

Sharing know-how makes community stronger

By Sarah Sobanski

The snowy weather doesn't seem to be stopping North Hastings residents from celebrating the coming spring -? from garden starting to maple tree tapping.

This weekend we had the opportunity to travel up to Maynooth for a fun filled Saturday. First stop was Seedy Saturday, then the main strip and of course, the finish line was at the Hastings Highlands Centre for the winter farmers' market.

Let's first mention how great these initiatives are to bring people to town during the slow season. But second, let's mention how incredible it is that people have a space to come together to discuss their crafts.

After taking photos for the paper and munching on a vegan cake pop ? I was coerced, but it was actually delicious ? a familiar face floated by to see how we were doing. She said the event was going well and I noticed the number of bodies seemed to have increased since last year. She said people had come to the event to spend the whole day, just to socialize and share information.

?Like what?? I asked.

Over the next 20 minutes I learned the ins and outs of garlic ? from planting to parts I didn't even know you could eat.

Not sure you can ever learn everything there is to know about anything, but at the very least I consider myself a junior gardener. I have a pair of avocado trees started and have forced spider plant babies on most of my friends and family ? those things never stop growing.

That considered, I've only ever had my mother to look to for advice. That's not a bad thing ? my whole head's worth of garden know-how would fit in a thimble of hers. But the old community centre was abuzz with conversations of how to save the bees, community gardens, what can be started from organic produce you buy at the grocers, pickling and on and on it goes.

While we know that this sort of research can be completed through hours of eye-numbing YouTube videos, that can't compare to learning in real time from people who have honed their habits through trial and error. Not to mention ideas for things you wouldn't have thought of researching.

I don't know about you, but face-to-face information retention just seems to be easier. Unless, of course, it's your partner relaying it ? then it's anybody's game.

?Are you even listening to me??

?That's a strange way to start a conversation, dear.?

I came home with a 12-seed starter kit and a clove of garlic to plant. My new plan is to build picture-frame terrariums and turn my spare room into a haphazard greenhouse ? apartment living problems.

The faces of surprise that were made when I said I planned to grow all of these things indoors ? especially the garlic ? make me think I might be in for a mismanaged adventure. But at least I'll be able to convey that trial to next year's Seedy Saturday attendees.

These types of events are resource opportunities for our hard-working but struggling community. If you can find the discretionary income to get there, or tag along with someone who can, it's always worth it.

Learning should always be free, but in a world where it's not, we might rely on the wisdom of our neighbours.