

TREES 'N' TRAITS: LARCHES = TRANSFORMATION

Neil Baldwin

Walk amongst trees for long enough and it is bound to affect your emotions. This second of a ten-part series challenges you to consider whether particular tree species can make a difference to how you feel. Particularly, the degree to which certain trees may embody some of your own traits, or those traits you might at times desire.

Last month, themed "Resilience", looked at cedars. This month explores larches, which include the native tamarack. Larch is a relatively fast growing tree, rising tall with a generally slender form. It has rough, scaly bark though the needles which occur in tufts on the branches are soft, gentle, almost feather-like. Larches are somewhat shade intolerant so needles will typically keep growing only on the branches further away from ground.

The defining characteristic of larch is that, unlike other conifers, they shed all their needles each autumn. If you didn't know better, larch with empty branches appear dead but they emerge in spring with the most vibrant light green in the forest, usually one of the first trees to leaf out. They look different again during summer once completely filled in, and in autumn larch

glows a bright bronzy yellow. It is truly a tree of transforming appearances.

Are you a person whose appearance, whether physical or emotional, regularly changes in the eyes of those around you? If you take on different personas, and get inspiration from the feeling of that changing, you may be a larch. As a larch, it is possible that the tender parts of your being, like those soft needles, may sometimes be out of reach to others. Or perhaps there is an imposing outward appearance, like the rough scaly bark, which belies gentleness to be found on closer inspection?

A mystery of larch is that the mat of needles shed in the fall seems to have all but disappeared once the snow has melted. Do you have a capacity to shed your baggage cleanly, out of sight, out of mind?

If you are a larch and find yourself in need of a boost, of if you are not a larch but admire some of its qualities, find yourself a place locally where these tall but gentle trees can surround you with their unique transformative energy on the cusp of both evergreen and deciduous. **♾**



THE GHOST OF YOU

Michelle Ward

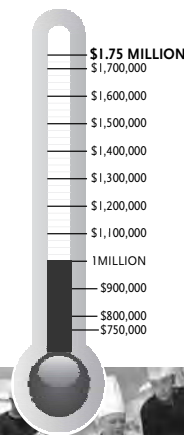
Local Meaford photographer Michelle Ward brings a mixed media art exhibition, *The Ghost of You*, for a two-month run at The Meaford Hall Arts & Cultural Centre. Capturing the untold stories hidden within abandoned farm homes, found historical portraits and artifacts, the exhibit focuses on the disappearing rural history of Grey-Bruce.

"My ultimate goal is to memorialize these people and places before all generational links are lost by examining what has

been left behind. I am attempting to understand and link the grounded physical world we occupy with the emotional and spiritual world that lends meaning to most everything we encounter. Each property, object and portrait that I explore has a tale to tell that has been lost generationally. I want to re-write these broken stories and create a new narrative for the viewer's imagination to follow," writes Michelle. For more information contact Michelle Ward at michelle@forgottenfarms.com or (705) 443-2522. **♾**

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