

## Story to Accompany the Hazelnut Shrub Gift in New Castle, Ontario

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As the gentle breeze rustled through the trees in New Castle, Ontario, a special package arrived at the home of the Westerink family. Inside was a young Hazelnut shrub, a loving tribute to Ethan, whose memory was cherished deeply by his family and friends. The shrub came with a message: "This Hazelnut Shrub is associated with Ethan. Sending you hugs and lots of love."

The Hazelnut shrub, chosen for its resilience and beauty, held a special significance. It would serve as a living reminder of Ethan, whose spirit and warmth had touched so many. As the family gathered around the shrub, they read the accompanying letter, which told a story of hope and continuity.

"Dear Westerink Family,

This Hazelnut shrub is a tribute to Ethan. In many cultures, Hazelnut shrubs symbolize wisdom, protection, and love. This shrub will grow strong and lush, just as Ethan's spirit remains strong in our hearts. When it matures, it will bear catkins each August, a gentle reminder of Ethan.

To ensure that this shrub thrives and bears fruit, we recommend planting another Hazelnut shrub nearby. Hazelnut shrubs require cross-pollination to produce nuts, so having a pair will allow them to flourish and provide a bountiful harvest. The fruits of these shrubs will benefit many generations of people and animals, just as Ethan's memory continues to touch and benefit all who knew him.

As the shrubs grow, they will not only provide shade and beauty but also serve as a sanctuary for wildlife. Squirrels, birds, and other creatures will find nourishment in the nuts, while the shrubs themselves will stand as a testament to love and remembrance.

We hope that each August, as the catkins form, you will find comfort and joy in the legacy that Ethan has left behind. Through these Hazelnut shrubs, his memory will endure, offering benefits to many generations to come.

With deepest sympathy and love,

Lyis Forestry"

Emma, an environmental advocate, had also included a parable that resonated deeply with the family:

"There once was a gardener who worked for God, trusting in God's provision and recognizing the divine within herself and all of God's creation. She did not dominate the land but respected the free will of herself and others, including her family, friends, and colleagues. She learned to forgive, love, and accept people as they were, speaking the truth yet never forcing it. She knew she was worthy to receive divine revelation and always tested the spirits to ensure they came from God.

As the day came for the gardener to meet her Creator, she did so with love and kindness for all creation in her heart. This is the spirit we must embrace to transform our land into something beautiful and sustainable."

The room was silent, absorbed in the story. The Westerink family felt a surge of hope. The risks were real, but so were the rewards. Emma's vision of a food forest wasn't just about plants; it was about cultivating a community, respecting nature, and working together with love and kindness.

Emma's voice softened as she made her final plea. "Imagine New Castle as a model of sustainability, drawing visitors and experts, fostering education and innovation. It's a vision we can achieve together, but it starts with a decision—to embrace this new way of thinking, to invest in our land and community."

She concluded with a heartfelt call to action. "Join me in this journey. Let's create a legacy of abundance and resilience for ourselves and future generations. Together, we can make New Castle a beacon of hope and sustainability."

After reading the enclosed instructions the Westerink family planted the Hazelnut shrub in their garden, choosing a sunny spot with adequate moisture where it could thrive. They later acquired another Hazelnut shrub to ensure a fruitful partnership, just as the letter had suggested. Each August, as the catkins began to form, they felt a renewed sense of connection to Ethan, seeing his spirit reflected in the strength and beauty of the growing shrubs.

Over the years, the Hazelnut shrubs became a beloved part of the community. Neighbors and friends would visit, sharing stories and enjoying the shade. The nuts were gathered and shared, symbolizing the enduring impact of

Ethan's life on those around him.

Through these shrubs, Ethan's memory continued to bring joy, sustenance, and beauty to New Castle, a living legacy that would benefit people and animals for many generations.

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This story, included with the gift, offers a message of hope, continuity, and love, ensuring that Ethan's memory is honored in a meaningful and enduring way.