



COWICHAN LAKE COMMUNITY GARDEN – 2020

The Cowichan Lake Community Garden is in very good shape this year but rather than providing the usual status report some members wanted to share with Council how the community garden has helped members and volunteers cope during the COVID 19 pandemic:

As a newcomer to Lake Cowichan, the garden has been a great spot to meet new friends, and as a not-very-experienced gardener, it's also been a great place to learn how to do a few things! Everyone is so friendly and willing to share their expertise. As soon as we saw the elk, deer and bunnies feasting on everything green in our own yard, we knew we needed another solution if we wanted to grow anything. We've been very grateful for the garden and the hardworking people in it!...Eric and Carol Stephenson

I find myself at the garden about 3 days a week often spending up to four hours per session. It is uplifting to see and be part of the progress being made from a packed refuse site to a flourishing garden. As a retired prairie farmer I am often finding some of the shared ideas and methods quizzical but hey, they work! In addition I get social distancing, enjoying the fruits of the garden, and exercising to and from the garden-I bike. I am finding the native flowers, herbs and shrubs being developed on the outside perimeter educational and deer resistant. Come see the hugel, the potatoe pyramid or the garden wizard. Smell the comfrey!...Cliff Suptjens

This is my second summer of being lucky enough to have space in the community garden, which has become my summer living room. It is always a pleasure to be there, growing in knowledge and skill as I tend my own little plots, peas, beans, potatoes, tomatoes, cukes, kale...favorites all planted with great optimism. After seeding, weeding, watering I stay longer, taking time to sit quietly on the wrought iron bench near the birdbath of this garden of Eden, listening to the birds, watching butterflies, sharing ideas with other gardeners and watching how the veggies, fruits and flowers are getting ready to be harvested. In short, I love this place of peaceful productivity...Kathryn Swan

I was new to Lake Cowichan 5 years ago. When I saw there was a Community Garden starting thought it was a good way to give to the Community, enjoy gardening, and make friends. The garden delivered

on all counts. We give back to the community and enjoy meeting like minded people. The space is a fun and healthy environment. There is a lot of learning, sharing and fun going on. Even in times of Covid it was easy to social distance and kept all our spirits up.... Thankful gardener, Lynn Budding

A Community Garden enriches the environment we all live in and much more. I like to go to the Community Garden and grow some things in my box. It started for a friend and her granddaughter but now it is for me and my granddaughter. It is an opportunity to show and teach our young the reward of a labour of love and the enjoyment to share it with others. I look at the other boxes gardeners are growing their things in, some decorative, some vegetables, some flowers and the peaceful and tranquil setting gives me a sense of belonging. Especially in an environment where there is many changes due to Covid. Even though there is social spacing it is nice just to nod at other gardeners and continue on our day... Donna Roughley

The community garden is my happy place, never more so than this year of COVID-19. It gives me a sense of purpose, it allows me to connect with nature and my wonderful fellow gardeners, it is both a learning and a knowledge sharing opportunity. The tremendous support we receive from Town Council, local businesses and local people inspires me to continue with improvements to make it even more of an asset to the community. It sustains me over the winter season, the time when gardeners yearn for the return of spring and spend time planning what they want to try out in the garden in the coming year... Cara Smith

Community gardens have become such a vital core to communities, and this community is no different. There is such a diverse population who benefit from directly taking part. From seniors who can no longer dig garden beds, to those who rent property and have no space available to them for a garden. Our community garden as well serves as a place where those with disabilities can be involved as well as a teaching tool for the youth of our community. With COVID-19 and the changes to our lifestyle which.. has been stated re: Dr. Tam, may well go on for years... the garden serves as a mental and physical health tool; providing a safe place to go, while getting fresh air, sunshine and exercise. Such outdoor spaces are only going to become more in demand and the fact we have one in our community, speaks volumes to the foresight of Town Council. I could speak personally on what the garden provides for me...but I have ..it provides all this and more. It is the reason I have stayed involved. Outdoor activities, spaces and destinations which are safe and which provide purpose are only going to become more essential in the coming years... Susan Lowe

I moved to Lake Cowichan last fall. In December my father died, in February my mother died, then the world changed in March in response to Covid 19. I'd never gardened before but was interested in it so I joined the Community Garden and from the get go I found the space, atmosphere, activity and people to be therapeutic and nurturing. The physical, emotional and mental well-being that I experience with each visit to the garden is healing to me. I've enjoyed watching and participating in the plants and

flowers growing, I'm enjoying nature and fresh air, I'm learning new skills, I'm developing new interests and I'm enjoying forming new friendships through the community garden... Linda Wiens

Yes I agree the garden is my happy place, I love to go up to the garden and sit in the shade and listen to the birds and their birdsongs each one has a unique trill, butterflies and hummingbirds stop by for visits and one day it was an interesting experience to see a hummingbird put the run on one of the resident birds – the hummingbird was drinking nectar from a patch of flowers and the bird came to check it out well the hummingbird wasted no time in chasing the bird away. The garden is always changing as the gardening season progresses the colours, the vegetables ripening and some at a rate of what seems like overnight. Yes, the Community Garden is my happy place and I am always amazed at the energy of the team who put in so many hours to make the gardens so fruitful and pleasing to the eye... Darlaene Eccleston

Cara, I could copy your comment as that is just how I feel! My happy place as well, where I can go to forget about all the craziness of our current world situation with this virus, interact with fellow gardeners and find a sense of purpose each day while putting many organic materials to good use that would otherwise be wasted. I, along with 5-6 of the other gardeners live in an apartment or townhouse and I would not be able to grow my own food without the garden. It is such a valuable resource for learning and sharing and I so appreciate being part of it all... Donna Martín

A few points of interest: Because of last year's fundraising efforts, a generous community donation of materials and a grant received from the CLCF Co-operative we were able to add more boxes (in response to demand from the community) and complete two significant projects, building a second shed and creating the native plant and the medicinal/culinary herb beds on the outside perimeter. Kudos to our supportive community and our great team!