

# 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tulip Friendship Garden

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## *Dutch Memorial Garden* **Stratford Ontario** **Planting Ceremony Report**

Stratford's Communities in Bloom Committee, the recipient of the award, partnered with the Stratford District Horticultural Society to design the tulip bed around the *Dutch Memorial Garden* and develop the planting ceremony. The ceremony took place on Sunday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 2 pm.

Stratford's *Dutch Memorial Gardens* features a Sculpture that was a gift from the Netherlands after WWII, in appreciation of Stratford's hospitality to 700 free men of Dutch birth who came to Stratford to form a battalion. The pair of hands symbolizes Canada's support; the dove is symbolic of the Netherlands.

The planting bed is key hole shaped. The long sides were planted in an interlaced pattern of red and white so the blooms will offer a visual reminder of the link between the two countries. Random planting at the sculpture's base was designed to represent a symbolic nod to the successful blending of both cultures after the war and an acknowledgement of the many Dutch immigrants who have chosen to live in the area.

The random planting ceremony where each person planted a bulb begun with Art Boon, a member of Royal Canadian Legion Branch 8 in Stratford who helped liberate The Netherlands 70 years ago. He was followed by Legion colleagues, members of the Army Navy & Air Force Veterans, Air Cadets, school children, elected officials and citizens of Stratford and area - many of Dutch descent. The ceremony was followed by a reception at the Stratford Perth Museum where participants enjoyed coffee or hot chocolate and a tour of the museum's exhibit *Perth Up! A Retrospective of Duty & Valour* on the history of the Perth Regiment, which played a significant part in the liberation of the Netherlands.

The Ceremony Program:

## **TULIP PLANTING CEREMONY PROGRAM**

Saturday, November 7, 2:00 pm, Dutch Memorial Garden

**Welcome** – Councilman Brad Beatty, Chair, Communities in Bloom Committee, Stratford

- Councilman Beatty introduces Alivia Judge, local elementary student) to sing “O Canada”
- Councilman Beatty introduces Johan Bossers to sing first verse of “Het Wilhelmus”
- Councilman Beatty introduces Martin Ritsma, Deputy Mayor, Stratford
- Councilman Beatty introduces Art Boon, 90 year old veteran of the Perth Regiment
- Councilman Beatty introduces John Nater, MP , Perth-Wellington
- Councilman Beatty introduces Ann Boyd & Ken Albert, Canadian Legion and Bob Castles, Army Navy & Air Force Veterans
- Councilman Beatty introduces Mike Matthews, President of the Stratford & District Horticultural Society
- Mike Matthews describes the tulip garden planting design, its significance and the random planting ceremony around the Dutch sculpture
- Mike Matthews introduces Art Boon to plant the first bulb, followed by veterans, elected officials, children and the public to begin planting one bulb each in centre garden around the sculpture
- Mike Matthews introduces Alivia Judge to sing “Getting to Know You” to accompany the planting
- Councilman Beatty gives thanks and invites all to attend the Museum Reception:

*“Perth Up! A Retrospective of Duty & Valour”* is an exhibit on the history of the Perth Regiment. The Regiment played a significant part in the liberation of the Netherlands. At the end of the war, while waiting to be repatriated to Canada, the Regiment was stationed for eight months in the town of Sneek. Profound connections developed between the soldiers and the townspeople that continue to be honoured today. In addition to the main exhibit, photographs and artefacts highlighting that period, as well as later reunion photographs are on display.

The planting ceremony was promoted through a media release that was published Stratford's Beacon Herald daily and by the prior week long installation of an event promotional road sign, funded by the City. The sign provided with the tulips about the '70th Anniversary Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden', including the program sponsors was installed during the ceremony and stands as a statement of the significance of the garden. The garden is situated on public land on the banks of the Avon River and attracts many visitors and residents.

The garden was enthusiastically welcomed by the citizens of Stratford, with approximately 100 people in attendance, and the planting ceremony was featured extensively in the local media.

<http://www.stratfordbeaconherald.com/2015/11/04/hundreds-of-tulips-a-living-reminder-of-bond-between-canada-and-the-netherlands>

<http://www.stratfordbeaconherald.com/2015/11/08/planting-of-tulip-bulbs-a-symbolic-tribute-to-the-bond-forged-between-canada-and-holland>

Stratford is proud of its 70th Anniversary Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden – a stunning and lasting tribute to its veterans, the commitment of the community to welcome the citizens of The Netherlands during WWII and the visit of Princess Margaret to a battalion of Dutch troops stationed in Stratford. As a Dutchman would say, 'Zeg het met bloemen' or 'Say it with flowers.'