

Week One

Welcome to spring 2011 everyone!

After a record breaking winter for snowfall and some very nasty/cold nights, everyone is raring to go for what looks to be a great year. In an attempt to stay in touch with many of you, *Bellaire Landscape Inc.* and *Essex Landscape Supply* have asked me to start my “new” career with some seasonal blogs. My name is Donald Tellier and I hope I can pass on some gardening tips and timely information as well as let you know what is happening here in Essex at the garden center.

To get started, here is a little background on myself:

I started my outdoor career at an early age on the family farm. As one of 15 children from a large Belle River area family, I began to get my “fingers dirty” with plenty of practice hoeing and weeding field crops and planting and maintaining a very large family garden. I started my official career in Horticulture almost 40 years ago at a local family operation “Belle River Grain & Seeds”. The attraction of doing something I thought I would enjoy while working with my Uncle Adrian, Charles (my dad) and Aunt Sis (Merine), pulled me away from my original choice of career path in Accounting.....I am ever grateful for that chance. In order to gain some expertise for the “new” Garden center opened in the early 70’s, I was off to Niagara College receiving my “Horticulture Technician” diploma. This was a good start however there was so much more to know and learn. Shortly thereafter, while working fulltime, I registered in the distance education “Ontario Diploma in Horticulture - ODH” program at University of Guelph.

A new chapter in my life occurred when I was hired as a Technician on the grounds of St Clair College in 1976. The campus as we know it today was in its infancy with a sizeable collection of trees and shrubs/perennials already established. I was very fortunate to work *alongside two mentors* that “lived and breathed” Horticulture, Ron Malkin and Bill Bering. In these early years I was in heaven! Working outdoors with a 100 acre garden (campus), assisting with the development of the Arboretum, working with a great staff and great institution and alongside many of the students from the existing Horticulture program.....challenging but so enjoyable.

Looking for a new challenge, I was given an opportunity to join the teaching staff as a full time member in the fall of 1979. It seems like yesterday but 30+ years later, I officially retired from St Clair College.

Along the way, I was fortunate to receive a “Student Development Award”, “Faculty Academic Award” and “NISOD – National Institute for Staff Organizational Development” recognition through the University of Texas in Austin.

I realized early that “Life Long Learning” was so important. Beyond updating myself with the latest techniques in Horticulture, I decided to also look closely at water management. I began training in the specialty of irrigation and water management with certifications as “CIA – *Certified Irrigation Auditor*”, “CIC – *Certified Irrigation Contractor*” and “CID – *Certified Irrigation Designer*” through the *Irrigation Association*. I also recently obtained a “CHT (now a CLT) – *Certified Horticulture Technician*” designation through the *Canadian Nursery Landscape Association*.

Over the years I have been a contributor to local newspapers and magazines and have co-hosted a Saturday morning “Live and Local- gardening segment” call in show on the local *AM800* radio station.

In March of 2011, my latest chapter in life has unfolded. I have retired from St Clair College after approximately 34.5 years of service.....I had a great career at St Clair and surely will miss the place. I am however looking forward to the next years of my life enjoying family: Kathy my wife, Jordan my son and daughter Meaghan. I look forward to getting my “fingers dirty” while gardening, golf and a little free lance work to bide my time. I also look forward to passing on some advice through the media and with this “new blog”.

Over the next several months, watch for some future pointers on lawn care, seasonal yard maintenance, new and favourite trees, shrubs, perennials, pest control, value added landscape design, water management and more. Also be sure to email me any questions or concerns that you have in your garden.....we will try to get back to you as quickly and timely as we can.

We also invite you to come down to Essex and visit “Essex Landscape Supply” for all your retail plant/garden supply needs. New selections and supplies will be arriving soon. You will also want to visit the beautiful display gardens of “Bellaire Landscape Inc.”. Be sure to see why they have won numerous awards for their professional landscape designs and installations.

Until next time..... “Happy Gardening”!

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