



2019 Report on Activities

Construction and Development

In the past few years we have been focusing much of our effort toward hardscaping improvements to our existing gardens. This activity is funded by grants, donated materials and labor.

In 2019 we added raised brick borders to the Oval garden, the Shade garden, and the beds below the two large BPF signs. We added a paver brick viewing path around the Oval garden and we installed paver brick around the Information Kiosk. A brick edger was installed along the front of the border garden.

Our building construction this year involved installing sky lights in the shop and most of the work to upgrade our information board to a mini information kiosk by the Shakespeare garden.

In the Rose Garden we added a wrought iron arbour.

Some of our proposed projects were delayed to 2020. This included upgrading the main entrance and south entrance areas and delaying the construction of new garden tools sheds. We have accepted one of the Parks panabodes located in the parking area for additional storage. We will determine if this will alleviate some of our storage needs.

Garden Maintenance and Enhancement

We had a very successful year in recruiting new volunteers. There are 10 new volunteers who were coming out on a regular basis. Our total volunteer hours remain around 6000 hours.

A lot of effort was focused on cleaning up our picnic area to make it more appealing to users.

For a few of our gardens where brick work was added we did a major addition of garden soil which will pay dividends to future plant growth.

We added quality garden soil to the Shade, Owl and Entrance sign beds. This involved lifting all existing plants, improving and adding the soil and replacing the plants.

We added a lot of new plant material in revamping the bottom third of the wall, plus most other perennial plant beds.

We have done some work within the existing tree beds. We were fortunate to receive 50 trees from Parks Urban Forestry and they have all been planted. This is a big step in increasing the tree diversity within the tree beds. We look forward to continuing this project jointly with Urban Forestry.

Parks initiated a Naturalization Program city wide. As part of this program we jointly developed and planted 200 native trees and shrubs within some of the forested area. Within the existing tree beds we also added two new corner shrub beds.

Our process for maintaining the wood chip pathways has been very effective this year. We rely on a couple volunteers and work teams of Latter-Day Saints to add a fresh layer of chip to the entire length of the path each year. We are also using a sweeper to clean up chip that finds its way onto the grassed areas.

We now have a Garden Planning process established to manage garden maintenance and improvements on a consistent basis.

Our Starter bed areas are now assigned to individuals and virtually all mature plant material has been moved out to various garden and shrub areas.

Our modest Christmas Decoration display is slowly growing. Our park users look forward to the annual winter display.

Our Kiosk information display has been regularly maintained and contains valuable information for park users.

Calgary Parks Support / Partnering

The big event this year was the formal signing of the Optional Amenities Agreement. This was an interesting process and a lot was learned by all involved.

We are very pleased with the naturalization project we are working on. This year major planting in two tree beds was completed. Next year we will proceed with the prairie naturalization project.

Parks turned over the second panabode on the parking lot to us this year. This allowed us to cancel a planned expansion of our outdoor fenced storage area.

We now have an arrangement with Urban Forestry where they provide some wood chipping services to eliminate our accumulation of branches. This helps us in our process for modest maintenance of the existing tree canopy.

Urban Forestry provided us with 50 trees this year to assist us in our program to diversify the species of trees existing in the forest.

We appreciate the continuing provision of water for our operation and a port-a-pottie for the park.

Parks has turned over to us the two Birthplace Forest sign structures which we will replace with our new garden signs.

We are extremely pleased with the growing support we are receiving from Calgary Parks. Together we are developing a significant park attraction for Calgary.

Partnering / building relationships with other groups

As a volunteer group we have been developing relationships with other non-profit groups to assist us in our growth. We receive significant help from:

Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS)

Silver Springs Community Association (SSCA)

Latter Day Saints (LDS)

Calgary Rose Society

Calgary Horticultural Society

Master Gardeners Association.

We also have a number of business and individual sponsors we rely on for financial and in-kind assistance. Financially Alberta Lotteries has been the major contributor to our operations for several years.

Organizational Development

This year we worked on two priority areas that were identified in our strategic plan in 2018. First was garden planning where we now have a good process so individual garden leads have the opportunity to share their plans with all other garden leads. The main accomplishment is that all directors and garden leads are getting direct information as to individual garden plans. The objective is to assure we have a coordinated overall plan.

The second item is managing our volunteer recruitment and utilization. We have revisited this process a couple times during 2019 and it has resulted in our best year ever for recruiting and retaining volunteers

A third item, communication is an area we have identified and much more work needs to be done. We now have a director specifically assigned to communication.

Education and Communication

In connection with the our new Agreement with Calgary Parks and the need for a more unified approach to communication and we had decided last year to improve all our on-site signage. This involved three types of signs. The first was the large signs at the entrance to the parking lot and along Sarcee trail and smaller one at our North and South entrances. City Parks had confirmed that there was no longer a need to have the BP Forest on these signs. The directors approved an image and once we receive

the final proofs they will be sent to Parks for approval. Our second type of sign is a map of the park. We will be using the map developed with the Agreement for our new base map. These will replace the old map signs on-site. Finally to assist people in finding gardens we will be adding some “Gardens” directional signs at trail junctions.

Our information kiosk was designed for us to present information but also to provide one panel for each of the SS Community and Calgary Parks to add relevant information.

The society has developed a database to share information. Our internal database currently has 578 plant listings. These plant description include gardens where found, type, height, spread, light/water/soil requirements, zone, bloom and foliage color and other notes. Of these 145 have been uploaded to our website under our searchable Garden Directory. Work continues upload all this information to our website.

Our website has extensive information about the gardens and links to all our key partners including the SSCA, Calgary Parks and other garden and plant related associations such as Calgary Horticultural Society, Calgary Rose Society, Master Gardeners Association. We also sit on the community board and provide a monthly update for the Community newsletter. The website is also a key communication vehicle for volunteers, sponsors and the general public with targeted information for each.

We are continuing to host a Speaker’s Series on gardening in partnership with the SS Edible Garden Group.

Garden tours are integral to our education package. These include school groups, Master Gardeners, Calgary Horticultural society and a variety of garden clubs and special interest groups.

Admin and other

We are very strong financially with a cash reserve in excess of two years operating costs. We have been relying on Alberta Lotteries for several years now to fund our capital improvements. Late this year we were informed our current grant application was not successful. We are exploring other options and expect to generate adequate new cash for capital activities before our operations start up in the spring.

Our Plant Data Base project has not been completed as we have found we need some specialized systems help to complete the process. A volunteer has been recruited to do this work and we now expect to have it operational in the spring.

Park Utilization

Consensus of our volunteers is that our visitor count was up again significantly. Positive feedback on social media from visitors seems to be the driving factor.