



Montreal Street Berry Patch

A Commons Garden Proposal



James Bay Neighbourhood Association

December, 2022

Revised, February 2023 & April 2023

Part 1: Project information



Location and history

This proposed new commons garden, of approximately 117 sq.m, is located at the intersection of Montreal and Kingston Streets, on a plat of land created by the City a few decades ago as a traffic-calming feature. The site blocks car access between Montreal Street and the perimeter road along the north edge of James Bay. It is an irregularly shaped piece of land currently containing one tree in turf, as well as a paved pass-through for bicycles and scooters. The garden also includes a small portion of the paved street area and boulevard to the south, where placemaking features, such as seating and planters, will be installed.

In 2017, the James Bay Neighbourhood Association submitted an expression of interest in developing this site, as well as a similar traffic calming feature at the nearby intersection of Pendray and Quebec Streets, as commons gardens to be called the 'James Bay Berry Patch'. Due to the pandemic and other opportunities that arose during it, such as taking over operation of the herb garden at Fisherman's Wharf Park and developing a new allotment garden on the grounds of Huntingdon Manor, the Berry Patch project was put on hold.

In 2016, the City of Victoria adopted the Cycling Network Plan which included a 33km priority network of All Ages and Abilities (AAA) cycling infrastructure to improve road safety and provide affordable transportation options for residents. The Montreal Street Improvement project, part of this plan, includes a 900m corridor extending from Kingston Street to Dallas Road, via Montreal, Niagara, and Dock Streets, improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings, and new landscaping.

In February 2021, the City of Victoria's Active Transportation team approached the Parks department to discuss the possible integration of the proposed James Bay Berry patch into the design and build phase of the Active Transportation updates in James Bay. City staff convened a series of meetings to discuss the site layout and considerations with input from the James Bay Neighbourhood Association. The proposed, but long-delayed, community amenity was successfully integrated into the landscaping design of the Active Transportation plans for the Montreal Street improvements.

A mutually agreeable decision was made that Council would be asked to grant a community garden licence of occupation for the completed berry patch, so that ongoing stewardship of the area, once built, would be delegated to the community.

Proposal and vision for the garden

We therefore propose that the garden, when completed, be designated as a commons community garden, and that a licence of occupation be granted to the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA).

We envisioned a garden in three parts:

1. A band of colourful edible flowers and herbs (some of which are evergreen) along the Kingston Street frontage, to make an attractive year-round visual presentation for passers-by on the busiest side of the space, while also providing support for pollinators and a pickable resource for nearby residents.
2. The bulk of the space will be given over to block plantings of various food plants, primarily berries, with an accessible path winding through them for easy access.
3. A small seating area with planters will provide a place for neighbours to have a morning coffee among the greenery or for tourists to rest on their way to or from town.

Proposed garden activities include:

- Active gardening, by a small group of volunteers who will tend the garden once a week.
- Harvesting, on a drop-in basis. This is a small space, so we anticipate that the harvesting will be on the scale of someone picking a few berries as a snack while passing, or harvesting a few springs of herbs to flavour a dinner dish.
- Enjoyment of green space. The seats, along with the planting, will make a small "green haven" where people can have a seat, relax, and enjoy being in a garden.

Proposed plant material:

A detailed plant list as specified to can be found in the garden design section of this proposal.

Responsibility for operation

The James Bay Neighbourhood Association is a registered not-for-profit society in good standing. Membership is open to all James Bay residents and the JBNA is governed by an elected Board of Directors. The JBNA contracts the services of a garden advocate, who, under the direction of the JBNA board, will ensure that the garden is well-maintained.

Over the last few years, the JBNA has developed a strong group of gardening volunteers and demonstrated its ability to develop and manage community gardening projects, including operation of the Herb Garden in Fisherman's Wharf Park, two plantings of neighbourhood food trees in parks, a very public garden at the corner of Michigan and Menzies, twice-a-year neighbourhood plant swaps, a neighbourhood seed box/exchange, and a new allotment garden on private land at Huntingdon Manor Hotel. The JBNA also holds the License of Occupation for the Montreal Street Allotment Garden

We anticipate following the model used in our other commons gardens: a once-a-week work party when weather allows and, when it doesn't, a weekly one-person walk-through to pick up litter and check for damage. The group of volunteers who look after the Herb Garden in Fisherman's Wharf Park has agreed to also tend the Berry Patch, as it is small and only a few blocks away from the Herb Garden, so its care can be incorporated into the regular weekly Herb Garden work parties.



Community benefits

We foresee a number of benefits from officially designating this space as a commons garden. First, it offers an additional opportunity for residents to garden. James Bay is a high-density neighbourhood; many nearby residents live in multiplexes with no access to land and a major residential high-rise development is being proposed for directly across Kingston Street from this site. Turning this space into a community garden provides another venue where residents can enjoy the proven health benefits and pleasures of gardening.

Second, it will provide an additional source of fresh food, which is of particular value to the community at a time of economic uncertainty for many. By focusing on berries and herbs, which are expensive and often sold in quantities too large for one-person households to use without waste, we can provide a supplemental source of food items which may be regarded as too expensive and dropped from the shopping list.

Any surplus produce will be harvested by volunteers and donated to the James Bay Community Project kitchen and food bank or other neighbourhood not-for-profit organisations. The seats will provide a pleasant place for neighbours to chat and for passers-by to rest. The garden will also enhance biodiversity and provide a more beautiful and visually interesting green space for all residents and visitors to enjoy. The new plantings at this site will also help shelter Montreal Street residents from the heavy tourist traffic along the perimeter drive during cruise ship season.

Timeline

February 2021: City of Victoria's Active Transportation Team approached Parks regarding the potential integration of the proposed James Bay Berry Patch into the design phase of the Montreal Street AAA Improvement Plan

April 2022: Site meetings were conducted with Parks staff and the JBNA Garden Advocate to determine the preferred layout, preferred plant material, and determine parameters regarding tree protection, maintenance of sightlines necessary for traffic safety, and place-making features.

June 2022: the final design (see below in Part 2: Garden Design) was brought to tender and a contractor for the build phase had been defined by September 2022.

Installation and maintenance tasks

Installation: Installation will be conducted by a subcontractor of the City and the construction phase is scheduled for late spring or early summer of 2023.

What the City will be asked to provide:

- Design and installation of the garden as part of transportation improvement landscaping
- Installation of a keyed water box or tap accessible to garden volunteers
- Continued maintenance of the road surface, curbs, and bollards within the garden area; repair or replacement of any damaged placemaking elements, e.g. chairs and planters
- Continued maintenance of existing trees within the garden area
- Delivery of mulch, etc. as provided under the existing Community Garden program

Ongoing maintenance:

Tasks and timing will vary from year to year, based on weather and what has been planted.

- Late winter: planning, pruning, weeding, tending the hardscape and edges
- Early spring: seed sowing, clean up, weeding
- Spring: more sowing, planting of seedlings and young plants, weeding, mulching
- Summer: supplementary watering where needed, deadheading where appropriate, weeding, monitoring for pests
- Fall: planting, seed saving, mulching, weeding, seed sowing, cutting back and tidying where appropriate
- Winter: monitor for litter and damage weekly

Normal garden waste will be composted at the nearby Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden, also managed by the JBNA garden volunteers, in a closed metal compost bin. Invasive weeds and seed heads will be removed from the site by the garden coordinator and properly disposed of.

The City will continue to be responsible for maintenance of existing trees within the garden area. The JBNA volunteers will ensure that the City has easy access to the trees and that proper mulching and root protection procedures, as specified by the City, are followed.

The existing in-ground irrigation system will be disconnected and/or removed at the discretion of the City.

The area proposed for designation as a community garden also encompasses an area of paved City street where the City will install placemaking features, such as three self-watering planters, chairs, and bollards. The JBNA will maintain the plantings and the general cleanliness of this area. The City will be responsible for continued maintenance of road surface, curbs and bollards, as well as any major repairs to or replacements of placemaking elements.

The JBNA acknowledges that the paved area remains part of the municipal transportation system and that the placemaking elements may need to be moved or removed, and/or the area covered by the licence of occupation altered due to changing traffic patterns, e.g. a possible request from an adjoining property for driveway access to Montreal Street.

Budget

Installation expenditures required

Installation costs will be covered as part of the landscaping component of the Montreal Street Active Transportation Improvements.

Ongoing expenditures (required annually)

Plants (replacement as needed)	\$ 40
<u>Seeds (annuals for colour)</u>	<u>\$ 10</u>
Total	\$ 50/year

These operating expenses will be covered by the JBNA gardening program revenues.

Anticipated or received donations

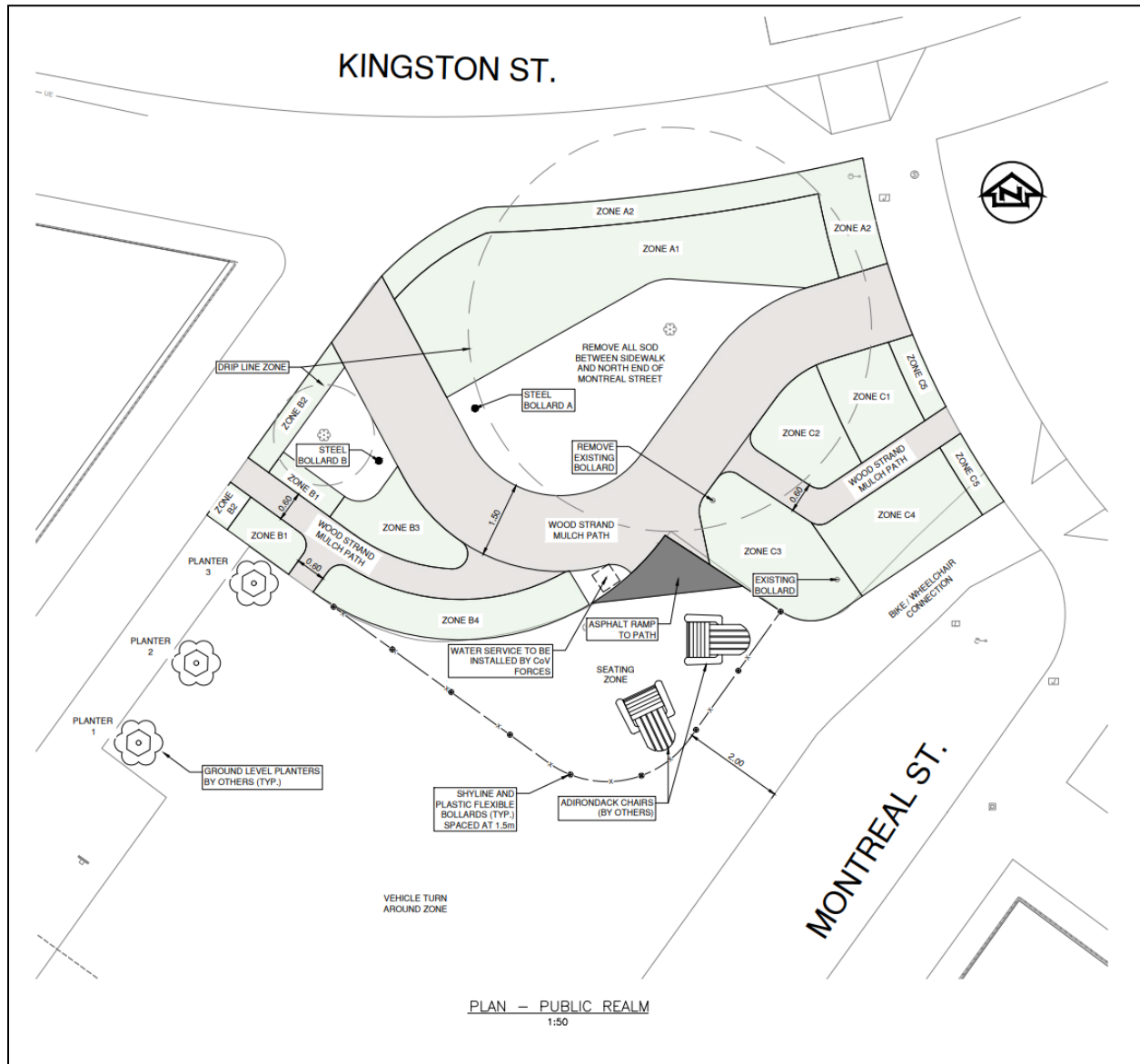
Leaf mulch, compost, and/or wood chips	City
Transfer hose & nozzle	JBNA
Plants	City food seedlings; neighbourhood donations; propagation by volunteers
Seeds	Neighbourhood donations
Labour (estimated 120 hrs/yr)	Individual volunteers

Timeline

Because this garden will be handed over fully built and planted, upon issuance of the Licence of Occupation, we will move directly into the ongoing maintenance cycle as outlined above.

Part 2: Garden Design

Site Map



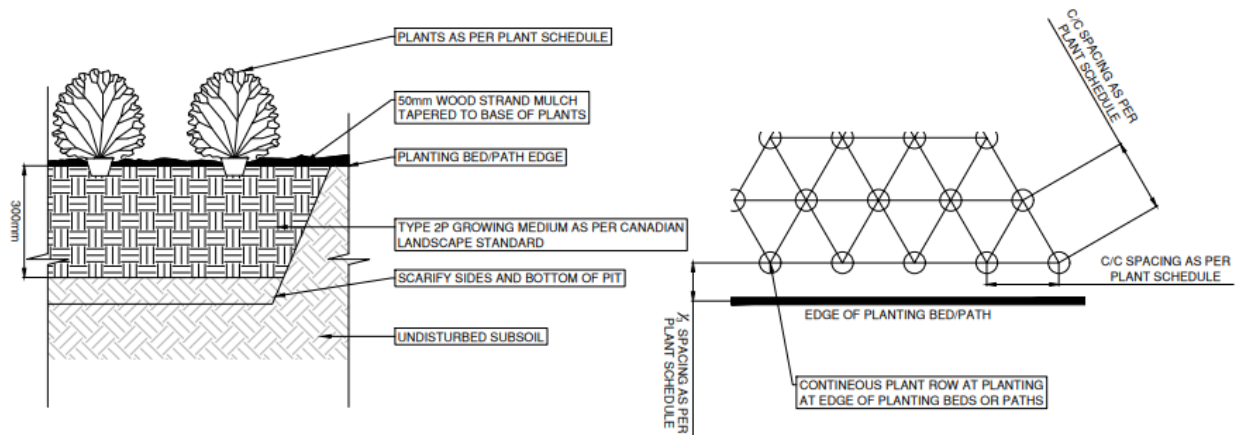
Notes on design features and materials:

NOTES:

- MULCH PATHS TO HAVE A MINIMUM DEPTH OF 300mm OF TOPSOIL COVER WITH WOVEN GEOTEXTILE FABRIC TOPPED WITH 100mm THICKNESS OF WOOD STRAND MULCH.
- ALL PLANTING BEDS AND NON-PATH AREAS TO HAVE A MINIMUM DEPTH OF 300mm OF TOPSOIL, TOPPED WITH 50mm THICKNESS OF WOOD STRAND MULCH.
- LAYOUT TO BE CONFIRMED ON SITE WITH THE CITY OF VICTORIA PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION.
- AREAS WITHIN 4.0m OF TREES TO BE HAND EXCAVATED WITH ARBORIST SUPERVISION.
- IF ROOTS ARE ENCOUNTERED WHICH ARE OVER 50mm IN DIAMETER OUTSIDE OF THAT 4.0M HAND EXCAVATION ZONE, THE WORK MUST BE SUPERVISED BY AN ARBORIST. THE ARBORIST MUST HAVE A CURRENT I.S.A. CERTIFIED ARBORIST CERTIFICATION AND A VALID TREE RISK ASSESSMENT QUALIFICATION. ARBORIST TO CONFIRM PLANT BED DEPTHS AND BERM REQUIREMENTS.
- WATER TAP TO BE INSTALLED BY THE CITY OF VICTORIA FORCES

PLANTING SCHEDULE:

ZONE	AREA (sq.m)	SPECIES	QUANTITY	SPACING	NOTES
A1	15.50	UNGIMOLINAE	5	1500mm C/C	
		LAVANDULA STOECHAS	8	600mm C/C	
		SALVIA ROSEMARINUS	8	600mm C/C	
		AGASTACHE FOENICULUM	16	300mm C/C	
		MONARDA FISTULOSA	8	600mm C/C	
		MENTHA SPICATA	8	600mm C/C	
		THYMUS CITRIODORUS	16	300mm C/C	
		VIOLA ODORATA	45	200mm C/C	
		TRIFOLIUM WORMSKIODII	168	125mm C/C	DOUBLE ROW
A2	6.75	FRAGARIA VESCA	2	300mm C/C	
B1	0.75	FRAGARIA VESCA	2	300mm C/C	
B2	1.75	TRIFOLIUM WORMSKIODII	88	125mm C/C	DOUBLE ROW
B3	2.75	RUBUS IDAEUS SHORTCAKE	33	600mm C/C	
B4	4.25	FRAGARIA X ANANASSA	86	300mm C/C	
C1	3.00	RIBES NIDIGROLIA	6	1500mm C/C	
C2	3.00	VACCINIUM OVATUM	8	1200mm C/C	
C3	5.50	FRAGARIA X ANANASSA	33	300mm C/C	
C4	4.75	RHEUM RHABARBARUM	21	600mm C/C	
C5	0.5	TRIFOLIUM WORMSKIODII	126	125mm C/C	DOUBLE ROW
BOLLARDS A & B	N/A	ACTINIDIA ARGUTA	2	N/A	ONE MALE, ONE FEMALE PLANTED WITH TRELLIS AT EACH BOLLARD
MULCH PATH	30.75	N/A	N/A	N/A	
NON-PATH AREAS	18.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	



PLANTING DETAILS
NTS

Part 3: Community Engagement Plan

Past consultations for the Montreal Street Berry Patch

An initial consultation was conducted by the JBNA back in 2017, when the idea for the two berry patches was first proposed. Letters explaining the project were dropped off at all residences on the block of Montreal Street between Kingston and Superior Streets and people were asked to submit comments, questions, and concerns. The replies were mostly favourable, although residents of the house closest to the proposed Montreal Street patch expressed some concern that providing seats might increase the amount of loud chatting under their bedroom windows on summer nights. These residents have since moved; the house is currently empty and under renovation.

Consultation for the Active Transportation Project was conducted by City staff. The design engagement process was held between February and June 2021. Consultation was completed with the public (residents, businesses, and commuters) as well as with agency partners including BC Transit, ICBC, Victoria Police, Victoria Fire, and BC Emergency Health Services. Over 1500 people participated in online surveys and virtual meetings. Promotions included direct outreach to businesses, print letters delivered to over 2000 residents, social media, print ads in Victoria News, Times Colonist, and Monday Magazine, on-street signage, digital screens at City Hall, through the City's e-newsletters and at the James Bay Market.

Further engagement plans

Since the berry patch is being built as part of the Active Transportation Project landscaping, no further engagement activities are planned at this time.