

LOCAL NEWS

BIG BREAK FOR LOCAL LANDSCAPER

St. Catharines man going to Canada Blooms

BY SCOTT ROSTS
STAFF

Scott Duff is hoping a big break will open the door for his local landscape company.

The St. Catharines entrepreneur operates Aura Landscaping, and over the next two weeks he will be showcasing his work at the Canada Blooms in Toronto. The event, Canada's largest flower and garden festival, will feature 15 feature gardens, and Duff has the privilege of designing one of them. Duff is excited about the opportunity, which allows him to show off his work to a wide audience.

"This is big. It's the equivalent of being asked to play quarterback for the Superbowl," he said. "It's life changing — I'm put in a category along with the most highly respected landscaping companies."

Duff submitted his entry, dubbed Urban Passions, last fall. He was over the moon when he got a call in November indicating he earned a spot as a feature garden for his design. He says his 600 sq. ft. garden is "where architecture and nature converge."

"I will have everything from Frank Lloyd Wright and art deco inspired stone walkways including a stone feature to resemble stained glass, to waterfalls coming out of natural stone walls and trees and flowers which will all be in full bloom," he explains. "The sights, sounds and scents of this garden will evoke your senses into overload and help to ignite your imagination and illuminate your soul."

Duff, who has spent the last week pre-building the garden, has been operating his business for about 18 years.



Scott Duff of Aura Landscaping will be showcasing his skills at Canada Blooms this month. The St. Catharines man has designed one of 15 feature gardens on display at the Toronto-based event.
PHOTO BY CHARLOTTE LETKEMANN

The 35-year-old had an interest in opening his own landscape company since he was in high school.

"I think I was the only kid to be bringing blueprints and a brief case to high school," he laughs. "I really like the feeling of taking something raw and ugly and turning it into something beautiful - Something that is show stopping."

Duff said his selection is a "David vs. Goliath" type of victory. His company, which employs four people during the peak season, makes just a fraction of what some of the other landscape com-

panies do.

"It's pretty incredible," said Duff, who serves all of Niagara Region, and as far as Toronto with his business. "I really hope this will open more doors for me."

Canada Blooms runs March 16-25, in conjunction with the National Home Show, at the Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place in Toronto. For more information on the show, visit www.canadablooms.com, or for more information on Aura Landscaping - Including a look at the garden designs - visit www.auralandscaping.com.



The Region has told the City of St. Catharines to keep up the landscaping on medians on Glenridge Avenue, like this one adjacent to Brock University shown March 9, or the medians may be filled in with asphalt or some other material.

Maintain medians or lose them: Region

BY PAUL FORSYTH
STAFF

The Region has told the City of St. Catharines to either keep up with the landscaping on traffic medians on Glenridge Avenue, or the Region could end up filling them with asphalt.

At issue are medians with boxes for landscaping adjacent to Brock University and on Glenridge south of Riverview Boulevard.

In a letter to Sandra Lawson, director of transportation and environmental services for the city, the Region's associate director of transportation operations said while the Region used to handle the landscaping feature of the medians, it no longer does that. Ralph Scholz said beautification of medians is now the responsibility of the local municipalities.

Joe Cousins, director of transportation for the Region, told the Region's public works committee on March 6 that the city has refused to undertake maintenance on the landscaping boxes on the medians. Scholz said if the city doesn't agree by March 15 to maintain plants in the medians, the Region will remove the landscaping features in April.

Cousins said the Region could simply fill in the medians with pavement or some other maintenance material. "It's a constant maintenance headache for us," he said. Cousins noted that some of the medians were designed to stop students from jaywalking, but said it hasn't stopped that dangerous practise.

St. Catharines Coun. Andy Petrowski suggested the planting boxes be removed altogether. "These things are a menace," he said. "They get hit by cars."

Port Colborne Mayor Vance Badawey suggested the Region simply send the city a bill if regional workers do the upkeep of the boxes.

Lincoln Mayor Bill Hodgson and Grimsby Mayor Bob Bentley said the traffic calming medians with landscaping boxes have worked well in their communities, and they're more than happy to handle the upkeep with town staff.

"We're proud in the Town of Lincoln to maintain and use our medians," said Hodgson, who noted the medians have made Victoria Avenue in his town much safer. As for collisions between cars and the boxes, "the real menace is the person who can't figure out how to drive around them," he said.



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