

Brewer Park garden brings community out in full force; New activities, projects added every day

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Community -Only in its second year, the community garden in Brewer Park is hosting more activities and more community get-togethers than ever before.

The community garden is located in Old Ottawa South's Brewer Park and has been continuously hosting events to encourage all residents in the community to come out to meet new people, learn new ways to garden or participate in a few new activities.

"We are trying to strike a balance among different dimensions of a community project, like social outreach, donations, learning opportunities, yoga, nutrition, love of nature," said Alison Duncan, one of the communication representatives for the garden.

"Getting involved with the garden would mean more than just gardening. We try to keep a bigger picture in mind in terms of really bringing something great to people. We try to be as sustainable and supportive a community in and of ourselves."

One of the most popular activities so far for the community garden, Duncan said, was a gardening tutorial.

"I saw lots of people that I didn't recognize who all were engaged with our member's presentation," she said.

"Simultaneously, we had a children's activity going on all about berries. The children were drawing berries, then picking and mixing with frozen banana and eating it up."

The garden organizers say some of the activities are even drawing in members from outside the community.

Aside from the daily activities to bring out new and old members alike, there are also a few projects that are just getting off the ground that will make Brewer Park's community garden stand out from the rest.

This summer members of a subcommittee will construct a biodome - a kind of greenhouse - for a portion of the garden, which will help extend the growing season.

The group has also committed to creating educational programs related to the biodome, diet and health. The project is one of the four projects receiving funding from the Neighbourhood Connections office at the city.

"We are almost ready to secure a dome supplier who we will work with to start implementing the plans," Duncan said. "We will start with exterior raised beds and we are hoping to get architecture and city approvals wrapped up to start before August."

A few members from the garden even took a field trip to Montreal to see how other community gardens are run in the larger city, including a few gardens at the McGill University

campus and the Concordia greenhouse, which has aquaponics, a food production systems which combines aquaculture such as snails and fish with hydroponics: plants grown in water.

"As we plan to set up aquaponics in our biodome, it was very important for us to first see it and receive a lot of knowledge in person," Duncan said.

Duncan believes most people in the community are driven by the will to do something good and to make a positive mark on the neighbourhood.

As an example, she said Chris Simmonds - a gardener and team member working on the new biodome project - is an architect and a vegetarian who puts has put a lot of effort into the dome plans.

As well, Summonds' wife Inga is a permaculture specialist who has jumped into many of the garden projects.

"I am hoping for a permaculture workshop in the garden very soon," Duncan said.



Members of the Brewer Park Community Garden took a trip to Montreal this summer to see other community gardens at work. They met with Santropol Roulant, an organization grows all the food on their rooftop garden site. They also visited gardens at the McGill campus and the Concordia greenhouse.

All members of the Brewer Park garden are volunteers and the organization welcomes more people to come out and share gardening tips with others.

The garden's organization will also be holding a launch party for the Brewer Park Community Garden on Aug. 24, more information about the party or the garden is available at brewerparkcommunitygarden.weebly.com.