



About the Humber Arboretum

History and Place

The 105 hectare Humber Arboretum is located in Adobigok (Place of the Alders in the Ojibwe Language). It is situated along the west bend of the Humber River. This Canadian Heritage river originates in the Oak Ridges Moraine near the Niagara Escarpment and flows through the Peel Plain on its journey to Lake Ontario. The watershed historically provided an integral connection for aboriginal peoples between Ontario's lakeshore and the Lake Simcoe-Georgian Bay region. This area is known as the traditional territory of the Ojibwe Anishnabe aboriginal people and includes several First Nations communities.

The Humber Arboretum is integrated with Humber College's central campus in Ward One, Etobicoke North. Its botanical gardens sit at the foot of the College's student residences.

Natural Assets

The Humber Arboretum is part of the Carolinian Life Zone (Ecoregion 7E), Canada's most biologically diverse ecological region. It is home to 50% of Canada's birds, 40% of Canada's native plants, and 66% of our reptiles. Some 2,200 species of herbaceous plants and 70 species of trees are found in this zone.

Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) designation

In 2015, the Humber Arboretum was designated as a new Environmentally Significant Area (ESA) by the City of Toronto. It is recognized in particular for its habitats for significant plant and animal species which are vulnerable, rare and/or threatened. Significant species at the Humber Arboretum include 21 species of flora, 20 species of fauna, 17 bird species, 2 mammals and one amphibian.

Outdoor classrooms and living laboratories

The Humber Arboretum's outdoor classrooms and living laboratory spaces are used by a wide range of Humber College's programs and departments. These include the landscape, horticulture, arboriculture, photography/film, Early Childhood Education, recreation, and culinary management programs as well as the Aboriginal Resource Centre and Athletics. Recent and upcoming applied research in the Arboretum includes control methods for the invasive *Phragmites* reed, butternut tree conservation, and native forest regeneration practices.



Horticultural Collections

The Humber Arboretum has a comprehensive collection of woody and herbaceous plant material. Among the standouts are the bulb collection including *Crocus*, *Galanthus*, *Scilla*, *Muscari*, *Allium*, *Narcissus* and *Tulipa*. We also have a large collection of spring flowering trees and shrubs including Magnolia, Dogwood, Redbud, Crab-apple, Cherry, Rhododendron, Lilac and Viburnum. Notable perennial collections comprise Peony, Daylily, Hosta, Daisy, and Echinacea.

Arboreal collections

The Humber Arboretum's shade tree collection offers a variety of Beech, Maple, Oak, Ash, Lilac, Horse Chestnut, Willow and nut species. Evergreens include Spruce, Pine, False Cypress, Juniper, Cedar, Yew and Hemlock, including dwarf varieties. Some of the Arboretum's most unique specimens are an endangered Dawn Redwood and ancient Sugar Maples.

Woodland

The Arboretum's woodland habitat includes forest dominated by American Beech, Sugar Maple, and Red Oak, with an extensive stand of white trout lily and other spring ephemeral species. There exists within the woodland a small sugar bush stand. Sugar maple trees are sustainably tapped and maple syrup harvested each winter for educational use by Humber College's culinary programs, Humber College's Aboriginal Resource Centre, and the Arboretum's nature education and camp programs.

Forest Apiary

Wild forest bees are kept by Humber Arboretum beekeepers in the Forest Apiary residing in six beehives. Approximately 60 L of honey is harvested each summer for educational and promotional use with limited quantities available for sale.

Wetlands and wildflower meadows

The Humber Arboretum valley is believed to be the site of a historic wetland or wet meadow. In recent years, TRCA has been working to restore the northern drainage channels into functioning wetland features as they were originally. Recent restoration plantings have been done in the area by TRCA, City of Toronto, Humber Arboretum, Humber College Landscape Technician program, and the Humber College Aboriginal Resource Centre.

This restoration work provides many benefits including tertiary water treatment, storm water and flood attenuation, and enhanced bird, amphibian and small mammal habitat. These are important factors in restoring the ecological processes and functions in the area, especially in such a significant bioregion¹.

¹ Source: Katie Turnbull, Project Manager, Restoration Projects, TRCA (2016)



Centre for Urban Ecology

The Centre for Urban Ecology at the Humber Arboretum is a sustainable, multi-purpose facility which functions as the Arboretum's educational and community hub. The Centre has gained recognition as Toronto's first Gold LEED Building as well as Ontario's first Platinum certified EcoCentre, demonstrating the highest rating for sustainable building operations in the province. It has a green roof as well as sustainable energy and waste management systems.

Purpose

As set forth in the Humber Arboretum's Tripartite Agreement (2006):

The Humber Arboretum shall be operated and maintained for the following purposes:

- a. To establish and maintain a comprehensive, aesthetically pleasing collection of woody and herbaceous plants;*
- b. To demonstrate correct arboricultural and horticultural techniques through responsible development and maintenance practices;*
- c. To protect natural areas through appropriate conservation and restoration practices;*
- d. To facilitate a range of educational and research opportunities in arboriculture and horticulture and environmental studies;*
- e. To establish and promote the Humber Arboretum as a resource that is an integral part of the Greater Toronto community and an attraction for national and international visitors;*
- f. To establish, maintain, and encourage wildlife habitat, and;*
- g. To create and maintain a Centre for Urban Ecology that will serve as a gathering point, with functional laboratory and classroom facilities.*