

## Kevin Kavanagh - Bio

Kevin Kavanagh has worked in the field of conservation for most of his professional life. In 2006, he joined the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) where he has focused his efforts on stewardship and related conservation internship programs. Prior to joining NCC he worked for 15 years with World Wildlife Fund Canada (WWF). While at WWF, he led the conservation science work to help expand Canada's parks and protected areas system and directed programs for the recovery of Canadian species at risk.

An avid gardener, Kevin believes that his passion for plants was instilled in him while he was growing up surrounded by forests and wetlands in Quebec's Eastern Townships. Always eager to explore new habitats, he endeavoured to collect seeds of his botanical discoveries with the hope of growing them on at close range where he could observe them year round. Consequently, his parents yard quickly filled up with a diversity of native trees and flowering shrubs. An interest in the botanical riches of more southern regions set in an early age as he struggled to find ways to successfully overwinter species such as broad-leaved Rhododendrons – in a location where winter temperatures regularly dipped to near –40!

At McGill University in Montreal, he pursued interests in the study of plant distribution, focussing on the shifts in the habitat preferences of tree populations at their northern range limits. In 1979, Kevin “migrated south” to Toronto to pursue graduate studies in plant ecology where he first encountered the rich Carolinian forests of Norfolk County along Lake Erie while researching the population dynamics of native stands of Tuliptree. His field studies also took him across much of the south-eastern United States where forest plots he established in the Southern Appalachian Mountains and Piedmont were thick with native Rhododendrons and Azaleas, Hollies, Silverbells, Magnolias, and more! He hoped one day to re-locate to Norfolk where he could develop a garden incorporating many of these southern botanical treasures – 25 years later that dream became a reality.

Now re-siding on a 28 acre country property overlooking the coastal wetlands bordering Lake Erie, he has turned his passion for gardening into a business with the launch of South Coast Gardens - a small nursery with display gardens specialising in plants native to southern Ontario and the south-eastern United States. A selection of frost hardy sub-tropical plants are housed in a 2,000 square foot greenhouse and are brought outdoors in the warmer months to augment the seasonal display in the gardens. Today, he gets great satisfaction from working with clients to design and install gardens that include a ‘touch of the south’.

Kevin holds a B.Sc. (Hons.) from McGill University, a M.Sc. from York University and several years of post-graduate research in botany at the University of Toronto.