

Montreal Street Community Garden Chair's Annual Report 2019-2020

To: James Bay Neighbourhood Association

As Chair of the Montreal Street Community Garden I am pleased to present the annual report for 2019-2020.

As a sub-committee of the JBNA our governance consists of a board of directors who are responsible for MSCG management, maintenance and membership. We also rely on volunteers to maintain the border and pollinator gardens.

We have 54 plots and a current waiting list of 63 applicants which means it takes approximately 4-5 years before a plot becomes available. Last year we had three new members join. We currently receive on average 2-3 applicants a month. Our annual membership is \$50.00.

All community gardens and allotments in Victoria and the region are experiencing a similar demand for plots. This speaks to the growing interest in gardening and local food production.

Many of you will have visited the garden which is the oldest community garden in Victoria having been established in 1975. The land is owned by the City of Victoria and our lease is renewed every 5 years. We work closely with City Parks staff and in particular their Food Systems Coordinator. We also liaise with the JBNA and we are very fortunate in having Kathryn Pankowski as a gardening resource. Thank you Kathryn and also Wayne Shillington for all the help and advice you have given us over the past year.

In 2019 we focused on priorities - improving our communications and administrative functions and building community relationships. We also started to look at what is needed to make this community asset safe and accessible. Some of the pathways are not easily accessible by people with mobility issues, wheelchair or walker users.

We started and completed the construction of a wooden border fence on the east perimeter of the garden. The work was carried out by volunteers and the sympathetic design complements the rest of the garden.

We installed new water saving units to the irrigation faucet system. These units not only help to save water but they are easier to use particularly for members who find it hard to turn the on-off taps because of for example arthritis or for other physical reasons.

We have a very healthy bank balance which has been built up over the years and our major expense in 2019-2020 was construction of the fence. We have excellent financial oversight managed by our Treasurer.

Going forward in 2020-21 we will be focusing on accessibility, improving pathways and fixing worn eroded areas in the garden. Our plots will be upgraded with new border edging. A new Native plant garden is also being established on the SE corner of the perimeter garden.

Gardens and gardeners are resilient. Last year we had every kind of weather but plants flourished. For some reason artichokes and tall beans took off in a big way!

We kept an eye on our four footed friends - local deer. There appears to be a familiar pattern in late Spring early Summer. Two or three deer appear in the garden. They take a look at our extensive menu. They selectively munch the tops of leafy vegetables and flowers from a few garden plots and they leave. They reappear the next day or two and then they disappear - apparently to visit other gardens. We don't have a serious problem - yet - but we will continue to monitor the situation.

Many residents and visitors express how beautiful and well maintained our garden is and we know how important this oasis is to our neighbourhood.

We want to continue to maintain this special neighbourhood asset and to those of you who haven't visited our garden please drop by and enjoy the rich diversity of food producing plants and flowers.

Christina Mitchell
MSCG Chair

10 April 2020