

Report on Gardening Programs, June & July, 2025

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Most of the established gardens are ticking along, doing what gardens do in early summer, with only minor challenges (a broken tap here, a hungry deer there). There has been good progress on several fronts with the new gardens.

The Pickable Commons Gardens

The herb garden, berry patch, and Lewis Commons are all flourishing, being tended each week by a growing number of volunteers, and being well-used by the public. Our biggest challenges have been the dry and windy conditions, which means we've been needing to water much more than is usual for the first half of summer, and that the deer have finally discovered Lewis Commons and seem to be enjoying regular midnight snacks of chard, bean, pea, and strawberry leaves, while (so far) leaving pretty much everything else alone.



The Allotments

Huntingdon now has a tool shed (left). This was part of the original plan when the allotments were transformed from temporary to 'permanent', and was the last big thing remaining to be done on the project. The small communal herb garden has also been fully planted up.

I attended a Montreal Street Allotment management committee meeting by invitation.

The New Gardens

Irving Park: The City has offered the JBNA first refusal on taking over the Licence of Occupation for the community garden in Irving Park, which New Horizons no longer wishes to manage, and the JBNA Board has agreed to assume care of this space. Note that this is the 'side' garden which is in Irving Park; New Horizons will continue to care for the 'front' garden along Menzies Street.

After discussions with parks staff, here's where things stand:

- New Horizons wishes to have some time to consult with donors and/or move some of the plants to their front garden. (These plants were gifts from members or given in memory of former members.)
- The garden currently goes right up to the building and there are several large shrubs touching the building. Since the building belongs to the City, property management will be considering if they would like to establish an access path and some setback from the building before a new garden licence is issued.

- Realistically, the JBNA will probably not receive the new licence and be starting work in the garden until sometime in the fall.
- Parks staff has looked at the existing water infrastructure and determined that they can run a water line to the garden fairly easily and install a tap for us to use. This is most likely to happen in spring 2026, when the City is doing its annual irrigation checks and repairs in parks.

Several new volunteers have already offered to help restore this garden. A lot of hands will be needed, so if you are interested in pitching in on this project, please contact Kathryn at gardens@jbna.org

The Butterfly Garden: After a lot of butterfly research, including by several of the volunteers, the formal proposal for this new garden on Rithet Street is almost (but not quite) completed. We have determined which butterflies are still living in the area, their life cycles and host and nectar plant needs, and developed a design and planting plan that we hope will keep butterflies happy while also appealing to human passersby. The next step will be a community engagement process. Two people who live on Rithet have joined the project and a couple more have offered to help with watering and so on once it is planted.

Events

The June and July garden drop-ins at the herb garden were both well attended. We had 9 keen participants in June (so keen we went for an extra half hour) and 23 people, mostly with a more casual interest, in July.

Upcoming events include the Get Growing Victoria! Seedling distribution in Irving Park on Saturday, August 9, 10 to noon and the James Bay Fall Plant Swap on Saturday, September 6, 10 to noon, also at Irving Park.

Community Connections

I was invited to a gathering of the 'Friends of the Labyrinth' (not a formal organization, but people who have been involved with the Irving Park labyrinth in the past) on International Labyrinth Day. We discussed becoming neighbours in Irving Park and how we might cooperate. The newly unfenced labyrinth will be relaunched with a dusk walk at sundown on the autumnal solstice, September 22.