

Report from Kathryn Pankowski, James Bay Garden Advocate August and September, 2020

Projects

The Michigan/Menzies Seed Box Garden

- Continues to be maintained on a “one gardener per week” basis, with a once-a-month distanced coordination meeting.

The Seed Box

- Use of the seed box continues to be much higher than we anticipated.
- The top of the box was ‘tagged’ by a graffitist, but has been cleaned by one volunteer and repainted by another.
- Our focus this fall is on seed collecting and processing, so that we gather enough seed to keep the box well stocked until biennial seed ripens next July. We have had generous donations from the Pollinator Border group at Montreal St Community Garden, the New Horizons’ garden, many JBNA garden volunteers, and a number of other residents.
- The seed box group is currently packing individually in their own homes, as the outdoor work parties have had to end. We are looking for a suitable free space where we can have small indoor work parties if COVID doesn’t get too bad; otherwise we will keep packing at home.
- The final report for the My Great Neighbourhood Grant which funded creation of the seed box has been submitted.
- Our current plan is to stop putting seed in the box at the end of October (because there’s not much you can sow in Nov & Dec), and resume in January. We will, however, keep the box well tended and stock it with resources about seed-saving.

The Food Trees

- All trees are doing well.
- We trimmed the grass around the tennis court trees and planted crocus and daffodils under the two apple trees at Charles Redfern.
- Still need to recut the circles and mulch the Tod trees, replace one tree stake, and then band all apple trees against winter moth in October.

Huntingdon Manor allotments

- Huntingdon Manor allotments are running smoothly and the Hotel arranged a small opening party in August, which attracted some further press coverage.
- Have been helping the plot holders source seeds and starts for fall planting.

Fisherman’s Wharf Herb Garden

- As you know, we are pursuing getting the herb garden designated as a community garden, with a licence of occupation granted to the JBNA, so that the garden volunteers can take care of it. Both the Letter of Intent (step 1) and the full Proposal (step 2) have been submitted to the City, and we are now waiting to hear back from Parks.

- We have proposed that the basic layout and purpose continue unchanged, that Parks continue to maintain the gravel paths, the hedge around the perimeter, and the taller trees (fig and dogwoods), while care of all other plants and enhancement of the space shift to the JBNA garden volunteers.
- Proposed enhancements include: installing an on-site composter, restoring the plant labelling system; adding a 'welcome/what is this place/yes, it's OK to pick' sign; raising a portion of the lower-growing herbs into planters for easier access for the mobility-impaired; increasing the range of culinary herbs grown, and increasing pollinator support.

Berry Patch and Lewis St

- Have been on hold due to Huntingdon, seed box, and Fisherman's Wharf.

Other items

- Last year, we did a small thank you event for the volunteers in the fall. After talking to volunteers this year, I have decided to postpone it (most of them don't want any unnecessary mingling) until spring, if it's possible then, and will just give people thank-you cards this fall.
- Leaf mulch delivery: after doing a pilot in four neighbourhoods last spring, the City has offered drop off leaf mulch this fall in any neighbourhood that requests it. I have asked for a small amount (3 cu m) to be dropped in Irving Park on Oct. 8 as a pilot project to see what the demand is. This will probably become a regular spring and fall event.

Ongoing Activities

- I wrote two columns for the Beacon
- I have participated in one online Urban Food Table meeting.