

Dutch-Canadian friendship tulip garden planted in Barry's Bay



Among those who were part of the planting of the Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 406 in Barry's Bay were, from left, Shirley Yantha, a member of both the Legion and the Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society; Sharon Mahussier, president of the horticultural society, and Kim Love, mayor of the Township of Madawaska Valley. PATRICIA McLEE Special to This Week

By Patricia McLee

When the robins return to Barry's Bay, there will be a new sign of spring to greet them.

A Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden, containing 700 red and white tulips, will be coming into bloom for the first time in front of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 406 in Barry's Bay.

More than a dozen hardy volunteers braved last Friday's raw cold to plant the bulbs, won by the Madawaska Valley Horticultural Society in the Canada-wide Dutch Friendship Garden competition sponsored by the Canadian Garden Council.

Sharon Mahussier, president of the horticulture society, said she's sure the inclusion of the story of Constance Chippure, a Dutch war bride who came to Barry's Bay 70 years ago, in the society's bid for the tulips was what clinched the win.

"And of course the Legion was the absolute best place to put the garden," Mahussier said.

She said the horticultural society was hoping to plant the bulbs in the shape of a Canadian flag, but with winter already baring its teeth last week, they had to be content with a simple red/white pattern cut diagonally across the garden.

The Legion has plans to renovate its front yard so the garden may have to be moved next year, possibly to the hill alongside so she said they may be able to change the design then. This year they were just happy to get the bulbs into the soil before it froze.

The garden is one of 140 Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Gardens won across the county, each linked to a symbolic 70th anniversary Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden consisting of 7,000 red and white tulip bulbs, to be planted in Ottawa as part of the Canadian Tulip Festival.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands and the end of the Second World War as well as the 70th anniversary of the first gift of 100,000 Dutch tulips bulbs sent in 1945 to Canadians as a symbol of appreciation for the role Canadian soldiers played in the liberation of the Netherlands and the hospitality Canada provided to the Dutch Royal Family in Ottawa during the war.

Michel Gauthier, executive director of the Canadian Garden Council and president of the World Tulip Summit Society came up with the idea to celebrate the anniversary of that first gift of tulips.

"Gardens play a significant role in Canadian culture and heritage," said Gauthier, "and the tulip represents both to all Canadians."

Vesey's Bulbs of Prince Edward Island donated 100,000 tulips bulbs for the contest as well as the bulbs for the Ottawa garden and Canada Post agreed to cover the costs associated with the delivering the Friendship Tulip Gardens.

?The tulip is the most recognized harbinger of spring,? said John Barrett of Vesey's. ?It has come to symbolize so many things to the people of Holland and Canada. Peace, compassion, friendship, trade, beauty and the memories of a nation coming to the aid of another. We are proud to be able to gift a flower that means so very much to Canadians.?

The 141 gardens will be featured on the 2016 edition of Canada's Garden Route.