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Team hopping to it

Garrison, Ross Farm growing beer's flavourful flower

By BRUCE ERSKINE Business Reporter
Thu. Jun 4 - 4:46 AM



Daniel Girard, brewmaster at the Garrison Brewing Company, pours a glass of the local brewery's Hopyard Pale, that was being bottled on Wednesday. (TIM KROCHAK / Staff)

HALIFAX'S Garrison Brewing Co. is teaming with Ross Farm to grow hops in Nova Scotia.

"I went with the family last August to see the pigs and the cows and, lo and behold, there were trellises loaded with hops," Brian Titus, owner of the award-winning microbrewery, said in an interview Wednesday.

"On a whim, I talked to the folks at Ross Farm about (planting) an experimental hops yard and they thought it was a fantastic idea."

Ross Farm, part of the provincial museum system, offers demonstrations of traditional farm life by staff who dress in period costumes.

Farm director Lisa Wolfe said the hops project has created a lot of interest among the New Ross museum's staff.

"Hops have grown here for as long as anyone can remember," she said, adding that hops were used traditionally in Nova Scotia for making bread as well as for making beer.

"All the old farms had hop vines."

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Mr. Titus said a crop of Cascade and Willamette hops was planted at the end of May from root cuttings from the Lazy Acres farm near Wolfville.

The vines, which can grow 30 centimetres in a day and reach a length of nine metres, are usually ready for harvest within two or three years.

"Hops were a common sight out east in the early 1900s, and the climate inland and through the Annapolis Valley is well-suited for this crop," said Mr. Titus, who launched Garrison 12 years ago.

"The goal is a brew made with 100 per cent local ingredients, and this will bring us closer."

Mr. Titus said there is a worldwide shortage of hops because of poor recent crops and increasing global demand, especially among craft brewers who are using more hops in their beers.

Garrison uses Cascade hops in many of its beers, and Mr. Titus said he hopes the Ross Farm experiment may encourage more Nova Scotia farmers to plant hops on a larger scale.

"It won't scratch the surface for need, but we're trying to show that it can be done," he said.

Meanwhile, Garrison is launching a new seasonal brew, Hopyard Pale, to mark its foray into hop cultivation.

A deep gold, medium-bodied and bitter ale, Hopyard Pale pairs well with most grilled and spicy foods.

It is being released in six-packs and on tap, and will be distributed throughout Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

(berskine@herald.ca)

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