

Montreal Street Allotment Garden (MSAG)

Annual Report 2022

To: James Bay Neighbourhood Association

The MSAG is currently without a Chair and I am, therefore, presenting this report for the period April 2021-22 in my capacity as Communications Director.

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

At the March 2, 2022 Annual General Meeting, a majority vote approved the name change from Montreal Street Community Garden to Montreal Street Allotment Garden (MSAG) in line with the City of Victoria Community Gardens Policy (2018). Our website, social media (Montreal Street Allotment Garden on Facebook), signage and other communications are gradually being changed to reflect this.

The MSAG has 54 plots and our annual membership fee is \$50.00. There are currently over 95 applicants on the waitlist, which means it takes approximately 8-9 years before a plot becomes available. Over the past year we have welcomed 4 new members. We currently receive on average 2-3 applicants per month.

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 the past year, our main priority involved the improvement of the Garden pathways using wood chips provided free of charge to us by the City of Victoria. About half of the pathways have now been remediated and progress depends on the availability of the chips. In our previous report we mentioned adding "compacted crushed materials" to the chipped pathways once complete and this would have been financed with a Great Neighbourhood Grant. We discovered, however, last year that we are not eligible for such a grant.

Our bank balance remains healthy thanks to excellent financial oversight and at the AGM the membership approved the proposal to go ahead with replacing our rather ancient gardening shed. A builder was recommended by one of our members and we expect to have the build completed at the end of the 2022 growing season. There was some concern that we would not be able to cover emergency irrigation repairs if we committed to the shed costs but an assessment of the system earlier this year showed it to be in good working order.

Our garden members continue to enjoy planting a wide variety of plants, saving and sharing seeds, and sharing gardening knowledge with each other. Some of our members continue to contribute some of their saved seeds to the Wee Free Seed Box at the corner of Menzies and Michigan. Twice during 2021, in the spring and again in the fall, many Garden members took advantage of free seedlings offered through the City's *Get Growing Victoria!* program.

At our AGM, a committee was established to revise the MSAG's "Terms of Use" and "Guidelines". This committee is chaired by Carolyn Zyha.

We continue to seek a Garden member who is willing to take on the role of Management Committee Chair or two members who are willing to share the role. In the meantime, we are managing day-to-day business as it arises without a Chair. With such a low turnover in the Garden many members feel that they have already "done enough" over the years and it is time for others to step up. The problem is there aren't any others (!) and an aging membership means there are fewer persons inclined to want to help or learn new ways of doing things.

With the lifting of COVID restrictions, we will be seeing a return of tourists to Victoria this year and expect to have more visitors to the Garden over the summer period. The gardeners responsible for the colourful flower displays in the border gardens along Montreal, Dobinson and the Alley are already hard at work both for the visitors and the pollinators! As our Spring Cleanup approaches, all our allotment holders are getting ready for the growing season. Life is good in the Garden.

Respectfully submitted,

Pippa Turney
MSAG Communications Director

April 4, 2022