

Spring/Summer Edition

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Guide

2021



FEATURING

A Walleye Lesson

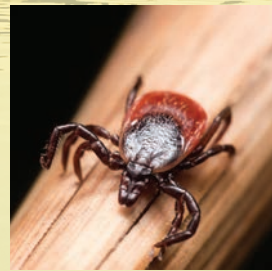
The path to a successful walleye opener.

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A lesson learned for walleye season opener



Dave Patterson with the largest walleye of opening day. This fish was caught in deeper water and was the first sign of a 'different' kind of opening weekend.

by Ontario Fishing Guys
MANITOULIN—For avid walleye anglers, nothing compares to the excitement of opening weekend. Hooks are sharpened, line changed

and boats and motors primed for the day that gets us all through the cold winter months. This year was different than most, the anticipation was

higher than normal. Perhaps it was the lockdown taking its toll or the fact that the ice had been gone for over a month and we had been stuck fishing for rainbow during that time.

Don't get us wrong, rainbow fishing is fine, but they are usually so easy to catch the shine wears off fast.

We were ready for some walleye action.

The first day of the opener was average for us. We caught some nice fish with a 28" specimen as our biggest and she was a one-off as we passed through a deep pock-

et. The action was good, but not great. Nine walleye were caught.

It was an early spawn this year, we thought. We will adjust accordingly and fish where we would the end of May and start of June.

Day two went much like day one. Fishing was okay, but we still didn't see many fish. We tried eight to 20 feet of water. Tossed jigs off points, fished the transition line and scouted the sand flats. Some fish, but not like we expected at all. What was going on? Five walleye caught.

Our next time out we decided to totally change our game plan. We targeted grounds that we knew held fish once the water temperature changed, which it had yet to do. Still not much to brag about. Desperation began to set in; had we lost the touch? Seven walleye caught.

On day one we had caught our best fish in deeper water, she was 32 feet down. Although we never marked another fish, we decided to look deeper, to the spots we would normally target in the fall.

Low and behold we struck gold on day four. We found the post-spawn walleye 40 to 50 feet down. This is not ...continued on page 10



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The common dandelion: more than a weed but only part of solution to declining pollinator populations

by Lori Thompson,
Local Journalism
Initiative Reporter

MANITOULIN—A yellow wave is upon us. At this time of year on Manitoulin Island, roadside ditches are lined with cheery marsh marigolds, clumps of yellow daffodils stand tall in

residential gardens and dandelions are cropping up everywhere, often covering lawns with their bright yellow flower. While many people see the common dandelion as a pesky invasive weed, others promote it as an important source of early spring nectar for bees

and other pollinators. It's also a source of food and medicine for people.

Dandelions originally hail from Europe but have naturalized throughout most of Canada. The name comes from the French 'dent de lion,' meaning lion's tooth, and refers to its toothed

leaves. It is believed that dandelions were purposely brought to North America by early settlers for their medicinal benefits. The plant has been used for over a thousand years by Egyptians, ancient Greeks, Romans and in China for medicinal purposes. Its Latin name, *taraxacum officinale*, has roots in the

Greek words for disorder and remedy: ancient Greeks believed dandelions would cure almost any illness.

Prior to the twentieth century and the invention of green lawns, dandelions were praised in Europe and were considered beloved garden flowers rather than weeds. They were woven into wedding bouquets for

good luck and have long been symbols of hope, summer and childhood. Japan had horticultural societies dedicated to dandelions.

Today, however, the common dandelion is often the most unpopular plant in the neighbourhood. Opponents of dandelions say they crowd out native plants,

...continued on page 6

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The bumble bee on the flower is *Bombus frigidus*, the "frigid bumble bee," which is a species found in western Canada.

photo by Tiffani Harrison, Conservation Outreach and Field Biologist, Wildlife Preservation Canada

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Creating your backyard oasis with RONA Little Current Building Centre



Creating a backyard oasis for your family and friends is easy with RONA Little Current Building Centre.

You've spent your winter daydreaming of summer barbecues, patio parties and relaxing in the sun, and now that spring is here you can finally turn those dreams into reality. Whether you live in town or in the country, creating a backyard oasis is made easy with the help of Little Current RONA Little Current Building Centre.

The first step is assessing your space and needs. Do you need a new deck or to refresh your deck or patio? If you are looking at building a new deck, be sure to compare the different decking materials available. Each has its own advantages.

Pressure-treated wood

Pressure-treated lumber is the most commonly used decking material. It should always be used instead of fresh, untreated pine lumber. Pressure-treated lumber is often selected because of its favourable cost and durability. If you go this route, keep in mind that you should wait six months to a year to stain or paint your finished deck.

Composite

Composite decking is even-grained and lasts at least twice as long as pressure-treated wood if cared

for properly. The decking features a realistic wood grain pattern, offering the warmth and style of real wood without the maintenance. There is no need to stain, paint or retouch, just select from the several colour choices available. Built to withstand Canadian winters, it offers UV protection so the colour won't fade and it is stain and scratch resistant for lasting performance. In the spring, easily clean with simply soap and water.

With environment-friendly products on everyone's minds, it's good to know that pressure-treated wood is now manufactured with chemicals that are less harmful than in previous years, while composites are made from wood fibers and recycled plastics. Whatever option you choose, RONA Little Current Building Centre sells more than 100 environment-friendly products for deck building.

Others elements to consider when building a new deck are:

Size of the deck

Even before the details are determined, calculate the approximate size of the deck. For example, make

sure there is enough space for each planned activity as well as for the number of people who will be using these areas. As a general rule of thumb, however, plan for 100 square feet per occupant.

Split levels

A deck with split levels can accommodate a sloped yard and a separation of activities. If planned correctly, split levels can also avoid the need for a railing and stairs.

Anchored/standalone

The majority of decks are anchored securely to the home, which is an integral part of the overall structural system. Yet, some decks are standalone and do not need to be anchored to the home. Determine your deck's main structural support scheme.

Ground-level patio or elevated deck

A patio at ground level could be an alternate option for an elevated deck. Concrete pavers, paving stones and tiles are favourite flooring materials for ground-level patios. Additionally, a ground-level patio could be used in conjunction with the deck's design.

Did you know that composite tiles are now available? An alternative to concrete

stone, composite tiles offer the same benefits as composite decking and are a great way to refresh an old space. Simple to put together, they work on decks, in the backyard, and even sauna floors.

Finish off your deck or patio with railing, fencing or a privacy screen from HOFT Solutions (New this year to RONA). HOFT offers stylish solutions for your backyard oasis.

tion, Toja Grid Pergolas' construction resists stain, mold and mildew. With ease of cleaning and fade resistance, the canvas can easily be taken down within minutes. The strong tension straps and buckles allow you to pull the shade tight and flat. It is a modular, flexible solution that is customizable to your needs.

RONA also carries a wide selection of umbrellas and gazebos. The 10' cantilevered umbrella from Henrika, for instance, provides an attractive shelter from the sun. Add an outdoor décor

outdoor furniture styles to suit your tastes.

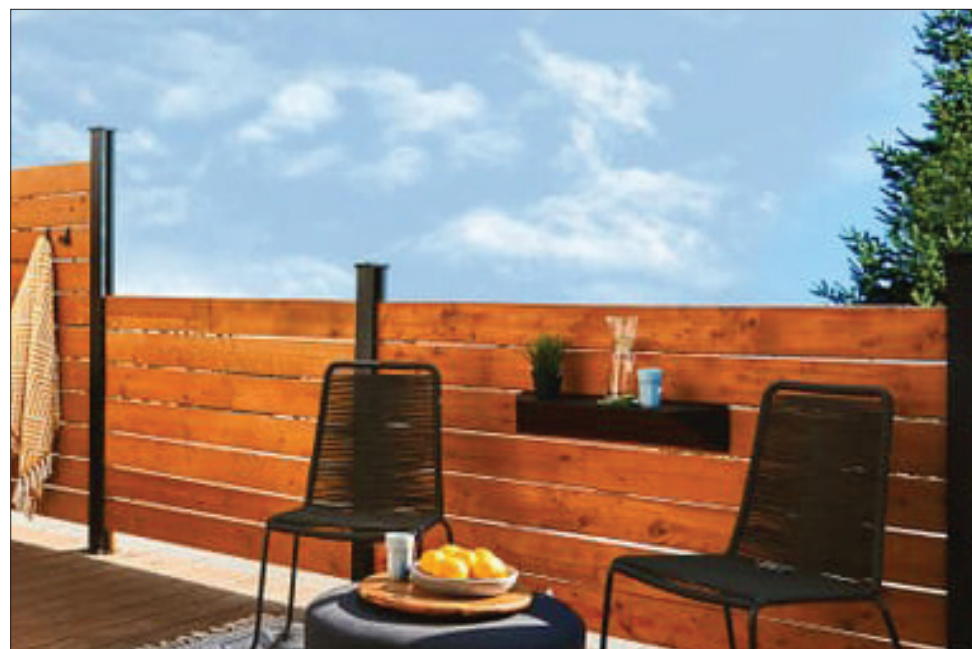
Once you've selected your outdoor furniture, complete your look with an outdoor rug, pillows, solar lights and patio lights.

Many outdoor rugs are now made of durable UV-treated polypropylene plastic, making it easy to clean with a garden hose and its innovative design allows you to easily fold and move it around. With trendy colour and patterns available, a rug will complement any outdoor décor.

While a deck is common-



Toja Grid Pergolas' construction resists stain, mold and mildew and is made of 100 percent synthetic HDPE construction.



New to RONA, HOFT Solutions offers stylish railings, fencing or privacy screen options.



Designed for durability and beauty, this composite deck board is a great choice for your decking project. With no need for staining, painting or sanding, this decking board is easy to install. It offers UV protection so the colour won't fade, and it is stain and scratch resistant for lasting performance.

Still not sure about your deck or patio material and design? Stop in at Little Current RONA Little Current Building Centre for a free quote!

Another key piece to creating your dream backyard space is shade. Consider the direction your deck or patio faces. If the sun's summer rays will be too intense at certain times of the day, add shade with plants, a lattice, an umbrella, a pergola or a gazebo.

New to RONA Little Current Building Centre this year is the Toja Grid Pergolas. Made of 100 percent synthetic HDPE construc-

tion, Toja Grid Pergolas' construction resists stain, mold and mildew. With ease of cleaning and fade resistance, the canvas can easily be taken down within minutes. The strong tension straps and buckles allow you to pull the shade tight and flat. It is a modular, flexible solution that is customizable to your needs.

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ly used during the warmer months of the year, it can be used for a greater length of time if the design will allow. Cooler nights could benefit from heated lamps, outdoor fireplaces and propane fire pits, all available at the RONA Little Current Building Centre.

Don't wait until summer to create your backyard oasis. Spring into your RONA Little Current Building Centre and make your vision a reality so you can spend your summer season enjoying your new space.

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...The common dandelion: more than a weed



Pollinators make use of the plentiful dandelions.

...continued from page 4
are easily dispersed to other people's gardens by their fluffy seeds and are difficult to eliminate from lawns and gardens because of their long tap root. "The dandelion is a tap rooted plant. The root is usually six inches long but apparently can reach up to 10 feet," Claudette Sims with Halton Region Master Gardeners

pointed out. "Certainly, some tap rooted plants can act as tillage crops, which are used to break up clay soils by penetrating the compacted layer, creating pore space that allows water and air to penetrate."

Radishes are a tap rooted plant that have been used to break up surface soil compaction and improve soil tilth, but radishes won't regrow from the root

as a dandelion will. "That would make it challenging, if not impossible, to grow anything else in that area," said Ms. Sims. "I suppose dandelions could be viewed as good for soils but so are many other plants. There are several native plants that would offer food sources for pollinators and other insects as well as have roots that both stabilize the soil and reach deep into it."

Karen Stephenson is a writer, researcher, wild food educator and chartered herbalist. She says dandelions play an integral role in maintaining healthy soil. "Dandelions are the prime indicator that the soil is compacted and when soil is compacted it tends to be anaerobic which means there's a lack of oxygen in the soil. Their role is to basically drill holes with their

long tap root. This creates more oxygen which creates more soil microbes. Soil microbes are essential," she said.

When people introduce chemicals into the soil through the use of herbicides, pesticides and some fertilizers in their quest to get the perfect green lawn, they end up destroying the soil microbes. "They're killing the health of the soil and those microbes are dying," said Ms. Stephenson. "Going back to the dandelions, one of the indicators of dandelions being prolific in a certain area is that the soil is calcium deficient. As a gardener, if you want that green lawn putting chemicals on it is not the way to do it. Just mow your lawn and those mowed down dandelion leaves will go into the soil and will provide the calcium that the soil and the grass needs. You have to be patient; this isn't going to work over a period of a few weeks. We're talking in terms of a couple years but in turn your grass will become what you wish it to be by leaving those dandelions."

Sue Meert is a 2021 butterfly ranger and assistant project co-ordinator with

Manitoulin Streams Improvement Association and believes dandelions are a healthy part of shoreline ecosystems. "From our standpoint on stream restoration, preventing erosion is what we do," she said. "Dandelions have such a deep root base that when they grow on the shorelines they're helping us do our job. We plant trees and other native species; they all do their part along with native grasses and dandelions."

Dandelions are medicinal as well as edible and full of vitamins and minerals. Ms. Meert likes to paint, so when she looks at a natural lawn, she's not seeing weeds. "I love that splash of yellow and seeing the bees and butterflies around. It's a beautiful picture to me," she said. It makes sense to leave some areas for dandelions and other native plants to grow.

Ms. Stephenson and Ms. Sims agree on the benefits of native plant species. "When people here are describing the perfect green lawn, what are they planting?" asked Ms. Stephenson. "They're planting grass that is not native to Ontario, it's native to central Unit-

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Composite decking trends on the rise on Manitoulin

MANITOULIN—With the sky-high price of pressure-treated wood these days, more and more people are looking to composite decking with prices becoming more in line with traditional products than they once were. This trend is no different on Manitoulin, with Island hardware stores seeing a major uptick in those seeking quotes, and purchas-

ing, composite decking.

Tom Carrick at Manitowaning Mill Home Hardware said his store carries the Trex brand of decking, which comes in four different price ranges. These differences are basically a matter of thickness.

Scott Card, floor manager at RONA Little Current Building Centre, says his store carries Trex as well as the RONA brand, Elegance

Prestige.

Mr. Card says the Little Current RONA has already sold five substantial Trex decks this year and many more in the house brand. He guesses composite sales are up by 15 percent.

As of press time (in today's market, prices are changing all the time), a piece of 5/4" pressure treated wood is running at about \$2.10/foot at Manitowaning Mill. The

lowest costing Trex comes in at approximately \$2.80 a foot.

"That's 25 percent more for the most inexpensive of the Trex decking," Mr. Carrick noted.

Likewise at RONA, there is a 25 percent difference between pressure-treated lumber and the Elegance Prestige brand.

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Tis the seasons to be watchful—for ticks carrying Lyme disease

by Michael Erskine
 MANITOULIN—Butterflies, bees and other pollinators are well-served by unmowed lawns and dandelions, but other, more sinister critters thrive on tall grasses and bushes. We are, of course, speaking of the blacklegged tick, carrier of Lyme disease.

Lyme disease is a serious illness that is primarily spread to people by the bite of infected blacklegged ticks (which also go by the nickname deer ticks).

While most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with antibiotics, if left untreated symptoms can last from months to years and can cause serious health problems—even death.

Blacklegged ticks live in woodlands, tall grasses and bushes and are found throughout Ontario, including Manitoulin Island. A Lyme-positive tick was recently discovered in Sudbury, but chances are near to certain that many of the ticks lurking in the Island's grass and bushes harbour the disease.

Ticks are most active in the summer months but can be found at any time of the year when the temperature

is above freezing so spring and fall are no sure defence against the tiny blood suckers. Adult ticks are about the same size of a sesame seed, but immature nymphs can be as small as a poppy seed.

The aforementioned blood-sucking can bloat the tiny creatures to the size of a grape.

Lacking wings, ticks move about slowly when ground-bound, or settled on tall grass, but they are consummate hitchhikers, waiting with outstretched front limbs ready to hook onto a passing animal/lunch, including humans.

Tick bites tend to be painless, so unlike many other warm weather scourges, there is often little indication of their visit. As the warm weather has Island-

ers taking to lawn, garden, farm, field and forest it is vital that they take a few steps to protect themselves and remain vigilant for any signs of ticks and/or the symptoms of Lyme disease.

If you do spot a tick, or think you have been bitten, don't panic. Tick bites don't always transmit Lyme disease. A tick has to be infected with Lyme disease bacteria in order to pass it on to you, and while it is estimated that 20 percent (up to 40-plus in some southern regions) do carry the bacteria, the odds still remain in your favour. But if your tick assailant is carrying the bacteria, time is of the essence. According to Public Health Sudbury and Districts (PHSD), the risk of getting Lyme disease from
...continued on page 12



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...Walleye opener

...continued from page 3
some kind of revelation as it is not uncommon for the large post-spawn females to leave the spawn fast and seek deep water to rest and feed up. What was strange is all the little males—perch, bass and pike—were there as well. Do you know what else was there?

Bait.
In all our excitement and then ensuing panic we had overlooked one key ingredi-

ent in being a successful fisherman. You find the food and you will find the fish.

It was a rookie mistake and we can guarantee you that if we were salmon fishing we would never have fished in a spot that we did not mark schools of bait fish. However, looking back we do it all the time with walleye. We got lazy and assumed that because we caught them in the same location countless times that they would still be there.

This is a valuable lesson about understanding the fish. Structure is important, transition is important, your presentation is important, however, they all pale in comparison to having fish in the area actively feeding on baitfish.

Over the next few days we proceeded to catch over 100 walleye with most going back. We did keep a few for a well-deserved fish dinner. Lesson learned.



Aaron Case with a beautiful walleye taken in over 40 feet of water. This fish went back to spawn again next year.



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Six ways to design your dream backyard

MANITOULIN—With more time spent at home, designing a space that feels like a mini getaway is increasingly important. Whether you're looking to move your dining experience outside or wanting to create a calming retreat, here are six ways to achieve your dream backyard.

Splurge on patio furniture

If your patio furniture is looking worn and tired, it might be time to consider investing in quality items that will last for seasons to come. Select pieces that are both functional and timeless. When styling the sitting area, try a large sectional. Not

only will it create a more intimate atmosphere, but it will also provide ample space for lounging. Use throw blankets and decorative pillows for colour and texture.

Extend the season

Patio season can be enjoyed all year long if you play your cards right. For the ultimate makeover, add a firepit or outdoor heater so you can keep spending time outdoors when the nights begin to cool. It's even better if you can stay cozy while you star-gaze.

Consider shade and privacy

A custom-made gazebo or pergola helps keep an outdoor space shady and cool

and makes for a stunning feature. Whether you want to tackle a DIY project or are looking for help with installation, many hardware store offer backyard project packages that can provide you with blueprints, quality materials, expert advice and everything you need to get the job done.

Enhance your outdoor dining

Elevate your dining experience with a trendy new pellet grill that allows you to sear, bake, roast and smoke. This will give the chef in your house the perfect excuse to whip up some classic burgers or a wood-fired pizza. Wood pellets are available in

a variety of flavours, like apple, hickory, maple, oak and more, so you can experience gourmet food from the comfort of your backyard.

Amp up the ambiance

Don't forget to add some atmosphere with lighting and the right finishing touches. String lights are a must-have for making a space feel bright and warm as the sun

goes down. Adding greenery and florals to your patio or deck space will also infuse charm and privacy. Consider going with tropical plants to bring a touch of the Caribbean to your home.

Let the games begin

Enhance that getaway feeling by adding entertainment to your backyard. Take games night outdoors with

Bolaball—a family-friendly game that's perfect for people of all ages. If you're in the DIY mood, you can also make a bean bag or washer-toss (affectionately known as Texas horseshoes in Haweater circles) game. These simple additions will keep the whole family having fun all season long.

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...Tis the seasons to be watchful—for ticks carrying Lyme disease

...continued from page 9
a tick bite is greater if an infected tick has been attached to its victims for more than 24 hours.

A few simple steps can greatly reduce the danger of running into a tick: keep grass mowed short, trim bushes and tree branches to let in sunlight (like the little vampires they are, ticks hate the sunlight and avoid

hot and dry locations), try creating borders of gravel or woodchips one metre or wider around your yard if you happen to be situated next to a wooded area, or a field with tall grasses, clean up leaf litter, brush and weeds at the edge of the lawn and from stone walls and wood piles, clean up areas under and around bird feeders to reduce the attrac-

tion of small critters such as mice and voles (which ticks love to hitchhike on), discourage deer from entering your yard as ticks also feed on these animals (hence that deer tick moniker), move children's swing sets, playground equipment and sandboxes away from wooded areas and may place such equipment on a woodchip or mulch founda-

tion.

When out and about in forest or field enjoying Mother Nature, dress in long-sleeved, full-legged and light clothing. Tuck your pant legs into your socks to present more of a challenge for the ticks to get to your delicious veins.

There are a host of insect repellants that are available on the market, most prominent of which is DEET. Deep Woods Off is often cited as a good commercial brand. You can also treat clothing and gear with products containing 0.5 percent permethrin. Permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear and will remain protective through several washings. Alternatively, you can buy permethrin-treated clothing and gear at most outfitters.

There are more environmentally-friendly options in the arsenal if you are one of those folks who develop a rash from DEET, such as oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE). Don't use OLE on children under three, however.

When you get home from your jaunt in nature, be sure to check your clothing as ticks don't always set in for their meal right away.

This is doubly so for children and pets. Ticks really don't play favourites. Strip the bush-bashing duds and wash them in hot water (ticks are hardy enough to make it through a cold wash cycle or two). Carefully check your coats, and daypacks too.

A shower is in order when you get inside as well. Showering within two hours of coming back inside has been shown to reduce your risk of getting Lyme disease and may even prove effective in reducing the risk of other tick-borne diseases. As an added bonus, showering may help wash off unattached ticks and provided the perfect opportunity to do a thorough tick check of those hard-to-reach nooks and crannies.

If you do find yourself experiencing any Lyme disease symptoms, get in to see your healthcare provider as early as possible. This is especially true if you feel unwell in the weeks following a bite or you feel unwell and have recently been in an area where ticks may live (even if no bite is evident). Explain to your healthcare provider about the tick bite or where you

were. If you were bitten and saved the tick, bring it along to your medical appointment. The earlier treatment is received, the better. Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated successfully with a few weeks of antibiotics.

Symptoms of Lyme disease usually occur within three to 30 days after a tick bite and may include: fever, headache, muscle and joint pains, spasms, numbness or tingling, facial paralysis, fatigue, swollen glands and/or an expanding skin rash (don't necessarily expect a rash, many people never get or see a rash).

If Lyme infection is not recognized and treated, it can affect the heart, nervous system or joints, but if it is caught early, Lyme disease can generally be treated successfully. That's why it's so important to contact your healthcare provider if you believe a tick was attached for more than 24 hours or if you develop flu-like symptoms or an expanding rash in the weeks following a tick bite.

So, enjoy the great outdoors, but work some sensible precautions into your routines and stay safe.



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Grilling breakfast: Summertime brunching with a unique twist

MANITOULIN—Looking to mix up the next brunch you host? Impress your guests by grilling up breakfast and giving them the ultimate flavour experience.

This baked asparagus pancetta cheese tart is the perfect party-starting appetizer. A flaky crust is topped with fresh asparagus, savory pancetta and salty parmesan. For perfect wood-fired fla-

vor, use a wood pellet grill to cook up this tasty meal.

Pair this delicate and savoury dish with a passionfruit mimosa, or locally roasted coffee, and a mixed green salad topped with goat cheese for a restaurant-worthy experience.

Baked Asparagus Pancetta Cheese Tart

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 sheets puff pastry, chilled
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream
- 6 whole eggs
- 3/8 cups goat cheese
- 6 tbsp Parmesan cheese
- 1 1/2 tbsp chopped chives, plus more for serving
- 12 oz thin asparagus spears
- 12 oz pancetta, cooked and drained
- Lemon zest, for serving

Shaved Parmesan cheese, for serving

Directions:

When ready to cook, set grill temperature to 375°F (190°C) and preheat, with the lid closed for 15 minutes.

Place puff pastry on a half sheet tray and score around the perimeter 1 inch in from the edges making sure not to cut all the way through. Prick the centre of the puff

pastry with a fork.

Place sheet tray directly on the grill grate and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until pastry has puffed and browned a little bit.

While the pastry bakes, combine cream, 3 eggs, both cheeses and chives in small bowl. Whisk to mix well.

Remove sheet tray from grill and pour egg mixture into the puff pastry. Lay asparagus spears on top of the

egg mixture and sprinkle with cooked pancetta.

Whisk remaining egg in a small bowl and brush the top of the pastry with egg wash.

Place tray back on grill grate and cook for another 15 to 20 minutes until egg mixture is just set.

Finish tart with lemon zest, more chopped chives, and shaved Parmesan.



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...Composite decking trends on the rise on Manitoulin

...continued from page 8

Mr. Carrick says a standard pressure-treated deck can also last a long time if properly maintained but, he adds, the beauty of composite decking lies in its hassle-free nature. The days of staining and splinters are gone.

"My own house in Sandfield is all composite decks," he notes. "It's 16 years old and they look the same as

they did the day they were laid."

Some have cited slipperiness as a concern with composite decking, but Mr. Carrick says it's "no slipperier than wood."

Mr. Card agrees. "Early generation deckboards were slippery, but that's since been solved."

The RONA floor manager says composite decking has other advantages, such as

its use of recyclable materials for those worrying about deforestation when undertaking construction projects, plus the decking's hidden fastener system makes projects look "very sharp. Especially when you've got multi-layer decks, maybe with different shades. It can look amazing."

Another bonus for composite decking: the Trex brand comes in a variety of colours

and textures. Match that up with a railing system (they even come with LED lights these days) and you've got yourself a work of art.

Trex comes with a 25-year limited warranty, while the Elegance Prestige brand comes with a 10-year warranty.

Mr. Carrick says he believes the cost of pressure-treated wood will come down even-

tually, but will likely never be as low as it once was. "Inventory is costing more than three or four times it did," Mr. Carrick adds. "It's costing me more to bring it in than to retail it."

"In the 46 years I've been doing this, it's the most stressful it's ever been," he says.

While relatively new to the business, Mr. Card can agree

that the staff of RONA Little Current Building Centre is also run off its feet, fielding upwards of 70 calls an hour these days. Keep in mind that with a nationwide construction boom, you may have to wait a short while for your composite decking order.

For more information on composite decking, visit rona.ca or homehardware.ca.



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...The common dandelion: more than a weed

...continued from page 6

ed States. It's not meant to be here and this is why they're water hogs. They're fighting constantly to get that perfect green lawn so that's fighting against nature. Kentucky bluegrass, for example, is not native to this area. We're going to fight constantly to keep it looking healthy. Work with what is supposed to be here and you'll have greater success."

There's a myth that dandelions are the first flower to bloom, added Ms. Sims. "These dandelion promotions are often an attempt to convince the public that dandelions will save the bees and that is completely false. Our bees are often thought of as honey bees but honey bees are a non-native species in Ontario. The bees that are native to Ontario and that have successfully pollinated plants since way before honey bees ever arrived are the ones that are endangered."

There are over 850 species of native bees in Canada, Ms. Sims pointed out. "It is true that honey bees are often found on dandelions. This is not a surprise as honey bees are also not native to North America.

They recognize dandelions as a food source because they evolved with it. We know that native plants and insects have evolved over time to form complex and necessary associations. There are specialist native bees that feed exclusively on the pollen of one species of plant (similar to monarchs, whose caterpillars can only feed on milkweed). Dandelions would not be a food for them. Without the evening primrose, there would be no evening primrose sweat bee. The hind legs of this specialist bee have evolved to be able to collect pollen exclusively from that specific plant."

Honey bees do forage on dandelions and that may confuse a lot of people who see that and think this may be the best flower available, which isn't necessarily true, said Sarah Mackell, lead biologist with the Native Pollinator Initiative at Wildlife Preservation Canada. That dandelion may be the only flower available or the first they saw that day. Ms. Mackell is currently breeding bees and has a field team out surveying bees. The project involves research, annual large scale population monitoring, outreach, commu-

nity science and breeding, with a focus on at-risk bees.

There are generalist native bees who do feed on dandelion but this is only a part of the solution, she explained. "Dandelions are kind of a contentious topic at the moment," Ms. Mackell said. "They are kind of important but they also aren't the solution to our issues. They do definitely provide pollen nectar for bees in the early spring but actually, dandelions don't provide all of the essential amino acids that emerging bumble bees need to reproduce to start their colonies. A lot of studies have shown that if you only feed dandelion pollen to bumble bee there are negative impacts on their reproduction. It's good that they're there but it shouldn't be the only thing provided to them, especially because dandelions are non-native as well."

"We definitely encourage people to plant native species and ensure there are native plants in the landscape," she added. "Overall I would say early emerging bumble bees need a varied source of pollen for reproduction and many early flowering native plants provide a more nutritious

pollen for them compared to dandelions. They are better than nothing but are not the solution to pollinator declines. We shouldn't be pushing them as a solution for pollinators. I think it's an important step but I don't think it solves pollinator decline or pollinator stressors."

Pollinator decline, specifically bees, is very complicated, Ms. Mackell ex-

plained. There isn't just one stressor or one thing that's causing the decline. "There are likely multiple things going on at the same time, for example climate change, habitat loss, pesticides, pathogens is a big one. Definitely, planting natives is good for providing forage for pollinators throughout the season, also making sure there are no periods where they don't have

anything to forage on."

She believes it's good to have some dandelions in the lawn. "Lawns don't have to look perfectly green. Hopefully after a year or so of living with dandelions they can start to think about putting native plants in their yard. Allowing dandelions to remain in the yard is a good start to having people start to think about ecology."

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