



August 2020

### **Presidents Message to the Members of the Ontario Horticultural Association**

Hello members, here it is August and we are still in the COVID -19 Pandemic and all health officials say this will not be going away soon. Windsor Essex County still remains in Stage 2 because of people having large gatherings at weddings and funerals. I went to a visitation of a charter member and life member of the Tilbury Horticultural Society. I went as part of a bubble of 8 horticultural members who all had to wear masks. We had to register for a time, which was the time we exactly entered the funeral home and had to sanitize our hands. We then had to answer 12 questions and had our temperature taken. We then could sign the memorial book, each using a different pen which was placed in a container for sanitizing later. We then saw the members of the family who were behind a knee-high barrier, keeping us six feet or more away. All members of the family wore masks as well as the little great grandchildren. It is a different world we live in and one where everyone is to be kept safe. And yet, some people do not realize the seriousness of this virus. I hope and pray that all that are reading this have kept safe and are following the health departments standards in each of your areas.

Our Officers have been continuing to have our monthly Officer and Finance Meetings, virtually, and we have held three Board of Directors meetings, virtually as well. Insurance questions, meeting questions, OMAFRA questions, Society problems, future conventions, among other topics are part of the agendas. Contracts are usually approved by the board at the post-convention meeting but this year they were approved at the July virtual board meeting along with members of the board volunteering to fill committee positions.

Treasurer's reports are given at the Officers' Meetings and OHA Board Meetings. I was sorry to hear that our Treasurer, Jane Leonard has decided to retire as Treasurer as of September 30, 2020. Jane has done a tremendous job for the OHA, coming in at the time when the OHA was giving out the STBI fund, which was a huge undertaking. I and the board want to thank Jane for her devotion and time to the job. So, we are now looking for a new Treasurer, which is a paid position. If you know of someone who is willing to take on the job, please contact the OHA Secretary, Kelly Taylor.

Jane has reported that the OHA has received approximately \$2640 from the Make It Sow Fundraiser. Great job to all the Directors and Societies in making this fundraiser happen.

We now have a new fundraiser in place that has been advertised on the [gardenontario.org](http://gardenontario.org) website and Facebook page. Beeswax Wraps, instead of plastic wrap for dishes and cloth bags to put vegetables and fruits in instead of the grocery store plastic bags.

Plus, there are new items on the gardenontario.org store. Please check out all the items as you might find something you might like to buy for yourself or give away as a gift.

Over the last five months, the board has approved the OHA Youth Program Standards Manual. The board has also approved Police Check Grants to offer financial assistance for Youth leaders.

Resolutions and the new Mission Statement have been approved to bring to the membership when we get to meet at the OHA Annual General Meeting.

Convention contracts were signed after Officers' approval and the dates were posted in the summer *Trillium*.

The board welcomes Donna Hussey as the new Convention Registrar. Barb O'Malley has decided to retire from the position, and we thank her for ten+ years of exceptional service as Registrar. We are fortunate as a board as Donna has experience in online registration and payment which is the future of OHA Convention Registrations.

In putting a Strategic Plan together for our association, succession planning has been a topic of discussion. I have promoted looking at a five-year plan for all Districts and Societies. By-laws, for every District and Society, should be reviewed on a yearly basis. Times are changing and new Members are coming to Society meetings. Sometimes, Officers are in for a long time and the Society needs a change. The OHA put out a pamphlet on the job description of all the Officers of a Society or District. These pamphlets are available from the District Directors. None of the jobs are onerous and yet everyone seems to shy away from them. Sometime all it takes is for one person to approach another person and ask. And sometimes the jobs can be shared between two. Don't let a Society close because there is no one to come on the Board. If there are problems, the Officers are here to help, but we need to know the problem.

Kelly Taylor has done an excellent job in putting the [OHA Corporate Report](#) together and this is available on the gardenontario website.

Anniversary certificates and OHA Awards were mailed out instead of being presented by myself or my designated board member at the AGM's or at the convention. I have so missed going to visit the different Districts Annual General Meetings. I enjoy meeting the Members from different areas of the province.

The Officers' and the Fundraising Committee are working on a donor page for the website to hopefully bring in some added funds. The cost of running the association is getting more expensive and the membership fees brought in from the societies has not kept up with the increased cost of doing business. The Board has approved a Motion to go to the OHA Annual General Meeting to request an increase of the membership dues. The last increase was approved in 2005. Once the government has declared the State of Emergency over, we will work to schedule the OHA AGM where this will be voted upon by the membership.

Please think carefully about this proposed increase and if you would like to see the Ontario Horticultural Association continue in its work across the province.

Charles Freeman has been working diligently on your behalf with OMAFRA. We thank you for your response to the survey on how your Society is doing through the COVID-19 Pandemic compared to last year. The survey took a lot of time to compile and it has been presented to OMAFRA with a request to consider using the 2019 membership numbers for the OMAFRA Society Grant in 2021 along with a letter to the Minister of OMAFRA. We will let you know the results when we hear their decision.

I kept hoping that the Pandemic would be short-lived (silly me) and that we would return to normal, but sadly to say, we may never see that normal as we knew it.

I want to thank April Davies, our Webmaster for her tireless work in getting our website updated and looking better each day. However, there are still societies that do not have a contact or web page on the site. New Members are looking at where they can join by looking at cities, and towns on the website. If there is no Society listed, then they may give up. Please, please, have someone from your Society work with April to have your Society listed. It is the best free advertisement you can have.

I want to congratulate those Societies who so willingly, planned out plant sales and planting flowers to enhance their communities during this difficult time. Good for you. Also, those who are helping in the community gardens and food banks. Thank you for all you are doing. You all so exemplify what an Ontario Horticultural Association Member is all about. Keep up the good work and stay safe.

I am sorry this is so long, but I was unable to give you a report at your District Annual Meetings and I wanted to try to keep you all informed on what the Officers and Board of Directors are doing on your behalf.

I hope you are enjoying this time to be in your gardens, be it a vegetable, flower, or community. I am in the process of ripping out plants that have overstayed their time and planning out new plants to plant this fall. Maybe you are doing the same.

My garden is my solace and my happy place. May it be yours as well. Stay safe.

Katharine Smyth  
OHA President