Premiere Peony Canadian Collection Reveal Boosts Agri-Tourism “Flower Power”

Special Guest, The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Representative of Her Majesty The Queen

(April 29, 2014 - Wilsonville, Norfolk County, Ontario Canada) As a “budding” new garden destination attraction located in Ontario’s Garden, Norfolk County The Heimbecker Family and Whistling Gardens Team, are thrilled to share two peony collections will be revealed on Friday May 23rd 2014 at 10:30 am as a result of two generous donors! The two collections will represent over 700 varieties of peonies, a "Premiere Canadian Collection" while showcasing an annual floral show of over 900 plants! Witness the transformation as two Peony Collections are introduced and planted throughout the 2014 season with full blooms expected over the next two years as we are joined by special guest, The Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. [http://www.lgonontology.ca/en/pages/default.aspx]

The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, M.P. Haldimand-Norfolk and Norfolk County Mayor, Dennis Travale will join the Heimbeckers for special presentations which will include John B. Lee, Poet Laureate of Norfolk County, Garden Fiddlers 'The Collver Sisters' and the collection reveal, acknowledging the generosity of the two donors Mr. & Mrs. Joe and Hazel Cook with their daughter Amy, Blossom Hill Nursery and Mr. David Maltby, “Meet Our Donors” while learning from the experts during their FREE Peonies Talk and Garden Tour. Dignitaries from the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation will present a special native “Tree Planting Ceremony” as part of their “Unique Backyard” presentation. They will talk about Whistling Gardens’ location in one of the most agriculturally diverse areas in Canada and near one of the most ecologically significant parts of the world – a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. Garden guests will learn about the Long Point World Biosphere, its projects and the special relationship it has with Whistling Gardens during a short presentation along our guided tour.

Did we mention the "first 100 guests receive a FREE Peony Gift" and of course there's cake too! A new Legacy Program will be introduced, acknowledging the goodwill of so many generous garden donors resulting in donated plants, benches, bulbs and birds! Local dignitaries and generous local event partners have planned their special brand of homegrown hospitality Norfolk County is so well known for. (Regular botanical gardens admission rates apply) [http://www.whistlinggardens.ca/admission-fees.php]

This peonies donation, by two generous private citizens reveal a very substantial collection, which represents a new significant opportunity to engage the international overseas tourism markets into Norfolk County based on existing, established smaller botany collections. Unique opportunities are creating emerging new markets in agri-tourism as farms embrace transformative change through the collaboration between philanthropic donors and private business. Whistling Gardens was first envisioned over 25 years ago by owner Darren Heimbecker to be built as a sustainable agricultural public sanctuary in perpetuity, offering education, celebration and respite for garden guests.

**COLLECTIONS:**

- **300 plants with several one of kind varieties - Mr. David Maltby, Brant County, President of the Canadian Peony Society**
- **600 species, hybrids and varieties - Mr. & Mrs. Joe and Hazel Cook with their daughter Amy, Blossom Hill Nursery north of Peterborough**

BLOSSOM HILL NURSERY, The Cook Family Mr. & Mrs. Joe and Hazel Cook with their daughter Amy have operated a family owned business, Blossom Hill Nursery since 1994, specializing in the hybridization and propagation of British Delphinium elatum. A second passion has resulted in an extensive peony collection of over 600 varieties including species, tree, herbaceous and intersectional peonies. Blossom Hill is located just north of Peterborough and has perennial display gardens as well as 3000 peonies and trial beds in the field for over 1500 delphiniums. Blossom Hill delphiniums have won the only two Bronze Medals from the UK Delphinium Society presented at the Ontario Delphinium Club field days.

The year 2009 was very exciting for their nursery. Hazel’s entry of one of their peonies, a large double yellow intersectional, named ‘Bartzella’, won the Grand Championship at the Canadian Peony Society Convention held at the Montreal Botanical Gardens. Blossom Hill Nursery was also honoured with the ‘Outstanding Business Achievement Award’ from the Kawartha Lakes Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Region. The Cooks are active members of many horticultural organizations. Hazel is now a director for the American Peony Society and Joe is the past president of the Ontario Delphinium Club.

**David J. Maltby** Peony donor, David J. Maltby is a well-respected Canadian general practice lawyer in Brantford, Ontario. As the current President of the Canadian Peony Society and Past President and current board member of the Ontario Regional Lily Society. He is the 2012 recipient of the North American Lily Society Regional (NALS) Medal, acknowledging his outstanding service to the horticulture and the Ontario Regional Lily Society.

Growing accolades are numerous, Best in Show, along with many other major awards, have extended his long winning streak. His respectful peers know him best as ‘a good gardener’. He made this donation so that it would be available for the public to enjoy! The David J. Maltby Peony Collection will be proudly enjoyed by thousands of guests as a result of his generosity to donate his personal collection of approximately 300 peony plants with several of kind cultivars and varieties to Whistling Gardens.

(Blossom Hill Nurseries, the Cook family)

The Collver Sisters, Garden Fiddlers
**OUT OF TOWN GUESTS - Ontario's Garden Stay & Play Visitor Special!** **Savings Up To 30%**

Out of town guests wishing to join us this season should explore our NEW overnight special "Tussie-Mussie" The Language of Flowers. Enjoy a day in the gardens, an afternoon of shopping in Simcoe’s quaint boutiques, dine at Blue Elephant’s award winning restaurant and take comfort in a cozy overnight stay and breakfast at the Comfort Inn while experiencing our friendly home grown hospitality!


A special thank you to our generous event sponsors offering their time, resources and goodwill for our “flower power” celebration!

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Agri-tourism, a new outlook on conventional farming! The botanical gardens are ornamental in nature, however they are a primary farm resource for seed and plant propagation material. As the gardens mature each year, The Heimbeckers are getting closer to becoming self sustaining by growing a majority of the plants, especially rare and unique selections that can be offered at their retail garden centre. Now entering their third season, the botanical gardens witnessed a 32% visitor increase from last season with local garden enthusiasts, globetrotters from most of our Canadian provinces and overseas guests planning a visit. The planting continues as the wheelchair accessible gardens now represent 20 acres to accommodate their growing collections of conifers and specialty plants. Valued new partnerships continue to evolve while providing unique garden experiences for diverse groups. New horticultural, educational nature programming and the exotic bird aviary is creating a unique and diverse garden guest experience.


“**With our second season now behind us, we can reflect and always appreciate the unexpected!”** The Heimbeckers

As it has been 50 years since a private botanical garden has opened its doors to the public in Canada. In 2012, the very first year the botanical gardens opened, Whistling Gardens was voted “Canada’s Best New Garden Experience” at the Canadian and International Garden Tourism Awards, by the Canadian Garden Tourism Council in conjunction with the Garden Tourism Conference, Canadian Nursery Landscape Association and American Public Gardens Association. Within the second year, in January 2014, what a surprise to receive the inaugural Sustainable Tourism Ambassador of the Year Award presented by the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation in partnership with Norfolk County! The purpose of the award is to honour leaders in sustainability whose businesses have made significant differences in the social, economic, natural and cultural environments of Norfolk County.

Learn more [http://www.whistlinggardens.ca/05-downloads/140311-media-release-sta-award.pdf](http://www.whistlinggardens.ca/05-downloads/140311-media-release-sta-award.pdf)

“**It is the goodwill of others that are truly shaping and transforming the gardens for generations to enjoy.”** The Heimbeckers

“Although the concept for these gardens started over 25 years ago, the task of creating and constructing them has been completed in the last 5 years, apart from operating a wholesale nursery and retail garden centre in which revenue is reinvested to build the botanical gardens. It has required daily sacrifices, a physical, financial and emotional struggle...Of all my travels around the world; this journey has been the most challenging, exciting and rewarding experience all at the same time. It has conjured every possible emotion.” Darren Heimbecker explains. “Whistling Gardens is a dream I have kept alive for nearly 30 years. I hope people will enjoy the gardens now and together we will continue to build your gardens into a premier horticultural destination in Canada for generations to enjoy as Norfolk County's premiere Botanical Gardens continues to grow.”

For more information, please contact:
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Directions WG GPS: 42º59’55.95” N. 80º17’50.32” W or [http://whistlinggardens.ca/directions.php](http://whistlinggardens.ca/directions.php)

Located in Norfolk County "Ontario's Garden"

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