

## LOCAL NEWS

### A Dream Come True: Ottawa's First Biodome Garden



The official ribbon cutting ceremony with (l. to r.) Martin Buffam (Designer/Builder of the geodesic dome and base wall), Marcel Belanger (Garden President), Jordan Bouchard (Just Food), Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, Michael Oster (Biodome Project Leader), Guy Souliere (Biodome Co-Leader) and Aviva Gluss (TD Friends of the Environment Foundation). PHOTOS BY ED KUCERAK

By Ed Kucerak

What started years ago as a dream for Old Ottawa South resident Guy Souliere became a reality when the Brewer Park Community Garden (BPCG) held a grand opening for its innovative Biodome Garden project on August 17, 2014.

Mayor Jim Watson attended the official ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration along with many members and volunteers of the garden, the community and funding representatives.

The afternoon celebration also included guided tours of the biodome and nearby community garden plots plus a barbecue provided by The Journey, a local church group.

Not long after BPCG volunteers started to build the first raised beds in June 2012 (yes, just two years ago), and inspired by Patricia Watters' *The Biodome Garden Book*, Souliere asked garden member Michael Oster, "Why can't we grow vegetables all year long in Ottawa?"

Always concerned about healthy food and food security for the local community, Oster replied, "There's only one way to find out." And the idea for a garden for all seasons was launched. With the support of BPCG members, in October 2012 the two men and their "Dream Team" set out on a challenging journey with many twists and turns dealing with the planning, design, fund raising, hard physical labour and eventual construction and completion of



The Biodome Garden is the first of its kind in Ottawa. In addition to interior raised beds, the biodome structure has exterior raised beds for conventional crops

the dome structure.

Located across from Brewer Arena, the Biodome Garden is an exciting accomplishment. A beautiful work of architecture and design, it creates an attention-grabbing presence in Brewer Park even when seen from a distance.

The pilot project is the first and largest of its kind in Ottawa and in Eastern Canada, with financial support from the City of Ottawa's Better Neighbourhoods Program, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Just Food and the Community Garden Network, and with special thanks to Capital Ward Councillor David Chernushenko for his ongoing support of the project, and to the informal collaboration with both Carleton University and Algonquin College.

The geodesic dome-shaped greenhouse, 13 feet high and 26 feet in diameter, will provide an extended growing season in Ottawa's climate, and for many years to come it will serve as a demonstration, education and research station, for gardeners, community members, local schools and other partners.

For BPCG members and the public in general, it will offer unique hands-on opportunities to learn not

only about the basics of growing organic vegetables locally, but also about how the biodome structure works and the benefits of companion planting. Souliere says that it also demonstrates innovative growing techniques such as vermiculture and aquaponics.

The Biodome Garden consists of interior and exterior raised beds for conventional crops and an eventual aquaponics system which will safely use fish waste-water to nourish plants and increase yields. Made of polycarbonate panels securely mounted on a wooden structure, it is powered and heated by solar and radiant energy.

August 17 was a special day of celebration and a very proud moment for Project Leader Michael Oster and Co-Leader Guy Souliere, and a day to thank the many volunteers, garden members, funders and the local community who helped in making the dream come true.

And perhaps it is the beginning of many more sustainable ways of growing healthy good food throughout Ottawa and the surrounding area. To learn more or to get involved as a member or project partner, visit [www.brewerparkcommunitygarden.com](http://www.brewerparkcommunitygarden.com) or email [brewergarden@gmail.com](mailto:brewergarden@gmail.com).



**ANDREW CARTER**  
Sales Representative  
[andrew@homesinottawa.com](mailto:andrew@homesinottawa.com)

613.231.4663(o)  
613.797.4732(c)

