

## **Gardening & Recycling Programs, October & November, 2024**

### **Kathryn Pankowski**

These two months were a combination of seasonal gardening activity, gearing up the planning for next year, and the occasional bit of excitement

#### The Wee Free Seed Box & Seed Box Garden

- The Wee Free Seed Box will be removed shortly for a complete refurbishment and repainting. It's been out on the corner for 4 ½ years, so it is time.
- We had been planning to turn the planter box by Discovery Coffee into a pickable herb box, but, since camping has ended at Irving Park, we are seeing more night activity by the box and a large amount of odd and sometimes unsavory garbage dumped there. (Last week's haul included two hash pipes and a large metal doorstep.) We have decided to continue with this bed being primarily ornamental for a while and see how the situation unfolds, as right now we don't want to be encouraging the public to pick and eat from it.

#### Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden

- The City has done some work to improve the paths, smoothing the transitions from the cement to gravel, which was a pleasant surprise..
- We have started succession planting for some of the original herbs, such as the rosemaries, adding young plants near the old ones, in the hopes that the young sprigs will be ready to replace the older plants when necessary.

#### Montreal Street Berry Patch

- We have added a smattering of small spring bulbs with edible flowers near the main sidewalk, as well as primroses and more violets under the tree, in the hopes that we can get some attractive flowering going on here as early as possible in the new year.
- One of the irrigation cover plates in the middle of a path was vandalized (broken into three pieces and posing a safety hazard). It was noticed immediately by one of the garden volunteers who lives nearby and who put a safety cone over it as a temporary measure, and it was replaced promptly by the City.

#### Lewis Park Commons Garden

- We have added spring bulbs to the cut-flower patch, again to start providing cheer earlier in the year

#### Potential Rithet Street Garden

- We have decided to pursue the possibility of creating a butterfly support garden on the Rithet Street site which the City is offering for community gardening.
- The first step was submitting an Expression of Interest form, which we have done. It's now making the rounds of the various City departments and then we will hear back (estimated time is mid Dec) as to whether we will be asked to develop and submit a full formal garden proposal.

- We have agreed to remove the item in my work plan to plan several more small pickable herb boxes/gardens and replace it with planning the butterfly support garden as our 'new project' for the 2024-25 year, postponing the herb gardens by a year in order to take advantage of the Rithet Street opportunity, which will only come around once.
- Meanwhile, the Lewis Park volunteer group has weeded the site and sown crimson clover as a cover crop, with City permission, to keep the soil protected and keep down weeds over winter. We are also researching the native butterflies still present in James Bay and their specific adult and larval food needs, so we can tailor the garden design to provide as much support as possible.

#### Get Growing, Victoria!

- The final report, which is a requirement for serving as the partner for the neighbourhood distribution days in James Bay, has been submitted.

#### VCAN Garry Oak Ecosystem Project

- This volunteer project has been completed. Four of the James Bay volunteers attended the VCAN community open house for the project..

#### Recycling

- We had over \$300 in donations at the November depot - the largest amount for any depot this year.
- Also in November, the ReFuse truck did not turn up to collect our recycling and, after waiting around for as long as they could, the crew moved everything into temporary storage. We seized the opportunity to do a 'trial run' of renting a cargo van and taking the recycling to Esquimalt Return-It ourselves. It went very smoothly and we now have a realistic idea of how much time and money it takes to "do it all ourselves", so we can make an informed decision about which method to use.

#### And...

The usual 4 garden work parties a week (weather permitting), 2 articles per month to the Beacon, volunteer management, and dealing with correspondence (including a rather entertaining email from a resident of Oak Bay, who wanted to know why James Bay's allotment garden was nicer than Oak Bay's). I also attended a management committee meeting of the MSAG at their request and attended a presentation from the City climate team at the Urban Food Table. They will be launching their first public-facing mitigation plan soon, and I'd like to suggest that they be invited to speak at a JBNA meeting when that happens.