

PlantWatch New Brunswick – Winter Update

Dear New Brunswick PlantWatchers,

I'd like to begin by offering my heartfelt thanks to all of you for your efforts since the launch of PlantWatch in New Brunswick in 2002. Without you PlantWatch would not exist and the important data that you have provided would have to be acquired in some other way.

What makes PlantWatch special is that it doesn't cost any money, doesn't involve any fancy equipment and yet it involves people like you from across the community in the collection of important scientific data. Thank you for making PlantWatch happen.

Ever wondered what happens to your observations?

Your observations are used by Environment Canada's Ecological Monitoring and Assessment Network Coordinating Office (EMAN CO) , the Federal Government, Universities, botanical gardens etc to monitor climate change over time across the whole of Canada.

If you would like to see how your own observations compare with others across the country then all you have to do is visit the NatureWatch Website at

<http://www.naturewatch.ca/english/plantwatch/>

You can either download a spreadsheet of all of the data for this year by clicking on the disk symbol in the top right corner, or you can view results for different species plotted on a map of Canada by clicking on 'view results' in the left hand menu (note, this works better using Explorer than Netscape).

Growing PlantWatch in New Brunswick

PlantWatch is still quite new to New Brunswick so we are still trying to build up our solid core of regular contributors. If you know of anyone else who might be interested in becoming a PlantWatcher then don't hesitate to tell them all about us. Involve your neighbours, people at work, your kids, your parents and their friends. EVERY observation counts and remember, all you need is keen eyes, a pen and paper and lots of enthusiasm!

PlantWatch NB News

Sadly (for us anyway) Liette Vasseur has been offered a new job at the Laurentian University in Sudbury Ontario and so has had to step down as PlantWatch co-ordinator for NB. Replacing her is Rowena Hopkins, a science teacher originally from the UK, now living in Grande-Digue. You can contact her at nbwilderness@yahoo.ca.

On a happier note Rowena has built a website for PlantWatch New Brunswick. Check it out for photographs, information and links to other interesting climate change monitoring programs.

<http://ca.geocities.com/nbwilderness/index.htm>

The website is currently being translated into French by Annette Gallant and Rowena (with a lot of help!).

Climate change in the News

Maldives, soon to be below sea level

The Maldives, a group of islands in the Indian Ocean, could become uninhabitable within 100 years making its 360,000 citizens homeless. The majority of its islands lie at no more than 1m above sea level and if the sea level continues to rise at an assumed rate of 0.9cm per year, 80% of the island chain could be below water within that time frame.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3930765.stm

Europe to experience more heatwaves say scientists

According to researchers at Oxford university, Europe is more than twice as likely to experience more killer heatwaves, like that of summer 2003, than it was in the past, and they blame this increased risk on green house gas emissions.

In 2003 temperatures of between 2 and 5 degrees Celcius above the norm left the young hot and sweaty and the old dead; tens of thousands more than during that time period in previous years.

These scientists are now trying to determine whether corporations or nations can be held legally responsible for causing these deaths, in the way cigarette companies are being held accountable for their actions, paving the way for individuals to seek compensation.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/4059497.stm>

Other climate change initiatives

Take the One Tonne Challenge

So, you want to help reduce climate change but you don't know how to go about it? Well, the One Tonne Challenge is for you. First complete an online questionnaire about your lifestyle and then follow the recommendations listed at the end. If you follow this program you will be able to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions by at least one tonne. Follow the link below for more information

<http://www.climatechange.gc.ca/onetonne/english/index.asp?c1=381&c2=&c3=&c4=&pid=>

Take the Nature Challenge

The David Suzuki Foundation answers the question "What can I do to help conserve nature and improve everyone's quality of life?". They suggest the following 10 easy changes that you can make to your lifestyle, that WILL make a difference. Chose three from the list below and then sign up online to show your commitment and send a message to the Canadian Government that Canadians care about their environment.

1. Reduce home energy use by 10%
2. Choose an energy-efficient home & appliances
3. Don't use pesticides
4. Eat meat-free meals one day a week
5. Buy locally grown and produced food
6. Choose a fuel-efficient vehicle
7. Walk, bike, carpool or take transit
8. Choose a home close to work or school
9. Support alternative transportation
10. Learn more and share with others

<http://www.davidsuzuki.org/WOL/Challenge/>

Personal Vehicles Initiative

Thinking of buying a new car and want to spend less on gas? Wonder how fuel efficient your current car is? Visit the Personal Vehicles Initiative website and complete an online form to find out. It also lists the most fuel efficient new vehicles for 2005.

<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/transportation/personal-vehicles-initiative.cfm>

We hope that this newsletter has given you some food for thought for the Winter and that you will all join us next Spring in rushing out of the house to celebrate the arrival of all things green. Don't forget to keep PlantWatching!

Sincerely,

Rowena Hopkins
PlantWatch Co-ordinator NB