



TARA JEFFREY The Observer

Anne Marie Gillis (centre), chairperson for Sarnia's Communities in Bloom committee, shows off some tomato plants at the Goodwill Laura Santina Braun Memorial Garden Monday evening, to national judges Gerald Lajeunesse and Odette Sabourin-Dumais.

# Showcasing Sarnia's best

TARA JEFFREY  
The Observer

Showcasing Sarnia's best assets to a pair of national judges in just a couple of days is no easy task.

"We have so much to show them in so little time," said Anne Marie Gillis, the city's Communities in Bloom chairperson, who helped host judges Odette Sabourin-Dumais from Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville, Quebec, and Gerald Lajeunesse from Ottawa for the tour, which wraps up Tuesday.

Sarnia is up against Drummondville, Que., Trois-Rivieres, Que., Whitby and Wood Buffalo, Alta. in the over 50,000 category for the 2013 national edition of Communities in Bloom.

The judges arrived Sunday and were treated to a tree planting and train ride at Canatara Park and a helicopter ride, followed by a full slate of stops on Monday that included Sarnia's downtown and waterfront areas, Aamjiwnaang First Nation, Bluewater Health and a dinner at the Goodwill Laura Santina Braun Memorial Garden, hosted by Goodwill Industries.

"We just love to visit communities and see how well they're doing," said Lajeunesse, adding that some of the highlights for him included the new Judith and Norman Alix Art Gallery, and the visit to Aamjiwnaang.

"Every community has something special that identifies them."

Sabourin-Dumais said she was impressed with the amount of tree planting happening throughout the city, and was looking forward to Tuesday's tour of Germain Park.

Other Tuesday stops include residential garden tours and a picnic at Kenwick Park in Bright's Grove.

This is Sarnia's seventh year participating in Communities in Bloom, and fourth year competing at the national level.

The non-profit organization works to foster civic pride, environmental responsibility and beautification in communities.

It sends judges to participating communities that award it a score and a number of "blooms" as well as selecting top communities in several population

“ We just love to visit communities and see how well they're doing.”

Gerald Lajeunesse

categories.

Sarnia came away with five blooms last year, along with special recognition for its Return the Landscape and One Tomato projects.

"We're hoping to maintain five blooms this year," said Gillis. "And win the national competition. It's a great chance to really bring the community together."

The results will be announced at the National Awards Ceremonies in Ottawa-Gatineau in October.

tara.jeffrey@sunmedia.ca