



URBAN FOREST DEMONSTRATION GARDEN AT THE BATHURST TTC STATION. INSET: NOW SUBSTANTIALLY 'GREENER.'

# YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

## *Innovative Tree Tenders Volunteer Training Program Improved & Expanded*

**T**his year, with the help of a \$7,000 grant from the Canadian Tree Fund, LEAF (Local Enhancement and Appreciation of Forests) was able to improve and expand their Tree Tenders Volunteer Training Program. This 15 hour course is designed for individuals who want to gain arboriculture knowledge and skills and serves as an introduction to the art and science of urban forest care. Based on the International Society of Arboriculture's *Citizen Arborist Guide*, each session provides basic training

and includes a combination of indoor and outdoor instruction. The course covers:

- tree biology, anatomy & functions
- trees & soils
- municipal tree-related programs, bylaws & policies
- identifying & managing tree stresses
- tree planting and establishment
- tree identification, care & maintenance
- getting involved in urban forest stewardship in your community

The program is led by LEAF staff, with guest lectures from municipal arborists and

### **CHRISTINE BRUCE TREE TENDERS GRADUATE**

"I am now far less likely to impose stress on trees personally and far more likely to act on their behalf when I see one in distress. The course material opened a window of opportunity to me and provided me many urban forest contacts in the city to whom I can go for support and assistance at any time. Even better, the instructors – LEAF staff and city urban forestry officials – gave me the confidence to act, encouraging me and supporting my stewardship efforts in my own community. Thanks to this course and LEAF's direction, I have become a wanton tree planter and a determined tree advocate, and I am circumspect when using tree products."

other experts. Funds from the Canadian TREE Fund grant were used to revise and update the course materials helping to ensure that students are provided with an interesting and engaging experience. The funds have also enabled LEAF to offer the program in new locations including the west end of Toronto and York Region, specifically the Town of Markham. Four courses will be offered over 2010 (two spring and two fall courses) resulting in over 100 graduates.

“The Tree Tenders Training Program has been a terrific way to engage and educate the public about how to care for trees in an urban setting,” says Janet McKay, founder and Executive Director of LEAF. “In the past, the program has resulted in many graduates becoming actively engaged in their communities working on tree stewardship activities particularly in the City of Toronto. This funding has allowed us to move out of Toronto’s downtown core and into York Region, one of Ontario’s fastest growing communities and an area where tree stewardship activities can have a real impact on the quality of life for residents into the future.”

Tree planting programs in newly developed areas of York Region face a daunting challenge. Typically in new developments, topsoil is bulldozed off the site and the subsoil is compacted by heavy machinery. After the houses are built, a thin layer of topsoil is placed back onto the property. Then sod is laid. This leaves soil with little pore space, poor drainage and very little, if

any, organic matter; less than ideal for tree growth. One of the goals of the Tree Tenders Volunteer Training Program is to help participants understand what they can do to give the trees they plant the best chance of survival; and perhaps more importantly, to work towards changing the policies and practices that make tree establishment so difficult in these new developments.

LEAF finds that many graduates take their newfound knowledge and get involved in activities that enhance the urban canopy. “This year we have found that some 60% of Tree Tender graduates go on to actively volunteer with LEAF in our stewardship projects. These include maintaining the LEAF Learning Garden at the Artscape Wychwood Barns (where the LEAF office is located), volunteering and leading activities at our Urban Forest Demonstration Gardens (located at various TTC stations across the Toronto) or coming out to our tree planting and stewardship days,” continued McKay.

One event this spring where Tree Tender graduates played a key role was at the Toronto Hydro Tree Planting Day in Etobicoke’s Pine Point Park. Some 20 graduates led workshops for over 150 Toronto Hydro staff and their families on how to properly plant trees and shrubs. By the end of the day, 350 trees and shrubs were planted and properly mulched.

Tree Tenders is not just about hard work though. In 2009, over 100 graduates were treated to a ceremony at Toronto’s trendy Gladstone Hotel. Over a dozen other

groups, including the City of Toronto, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, Ontario Urban Forest Council and Not Far From the Tree, were present to recruit volunteers for their own projects. Philip van Wassenaer, consulting arborist and past president of the Ontario Urban Forest Council, was the guest speaker. Philip has worked locally, nationally and internationally on assignments concerning urban forestry and the preservation of significant trees. His inspiring address, entitled *Conservation Arboriculture – Keeping Old Trees Viable and Safe*, took the audience on a photographic tour around the world, challenging them to look at old trees in a new and different way. This December, the annual Tree Tenders celebration will feature the success stories of graduates who have undertaken their own projects to help the urban forest.

“The Tree Tenders program is a key component in LEAF’s mission to protect and improve the urban forest,” concludes Amanda Gomm, LEAF’s Manager of Volunteer and Community Engagement. “The support of key partners such as the Canadian TREE Fund makes it possible to educate citizens on the benefits of the urban forest and ways they can help improve and protect it. We look forward to working with CTF to continue to build an educated, motivated and active community of urban forest advocates improving city life one tree at a time.”

For information on LEAF’s innovative urban forest programs visit [www.yourleaf.org](http://www.yourleaf.org).

## MORE ON LEAF’S URBAN FOREST DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

LEAF’s Urban Forest Demonstration Gardens have provided hands-on stewardship opportunities to beautify underutilized green space on TTC properties. Volunteers are involved in the design process, plant native species in the space, and provide ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the gardens. Two sites were established this spring at Bathurst Station and Old Mill station, and two more locations will be underway this fall. Since planting this spring, the gardens have driven media attention in local newspapers, including an article in the popular NOW Magazine, as well as CBC radio coverage on our planting day. Signage has been designed for the gardens to better showcase the transformation of these spaces and recognize the support received from program supporters. Adjacent is an example of the sign at Bathurst Station. Note CTF’s logo at the bottom.

