

Gardening Report, December, 2025 & January, 2026

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Thanks to the mild weather, an uncharacteristically large amount of gardening got done in these midwinter months, as well as a thoroughly characteristic amount of paperwork. (It's report and grant application season in the community gardening world.) The butterfly garden provided most of our excitement: not only did we start to build it, but also were handed some cash to pay for it.

The Commons Gardens

Lewis Commons, the Berry Patch, and the Seed Box Garden have been in their winter 'dormancy', requiring just once-a-week, one-person visits.

The seed box has been repainted, a volunteer is working on improved shelving, and it should be completely refurbished and back in the Seed Box Garden soon.

The mild weather has allowed the herb garden team to turn out most weeks, so the pruning there is progressing at a good clip.

The Allotments

The group working on shifting the Huntingdon allotments to more of a self-governing model has met twice, collected examples of governance from other allotments, and come up with a governance model to propose to the gardeners. I expect we will meet 2-3 more times to work out a revised ploholders agreement and plan the first annual gardeners' meeting to discuss the proposals and, we hope, elect a management committee.

New Projects

Work began on building the Rithet Street butterfly garden in December. The team has planted all the shrubs and deer-fenced them (a temporary measure), built the log lines, and laid wood chip on the 'gardeners' paths'. We're very fortunate that one of the volunteers keeps a boat at a marina with a ramp that has to be cleared after winter storms and king tides; she's been picking out all the most shapely pieces of (legal!) driftwood for us. We continue to have lots of volunteers turning out; I get the sense that there's a real hunger to 'do something' on projects with environmental value.

We also applied for and received a garden build grant from the City of \$2722.50, which should cover all costs of creating the butterfly-support garden. Thank you, City of Victoria!

Work on the Croft St boulevard will begin after we complete the 'build' - getting in the paths, raised beds, and soil amendments - at Rithet Street.

The spring bulb recycling pilot is set to launch in February and run through April.

Paperwork

In the last two months, we have:

- Applied for and received a garden build grant for the butterfly garden
- Submitted the report for the 2025 Community Garden Volunteer Grant
- Applied for the 2026 Community Garden Volunteer Grant
- Applied for the 2026 Garden Micro Grant
- Been invited to once again be the neighbourhood partner for the delivery of Get Growing, Victoria programs in James Bay, accepted, been sent a contract, and set tentative dates for our events.
- Placed orders for City spring mulch deliveries to the gardens.
- Created a new, more detailed volunteer hour tracking spreadsheet, as the City will be asking for more detailed data in next year's volunteer coordinator report.

Community Connections

I met with Eric Buhne of Curbside Farms Co-op, a new organization which hopes to foster more community-based gardening on boulevards.

I was interviewed by Hannah Lister, a UVic student, for a study she is doing on how to sustain seed boxes and similar exchange programs over the long term, with a focus on how to maintain enough seed supply to meet the demand.

The Usual

Also still running three work parties per week (seed packing, butterfly, and herb), writing Beacon columns, and attending Urban Food Table meetings.

Priorities for the next two months:

- Keep the existing gardens looking good (always the first priority)
- Develop the Rithet and Croft St gardens
- Reopen the seed box
- Finish off the remaining contract deliverables (web site rewrite, potential herb box sites, etc)
- March will be filled with mulch madness (as always)

Volunteer hours

Using my fancy new spreadsheet, I can report that the gardening volunteers put in 130+ hours of work in January, a comparatively quiet month.