

# BULLETIN

APRIL 2019  
VOL. 68 | NO. 4

  
**Happy Naked Gardening Day!**



## **ACROSS THE BOARD**

World Naked XERISCAPING Day

## **JOURNEY TO HEALTH**

Get in The Soil to Improve Your Mood and Immune System!

## **UNGLOSSED**

Let's Hang Out in a Garden

## **BRINGING NUDISM MAINSTREAM**

Gardening Without Clothing Requires a Few Precautions





# Bare Oaks



**About the author**  
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It wasn't that long ago that greater Toronto, despite its chilly Canadian climate much of the year, was a hotbed of nude recreation with four nudist clubs and its own nude beach.

That beach, Hanlan's Point, is still going strong. Sadly, two of the clubs were sold and converted to non-nudist use, while the other opted to leave AANR and family nude recreation. That leaves Bare Oaks Family Nudist Park, which has its own history of teetering between nudist and non-nudist status.

Thankfully, Linda and Stéphane Deschênes purchased the club in 2006 and since have made it a true family nudist showplace. One of the first things they did was to install a \$40,000 children's playground just beyond the entry gate to the property. All club events must be open to children, including the comedy shows performed by an all-female cast of comedians twice a year.

“We don't put any restrictions on the comics, but we do tell them that if you don't want to have to explain things to children, you might want to act accordingly,” said Stéphane Deschênes.



Stéphane Deschênes, 53, and his wife are unusual in that they purchased a nudist resort to ensure that they had a place for their two sons, just six and nine at the time, to enjoy nudism. Though the family does not live on the property, they reside in a nearby subdivision and have never shied away from their nudist involvement.

Stéphane Deschênes has a career in marketing and advertising and is visible in the community promoting the resort. He's served as president of the local chamber of commerce and has been active as both a Boy Scout leader and on the school council. He even hosts a podcast – The Nudist Living Show – that generates 50,000 downloads a month.

As for the kids, now 22 and 19, “We've always had the philosophy that you'll get teased as a child about something,” Deschênes said. “It might be because you're short or tall or because of your faith. It's how you deal with it that matters. If they can tell that you don't care what they think, it doesn't go anywhere.”

Nestled on 50 acres about a 30-minute drive northeast of Toronto, Bare Oaks has 19 acres of conservation land and 13 acres of untouched forest. There are two ponds, one small spring-fed lake, two streams, and a river. There are five guest rooms located in the main clubhouse, making Bare Oaks a year-round club. There are also five cabins and 100 camping sites, most of which have water and 30-amp electrical hook-ups.

In addition to the five guest rooms, the clubhouse features the Bare Bistro restaurant, exercise room, store, event hall, washroom and showers, two saunas, a lounge with satellite TV, lockers, and laundry room. Adjacent to the clubhouse is a solar-heated outdoor swimming pool.

Many of the amenities have been added or upgraded since the Deschênes family took over in 2006. The clubhouse was renovated and the restaurant added.

“They didn’t have a restaurant previously and that’s at least as important as having a pool,” Deschênes said. “There’s something built into our DNA where we enjoy connecting with others by breaking bread. It goes back to sitting as a tribe around the campfire eating something we hunted together.”

Bare Oaks, like many AANR clubs, has a long and colorful history. Deschênes is a history buff and has chronicled the saga on its website ([www.bareoaks.ca](http://www.bareoaks.ca)). The short version is that Eric and June Jarvis, who had frequented several Ontario nudist clubs, purchased the property in 1972, when it consisted of little more than a road to a bridge over a river and three cleared areas covered with ferns and brambles.

The couple, employed during the week in Toronto, spent weekends



the first year dredging a lake (now known as Jarvis Pond) before opening in 1973 as Toronto Helios Society at Haytor Leisure Park.

Business was slow at first but the couple added another bridge, an extension to the lake, hook-ups for trailers, and a clubhouse that today is known as The Outback. In 1978, the couple started building a house with 3,000 square feet of living area for themselves and a full basement to serve as a winter clubhouse for dances and parties.

By 1984, Eric and June found they could not make their nudist business work and operated for several years as a non-nudist campground before selling in 1992. New owners ran several non-nudist businesses on the property before selling in 2001 to Larry and Carol Bean, who renamed it the New Forest Family Naturist Resort.



The Beans remodeled the clubhouse and added six motel rooms, part of a property-wide overhaul that included the entire infrastructure. They added a volleyball court and exercise room, but the biggest improvement was a 2.5-acre lake that now serves as the focal point of many resort events.

Late in 2006, the Beans sold the property to the Deschênes family, who renamed it Bare Oaks Family Naturist Park for several marketing and rebranding reasons, including a play on the new owners’ last name. (Deschênes is French for “of the oaks.”)

More than a decade later, it’s one of AANR’s premier resorts. Signature events include the upcoming 4th annual 5K Colour Fun Run on July 21, during which runners get doused with colored powder. They have also scheduled a pair of summer volleyball tournaments, which wouldn’t be unusual in the nudist world were



# CLUBSPOTLIGHT



it not for the all-female comedy shows held the same weekend.

In 2013, comedian Lianne Mauladin contacted Bare Oaks asking if the club would be interested in having stand-up comedians from the Merry Janes of Comedy group perform. Deschênes agreed but asked that the comics perform nude since Bare Oaks is a nudist resort, not a clothing-optional one.

Mauladin convinced three colleagues to join her and it's since become something of a bucket-list challenge for comedians to perform at Bare Oaks. (There have been two summer shows since 2014). Several comedians have written about the experience, appeared on podcasts discussing it, and incorporated the experience into their routines. Performing stand-up is already one of the most intimidating performance formats. Doing it nude is one of the few things that can make it even more challenging.

After each show, the comedians stand behind the Bare Oaks sign for group photos that appear on the club website. Deschênes said the ladies asked not to add any male comics to the lineup since it would be awkward to have professional colleagues of the opposite sex on hand.

Bare Oaks honors the history of the club and Canadian nudism by naming resort streets and amenities. There's Connett Drive, named for Ray and Mildred Connett, who started several clubs in Canada and the United States. There's Helios Circle, a tribute to the club's original name, and Lake Beamor, named for Larry and Carol Bean (combining Bean and her maiden name).

As for the future of Bare Oaks, Deschênes is determined to make sure it does not go the route of other now-defunct Canadian nudist resorts.

"We plan to turn it into a co-op eventually because co-ops, while not good for developers, are good for making sure nothing ever changes in terms of nudist status. Once it's big enough and self-sustaining, we'll do a co-op so future generations can enjoy it as much as we have." ●

