

Questions, Answers and More! – April 2, 2014



Our special guest speaker for the evening was gardening expert **Ed Lawrence**, who has been for three decades the Chief Horticultural Specialist to six Governors General [from Jules Leger to Adrienne Clarkson]. In that role, Ed was responsible for the 85-acre grounds and the greenhouses of Rideau Hall and six official residences, including that of the Prime Minister.

As a kid in Toronto, Ed loved gardening and would weed his parents' garden and those of elderly neighbours just to be outdoors. He was recruited by the National Capital Commission right out of Humber College and remained with them until retirement. Ed now resides on a farm in the Almonte area where he happily grows wildflowers and hardy native plants.

Prior to the most interesting "questions and answers" session, Ed demonstrated the correct way to use gardening secateurs and emphasized that you should always keep the blade (as opposed to the anvil) "closest to what you are keeping". The blade should cut cleanly without crushing the tissue to ensure wound healing. One should always cut each stem back to a bud or branch. The node will emit chemicals and close itself off to prevent future infection. By cutting to a bud pointing to the outside of the tree, new stems will not grow toward the tree's interior and cross or rub against other branches.



Ed explained that the "five Ds" of pruning are dead, damaged, diseased, dangerous and delightful. After outlining the importance of removing parts that are covered by the first 4 Ds, Ed indicated that the fifth D covered those elements that relate to the overall design of the shrub and are delightful or desirable - what you want to keep and promote. Ed emphasized that you should never prune more than 25 per cent from a shrub or tree in any one year. This allows the tree to retain 75 per cent of its branches to photosynthesize. This rule applies even if the tree is damaged or diseased except if more must be taken for safety reasons. "If you take more than 25 per cent, it (the plant) throws out all kinds of suckers and the following year you'll be pruning the suckers", Ed said.

The evening continued with Ed responding to numerous questions on a range of gardening topics, and concluded with a door prize draw for a copy of his book, 'Gardening Grief & Glory', which Ed generously brought along for that purpose.

Ed Lawrence can be heard answering gardening questions every Monday between 12:30 to 1:00 pm. on CBC Radio 1's very popular phone-in garden show on 'Ontario Today'.



Thanks to Gary Hall (photographs) and Elaine Routledge (write-up) of the April meeting.