

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020



The UVic Campus Community Garden (CCG) is a 92 plot allotment garden for students, staff and faculty members located on campus, outside of Ring Road, at 2100 McKenzie Ave. In 2008, the CCG was relocated from its original site in the Technology Enterprise Facility (TEF) parking lot, where it was first created in 1998. Since its relocation to the 1.58 acre garden site, the CCG has seen an incredible surge in engagement with new students, educational projects, and food growth on campus.

The purpose of the Campus Community Garden is to:

- a) enhance the built environment of the University of Victoria;
- b) provide allotment garden space for students, staff, and faculty of the University of Victoria
- c) increase opportunities for students to access food and the process of food production
- d) provide volunteer opportunities for members of the campus
- e) provide an inclusive space for engagement, education and research on topics related to sustainable urban agriculture such as food security, permaculture, composting, organic gardening, native plant and perennial propagation, and healthy living.

The garden is committed to promoting an accessible community space for educational, agricultural and cultural purposes.

Campus and community engagement

- Pop-up markets during fall 2019
- Tabling at Clubs and Course Unions day
- Engaged with ES classes (tutorial visits of over 200 students)
- Helped Anth, ES and Geog students with projects (by being available for interviews)
- Tabled at UVic Environmental Round Table
- Seedling distribution day in partnership with CRFAIR
- Established connection with Growing Together Victoria and partnered on the creation of a harvesting video tutorial
- Video tutorial series created to continue education during the time of COVID-19
- Video created for virtual clubs days

Engaging with people via social media and online platforms has become our main avenue of outreach due to COVID-19. Our video tutorials have been very popular and we intend to continue making them. They are a great (and permanent) source of information that people can continue to access in years to come.

Social Media Outreach

- All of our new video tutorials have been posted on our website, instagram and youtube.
- The UVSS facebook and instagram accounts have been featuring us in their posts and stories which has greatly increased our following
- Other organizations in the greater Victoria area such as CRFAIR, growing together and Life cycles have also been featuring us on their social media platforms and in newsletters.
- Instagram stories and highlights have been a useful tool for engagement.
- Our main Facebook page continues to be an extremely valuable location for keeping information about our events and workshops in one localized place. Many attendees mention Facebook to be one of the places they found out info about our events and workshops.

Events and Workshops Overview

- Fall Harvest Party
- Beeswax wrap making workshop
- Composting Basics
- Winter Pruning
- Mead making workshop
- Propagation Workshop

Garden work parties were well attended over the winter and into the early spring until they were cancelled for the rest of the spring and summer. The lack of work parties over the summer proved that having volunteers is a huge help in keeping on top of the tasks that need to be done around the garden. The mead making workshop and beeswax wrap making workshop were both very popular. The farm crawl that we had planned had people very excited, however we had to cancel it under the unfortunate circumstances along with our spring social and all remaining workshops.

Infrastructure & Site

- U-shaped ERVN propagation bed taken on as another giving garden temporarily
- Composting toilet project progressed with help of Claire and Grace from an architecture firm, hoping to build in Spring 2021
- Portable rental toilet remains on site until the composting toilet is built
- Portable toilet switched from regular to accessible for accessibility
- New revamped signs for giving gardens painted
- Berry Trellis completed
- Portable pea and cucamelon trellis' constructed
- Construction for installment of Orchard began
- Herb Spiral deconstructed to make room for Cold Frame
- Cold Frame building materials purchased and donated to begin building this fall
- Maintenance done on pathways to garden and accessible garden bed
- Research completed and in progress on accessibility in the garden (ie. gravel pathways, handrails)
- Additional Species Care project soon to be completed by previous Work Study Christine
- Memorial Garden Revamp with native plants by previous Work Study Ziggy

This year was slower than others in regards to how many big projects we pushed for and completed. Staff of CCG this year focused their efforts on maintaining the existing infrastructures in order to get a better sense of their needs for maintenance. This “rest” year allowed for more time to plan future big projects and begin preparation for them around the site, as well as completing smaller, back-burner projects. Preparations included destructing the herb spiral that used to be by the kiwi trellis to make room for the construction of a cold frame, researching and purchasing materials needed for the cold frame, and beginning the planning and work for a future orchard. Smaller projects included completing the berry trellis, revamping the garden signs, and constructing portable trellis' for peas and cucamelons. This year, the CCG also focused energy into research for accessibility of the site. Research was done on an accessible ramp to the proposed Composting Toilet, on a handrail for the gazebo, and better gravel pathways suitable for wheelchairs, all to be hopefully completed the following year. It also should be noted that, with no work parties between March and August, many of the staff's efforts and energies shifted from pursuing infrastructure projects to growing as much food as possible to support students and the community who's access to food may have been impacted as a result of COVID-19.

The Composting Toilet project encountered another “bump” when during a meeting in November with the Office of Campus Planning and Sustainability (OCPS), a staff member noticed the proposed toilet had no accessible ramp in the drawings. With inclusivity being a core value of the CCG, accessibility of this ramp was equally important to us so we had to push for a new design and plan that included a ramp, however inevitably prolonged the construction start date. With the help of Project Director, Claire, and architects Grace and Christine, we have a new proposed Composting Toilet that includes a ramp to be built in 2 steps: 1) composting toilet as planned with space to retrofit a ramp 2) ramp installment. We now await approval from OCPS in order to begin the next steps.

Work Parties

Work Party Times

On-site work parties are/were held every Friday from 3-5pm throughout the year, weather permitting until interrupted by COVID-19. From March-September work parties were halted, resuming on September 11, 2020. Friday work parties will continue through this fall in a different format than ever before, although still subject to weather. There are now 3 work parties every Friday, with space for 6 volunteers in each. Each time slot is an hour and a half, starting at noon, 1:30 and 4, for a potential of 18 volunteers visiting the garden each Friday. Special safety protocols are strictly adhered to at each work party in order to maintain the safety of everyone involved.

Work Party Volunteer Statistics

From Oct 28, 2019- Sept 30, 2020 there were approximately 148 volunteers who attended CCG work parties. These numbers do not portray individual volunteers but instead the sum amount of volunteers per work party. The estimated amount of volunteer hours in this October-September time period is 356. These numbers are significantly lower than the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent shut down of UVic campus. All typical volunteer tasks were attended to by CCG staff over the March-September time frame.

Work Party Tasks

Work party tasks varied weekly depending on the priority of tasks set by staff in weekly staff meetings. Most work parties offered a variety of tasks in different areas of the garden, but consisted mainly of tending to plants in the greenhouse, giving gardens and turning the compost.

Work Party Morale Initiatives

We consistently gave volunteers fresh produce from the garden and offered purchased snacks to restore their energy at the end of the work parties. Playing music during work parties often helped create an even more enjoyable atmosphere. When discussing tasks, we ask volunteers what they would be interested in doing or learning, hoping to use work parties as opportunities for individuals to diversify and share their skills and knowledge within the community. Due to an inability to share food for the foreseeable future, we have transitioned to pre-packaged (by staff) gift bags that include a snack and produce from the garden as a thank you for volunteers.

COVID -19

On March 17, 2020, the UVSS made the difficult decision to close the SUB as the threat of the pandemic became increasingly apparent. For a few hours that day, it was uncertain whether that meant the garden site would be included in the shut down. Luckily, due to its nature of being outside and deemed an essential service, the community garden site was able to continue throughout the remainder of the Spring and throughout the Summer, albeit with new safety protocols and community guidelines. Unfortunately though, all of our scheduled events such as the Spring Social and Farm Crawl, in addition to all of our weekly work parties, had to be canceled.

CCG staff with the support of the CCG Board created safety protocols and community guidelines which received a lot of feedback initially that lead to the list below that are ever-adapting to the changing situations:

1. I will not enter the garden space if:
 - I am experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.
 - I have been diagnosed with or knowingly had exposure to COVID-19.
 - I have received direction from the provincial health officer to self-isolate.
 - I have arrived from outside of Canada within the last 14 days.
2. I will wash my hands immediately upon arrival and before I leave, even if I am just going to my plot to check on something.
3. I will wipe down and sanitize each tool I touch and use before putting it away.
4. I agree to make sure only one (1) person is in the shed or greenhouse at a time.
5. I will practice physical distancing of two (2) metres or six (6) feet between everyone else at the garden.
6. I agree to the maximum of two (2) people working on a plot together, unless from the same household.
7. I will notify the Garden Coordinator to report a known exposure of COVID-19.
8. I will notify the Garden Coordinator of any safety concerns I may have.

Between March and May, staff took on the responsibility of locking the gates at sunset and opening them again at 8 am each day. We did this to limit the number of folks coming into the garden in the evenings and touching things we might not be able to effectively sanitize. We also did this to thoroughly sanitize and wipe down commonly touched surfaces on site before the day and at the end of the day, with periodic sanitizing throughout the day. The communal shed was closed between the months of March to May and staff prepared a rotation of tools that they took out each morning to limit tools being touched in the shed and ensure that if the virus was on a tool, it endured a 4 day incubation to remove it.

Communal tasks for plot renters were temporarily suspended in order to promote less time spent at the garden. This, as well as no volunteers throughout the summer, meant that staff had to do their best to pick up that extra work.

Over the summer, as restrictions loosened up, ours did as well. Staff stopped opening and locking the garden and allowed for plot renters to take on the responsibility of doing so when entering and leaving the garden. As well, the tools shed has opened up with tools no longer being provided outside for the day. With this change, staff implemented the guideline that every tool touched must be sanitized after use and by its user. In September, we welcomed back volunteer work parties with a slight change. Each Friday there are 3 sessions each with 6 spots for people to sign up prior to the event. Each participant receives an email the evening before containing expectations, safety protocols and what to bring.

With the UVic Campus closed and students being scattered globally, we had to find different avenues through which to get the food we were growing to students. We donated our food to Community Food Support that served primarily UVic Students, The UVSS Food Hamper Program, and the SSD Food Box.

No in-person workshops have occurred since March, however, staff began making tutorial videos on platforms such as TikTok and Youtube on gardening topics from pollinating eggplants to

seed-saving kale. These videos were very popular as it was a resource that can be accessed from anywhere in the world.

Some challenges we faced and continue to face primarily exist in the form of following guidelines. Folks are used to coming to the garden to relax and enjoy the space while growing their own food, but now must follow safety protocols. Staff receive backlash when asking folks to wash hands, and are constantly reminding folks to do so. Staff are also finding that when asking plot renters to wash their hands, many say they didn't know this was a community guideline. This is difficult because email is our primary form of communication, but we also post these guidelines and other updates on our communication board at the site, assuming that everyone reads them when entering. Thus, if both email and notices posted at the garden are not enough to capture the attention of plot renters, staff are at a loss in terms of how best to communicate with members of the community.

With Membership Renewal time occurring now, we have updated our Membership Agreement to include an agreement to follow our COVID-19 Community Guidelines and Safety Protocols. Failure to comply after three (3) reminders warrants a potential subject for eviction.

FOOD PRODUCTION

Increasing student's opportunities and access to local food, as well as increasing their awareness of the process of food production, is one of our priorities. From October 28, 2019 to October 1, 2020, a total of 796 pounds of food was grown and donated. This is up a lot from last year, but the recording of last year's harvests only accounted for January to October. The amount of food grown in that time period was 446 pounds, which includes harvests for volunteers. This makes our total pounds in harvest this year an impressive 350 pounds higher than last year. On top of the 796 pounds of food donated over the last 12 months, 18 pounds of food was given to volunteers. This number is much less than last year's due to the fact we had to cancel work parties between the months of March and August, where a lot of our food production occurs.

Because of COVID, the UVSS Food Bank was closed for a number of months between March and July. With the Food Bank being our primary donation spot, we had to find other avenues through which to distribute food to students. We began donating to Community Food Support Initiative weekly, an organization in Victoria that began at the start of COVID to help alleviate food insecurity for students in the community. In July, the UVSS started a Food Bank Hamper Program as the Food Bank itself was still closed, which we donated to biweekly as well. The Society for Students with Disability (SSD) also had a food box going out biweekly that ended in September. Once September began and with parts of the campus opening back up, we focused our donations to the UVSS Food Bank Hamper.

Another avenue we found to help give students food was to give away free seedlings of kale, chard, tomatoes, and peppers. We grew them from seed ourselves and gave away as many as we could. Many students liked this and were grateful for the starts. It is recommended that if we are able to start extra seedlings, that we offer them to students again next year.

Squash (yellow and green zucchini and pattypan), hedgerow volunteer kale, and lettuce had the greatest yield this year. With the donations of tomato starters from Digable Roots Farm and ALM

Farms, our production of tomatoes was bountiful in the greenhouse throughout the summer season, and the plants in the greenhouse are currently still producing. We received donated plant starts from Mason Street Farm that included squash and broccoli and cabbage, peppers, strawberries and pumpkins from North Star that did exceptionally well. We also received donated plant starts from Beacon Hill Growing Together Initiative of cabbage, broccoli, lettuce, and tomatoes. The cabbage and broccoli from the BHGT Initiative did not produce any fruit, however did supply us with greens. In the Giving Garden beds and greenhouse we had a harvest of zucchini, potatoes, garlic, onions, carrots, kale, chard, lettuce, arugula, snap peas, bush beans, pole beans, cucamelons, sweet peppers, cucumbers, scallions, butternut squash, delicata squash, pattypan squash, cabbage, pumpkins, and beets that all did well. We tried out some fun foods this summer and grew broccoli and eggplants. Our bagged salad mix was very popular this summer in Food Box programs. In September we received an incredible donation from Rainbow Kitchen of winter starts that included kale, chard, winter broccoli, green onions, and peas.

The berry bushes and other fruits around the site were plentiful during the summer. The raspberries, elderberries, goji berries, strawberries, and gumi berries produced a large number of fruits, while the blueberries did not have much of a yield. The apple tree produced many apples this year, however, someone came in and harvested every single one before they were even ready to be eaten. During a chat with a visitor in the garden, we learned that the apple tree is a King Heirloom variety and is ripe at the end of October, and that the tree is in good health. One of our mulberry trees died this year, and produced no fruit.

MEMBERSHIP

In 2019/2020 we had 19 new plot rentals out of our 92 allotment plots, mostly from students. This was down one from the 2018/2019 year. The wait list time is up from 6 months to 13 months for students, and is longer for staff being at 14 months. This is a large jump, and a likely cause of this is that with COVID, growing one's own food became increasingly popular and important. So, more effort was made to keep one's plot this year. As well, we received a lot of online waitlist sign-ups during the months of March and April, likely due to this reason as well.

Due to COVID, we were aware that some plots might be vacant as some renters would choose to isolate for the time being. The Coordinator made a point to reach out to plots that appeared to have not been touched in a while to see if those folks were still planning on gardening in the summer. In addition, throughout the summer, staff made a point of contacting plot renters whose plots looked untouched to keep up on status' in case one changed their mind and needed to isolate. This summer 4 plots were used as sublets, with at least 2 now being given to the subletters officially in Renewal time. The sublet arrangement was successful and provided full and active plots all summer long, which was a first, a plot renter commented. It is recommended that the sublet program be kept and maintained throughout next summer.

Student groups that gardened with us this year included Uni 101, Native Students Union (NSU), Metis Neighbourly, and Centre 4 & 5 Daycare. We encourage more student groups to sign up to rent a plot!

FISCAL YEAR FINANCES May 2019 -May 2020

Income	\$121,526.17
Balance from previous year	\$20,537.66
Staff Salary Expenses (Coordinator, Outreach Officer, Site Officer)	\$58,822.49
Admin Expenses (Rent, food discount, office supplies, misc)	\$16,010.19
Events and Outreach Expenses (workshops, events, workparty food etc)	\$4028.30
Site Expenses (infrastructure, tools, plants, seeds, compost, straw bales, greenhouse, misc)	\$11,191.06
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$87,626.56
END OF 2019/2020 FISCAL YEAR BALANCE	\$70,774

Current CCG Balance as of October 2020: \$75,000**

**This number does not include student fees to be received for fall and spring semesters

Major expenses:

See Budget Expenses spreadsheet Finances 2020/2021 in google drive.

Sources of income:

Due to our referendum in February 2018, the garden funding doubled. The garden previously received \$1.50 per full-time student, and \$0.75 per part-time student from UVSS Student fees, and now receives **\$3.00 per full-time students**, and **\$1.50 per part-time students**, which we began receiving in the summer. This gives the Campus Community Garden its main source of revenue at approximately \$110,00 per year, up from previously \$60,000 per year.

Plot renters will continue to pay a \$30.00 membership fee to rent a garden plot or \$15 for half a plot, and pay for subsidized site materials for their individual plots (e.g. compost and straw bales @ \$5-10/wheelbarrow).

Plot renters helped with cost recovery from subsidized materials delivered to the site such as sea soil, compost and straw bales. This is categorized under miscellaneous income for 2019/20.

OTHER REFLECTIONS

The creation of the year round site officer position continues to be beneficial. However, without the ability to hire summer site officers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of extra work fell on the shoulders of the year round staff - not all of which was able to be completed. Year round staff were given the opportunity to work 30 hour weeks over the summer due to the lack of volunteers and summer site officers and found that having the ability to work this many hours kept them better connected to the happenings at the garden, and better able to manage all aspects of the garden site. It is under this pretense that this year's year-round staff members make the recommendation that all year-round staff should have the opportunity for increased summer hours, and summer specific site officers should work more than the typical 10 hours/wk. Theft at the garden this year did not appear to be a continuous presence, although one instance of theft of materials from the staff shed was reported. CCG's drill and a few other tools were stolen and have since been replaced, amounting to a total of \$300-400. The gate latch on the McKenzie fence line was damaged this year, from what appears to be someone pushing the gate in order to widen the latch and get inside even with the lock on. We replaced it once, but later in the summer discovered it was being widened again. This is difficult to navigate because we do not normally lock the gates throughout the year, however had to this year to limit guests in the garden in the evenings and nights in order to have more awareness about what is being touched and needing to be sanitized. This year, there was one deer entrance into the garden. No infrastructure was damaged but several plots were severely grazed. The community must remain diligent about closing the gate in order to prevent a repeat of this event. In both of the hedgerows deer have gotten in, likely due to jumping on top and ripping the netting and grazed some of the plants and shrubs. The composting toilet project continues to move forward (albeit slowly), we have started to work with an architect and plans for the placement of the structure and ramp are developing nicely. We remain positive that this project will be seen to fruition and in a manner that the CCG community views as acceptable. It is recommended that the Board of Directors pursues the purchase of new tools for the communal shed and new greenhouse infrastructure to facilitate growing food over the winter.

2019-2020 STAFF

Garden Coordinator: Nicole Cymerys was hired as a Temporary Garden Coordinator until March 2021.

Work study Project Assistant: Christine Constable, Mady BK, Ziggy Sveinson, Keely Kergen

Outreach Officer: Sydney Welsh

Site Officer: Riley Yakabuski

2019-2020 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Undergraduate Members: Jessica Roberge, Bronte Elphick-Miner, Jake McCurdy, Alisha Franklin, Alistair Knox, Eve Kenny, Kayla Kremer, Sophie Henderson, Keely Kergen (until end of Dec 2019)

Associate Members: Larry Kimmett

October, 2020 CURRENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Undergraduate Members Summer 2020: Jake McCurdy, Bronte Elphick-Miner, Eve Kenny, Alistair Knox, Sophie Henderson, Kayla Kremer

Associate Members: Larry Kimmett