



Recent ACER Events

- Mar.4 RTO Measures UP! Trees R Us Webinar 2 Virtual Event
- Feb.4 RTO Measures UP! Trees R Us Webinar 1 Virtual Event
- Nov.26 City of Mississauga/GO Open Data Hackathon (Alice - guest judge) Mississauga City Hall, Mississauga
- Nov.12 RTOERO District 22 Fall Luncheon (ACER - keynote speaker) Weston Golf Club, Etobicoke
- Oct.22 RTOERO Measures UP! Field Event 1 Centennial Park, Etobicoke
- Oct.18 GLLAF Ganaraska Closing Ceremony Chris Garrett Park, Cobourg

Exciting News: TDFEF Funding Secured to Support the Analysis of 20+ Years of ACER's Tree Monitoring Data!

Thanks to new funding from the [TD Friends of the Environment Foundation \(TDFEF\)](#), ACER can now analyze the tree monitoring data we have collected over the last two decades, with the ultimate goal of identifying which species thrive best in urban and peri-urban environments. Urban and peri-urban forests are essential for maintaining ecological balance, supporting biodiversity, and enhancing urban environments.

The data being analysed comes from the native tree micro-forests planted in 73 schoolyards across Southern Ontario as part of our Planting For Change (P4C) program since 2008, and the one-hectare Humber Arboretum Experimental Plot, established between 2002 and 2003. Each planting site was benchmarked at the time of planting with ongoing data collection conducted collaboratively by researchers, volunteers, and students from local schools and universities taking critical measurements on tree growth and health including tree height, diameter at breast height (DBH), canopy width, and soil conditions.

We now have approximately ten data points for each tree that we can analyse to assess the health, growth patterns, and environmental responses through a combination of GIS mapping, spatial analysis, and tree mensuration techniques. This analysis will investigate key questions; for example, which species exhibit the highest growth rates? How do trees respond to urban stressors? What are the mortality rates across different species? How much carbon has been sequestered over time?

The findings and insights from this project will help inform urban and peri-urban forestry practices, guiding optimal species selection, planting strategies, and maintenance schedules, helping municipalities and communities make informed decisions on sustainable urban greening, improving carbon sequestration and strengthening overall climate resilience. ACER Program Manager Sadia Butt, MFC, PhD and ISA Certified Arborist, is spearheading the project which kicked off in January, with results expected out by early spring. The tree monitoring data analysed so far highlights the invaluable role of long-term community-collected data in deepening our understanding of tree species' resilience and growth patterns across diverse urban environments. This knowledge will help shape future tree plantings to ensure thriving green spaces for generations to come. As the project moves forward ACER will share results reports and data visualizations on our website so, stay tuned! Once again, we thank TD for funding this epic and much needed analysis!

Celebrating Our Success in the Ganaraska Watershed!

On October 18th, 2024, ACER celebrated the successful completion of the 2023 Tree Planting and Caring for Trees Initiative in the Ganaraska watershed, alongside partners, organisers, municipal officials, and local volunteers and students. Held at the Chris Garrett Park retention pond in Cobourg, the initiative's final tree-planting site, the celebration included the unveiling of a commemorative sign, opening comments by Lucas Cleveland, Mayor of Cobourg, and the demonstration of the use of three levels of technology from grassroots/hands-on tree monitoring and assessment to a mini-drone flight over the tree-planting site with video streamed real-time to attendee's smartphones. ACER also awarded its first-ever "Oxygen" awards to project partners and key contributors. A special thank you to Jonathan Brown, GIS Coordinator for Sustainable Cobourg and long-time ACER collaborator, who not only served as the local liaison throughout the initiative but also kindly took on the task of organising the closing celebration.

During the year-long initiative, over 1100 trees were planted across six sites in the Ganaraska watershed with the help of over 300 volunteers and students, and our partners, the [Ganaraska Conservation Authority](#), [Sustainable Cobourg](#), the Town of Cobourg and the Municipality of Port Hope.

"The need for trees around lakefront communities like the Town of Cobourg and Port Hope is actually one of the fundamental principles of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative...a big congratulations to ACER in securing the funding to plant over 1000 trees in our communities. It's not just about planting trees or celebrating together, it's about nurturing the next generation of innovators and stewards of the planet." – Lucas Cleveland, Mayor, Town of Cobourg.

ACER sincerely thanks everyone involved for their hard work and dedication and the [Great Lakes Local Action Fund](#) for supporting this latest initiative in our Riparian Rangers program. We look forward to launching more community-centered initiatives in the future! "It takes a community to raise a tree!" – ACER Founder and President Alice Casselman.



The commemorative sign is unveiled at Chris Garrett Retention Pond!



Alice presents an Oxygen award to the Town of Cobourg

Full Speed Ahead with RTOERO Measures UP!

ACER was deeply honoured to serve as the keynote speaker at RTOERO District 22's fall luncheon in November. ACER President Alice Casselman and ACER Program Manager Dr. Sadia Butt provided an overview of ACER's programs which lead to many great questions about trees! During the event ACER was also presented with a ceremonial cheque to symbolize the funding awarded to ACER by the district as part of RTOERO's annual community grants program. This funding supports ACER's latest Measure UP! initiative launched in October in collaboration with RTOERO District 22. The initiative features three "Measure and Mulch" field events at recent planting sites hosted in collaboration with the [Toronto and Region Conservation Authority](#), along with three "Trees R Us" webinars covering a variety of tree-related topics for interested RTOERO members and friends.

To date, one measure and mulch field event and two "Trees R Us" webinars have been completed. The final Trees R Us webinar is scheduled for April 1st and will focus on how to identify trees, and monitor and care for them. If you are interested in attending, email acerseniors@gmail.com. Meanwhile, the final two field events are currently being planned for this spring so STAY TUNED for the dates!

ACER thanks [RTOERO District 22](#), and the [RTOERO Community Grants Program](#), for their support for this initiative. Since 1968, RTOERO has been a voice for teachers, school and school board administrators, educational support staff, and college and university faculty in their retirement, helping them stay connected and engaged, with each other and the community. "Our donation will cover the necessary equipment, training and transportation for the Measure UP! events. The aims are to foster a deeper connection with the local environment and strengthen community bonds." – RTOERO District 22 Etobicoke & York President Anne McIlroy.



ACER receives the ceremonial cheque at RTOERO District 22's Fall Luncheon

Announcing the Latest Installment in our TREEVIA Quiz Series!

In case you missed the announcement on our website, check out the latest installment in our TREEVIA quiz series – our **Trees & Biodiversity Quiz** that can be found on our TREEVIA page [here](#). Or, click on the quiz below, to go directly to the interactive version. Test your knowledge about trees and their critical role in healthy ecosystems and the survival of our beautiful yet fragile planet! And...stay tuned for more TREEVIA quizzes!



SPOTLIGHT: INVASIVE PHRAGMITES

Did you know that Invasive Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) is one of Canada's most aggressive wetland invaders? Also known as the European common reed, this perennial grass was introduced to North America from Eurasia over 200 years ago, quietly taking up roots in the Great Lakes Region and Eastern Canada. However, in the 1990s it started spreading rapidly across Southwestern Ontario. Now invasive phragmites clogs ditches, overruns marshes and coastal wetlands, and can be found as far north as Kenora and Thunder Bay, with inroads into Western Canada.

Once established, this fast-growing plant - that can grow up to five or even six metres high and lacks natural predators here in Canada - quickly outcompetes other plants for water, nutrients, light and space, most notably native phragmites and the once-abundant cattail, creating dense monocultures (up to 200 stems per square metre!) decreasing plant biodiversity, degrading wetland habitats, and disrupting vital ecosystems. Phragmites spreads not only through its abundant, easily dispersed seeds but also through an extensive underground network of rhizomes which make up more than 60% of its biomass. These rhizomes store energy and send out new shoots that grow into new plants enabling its rapid expansion. Meanwhile, its deep-reaching roots help it access water in drier areas, increasing its invasiveness. Research also suggests that its roots may release chemicals that hinder the growth of nearby plants, further increasing its chance of success.

How to identify invasive phragmites: the most distinguishing characteristic of invasive phragmites is its dense leaf sheaths that are very difficult to remove, unlike those of the native species. Refer to the image gallery below for other distinguishing characteristics.

What is being done in Southern Ontario to fight this wetland bully: the primary methods used in Ontario to control the spread of invasive phragmites include the application of Health Canada-approved herbicides, and selective cutting/spading, on land or in water, with removal and high-heat or solar destruction of the plant biomass, where possible. But, effective control of a phragmites stand is NOT a one-time effort – it can take years of persistent intervention, and even then, there are no guarantees of complete eradication.

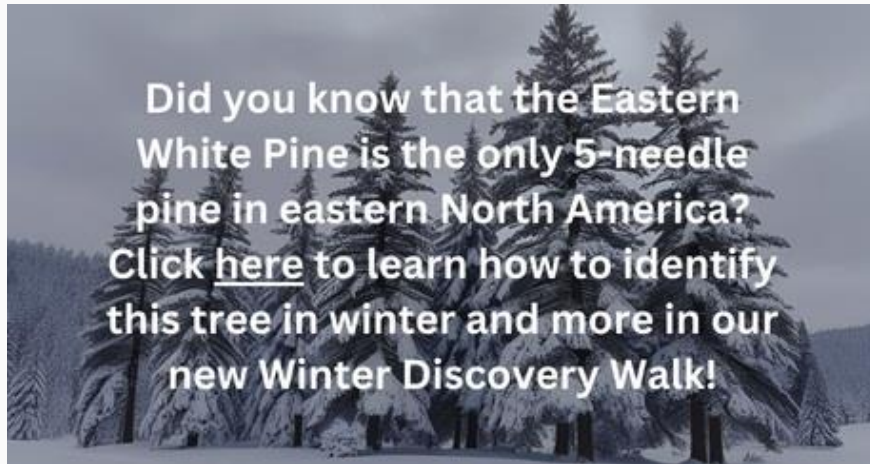
The potential power of moths! Two species of moths, whose caterpillars feast ONLY on invasive phragmites show promise as a biocontrol method. With the collaboration of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, University of Toronto and Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), these moths are being released at select sites in Ontario with the hope they will reduce the dominance of invasive phragmites allowing native plants to rebound.

What YOU can do to help in the fight: report any sightings of new stands of invasive phragmites via the iNaturalist app, at eddmaps.org/report, or by calling the Invading Species Hotline at 1-800-563-7711.

Key identifying features of invasive phragmites



Photo source: [Ontario Phragmites Working Group](#)



Special thanks to:

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
Retired Teachers of Ontario District 22 Etobicoke and York
RTOERO Retired Teachers of Ontario
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
Great Lakes Local Action Fund
Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
Sustainable Cobourg
Town of Cobourg and Municipality of Port Hope
ACER collaborators, local volunteers, educators and students
ACER donors (as always, thank you for your generous support!)

Want to support ACER's work in the community AND have a say in the direction of ACER? Become a member! Annual memberships are \$30 (adult), \$20 (senior) and \$10 (youth/student) and are completely tax deductible!

[Click here to become a member today!](#)



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