

The Vintage Gardener

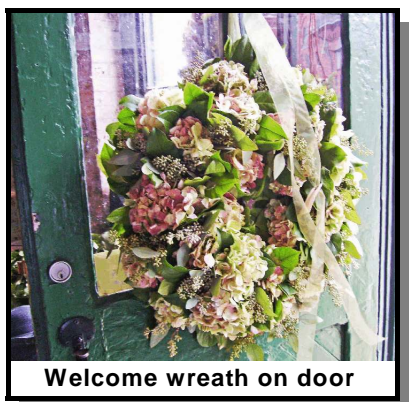
by Richard Toivonen

As often is the case, this offering came about by happenstance. While visiting Toronto, my wife and I ventured over to the Distillery Historic District, where the old Gooderham and Worts Distillery was once located. In its heyday, it was the largest whiskey distillery in the world, but with its closing in 1990, the complex soon became derelict

and a prime location for redevelopment. A far sighted developer chose to preserve the district that contained the largest and best preserved collection of Victorian-era industrial architecture in North America. It is presently the site of a pedestrian-only arts, culture and entertainment neighbourhood, with the buildings occupied by one of a kind boutiques, art galleries, live performance venues, restaurants, jewellery stores, cafés, coffee shops, and a micro brewery, the Mill Street Brewery. Many of the upper floors of buildings are leased by artists as studio spaces.

It was here that we discovered a little gem of a garden shop called “Vintage Gardener”, (‘named the best garden store in Toronto’), where a card was included with our purchase. Among other things, the card listed their web site, www.vintagegardener.com, which contains a

treasure chest of information about them. To use their words, they celebrate “the gardening lifestyle”. As the picture on the right, from their website illustrates, the mother-daughter team of Elaine and Anna, “like gardens and old things”. What you will discover in the shop and on French style garden carts in front of the shop, are seasonally designed offerings of fresh and potted flowers, herbs, gourds, wreaths, etc. etc..... Among these floral delights can be discovered a cornucopia of garden decorations, garden tools, antique urns and locally thrown ceramic planters, suitable for the “love of the garden in your home, your outdoor living space and your entertaining, wedding, or gala.” Gift ideas abound. It was the list of seasonal festivals they present year round that created the germ of an idea for this article, in particular the February offering entitled “A Cabin Fever Breakaway. Let’s face it, we can only peruse seed catalogues for so long waiting for Canada Blooms. This provides the perfect answer. To quote their description: “Find yourself in an inspiring setting filled with all manner of Spring Blossoms and Flowers - ahhh - a sure fire cure for the Winter Blahs and Cabin Fever! It all starts at our Cabin Fever Brunch each Day following, will feature workshops with a different spin on the topic - How to lure spring in the middle of the winter.”



Welcome wreath on door

Coupled with the workshops is a floral design competition, with prizes donated by their suppliers. As the website instructs, “Our suppliers have donated some pretty cool prizes. There is no cost to you – but ...to drop your toonies into a jar for our Cancer Research drive! Unleash your creativity and bring your entries in to our studio in the Distillery Historic District before 11:00 am – Judging begins promptly at 11:30 am !!! (You’ll need to RSVP to let us know you are coming – because that is just polite!)” Five categories are explained on their website on the page entitled “Workshops” The website also offers How-to projects such as forcing spring blooms on branch cuttings, drying hydrangeas and making lavender cookies. Return to the website often or sign up for their e-mail newsletter. Better yet, pay them a visit; the drive will be worth the effort.