master-gardeners-planting-sugar-maple-for-national-tree-day-5841139>

<https://www.mystratfordnow.com/93259/area-health-care-workers-to-be-honored-at-tree-planting-ceremony/>

Shrub Planting Avon River at John St. Weir

<https://www.stratfordtoday.ca/local-news/stratford-to-plant-400-trees-and-shrubs-in-october-5846898>

<https://www.mystratfordnow.com/93386/don-farwell-from-releaf-stratford/>

<https://www.stratfordtoday.ca/local-news/stratford-to-plant-400-trees-and-shrubs-in-october-5846898>

News items also appeared in the Master Gardener of Ontario Newsletter

<https://www.mgoi.ca/resources/Inside-MGOI-Newsletter/Inside-MGOI-2201.pdf> p 14,16

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/811d4b15-a0c8-dac6-2171-9810142f43b7/Inside_MGOI_February_2022.pdf p. 12, 14-15

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/3820fed1-cea1-d523-d586-7a06a0ae403c/Inside_MGOI_March_2022.pdf p. 10-12

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/1e84be28-4829-ee19-ae5d-79b08c1010c7/Inside_MGOI_April_2022.pdf p 10-11

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/d8061c1b-be10-e6ea-1860-f9e697dced7a/Inside_MGOI_May2022.pdf p. 12-13

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/02ea1d5e-8ddc-4ae3-c93f-d2b6c5f7c838/Inside_MGOI_June_2022.pdf p. 12

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/a3017731-e169-99c8-a672-ba95115b54af/Inside_MGOI_July2022.pdf p.9

https://mcusercontent.com/602962b22dd2d8fc4353b63e3/files/5a7dc508-5c52-365d-f27a-e9f6a1ef2ab4/Inside_MGOI_Oct2022.pdf p 13

Additional Documents

UTRCA 2017 Watershed Report card on the Avon River

https://thamesriver.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/WatershedReportCards/RC_Avon.pdf

Stratford & District Horticultural Society Newsletters Spring np and Fall p 19-18 not available on-line (attached)