

Carleton Place & District Horticultural Society

March 4, 2026 General Meeting Minutes

Prepared by Linda Bartlett

Our first meeting of 2026 got off to a great start. Over 50 members attended, including several new members.

The meeting began with welcoming remarks from President Rick Roberts, followed by other members highlighting upcoming Society activities.

Linda Bartlett gave a financial report. We received a \$500.00 donation from Wendy Leblanc. The balance in our account is \$9,360.00. We applied for and received an OHA Tree grant of \$300.00 to plant a native tree in the Victoria School Garden.

A reminder that it is membership renewal time for 2026 and that the \$15.00 membership remains the same for this year.

Our Social committee passed around a Volunteer sheet for members to sign up to bring in goodies for each meeting.

Rob Drapeau spoke about the 2026 Photo Competition and Volunteer Hours. He will be the lead on both of these projects.

A key activity for the society in the coming months will be the digging and potting of plants for our May 23rd Annual Spring Plant Sale. The potting up will be at Rick's place, and Carlo will be in charge of organizing the digging up of volunteer gardens.

Our April 1st meeting will feature Nicholas Bott from Aquatopia, who will speak about Water Gardens. We will also be starting a new feature – the member spotlight – Deb Crosby will talk about how to plant to attract birds to your yard. To coincide with that topic, the Climate Change Group will be selling birdhouses created by the Hackberry Men's Shed. These birdhouses will be available for sale at the April meeting, so if you are interested, please bring cash. The birdhouses will be offered at very reasonable prices, starting at \$20.

Our guest speaker was Alberto Esteban of Pakenham (naturesapprenticefarm.ca). Alberto's session, "Modern Sustainable Gardening Practices," was an absolute eye-opener for many attendees, emphasizing that our plants help maintain the health of our soil. Plants feed sugar to fungi and bacteria in the soil, which in turn enrich the soil. Healthy soil needs plants, lots of plants!!

Key highlights of Alberto's talk were:

- Don't leave soil bare – do coverage and companion planting. If you have to leave paths, mulch them.
- Don't pull plants out of soil (except for weeds) if you can avoid it. Leave annual roots in the soil and let plants die down over winter, feeding the soil.
- Don't disturb, dig or till soil if you can avoid it. Let what is already going on underground continue to feed the soil. (Alberto mows and scythes spent crops and plants anew. Last year he grew potatoes on top of compost covered with mulch – never disturbing the soil below.)
- Diversity in planting provides a greater variety of microbes in the soil – so plant crops

and flowers together and use natives, not ornamentals, as they better feed the local ecosystem.

- Don't use chemical fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides. Problems arise when plants are stressed – take care of the plant, not the pest!!

The meeting ended with a fabulous assortment of pies supplied by Kilby and crew and a host of door prizes.