

Report from Kathryn Pankowski, James Bay Garden Advocate October and November, 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. Will be little to do, other than pick up garbage and deal with damage, until the end of January.

The Seed Box

- We kept the seed box operating through October, and demand continued to be high. (The appetite for seeds in James Bay seems to be insatiable.) The box is taking a ‘winter nap’ for Nov, Dec, and the first part of January, because there’s little that can be sown then, we need to clean the fall seed donations, and, frankly, we need a rest.
- We regularly renew the chalkboards and sometimes add a few small items, such as seed pots or dried seed pods for wreath-making, just to make it look tended.
- One cardboard packet holder was ripped out in October and has been replaced.
- We arranged to pack seed in a room at the James Bay Community School Centre, masked and distanced, but after 4 weeks there have had to go back to working separately at home due to new COVID regulations.
- I am a bit concerned about being able to keep the seed box stocked if demand for seeds continues at this rate, so am looking into possible discounts and funding to help with the cost of seed packing materials.

The Food Trees

- The tree circles at Tod have been recut and weeded, we have reset the damaged tree stake, and banded all apple trees against winter moth.

Huntingdon Manor Allotments

- I have talked to Julia Canton about the hotel’s plans for next year. The staff is enthusiastic about making the allotment a permanent feature, and will be proposing that the Hotel commit to that at a December meeting with the owner.
- However, given the uncertainty around COVID in 2021, even if the decision is made to operate the garden long-term, we have recommended that for the next year we keep the arrangement ‘as is’, with the wide spacing and palettes

Fisherman’s Wharf Herb Garden

- Parks responded to our proposal favourably and has agreed to continue to maintain the paths, *Cornus kousa* trees, snowberry hedge, and irrigation system, while the JBNA volunteers manage the day-to-day gardening.
- They also asked that we provide some additional information and revise the proposal to match a new preferred format for community garden proposals. The revised and augmented proposal has been submitted, and it is anticipated that, after further review by Parks, will go to Council in January.

- We are eligible to apply for a one-time 'Community Garden Start-Up Grant' to help cover the costs of major items, such as the composter. Deadline is Dec. 18.

Tree Planting on Private Land

- The My Great Neighbourhood Grant will now cover a group of neighbours to plant trees on their own properties; minimum of 10 trees required. I now have enough people interested in participating to put in a grant application.

Berry Patch and Lewis St

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

Other Items

- Leaf mulch delivery: We had 3 cu m of leaf mulch delivered to Irving Park in October as a pilot. All the mulch was taken, so there is demand (and an amazing array of ways to haul mulch by foot, bike, and tricycle). The major complaint was that it was a long way from the west half of James Bay, so next spring (when demand will probably be higher), will ask for a pile of the same size to also be dropped somewhere on the other side of Oswego.
- At the request of the City, I did a brief (10 min) presentation at an online 'Lunch and Learn' about using the Food Tree Stewardship Program to add trees to the city.

Ongoing Activities

- I wrote two columns for the Beacon
- I have participated in one online Urban Food Table meeting.
- I have attended an on-line training session for community garden coordinators put on by the City on increasing accessibility in allotments and public gardens.