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15-year track record of planting

December 18, 2009 By: [Joni Miltenburg](#)
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The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is now.

If the Chinese proverb is correct, Manfred and Penny Conrad are right on time. Fifteen years ago, they planted 15 acres of trees near their home on Weimar Line near Bamberg. They have continued planting seedlings over the ensuing years and now they have 270 acres of trees.



Over the past 15 years, Manfred and Penny Conrad have planted thousands of trees on their Bamberg-area farm, covering some 270 acres.

“I think it’s our way of giving back to the community and greening up our area of the environment,” Penny said. “Our intention is to leave this as a forest for as long as we can control it.”

She wasn’t a born with a green thumb, but after the couple moved to the Wiemar Line property and their children left home, Penny cultivated an interest in gardening. She has taken a few horticulture courses but mostly she’s learned through trial and error. She’s also interested in organic farming, and they keep a large vegetable garden.

“Manfred would come home with business clients, and I’d be out there digging or pulling weeds.”

Manfred, a developer with The Cora Group, frankly admits that he doesn't have Penny's green thumb, but he shares her interest in planting trees.

They did their first planting 15 years ago after the Mennonite farmer who had cut hay on their back field moved away. The land was too hilly to farm with tractors – he had used horses – so they decided to plant it full of seedlings.

“We sort of grew into it through that field,” Penny said.

Over the past three years, they've planted almost 30,000 trees in partnership with the Grand River Conservation Authority through the 50 Million Tree Program.

The province of Ontario has pledged to plant 50 million trees by 2020, in support of the United Nations' campaign to plant one billion trees worldwide each year. Under the provincial program, landowners have to sign a 15-year management agreement to maintain the trees, contribute 15 cents per tree for startup costs and take on some of the addition costs to maintain the trees.

The program provides a huge boost to landowners, Penny said.

“It would take a lot longer to do if we didn't have support.”

Nathan Munn, forestry specialist for the GRCA, evaluates the land and recommends suitable native species. He also conducts an inventory in the fall to see how the plantings are faring.

So far, Manfred said, they've had a very good success rate.

“We must have picked good trees for the soil. For some reason, they're thriving.”

The Conrads also have help from Hans Peter Moos, who manages their properties along Weimar Line. An excellent gardener, he's also a good hand with trees and the wildlife that is attracted to the Conrads' property.

The forests are a haven for animals of all sizes; when it snows, there are tracks all through the forested areas. The Conrads allow snowmobilers on a signed trail that runs through the property, but they don't permit hunters.

As today's tiny seedlings grow into mature trees, the Conrads plan to continue greening their corner of township, an area known as the four Ws, as it's near the point where Wellesley meets Woolwich and Wilmot townships and the City of Waterloo.

“You're never too old to plant trees,” Manfred said.

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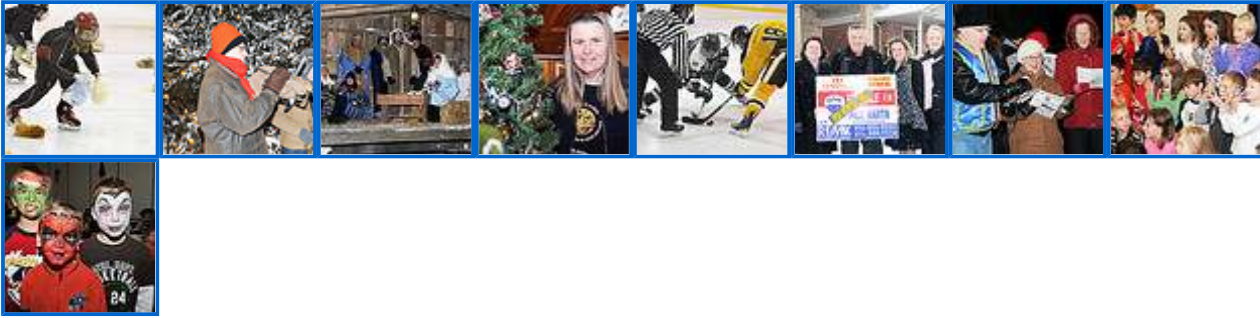


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