

Caledon's favourite trees could be in the spotlight through Ontario Tree Pageant

by BROCK WEIR

The Downy Woodpecker is now winging in a lofty position after being named Caledon's Official Town Bird after a public vote, but some of the more picturesque places these birds might peck could also soon be in the limelight with your help.

Tree Trust, a grassroots organization dedicated to promoting the health and longevity of urban trees, is seeking submissions for the Best Tree in Ontario for the 2026 Ontario Tree Pageant.

If you have a favourite tree in the community, you're invited to snap a photo of it and share a few words about why it deserves to be celebrated.

Do you have a favorite tree that holds a special place in your heart? A towering oak in your backyard? A graceful willow near a river? Or a majestic roadside maple? Share a photo of your special tree along with a few words on what it means to you, says Tree Trust. That's all it takes to lend your voice to the growing chorus that sings the praises of trees while highlighting their value to our economy and environment. You just might win a prize too!

Think of the competition as a beauty pageant for trees. Our biggest and best trees make our communities more attractive and inviting. Mature trees enhance our neighbourhoods and are good for business. At the same time, there's more to 'legacy trees' than looking good. You could say that their beauty is beyond 'bark-deep.' Tree of the Year reminds us why a love of trees is far from superficial. Our biggest and healthiest trees are stable, lifelong companions that just keep on giving. The carbon they store brings us cleaner air. Shade reduces the need for air conditioning. Root systems slow stormwater runoff, protecting our waterways. A natural habitat for birds and wildlife.

High quality photos are being accepted now through August 3 at pageant@treetrust.ca.

Entrants must include their name, tree species (if you know it), the location of the tree, and why it deserves to win in up to 30 words.

Winning trees will be announced in September and submissions will be reviewed by a formal judging panel:

Judy Maddren, M.S.M, Retired CBC Radio Journalist;

Mike Schreiner, Leader of the Ontario Green Party and MPP for Guelph;

Terry Schwan, Professional Forester; Member, Board of Directors, Forest History Ontario;

Paul Zammit - Instructor, School of Environment and Horticulture, Niagara College.

Everyone who enters will be considered for one of three prizes: a \$100 Lee Valley Gift Card, a gift basket from the Royal Canadian Yacht Club and a 2027 Family Pass to Ontario Parks.

For more information, visit treetrust.ca.