

Georgian Bay Eco-Travel

July 2006 [Features A](#)



By Monika Carless

Southern Ontario is known for its many tourist attractions. Georgian Bay, in particular, has traditionally been a cottagers' destination, offering sandy beaches, walking trails, horseback riding and historical sites for exploring. Winter

months are equally as inviting if skiing and snow-shoeing are your sports. Over the past few years, a renewed interest in preserving the downtown core of the area's small towns is proving to be a wonderful way to draw tourists. This is a good thing, as many downtowns have suffered from the invasion of box stores. Thankfully, some creative and inspired individuals have dared to offer us a varied shopping experience, while dishing up small town atmosphere. As a former city dweller, I have fallen willingly to the siren call of small town charm, and driven far and wide for the country experience. You'd think that living the country life now would suffice, but I must confess that I still wander the back roads, this time in search of an organic experience.

Fortunately, Georgian Bay, and Simcoe County in general, is awash with folks who are dedicated to the preservation of eco-systems, life in harmony with nature and organic agriculture. During the recent push to make organic produce available on a wider scale, local farmers and small market growers have banded together to make shopping for organic food a great day trip experience. Of course, one would car-pool with their friends or relatives for greater fuel efficiency and for the sake of our grateful Mother Earth. To a purist, driving from Toronto to Georgian Bay for organic produce is not so very local, but I say that it's more local than say, from California? Sure, you can buy organic produce at the local Superstore, but Ontario farmers struggle to stay on their land while Californian migrant workers are paid pennies for their work so that large food chains can capitalize on the organic bandwagon. To be sure, this is a complex subject, but suffice it to say that there is nothing like home-grown. On farm produce sales boost the local economy and provide the shopper with an opportunity to participate in growing the local organic sector. You may find that not all market growers can lay claim to a certified organic label because of cost or red-tape issues, but many are members of the EFAO (Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario) and follow strict organic guidelines. Local farmers offer a type of first hand verification to their clients, where one forms a relationship with the farmer through farm visits

and tours. All the organic farmers that I've met in the area have strong feelings about the land that they steward. They are delighted to share their life's passion with you, indeed, try to escape without a tour of the farm. Unless, of course it's harvest time, or planting time or weeding time...

Growing up in southern Ontario over the last thirty years, I have noticed the sprawl of the city eating its way north, consuming prime farm land and green belts. Bathurst and Steeles used to be country, the very edge of civilization. The Holland Marsh seemed to be a long way north on the 400, now it's just past the Tim Horton's at Wonderland. Many things have changed... except for the desire to get in the car and explore the countryside. If you feel the urge to explore one fine summer or fall day, you may enjoy the following list of Mother Earth friendly places to visit, a cross-section taken from a large variety of choices. Taking a route north on the 400, up to the Midland area and across Hwy 12 towards Orillia, it offers an opportunity to pick your own, canoe on the Wye marsh, and buy some eco-lawn seed with some lunch and organic-fair trade tea in between. There are, of course, many other stops but not enough room here to list them all. Most likely, more than one trip will be necessary, but either way, you will be delighted with what you find. Shall we start?

MOONDANCE ORGANIC GARDENS

Kim & Tom Keckes

Located on the corner of 5th Line & 25th Sideroad of Essa

8285 5th Line

Angus, On

705- 424-2606

ktkeckes@sympatico.ca

www.moondanceorganicgardens.ca

CSA (Community Shared Agriculture)

Market Stand offering seasonal veggies, herbs (cut, dried or potted) natural body care products, perennials and cut flowers.

Educational workshops, children's programs and volunteer opportunities

16 types of salad greens, 25 types of veggies including heritage varieties

Open May to November, Wednesday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm

HEMPOLA VALLEY FARMS

Kelly Smith & Greg Herriott

2133 Forbes Road (at Penetanguishene Road in Dalston)

400 Extension to Forbes Road cut-off

705-730-0405

greg@hempola.com

Hemp products, Clothing, Functional Food

Hempola also hosts the **ECO FARMERS' MARKET**

The market is a place to purchase local, ecologically or organically grown produce, meant to promote the local economy and sustainable farming practices. A great way to meet the people on the front lines of ecological food production right here in Ontario
June 16 to October 6, 2006
3:30 till Dusk

Friday evenings (a good stop on the way to the cottage)

For more information e-mail info@efaosimcoecounty.ca

Ask for the EFAO brochure which lists some of the ecological food producers in Simcoe County!

BEUCK'S FARM

Dieter & Gudrun Beuck

1216 Penetanguishene Rd.

Barrie, On

(Just down the road from Hempola)

705-722-0277

PYO Saskatoon berries, un-pasteurized honey and beeswax products

Saskatoon berries are a wonderful treat. They look like a blueberry but the taste is more interesting. Suitable for all kinds of cooking and baking applications. Gudrun usually has recipe cards on hand. Please call ahead for harvest time but it's usually mid- July for several weeks. Honey available year round

LUTICK'S BLUEBERRY FARM

Greg and Adrienne Lutick

Ron Jones Road

Midland, On

705-526-3042

glutajex@csolve.net

www.HarvestOntario.com

400 Extension north to the Midland exit (County Rd. 93) County Rd. 93 past Waverley to McMann Sd. Road. Turn right onto McMann Sd. Road to Ron Jones Road. Right onto Ron Jones Road .5km to Lutick's, on the left.

Lutick's blueberry farm is carved out of the beautiful forest landscape, a truly magical spot where you will find several varieties of blueberries as well as other types of berries. Adrienne and Greg also grow perennials for bouquets. This is a secluded spot, the experience is always as good as the berries and once you've been, you'll keep coming back. High bush and low bush varieties, stools are available should you need one. Each variety is its own flavor extravaganza.

The season is usually July 20 to August 15 but may extend from July 10 to early September, but call ahead to be sure. Really worth the drive

SERENDIPITEA

Dawn Downer

244 King Street (at Midland Ave)

Midland, On

705-526-8327

Serendipitea is a new tea room in Midland. King Street, (famous for its' many murals), has benefited from Dawn's delicious venture. Serendipitea offers excellent lunches and desserts, but the main attractions are the teas.

Dawn serves 69 varieties of tea, 40 of which are certified organic and fair trade. Among them are White, Green, Oolong, Black,

Roibos, Honeybush and herbal infusions. The Darjeelings and Assam teas are certified Bio-dynamic and have no commercial flavorings. Most are certified Forest Analogue grown (not mono-cropped). All profits from these are re-invested by the grower into ecological and social well being within the source regions.

You may have trouble picking out only one tea, as they are all divine both in taste and scent. My personal favorite is Roibos Provence. The aroma instantly transports you to a secret garden, where all worries float away on fairie wings. An accompanying home made scone with Devon Cream and lemon curd is recommended. Fortunately, the teas may be purchased to be enjoyed at home. Quickly becoming a favorite for tourists and locals alike

THE WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

16160 Hwy #12, Midland, On
705-526-7809

www.wyemarsh.com

info@wyemarsh.com

Open year round

This is the place to explore nature! The Wye Marsh is a non-profit organization which provides visitors of all ages the opportunity to enjoy activities such as canoe rides, 10 km of walking and biking trails, a wildflower garden and live Bird of Prey demonstrations. You can even feed the chickadees right out of your hand! Of special interest is the Wye's work with Trumpeter Swan populations, providing them with a safe habitat in Ontario.

Winter months are for guided snow-shoe hikes and over 22km of ski trails. The Wye offers individual and family memberships. Their gift shop has something for everyone, and supports the centre. Next door to the historical Saint Marie Among the Hurons.

Wheelchair accessible

THE WILDFLOWER FARM - Home of the Eco-Lawn

Paul Jenkins and Miriam Goldberger

On Hwy #12 between Coldwater and Warminster

1-866-476-9453

www.wildflowerfarm.com

Opens on Earth Day, April 22 and closes September 30. 9 - 5, 7 days per week

The Wildflower Farm first hailed from Schomberg, where it was Ontario's Original PYO Flower Farm. Stroll through the wildflower gardens, or browse the gift shop. Some of the items for sale include natural soaps and lotions, garden accents and wildflower seeds. Also for sale at Wildflower are native grasses, Gardens-To-Go and the cut-free Eco-Lawn seed! Uncut, it resembles a soft and undulating field, and is suitable for city or country landscapes. If you hate cutting grass or polluting the neighborhood with lawn mower fumes, (but still want a lawn), then this is the grass for you. The Eco-Lawn is good for drought conditions, so it conserves water as well. Wildflower also offers a catalogue. Their web-site is great so check it out.

Activities and Seminars

1. Eco-Lawn Seeding Seminars 10-11 am on April 29, May 13, Sept. 2 and 9
2. Mother's Day, PYO Tulips and Daffodils Sunday, May 14, 11 - 4
3. Water Efficient, Cost Effective, Chemical Free Approach to Landscaping
May 27, 10 - 12
4. 5th Annual Sunflower Celebration Sunday, August 13, 11 - 4
Check web-site for details.

Happy and safe travels to you all

Monika Carless, RNCP is a Holistic Nutritionist from Wyebridge, On. She promotes sustainable agriculture and living practices. You can reach Monika at healingorganics@sympatico.ca