

King farmer gives nature its due through stewardship

Tom Dobson admires his handiwork on his King Road farm.



By Mark Pavilons

Tom Dobson had a vision.

And in his case, it has meant perfecting what nature has so thoughtfully provided.

The King Road cash crop farmer has painstakingly reclaimed the bulk of his 60-acre property, preventing erosion and breathing new life into the ecosystem.

By planting literally thousands of trees; allowing wild grasses to flourish and encourage milkweed to thrive, Dobson has created an oasis ? a perfect ecological mix that's home to not only healthy flora, but many of the local wildlife.

He speaks fondly of the creatures he shares his land with ? wild turkeys, a family of red fox and numerous deer, even coyotes ??many of which simply love to lie in the tall grasses. They feel protected and safe there.

When he and his late wife Lynn purchased the property roughly 17 years it had been a barren farm, ravaged by grazing cattle. There were a couple of old barns an old house, weeds and more weeds, he recalled.

The natural forest that existed at the north end of the property was showing signs of deterioration. Cattle had trampled it and caused visible damage.

Dobson's vision began even before he purchased the land. He wanted a functional farm, but he wanted to ?make it look good.?

The eroding hills were saved by numerous well placed plantings. He created a well laid out environmental plan and very simply, began planting trees. And planting more trees.

With some support and assistance from York Region and the Toronto Region Conservation Authority, thousands of trees ??mostly pine and spruce ? now dot the landscape. Dobson himself plants between 100 and 200 trees each spring, to fill in the spaces and further enrich the landscape.

Aside from the wildlife, monarch butterflies appreciate Dobson's efforts and the bountiful milkweed.

The land is now ?much better??than the condition in which he found it.

He raises soybeans on a substantial portion of the property, fields that are intricately interwoven among the pine and spruce. It's a perfect marriage between nature and man. Dobson knows every inch of his land ? he walks it regularly.

It's definitely a labour of love and even after almost two decades of work, it'll ?look pretty good when it's done,? Dobson says with a smile.

Even his farm operation has helped improve the soil conditions.

Tom lauds Lynn's efforts in adapting to country living and creating the beautiful gardens that surround the house.

Walking through the manicured lawns and thick grasses, you can feel a sense of harmony, that this is not a piecemeal patchwork of Mother Nature's handiwork. It's an intricate quilt, guided by man.

The Dobson property is the epitome in environmental stewardship and truly a gem in King Township's landscape.