



PETER MCKEE COMMUNITY GARDEN ANNUAL REPORT

A summary of accomplishments, challenges,
and statistics for the 2019/2020 growing season

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Food Centre



Background

The Peter McKee Community Garden is a green sanctuary hidden behind the Peter McKee Community Food Centre near downtown Moncton. The Garden not only provides space for urban residents to grow food to support their families; it also provides hundreds of pounds of fresh, local food to the food bank each year, to be distributed to food insecure families and individuals in the city of Moncton.

The space also provides education and hands-on experience, as volunteers, students and other members of the public can attend workshops and lectures in the garden, to learn about agriculture at no cost.

Previous Years

The Peter McKee Community is a quarter acre sized lot situated on what was once the tennis court for the CFB Moncton recreational centre. The garden was originally started in 2016 by the Garden Cities project of Moncton, and consisted of 28 raised garden beds and a communal garden shed. In 2018, the Peter McKee Community Food Centre took ownership of the garden and in 2019 expanded to 77 boxes, as well as diversifying to include a large cold frame, a communal seating area, a pergola, and a goldfish pond.

The development of a full-time Garden Coordinator/Urban Farmer position at the food centre, allowed for constant support for gardeners, as well as an element of intensive food production for the food bank. Garden participation has more than tripled in the last two years, with more gardeners looking to join the program each season.

The opening of the garden's Affordable Food Market in 2018 has allowed for regular sale of garden produce and preserves as well providing a sense of pride and contribution to clients of the Food Centre. The funds raised from the sale of market goods and the rental of garden plots (\$20 for members of the public, with Food Centre client's boxes being subsidised by the Centre) to back into the garden fund, allowing for the purchase of supplies as needed.

In 2019, the Garden launched its first annual Sponsor-A-Garden-Box fundraiser. By sponsoring a garden box for \$200.00 individuals or corporate sponsors receive a full-color sign and dedication of their choice on one of the garden plots, regular updates on the progress of their plot, social media mentions, and a tax receipt for their donation.

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The difference is night and day. The garden has gone from black and white

to full color 3D!

-Carol Fownes, Gardener

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Gardener Participation

The increase in time and resources allocated to the garden over the last three years have not only expanded the garden itself, but increased gardener participation as well. Feedback collected from the gardeners indicates that they feel that they have more support, that the garden is a more social and welcoming environment than it was before.

Data collected in the 2019 garden season shows that the average gardener was able to yield approximately 35 pounds of produce from their plots over the course of the growing season. This can be attributed to better soil care, better gardener support, and increased gardener participation (being encouraged to tend their plot, visiting more often, asking questions, etc.)

Data collected over from 2018- 2020 indicated an increasingly even spread in terms of gardener experience (experienced vs novice gardeners) as well as increased participation by food center clients and newcomers to Canada. (Fig 1)

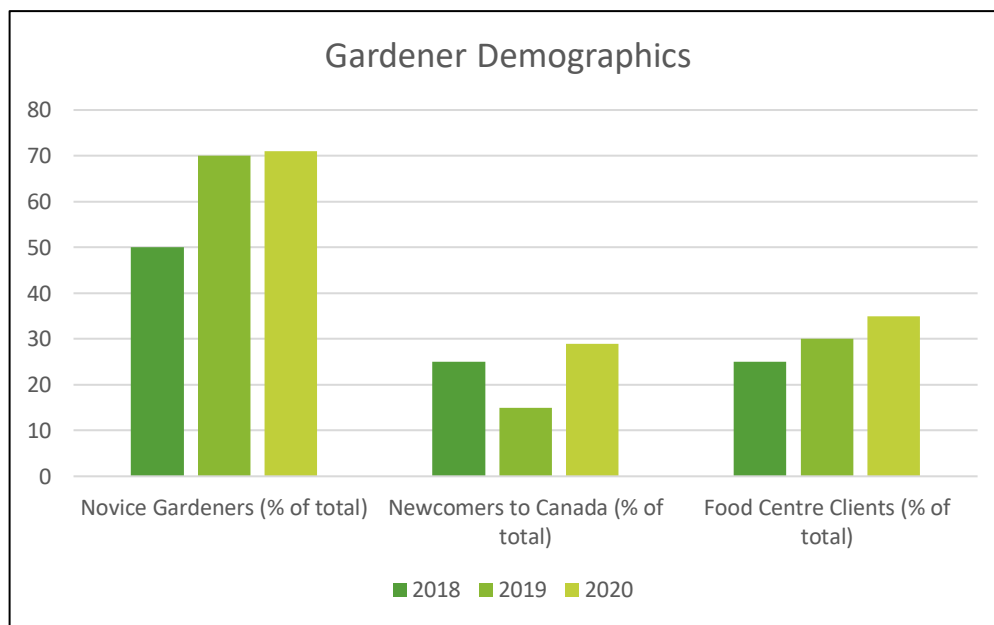


Figure 1: Gardener demographics 2018-2020

In addition to greater diversity in the garden in terms of gardener experience, race, and socioeconomic background, the overall number of gardeners has steadily increased over the years. While some gardeners return season after season, each year, the garden is happy to welcome new participants and make them feel at home.

Over the three-year expansion, the number of gardeners that the garden can accommodate has also increased, allowing the number of participants to triple over three years. (Fig 2)

Feedback from the gardeners indicates that they have noticed the improvement in recent years and are happy with the systems that have been put in place to help ensure their continued success.

Gardener Recruitment

As we can see in Fig 1. The percentage of novice gardeners (defined here as having little or no previous experience growing vegetables) has increased by 20% since the Peter McKee Community Food Centre took ownership of the Garden. This can likely be attributed to better support services for the gardeners, word of mouth about garden availability, and increase in marketing efforts for the garden.

Participation in the garden by food center clients has increased by 15% over three years as a result of increasing outreach in the food center directly. This can also explain the 5% increase in participation by Newcomers to Canada over the same time frame.

Fig 2. Demonstrates that while new gardeners join the program each year, a significant portion of those that do, choose to return in subsequent years to continue their gardens.

With the expansions that took place in the fall of 2020, the garden can now accommodate up to 48 gardeners, while maintaining enough space to grow produce for the Food Bank. Of these 48 plots, two are double sized to accommodate families of five or more, two are wheelchair accessible, and twelve are half-sized plots for children and youth who want their own garden space. Two double height boxes are also in place, for those with difficulty bending down to reach a standard plot.

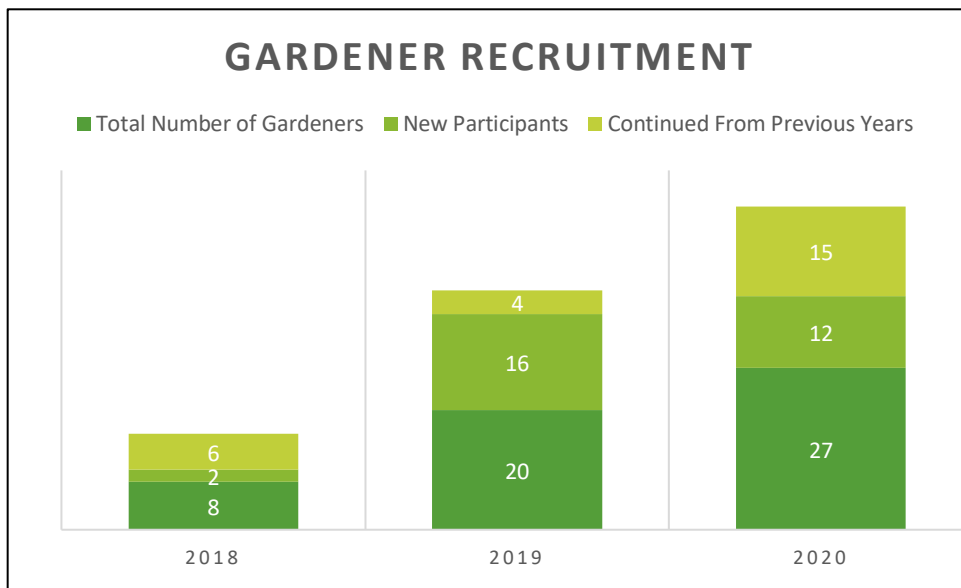


Figure 2: Gardener Recruitment 2018-2020

Food Production

The Peter McKee Community Garden is more than just a community garden. Half of the plots on the property function as an urban farm, specializing in growing food for the Food Centre. By focusing efforts onto a few staple crops, and implementing intensive planting and crop rotation practices, food production has more than tripled in the period from 2018-2020.

Fig 3. Shows the upward trend in crop yields over the last three seasons. With newly constructed boxes, continued soil maintenance, seasonal planting, and season extension, these yields are expected to increase in coming seasons. The data show for the 2020 season is incomplete, as several crops have yet to be harvested, but it is estimated that approximately 400-600lbs of food could still be produced by the end of the season.

The construction of the greenhouse has also been instrumental in the garden's success, as it has allowed for the production of warm weather, long-season crops (such as bell peppers and sweet potatoes) that would normally fail to thrive in this climate.

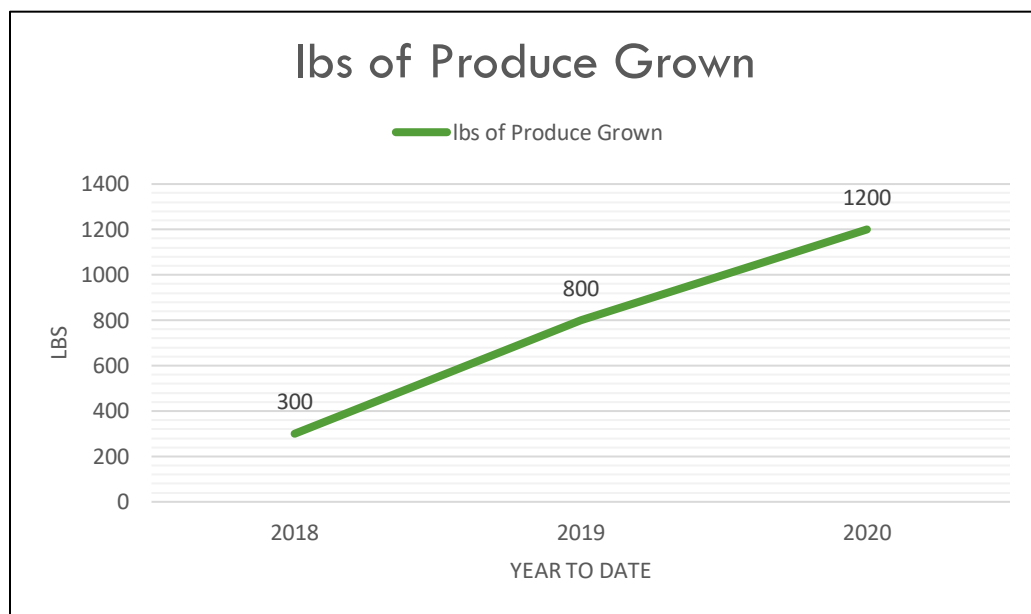


Figure 3: Food Production 2018-2020

The role of community support in the Urban Farm's success cannot be overlooked. Continued support by donation of seedlings and store credit by Macarthur's Nurseries, compost supplied at no cost by TransAqua and donations of cherished heirloom seed varieties by local gardeners and community members have allowed the garden access to resources that otherwise would not have been attainable.

Sustainability

An integral aspect of the Peter McKee Community Garden is sustainability. When the project first launched in 2018, the objective was for the garden to be fully self-sustaining (in terms of seed, soil, and compost processing and production) by 2022.

As of 2020, we have reached this goal and are capable of full independence for annual garden inputs. The Affordable Market and the annual Sponsor-A-Garden-Box fundraiser provide funds for the garden, to cover operational costs, such as staffing, workshops, and equipment upgrades. To date, over \$6,600.00 has been raised through the Sponsor-A-Garden-Box fundraiser, and the Affordable Market averages \$200.00 a month in revenue.



By saving seed, producing compost from garden waste, and by using rainwater catchment, the garden offsets extra costs while teaching skills that help gardeners become self-sufficient. Learning traditional skills such as seed saving benefits the individual gardeners, by giving them knowledge and confidence in their abilities, as well as saving them money on garden inputs.

Passing down these traditional skills is also key to preserving biodiversity in gardens. By saving seeds from heirloom vegetables that have been kept in families for hundreds of years, we connect with our history while protecting our future.

Challenges

Over the life of the garden, there have been challenges despite the overall success.

- ▶ Delays or cancellations of projects due to limitations on funding.
- ▶ Environmental problems (such a weather and insect pests)
- ▶ Low initial engagement in workshops and video seminars
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic

Solutions

- ▶ Corporate partnerships through the Sponsor-A-Garden-Box fundraiser and garden Naming rights.
- ▶ Using crop rotation, companion planting, seasonal planting, and water catchment to maximize garden efficiency.
- ▶ Outreach to community through social media. Partnership with UNB marketing students to build the garden's online presence.
- ▶ Physically distanced gardening through designated time slots, increased sanitation, and postponing in-person workshops in favor of Facebook Live events.

The Peter McKee Community Garden continues to thrive despite ongoing challenges, because it's mission is essential to the well being of the community. From the biweekly workshops to the weekly Affordable Market, the Garden is helping to increase access to fresh, whole foods in the Moncton community. We are working to not only provide produce to the food bank, but to provide the education that community members need to grow food for themselves. By teaching people how to grow vegetables, we are teaching them how to (literally) take their food security into their own hands.

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We are teaching people how to take their food security (literally) into their own hands

-Alicia Clarkson, Garden Coordinator

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Moving Forward

The Peter McKee Community Garden has experienced tremendous growth over the last three years, and has no intention of stopping now. A major long-term goal is to construct an outbuilding adjacent to the garden that would serve as a year-round space for indoor garden projects, workshops, teaching, and the Affordable Market.

We have also begun to break ground on our very own perennial food forrest. By tilling and amending the land around the perimeter of the garden, we are creating a space to plant a self maintained garden of perennial fruite trees, bushes, and ground cover. These plants will not only provide fresh fruit for the Food Centre, but will also provide habitat for pollinators, songbirds, and beneficial insects. Walking trails throughout the garden will allow for human visitors to enjoy the space as well, creating a food-producing, woodland sanctuary in the middle of the city.

In the spring on 2021, we plan to continue with our second season of raising and releasing monarch butterflies. In the 2020 season, 12 monarchs were raised from eggs to adult butterflies and released in the garden. This not only provided a learning and teaching experience for gardeners and visitors alike, but it helped to ensure success for these individuals of a highly endangered pollinator species.

With continued support from our private donors and corporate sponsorships, we know that the 2021 garden season will bring more success, and superior growth.



Corporate Sponsors



Osprey Practice Affiliates



Community Support

Dick Bisset
Karen Rogers
Dale Hicks
Pascale LeBrasseur
Liane and Neil Clarkson
Bryan Butler