

Quest is on to nominate your favourite Winnipeg tree

Contest aims to promote education and exploration

**ST. BONIFACE
SOUTHDALE**

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Organizers of a contest with plenty of bark are hoping Winnipeggers will branch out and nominate their favourite trees.

St. Boniface-based Rivers West Red River Corridor — in partnership with the Manitoba Forestry Association — is accepting nominations for its 2nd Annual Amazing Tree Quest. Community members are invited to choose their favourite tree — or go exploring and discover a new one — along the Red River Corridor throughout the city (the contest technically spans the area of the corridor from Emerson to Lake Winnipeg).

Once selections are made, individuals are asked to guess the tree's height, provide a location description or GPS coordinates and take a photo. Photos and nomination forms can then be submitted online at www.riverswest.ca until Sept. 3.

Voting will take place from Sept. 4 to 21 and the winners will be announced during National Forest Week (Sept. 22 to 29).

The tree categories are historical, notable, tallest, largest (diameter) and community favourite, said RWRRAC executive director Julie Turene-Maynard, who hopes the quest will encourage individuals to “discover their neighbourhoods and identify amazing trees along the riverbank, while enjoying a great family activity.”

“I look for very tall or large trees, as well as overall beauty and trees of interest or symbolic value, such as the Halfway Tree between Winnipeg and Brandon,” added the Southdale resident.

Turene-Maynard said the contest also has educational implications for the protection and preservation of Mani-



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Margaret Smith, an entrant in last year's contest, measures her favourite tree in rural Manitoba, as part of the nomination process.

toba's tree population.

“People can underestimate the role trees play in the community, the environment and the quality of their lives. They also play a vital role in flood mitigation, as the roots take up large quantities of water,” she said.

Under the spotlight of the provincial government's Tomorrow Now Green Plan, released in June, Turene-Maynard said the future vision is to develop the MRA's Heritage Trees of Manitoba program to “protect and conserve our trees.” Andreea Kraayeweld, MRA's woodlot technician, hopes the



Supplied photo

Mike Quigley, another 2011 entrant, stands by a towering cottonwood near Red River Boulevard and McBeth Street in the Rivergrove area.

contest will capture the public's imagination.

“It's an opportunity to capture the stories of trees and why they are important to people,” Kraayeweld said.

The Charleswood resident noted a tree in Assiniboine Park, located near the footbridge, has been formally named Grandmother Elm and has been “chained off and given a plaque” because of its popularity in the community.

The 2011 quest nominations included a tree in rural Manitoba that provided spiritual inspiration to a man battling cancer, she said.

Boxes have changed gardener's life, keep his mind off pain

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“I was always relying on other people to come over and you end up micromanaging.”

Then the couple had a new fence put in this May. One thing led to another and they began researching garden boxes. This resulted in a redesigned yard space — and a new lease on life for Patenaude's green thumbs.

The boxes are made with planks of treated, bolted wood and laced with a heavy gauge plastic to separate the soil from the base to prevent any chemical seepage.

“This has changed my life. It keeps me focused and keeps my mind off the pain. The satisfaction is humongous,” Patenaude said, pointing to plant bearing more than '70 still-green

tomatoes.

Despite missing the start of growing season, Patenaude has already reaped the benefits of the boxes by utilizing every inch of available space.

“With a traditional garden, you need working space between the rows. That's the beauty of the boxes — you have less planting space but more produce,” he said.

“I know how these herbs and vegetables plant, and I know how they behave, so I strategically put them where they will maximize space.”

Patenaude noted two other improvements now that his crops are elevated — the plants are getting more even

sunshine and “they are less susceptible to bugs, grubs and insects.”

“Now I can watch for, identify and eliminate blight straight away and make a mixture to eliminate fungus.”

Joan said it's been wonderful watching her husband getting his hands in the soil again.

“He's always been a gardener, so it does my heart good to see him out there,” she said, noting the couple had a gazebo built a few years ago.

“We can't travel because of his condition, so this is our recreation. We hold gazebo parties for family and friends, which are sometimes impromptu.”