

Rideau Woodland Ramble named Canadian Garden Council 2015 Destination Garden Centre of the Year



The Rideau Ramble

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Kemptville Advance

By [Jennifer Westendorp](#)

Put a horticulturist and an architect together and what do you get?

An award winning destination garden.

The Rideau Woodland Ramble, located at 7210 Burritt's Rapids Road in Merrickville, has been named the Canadian Garden Council 2015 Destination Garden Centre of the Year.

"It's a funny story actually," said David Dunn, one of the owners. "After the ice storm in 1998, we spent most of the next year cleaning up. Two acres of woodland were literally decimated. It was a good opportunity to rebuild the garden. The storm created a clearing that was ideal for a garden."

Rideau Woodland Ramble opened in 2000 and is celebrating its 15th anniversary with an award David referred to as a 'crowning recognition.'

"It started out small and we've spent the last 15 years expanding," said Dunn. "We've added a couple acres of land to the garden. Every year has been about evolving, tweaking and developing."

He explained the garden is now at a point where it won't get any bigger, so Dunn and his partner, Robert Caron, can now focus on improvement.

"The gardens are all perennial trees and shrubs," said Dunn. "We've done some editing over time as the garden has grown and changed. You need to make adjustments as the garden ages."

He said the gazebo is the iconic center of the garden.

"I am an architect and a painter," said Dunn. "I think about garden design the same way I think about painting. My visions as a designer and painter are the perfect combination for creating a garden."

He said the Rideau Woodland Ramble was designed for visitors to ramble through the trails, garden rooms and big open areas.

"There are six sections of gardens all connected together," said Dunn. "Some go by the pond and some go through the woodland. It's a contrast of all those different zones. That's what makes the garden interesting."

The Rideau Woodland Ramble opens seven days a week, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., starting in April through until November.

"We knew when we created the garden, in order to make it a destination, we had to be open all the time," said Dunn. "We never turn people away. We have people visiting from all over Ontario and out East. We've had people from Europe visiting our gardens."

He said they even had people from Heritage Canada stop by with visitors from Japan and they held a Japanese tree planting ceremony in the garden.

"We've had people from all over the world, but mostly we get visitors from Eastern Ontario," said Dunn.

He said gardening is a passion and lifestyle for both himself and his partner.

"It's something you live," said Dunn.

He explained the Rideau Woodland Ramble is a very Canadian garden.

"The garden responds and reacts to the woodland setting it's in," said Dunn. "You don't hear much about Canadian gardens, but all our gardens are the epitome of Canadian gardens. They reflect the marriage of garden and nature, demonstrating what nature provokes and allows."

He said different visitors to the gardens react to unique elements.

"We have a rare collection of evergreens and conifers running alongside the pond we like to call Lake Ramble," said Dunn. "People really seem to love that part of the garden. Some people really love the diversity of the evergreens; some people really love the woodlands. We have vistas here that draw you through."

He said people can come to the Rideau Woodland Ramble to be inspired and get ideas for their own gardens, by seeing how the garden has reacted to its setting.

"We talk to them about how the garden evolved," said Dunn. "Some of our gardens are 30-years-old. People can see what the plants look like as they mature. This place is a learning and teaching tool."

He said people have told them the garden is a very European model, which was cited at the awards ceremony as well.

“It’s unique to Canada,” said Dunn.

He said coming to the Rideau Woodland Ramble is all about having an experience.

“We want people to get out of their cars and have a feeling overcome them,” said Dunn. “Every week the garden looks different. There is always something to see.”

Rideau Woodland Ramble is situated on seven acres of woodland. Its mission is ‘to capture the imagination of gardeners and collectors,’ in a woodland setting, showcasing and selling rare and unusual Hostas, Grasses, Conifers, Magnolias, and a range of shrubs, trees and perennials.

The first gardens enjoy the dappled light provided by a stand of red pine. They

can be found on either side of the house. This acidic area is the home of Japanese maples, Rhododendrons, Azaleas, and a range of trees, shrubs and perennials. Many are surprised by what thrives in this environment. The second area is home to a babbling pond, a collection of dwarf conifers, specimen Hostas, and grasses, as well as a further range of trees shrubs and perennials. The third major area is known as Lake Ramble, a pond home to wildlife. A large garden of conifers anchors this area, along with a large grass demonstration bed. The next major zone included is called Totem Trail as it rambles into the pure woodland and some of the surprises contained therein. Another area is the northern zone at the Ramble, with dramatic plantings down Chanticleer Lane. Hosta Specimens can be seen throughout the Ramble, but new gardens in 2007 showcase them south of the hosta house and at the front of the property along Burritt’s Rapids Road.

All of these gardens are interconnected with trails and walkways. The gardens are carefully planted to exhibit, both structure, and the ‘bones’ that hold them together, succession planning to assure interest from first melt to first snow, and even interest thereafter.

Contact the Rideau Woodland Ramble by calling 613-258-3797 or emailing

info@rideauwoodlandramble.com. You can also visit the website at www.rideauwoodlandramble.com or check it out on Facebook.

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Presenting the awards (left to right) are Alexander Reford, Chair, Canadian Garden Council, Bill Hardy, President, Canadian Nursery Landscape Association and The Honourable Peter Kent, Member of Parliament.



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