

CVC to run 'Maple Syrup in the Park' event throughout March

By Rob Paul

After a two-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, maple syrup will be flowing once again in Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) areas this month.

CVC is inviting people to come out to Terra Cotta Conservation Area (in Halton Hills) and Island Lake Conservation Area (in Orangeville) throughout March for a chance to get out and enjoy nature while also getting fresh maple syrup through its 'Maple Syrup in the Park' event.

The event kicks off March 12 and tickets are \$10 for adults (ages 15 to 64), \$7 for seniors (65+), \$6 for youth (6 to 14), and free for children (under 5). Attendees will not only get to enjoy tasty treats, but there will be plenty of opportunities to learn.

'This year we're hosting Maple Syrup in the Park at Island Lake and Terra Cotta Conservation Areas March 12 to 20, 26 and 27,' said Evan Orme, Superintendent, Conservation Parks at Credit Valley Conservation. 'Visitors can tour maple syrup demonstrations, enjoy a storybook walk with the family, try maple taffy, learn about Indigenous culture and heritage, and enjoy pancakes with real maple syrup. We will also have maple sweets and treats available on site for people to purchase and take home.'

Maple Syrup in the Park is geared towards teaching families about the maple syrup process and giving them a chance to try some of the sweetest snacks, and, for adults looking for a more intimate setting, CVC will also have an event in early April for them to partake in.

'Visitors can tour our maple syrup demonstrations and learn from our knowledgeable staff,' said Orme. 'They will share the history, customs and production methods used to make maple syrup. Visitors can also tour the sugarbush and see the sugar shack steaming. We also have Maple Syrup by Lamplight at Island Lake on April 1 and 2. This event is a fun after hours event where visitors can enjoy a guided tour by lamplight through the sugarbush, followed by maple-themed samplers and a maple cocktail or mocktail from the Fix Mobile Drink Bar by the campfire. Space is limited and this event is for ages 19+.'

CVC finds it important to always make an effort to put together maple syrup events at its locations because the sweet stuff is an integral part of Canadian history.

'Maple syrup events are an important annual tradition at Credit Valley Parks to help visitors understand, enjoy and appreciate nature,' said Orme. 'Maple syrup production is an important part of Canadian history and identity. Visitors enjoy learning about it and sampling pancakes with real maple syrup.'

The popularity of maple syrup events has been big for CVC and losing them the previous two years was tough, but Orme is confident that with them returning so too will the patrons who come from all over the area.

'Maple syrup events were put on hold in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19,' he said. 'It was disappointing that we were unable to host our annual events because maple syrup season is a fun way for visitors to connect with nature and learn about an important part of our history. We're excited to bring Maple Syrup in the Park back to Island Lake and Terra Cotta Conservation Area. We see visitors of all ages come from across the GTA to enjoy our annual event, and they have so much fun many come back multiple times each year.'

With the pandemic still active, CVC has health protocols in place for Maple Syrup in the Park to ensure the safety of all those who attend.

'Reservations are required in advance to attend Maple Syrup in the Park and taffy tickets must be bought ahead of time with your

entry ticket purchase. It's important that people book early to get their preferred date and time to attend. We will require face masks to be worn inside all buildings. We're inviting people into the sugar shack this year, as long as they're wearing a face mask, so they can see the process of how maple syrup is made.?

There's a specific process to safely tap maple trees for syrup that CVC follows to keep them protected and stop any adverse effects from impacting the health of the tree.

?To follow sustainable tapping practices, sugar maples must be 30 to 40 years of age and 30 to 35 centimetres in diameter to support one tap for sap collection,? said Orme. ?As sugar maples continue to grow, they can support two to three taps depending on their age and diameter. We never use the same tap hole twice. New holes must be drilled each year, five centimetres horizontally and 15 centimetres laterally away from previous tap holes. Following these sustainable tapping practices, only 10 per cent of a sugar maple's annual sap production is collected and doesn't negatively impact the growth of the tree. This way, we're able to tap the same tree year after year and preserve the health of our sugarbush. We encourage people to come out to Maple Syrup in the Park to learn more at our sugar shacks.?

Tickets for all our maple syrup events must be reserved in advance and are available by visiting CVC's website, [CVC.ca](#).