

100% CANADIAN
Harrowsmith
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Contributors



NICOLE ROBERTSON is a competitive equestrian, facilitator, voracious reader and storyteller with a healthy disregard for the ordinary. She has an overwhelming fondness for common sense and crème brûlée. As the owner of Caberneigh Farm, Nicole continues her lifelong learning as a student of the birds and the bees. She lives with eight horses, six cats, six dogs, 25 chickens and one pot-bellied pig named Olive. And her better half, PJ.



MARK SIROIS is a senior manager at IBM by day, and a long-range weather forecaster whenever he can fit it in his free time. His passion for meteorology started at the age of 15, and for the last 30 years he has developed a multi-faceted approach to long-range forecasting. His frustrations with the way Canadian mainstream media broadcasts weather information led him to create an alternative option to those in southern Quebec. Since 2007, he has offered severe and long-range forecasts through the Southern Quebec Severe Weather Network on Facebook; since 2013, he has also been providing his forecasts via sqswm.ca.



PHIL THOMPSON won the Nova Scotia Energy Award in 1989 and the Nova Scotia Housing Award in 1997 for "outstanding leadership in conservation and renewable energy." He has written for *Maclean's*, *Reader's Digest*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Canadian Yachting*, *Sail Canada*, *Saltscapes*, *Atlantic Insight*, *Atlantic Fisherman*, *Atlantic Advocate*, *Axiom* and more than two dozen national and regional newspapers. He lives happily off-grid in Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia.



LEIGH-ANN TOPFER was a volunteer at the Green & Gold Community Garden in Edmonton for several years until she headed farther west for softer winters and almost year-round gardening on the Pacific Coast. The Green & Gold Community Garden is still her happy place, though, and she celebrated the garden's 10-year anniversary with the community this summer. She is a medical writer and researcher for the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health.



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Edmonton's Green & Gold Garden

How one community garden is making a global difference.

BY LEIGH-ANN TOPFER

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In the spring of 2009, Sarah Bowen, a professor at the University of Alberta's School of Public Health, posted an intriguing call for volunteers to help create a local community garden that would also benefit women in Rwanda. Sarah and husband Eduardo Parada lived near the university's farm, in suburban Edmonton, and

proposed the idea of using a piece of university farmland for a community garden. The university agreed and generously donated two acres of land to what was named the Green & Gold Community Garden—in recognition of the university's school colours.

The first year, a handful of volunteers cleared rocks from what looked to be barren land.

GARDENING: COMMUNITY GARDEN

With donated seeds and plants, and some rudimentary garden tools, we planted vegetables and sunflowers, lots of sunflowers. That spring it barely rained, and until irrigation was put in place in July, we carried endless buckets of water from a water tank to the struggling plants. Amazingly, by the end of June, despite the drought, we had vegetables—mainly greens at first—and we opened a twice-weekly market to the general public.

At the garden markets we asked “customers,” including our own volunteers, to make a donation to the Tubahumurize Association, a grassroots women’s organization in Rwanda, in exchange for the produce. To avoid undercutting local farmers’ livelihoods by offering discount vegetables, we asked that donations be based on what they would expect to pay for similar

produce in a supermarket or farmers’ market. Customers appreciated our “community garden with a difference” and the opportunity to support women in less privileged circumstances in exchange for freshly picked, organically grown, local produce.

Tubahumurize, which means “Let us console and give them hope” in Kinyarwanda, was established by Jeanne Mwiliriza, a social worker in Rwanda who had seen the devastating trauma caused by the Rwandan genocide. She recognized the need for group and individual trauma counselling for women who had suffered through the genocide, and for vocational training that would allow women to recover their lives and support their families. Sarah and Eduardo had connected with Jeanne some years earlier when they met her son, Eloge, who had come to

Help Build the First Women’s Shelter in Rwanda



Over half of Rwandan women experience domestic violence at some time in their lives. Currently, there are no safe places of refuge for vulnerable women and their children. Tubahumurize is working to establish

Rwanda’s first shelter for women and children suffering from domestic abuse. If you would like to make a donation, please visit rwandanwomencan.org.

GARDENING: COMMUNITY GARDEN

Canada as a refugee and was studying in Canada.

Customers clearly enjoyed the experience of heading out to the field with a garden volunteer to have a custom bag of mixed salad greens, kale, chard or fresh herbs picked while they waited. Peas, beans and root vegetables were a little more trouble. However, we found that most customers were perfectly happy to wait and wander around the garden while their vegetables were harvested.

At first our market was mainly promoted through word of mouth, university e-news and community newsletters, but we also set up an email list for weekly garden

produce news. This now has over 1,500 subscribers.

Winter comes early in Edmonton, but by the end of our first season, the garden had raised over \$16,000 for Tubahumurize!

As well as the produce, handicrafts made by the women in the sewing program at Tubahumurize are sold at the garden's markets and at Edmonton craft fairs. All of the donations for produce and all of the handicraft sales are sent to Tubahumurize in regular instalments. In return, Tubahumurize sends detailed reports on how the funds were used. The garden funds primarily

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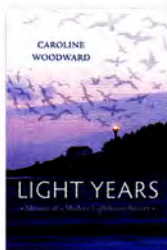


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GARDENING: COMMUNITY GARDEN

support the vocational training (sewing and embroidery) program, trauma counselling sessions, and the micro-credit loans that Tubahumurize offers to help women start their own small businesses. Tubahumurize is now planning to build the very first women's shelter in Rwanda for victims of domestic violence.

Each year since that first summer, the garden has improved, grown and flourished. It has expanded to include caring for an adjoining heritage orchard. It promotes bulk sales of surplus fruit and vegetables to local chefs, and added the sale of green tomato salsa, elderberry jelly and elderberry elixir made from garden produce. The garden now grows about 80 types of vegetables, herbs and fruit, plus many types of flowers.

When Sarah and Eduardo moved to the East Coast, a small group of regular volunteers, led by founding volunteer Shirley Ross, assumed responsibility for overseeing the direction and operation of the garden.

What is truly incredible to see is the ways in which the garden has become a community. Anyone is welcome to help at the garden or come to the public markets, and much like our customer base, our regular volunteers have ranged from teens to retirees.

For the women of Tubahumurize, the garden means that people from across the world care about

them. As Jeanne once wrote to us about her work at Tubahumurize, "When these women first arrived at the centre they would simply cry, often uncontrollably; now they stand tall, confident in their abilities to provide for their families and free from the disability of their trauma. Essentially, these women now have hope."

Over the years, the garden has won sustainability and community awards for the university. This year, we were honoured to receive a Senate 150th Anniversary Medal for our contribution to the community and beyond. We are a garden, but we are so much more! Artists come to paint and photograph the garden, a ukulele orchestra performs each year, and elementary school classes, gardening and bike groups come to tour the garden. One of our volunteers offers yoga classes there, and a long-time customer leads Nordic walking classes around the garden.

This summer, the garden celebrated its 10-year anniversary. To date, it has raised over \$290,000 for women in Rwanda. As Sarah said, it's a "win-win-win" situation: the volunteers get to garden together using organic gardening practices, the garden contributes locally grown food and a place of community in Edmonton, while across the world, it has also made a real difference in the lives of hundreds of women. **H**