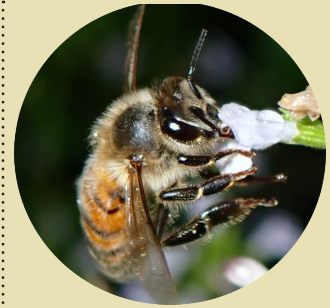


Toronto Nature Stewards



Newsletter 2
March, 2021

Here is Our Update on Important News

Spring has arrived! It has been a very very long winter and we are so looking forward to digging in some dirt.

Newsletter and logo for Toronto Nature Stewards

A big "Thank You" to Ravi Ponnadurai, who has created this newsletter template, and to Karen Yukich, who are both part of a subcommittee working with artist volunteers and a graphic designer to develop an appropriate logo. Get out your sketch pads! Ideas are always welcome.

Status of City Collaboration

- After a slow start, things are moving. We have been meeting regularly with Kim Statham (Acting Director, Urban Forestry), and Wendy Strickland (Acting Project Manager, Ravine Strategy) over the past weeks. Consultations continue.
- As one of the actions identified in the Ravine Strategy (p. V Action 16 - <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/9183-TorontoRavineStrategy.pdf>), the City is developing a Framework to engage volunteer groups in stewardship. This process includes stakeholder input, union impacts, legal issues, etc.
- Although we have input into this Framework, we did not wish to wait for its development. Instead, together with the City, we have proposed a pilot program, a "soft launch" of sorts as to how we envisage stewardship can expand without requiring additional resources from the City. More on this later.
- As part of the Framework, it is our understanding that the City will be setting up a "Stakeholder Consultation". We encourage everyone to stay engaged and provide your input, recognizing the work that we have all contributed in developing the two manuals for stewardship in ravines and natural areas – private and public. Please continue to input into our vision of how stewardship can scale with the U of T Daniel's Forestry relationship and in an integrated and coordinated fashion with City staff and other stewardship and NGO groups (also a Ravine Strategy action – p. ii Action 5, p. V Action 14)
- As the City may be contacting you or members in your organizations, we encourage you to continue supporting a Lead Steward stewardship model without City supervision. In this model, a trained volunteer Lead Steward would supervise and support other volunteers through the Adopt-A-Patch and Pop Up programs in a limited number of permitted activities. Activities related to mature tree removal, power tools and herbicides would not be allowed. City staff resources would continue to be applied in those situations. Stewardship activities would remain coordinated and integrated with those of the City.
- Roles and Responsibilities of City Staff, Lead Stewards and Toronto Nature Stewards are currently under discussion. We envisage some of these activities to sit squarely with one party and others to be shared. The coordination of these activities must be agreed upon and a process for communication developed.

Pilot Program 2021 Season



Training of 24 Lead Stewards will commence later this month. These Lead Stewards will work on agreed-upon 6-10 sites. These sites remain under discussion. They are not current Community Stewardship Program sites. It is our understanding that those sites will continue as normal (i.e. as much as Covid permits).





Lead Steward Curriculum

Thank you to those who signed up to become a Lead Steward. Training begins March 31, 2021. There will be 5 online sessions of two hours plus two field trips. Members of the Steering Committee, Stewardship Community, Toronto Field Naturalists, and U of T Lecturers will be teaching the course. The course is designed to give Lead Stewards the tools and confidence to lead a team of volunteers in stewardship under the Adopt-A-Patch program. No training for Pop-ups is planned for this season.

Indigenous Involvement Update

A subcommittee continues to reach out to the First Nations community on a number of fronts and recognizes this to be an ongoing activity. We have met with the City of Toronto's Indigenous Affairs office and have a couple of avenues to explore. Stakeholders such as yourselves continue to provide input and ideas into this very important area and we thank you.

Portal

As stated previously, we have learned that the CEDAR application doesn't create a steward profile. For our upcoming pilot, old fashioned paper-based and/or common programs (like Excel/Facebook) will be used. This will help inform us of the User Requirements and Technical Specifications of an eventual Portal.

Manual Update

Best Management Practices are being developed for Phragmites which will be reviewed by Lynn Short, Humber Arboretum, and for Burdock by Clyde Robinson. Stuart Livingstone has offered to review the section on Dog-strangling Vine. We expect the next deliverable to be an updated manual. However, in the meantime parts of the current draft manual will have a test drive this coming season during a pilot. Testing the manual in the pilot curriculum and subsequently in the field, we can make any necessary adjustments for the next version. We anticipate that the manual will change through adaptive management in perpetuity, always bringing in Best Practices and suggestions from Toronto stewards.

Enjoy your spring and we hope to see you stewarding very soon!

*Best wishes,
Paul, Catherine, Dale, Andrew, Clyde, Paula, Sandy, Pat
(Toronto Nature Stewards Steering Committee)*



Photos by Ravi Ponnudurai