

Arboretum tradition promises sticky encounter

By Erin Saupe
The Record

With the temperature rising and the sap beginning to flow, the sugar shack is firing up for another season of maple syrup making.

"Making maple syrup is a fun way to get involved and be part of the campus," said Sarah Gainey, environmental education coordinator for the Arboretum. "We are tapping around 600 trees, so we need a lot of volunteers."

Students are encouraged to get involved in all phases of the process, from tapping trees and collecting the sap to boiling it down to syrup.

This year's tentative tapping date is March 11, Gainey said. And if you aren't interested in volunteering, you can always taste test.

"If a visitor comes we will often serve them pancakes with fresh, hot maple syrup straight off the evaporator," Gainey said.

St. John's has been tapping trees to produce syrup since 1942.

The process has its origins in WWII when sugar shortages forced monks to boil maple sap down for sugar.

As time went on, maple syruping became an important part of the St. John's tradition.

"Not many students are aware

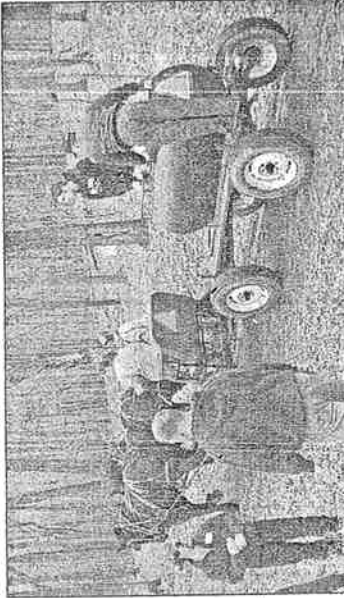


Photo courtesy of the St. John's Arboretum

Horses cart a barrel for collecting maple syrup last year.

we harvest maple syrup, and it is a really great opportunity to get involved in a St. John's tradition," said CSB junior Sarah

Weinberger.

Making maple syrup isn't easy.

It requires 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

Yet St. John's historically produces an average of 257 gallons of syrup per year, said Tom Kroll, land management and Arboretum director.

This spring the Arboretum is hosting its annual maple syrup festival from 1-4 p.m. April 1 and 8 at the sugar shack.

Horse-drawn wagons will take people from the registration spot at St. John's Pref to the sugar shack by the radio tower fields.

The event is free for student members of the Arboretum and

\$2 for student non-members.

Activities include sap collecting, tree tapping, sugar shack tours, hot maple syrup sundaes and live music.

Pre-register for the festival by contacting the Arboretum office at 363-3163 or e-mail arboretum@csbsju.edu.

So get ready to hike out to the sugar shack this March and participate in a tradition unique to St. John's.

Besides, "it's a great way to get outside after being cooped up after a long winter," Gainey said.

Email Gainey at sgainey@csbsju.edu for more information or to get involved with the maple syruping process.