10 OUTDOOR GREENING CASE STUDIES
SPRING 2017

Supported by:

Faith & the Common Good
Greening Sacred Spaces
Ottawa Community Foundation
This compilation of case studies shows a variety of gardening projects that are ongoing in the City of Ottawa. Faith communities have initiated these garden projects for a variety of reasons whether ecological, social or environmental. All of these gardens visibly demonstrate to the community the desire to Care for Creation at a local level.

We want to thank all faith communities who shared their gardening stories and photos of their gardens with us and we’d also like to express our gratitude to the individual volunteers who kindly reviewed each case study and provided feedback for the final version. We are also very grateful for the funding support from the Ottawa Community Foundation and the City of Ottawa’s Community Environment Projects Grant Program.

It is our hope that these case studies are an inspiration to initiate new garden projects in the City of Ottawa with your congregation and communities!
CASE STUDY ONE

Kitchissippi United Church transformed a grey asphalt courtyard into a green lush entranceway that parishioners and building tenants benefit from and enjoy. Green landscapes can help soak up rainwater and lessen the burden of local storm water and sewer systems while also cooling down microclimates that add to the heat island effect of cities. Gardens also help decrease stress levels and add beauty and sensory pleasure.

BACKGROUND

Kitchissippi United Church is an urban church with a congregation of 100 families and an active Ecological Christianity Circle that meets regularly for “learning, support and action” in terms of their relationship with all of Creation in daily decisions. The parish completed a Green Audit with Faith & The Common Good in 2013, and were discussing various projects that they wanted to start working on after the Audit, one of which was their hard-edged entrance.
This was a secondary entrance but heavily used by many groups that rented space in the building along with the congregation. Adding a garden to this southerly exposed courtyard would provide a beautified entrance that could be enjoyed daily and a buffered quiet green space away from the noise of the highway.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

Only a few weeks after the discussions of the Circle, an opportunity to apply for funding to support this vision arose. Ecology Ottawa had issued a call for proposals to identify a location for the first Depave Paradise project in the city. The project was exactly what was needed to transform the church’s courtyard, as it included the support of Ecology Ottawa to help administer the project and recruit volunteers and funding to help excavate the asphalt. So Kitchissippi United Church applied and became the first Ottawa location for the Depave Paradise initiative.

Once the funding was confirmed, the church had to mobilize quickly. This included consulting the congregation and the tenants (including a Montessori school) of the building. They also sought donations and in-kind help, including a landscape architect to create an appropriate garden design for the space. The design addressed the needs of the church and other building users – providing benches that also converted into tables, locating low perennials around basement windows to allow light to enter into the Montessori space indoors and choosing low maintenance and native plants for the design.

All the labour was done by volunteers and that included both taking out the pavement and gravel, adding garden soil and planting the landscape design. There were two large events organized by the church and Ecology Ottawa – the Depaving day in June 2014 and the Planting day in September 2014 and more than 60 volunteers came out to help. The volunteers included members of the church, Ecology Ottawa volunteers, some building tenants, plus some local neighbours and even a family from the Montessori school.

**KITCHISSIPPI UNITED CHURCH**

**RESULTS**

For this project, the total area depaved was 102 square meters. There are now butterfly and xeriscape (drought resistant) gardens that include native plants on all three sides of the courtyard with spacious access to the entrance of the church (allowing for drop-offs and unloading). The courtyard provides a green space for sitting, eating lunch and even outdoor programming for the Montessori school and Sunday school children.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

Find partners with expertise: Having access to professionals and people who had experience with similar projects helped take out the guess work and ensure that the project ran efficiently and saved time in the long run. The professional landscape architect provided detailed instructions on amount of soil to order, plants to purchase and how to install and maintain the garden. Other experienced partners helped coordinate, ensured proper safety considerations were implemented (i.e. steel toe caps) and provided outreach support to reach the broader community.

Scan the congregation and supporters far and wide to see what type of donations are possible: For this project, key in-kind services were found from supporters of Ecology Ottawa in the form of the landscape architect and a family member of the congregation whose employer provided excavation and hauling services at no cost.

Consultation is key: Members of the congregation were consulted far in advance along with all tenants of the building. Their concerns in regards to snow removal, shading of basement windows and vehicle access were discussed and addressed before the project moved forward and this helped increase support for the project. Keep in mind this may be an ongoing discussion during and after implementation to tweak unexpected situations.
The Trinity Presbyterian pollinator garden in Kanata is home to native plants that provide nectar and pollen to beneficial insects and birds. Native pollinators are an essential component to the ecology of plants, ensuring that flowers are fertilized and food can grow. Supporting a variety of pollinators promotes a strong, biodiverse local ecosystem.

Trinity Presbyterian Church has strong roots in Kanata, going back almost forty years. The church recently experienced an expansion and is now located on Richardson Side Road having outgrown its original space. The original church building was known as the “White Church on the Hill” and was the first passive solar church in Canada (designed by architect Barry J. Hobin). In their new home, their connection to sustainability continues with their environmental initiatives both inside the parish and on their property outside.

The garden project was initiated when the youth group was discussing various social justice issues and how they could make a difference in the world. In the discussions, the youth also voiced their desire to integrate nature into the church environment.

The incredible positive spirit of community at the outdoor events, when all the different groups came together, including Ecology Ottawa, the church congregants, the Montessori school, the neighborhood and even the Mayor.

The realization that the space where a new tree was planted was in the exact space that one was located originally. Historical photos revealed a winding path and grass that echoes the new project and honours the original vision for the space.

While, taking pictures after the project was complete, it was wonderful for one of the project leaders to witness the number of children who enjoyed exploring and interacting with the garden space as they were waiting for their parents after school. This confirmed that the space is now a place to linger and enjoy. 

Resoures

- Andrea Prazmowski (Webinar, Protecting Water and Your Place of Worship” with RAIN, Faith & The Common Good – 2015)
- “Kitchissippi residents work to de-pave paradise” by Jennifer McIntosh, Ottawa Community News – Metroland (2014)
The garden is now well established after two years. A wood-burned sign was added and a path was installed behind the garden with the help of about half a dozen parishioners to make access easier. The creation of the path was installed with the help of machinery and gravel donated by a local business. One of the volunteers brought a small backhoe that day, while others helped spread the gravel, level it out and place pavers. Over the first two years approximately 20-30 children/youth and 15-20 adults/seniors have helped with the garden. Congregants of the church were offered a tour of the garden to learn more about the benefits after worship in September 2016.

The perennial plants that are now in the garden will need to be divided at some time. When the time comes, the parish can explore various options in terms of what to do with the divided plants. They could sell them at a garage sale or donate the plants to others who want to start gardens. This will be a great way in which the garden can symbolically continue to expand and provide more pollinator habitat around the city.

**RESULTS**

Recruit project leaders with various skills: Meghan Brown Saavedra was the Youth, Family and Discipleship minister when the project was initiated and her organizing and interpersonal skills complimented Kristen Montuno’s plant research and gardening skills.

Understand the administration procedures for the project: For a group within the church that hasn’t navigated the administration process before, it was helpful to be guided by staff about key people to talk with and how to get the right permissions, etc.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

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Faith & The Common Good

OUTDOOR GREENING CASE STUDIES

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OUTDOOR GREENING CASE STUDIES

BACKGROUND

Trinity United Church’s wildflower garden initially conceived by their Church in Society Committee, was installed in the back lawn of the faith community’s property and has evolved over time. Native wildflowers are better able to survive local conditions including temperatures and drought and require less maintenance including pesticides than their more exotic counterparts. Helping native plants flourish can lessen outbreaks of invasive species and supports other native species that provide ecosystem benefits such as soil nutrients and pollination. This type of flora also provides habitat to local wildlife in urban settings where it may be lacking.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

It was very exciting for the youth group to find two monarch caterpillars on the milkweeds in the garden during the first summer – a great sign of success and so exciting to see these small creatures after a winter of talking about them!

A side project that complemented the garden was an installation of crocus bulbs in the shape of a cross on the church’s front lawn. It was amazing and touching to see the youth working outside in the autumn planting all the bulbs as the light was fading, knowing that it would bring such delight to both the children and the parishioners in the spring.

The garden bed was prepared by doing lasagna gardening (making layers of newspaper, manure, dead leaves, grass clippings and soil on top rather than tilling). The youth group leaders went to collect donated grass clippings and leaves from some of the parishioners and enjoyed impromptu tours of their gardens.

TRINITY UNITED CHURCH WILDFLOWER GARDEN

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BACKGROUND

The Trinity United Church building was designed in 1962 and is located in an older suburban area of Ottawa that is adjacent to a greenspace and the Experimental Farm Multi-Use Pathway. This inclusive green church is active in Care for Creation through both its in-house environmental...
actions such as conversion to more energy-efficient lighting, hosting a technology recycling depot, efforts to increase water conservation and providing bulletin updates on sustainable actions and events to their congregation. Trinity United Church has also participated in the reconciliation & commemorative action of planting a Heart Garden at the front of their church with the children in their Sunday School.

The wildflower butterfly garden was developed as an initiative of the Church in Society Committee which has a mission to spread compassion and justice through various education and action opportunities. The garden idea was suggested by one of the members and once the idea was approved, the committee researched the best plant selection for the location of the site and the main purpose of the garden. The site is located at the back of the church near a cherry tree that was planted by the local Scout Troop celebrating 50 years of Scouting with Trinity United Church. The specific location identified for the garden was shady, sloped and had poor soil. So the chosen plants had to be able to survive all of these conditions and also dry spells due to the fact that the garden wasn’t close to a water outlet, which meant that watering would be sporadic at best.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

The first attempt at creating the garden with seeds was not a success, but the committee did not give up. To prepare the garden for the second attempt they used weed suppression techniques covering the garden with several newspapers and mulch. They also added enrichment to the soil that included numerous bags of compost to address the poor soil conditions.

The following spring they chose to plant established plants (rather than seeds). Some of the plants were donated by the congregation, with church members providing specific butterfly-friendly plants from their own gardens. Committee volunteers also helped by purchasing specific plants that had been identified but not received through the donations. Finally, the Sunday School children also contributed to the garden by growing some plants from seed indoors.

Approximately five volunteers from the Church on Society Committee helped install the garden and the regular maintenance is done by two people with up to three others who fill in when needed. There is also a small roster of people willing to water during dry periods.

The committee started out with a goal of having butterfly-friendly wildflowers in the garden. They gradually included more traditional garden plants and other plants that did well for the location. They shifted to a more general goal for their outdoor project to support both butterflies and bees. The volunteers have also added more soil and mulch over time to support the plants in the garden. After the garden was established, the committee has helped educate the congregation on the importance of preserving butterfly and bee habitat through notice boards and bulletin inserts.

The garden volunteers ended up cutting the size of the garden in half, as the original size was overly ambitious for the amount of time and effort that the volunteers could put into the garden. They also will be cutting back some plants that had been identified but not received through the donations. Finally, the Sunday School children also contributed to the garden by growing some plants from seed indoors.

Consider your location and method carefully: Due to the location of Trinity United’s garden, planting seeds did not work, as most were not able to compete with the many surrounding weeds that were either in the soil already or came from the adjacent greenspace.

Be prepared to adjust as you go along: The garden volunteers ended up cutting the size of the garden in half, as the original size was overly ambitious for the amount of time and effort that the volunteers could put into the garden. They also will be cutting back some plants to make room for a more diverse mix of drought tolerant plants in the upcoming year.

Watering will help some plants become well-established: The sometimes this is good but sometimes this benefits some plants over others. At Trinity United Church, they watered extensively last summer which helped the already successful plants in the garden (Bee Balm and Yarrow) to survive and thrive, but didn’t really help the other plants very much.

**RESULTS**

As of 2016, the garden is well established with hardy plants able to survive drought conditions along with ones attractive to bees and butterflies, and some do both. Currently there is Bee Balm, Yarrow, Butterfly Bush, Milkweed, Phlox, Echinacea and Carpet Flower with a few of these plants being so successful that they will have to be thinned out and tamed. Along with a bit of a thinning for certain plants, the committee plans to expand the variety of plants to increase the diversity and overall resiliency and also add to the seasonal variety for those enjoying the wildlife garden.
The First Unitarian Meditation Gardens have been designed and maintained by the First Unitarian church over the past twenty years for the benefit of all groups on the six-acre campus plus visitors from the entire city. It was designed to be an urban oasis for “relaxation, restoration, observation and meditation”. Over the years it has evolved into a wildlife sanctuary also, which provides extra animation for visitors and “builds connection among humans, animals, plants, water and soil.”

**FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH**

**MEDITATION GARDEN**

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**BACKGROUND**

The First Unitarian Meditation Gardens were built to be used as an outdoor space for reflection, prayer and repose. They can be found on the six-acre First Unitarian campus, which also houses a Seniors’ Residence and a Childcare Centre. The campus is located beside the Sir John A. Parkway and the Trans Canada Trail, which create a green corridor along the Ottawa River. The original garden was established in 1995 by a group of volunteers, including Renee de Vry, Head Gardener, who worked over the past twenty years in the gardens as a volunteer staff member. The initial
The First Unitarian Meditation Gardens, which are an Ontario Communities in Bloom award winner, offer a tranquil place to slow down, pause and connect with nature. The gardens are maintained by approximately 7 - 10 regular volunteers who weed and water the half-acre of plantings. Many groups use the gardens including the church youth group and the Sunday school. The religious education leaders enjoy weaving church lessons with experiential learning in the gardens. The seniors and child care centre benefit from the beautiful surroundings also. The church also uses the gardens for memorial dedication ceremonies.

**RESULTS**

Keep everyone informed: Information about changes to the gardens has been beneficial, not only for volunteers and congregants but also for visitors and regulars to the gardens who may be sensitive to changes to a space they go to for comfort and relaxation. The garden volunteers installed a bulletin board in the south garden to help keep people in the loop.

Allow evolution as dictated by volunteer availability and resources: Without a regular full-time gardener, some further changes to the gardens will be inevitable such as maintenance for the pond. The best option here may be to allow it to gradually silt up and become a rain garden area. Flexibility to the changes have allowed continued enjoyment of the space without such a strict definition of what it needs to be.

Keep communication open between congregants and volunteers: When the gardeners need help with heavier tasks or specific seasonal activities, having open communication lines with the congregation (and among the volunteers) makes it easy to get things done. For example, a long dry spell required regular watering and a roster of volunteers, which required extra effort to coordinate around varying holiday schedules of volunteers.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

The gardens are composed of various garden beds, some of which are named with spiritual virtues (Forgiveness, Peace, Charity, Hope, Faith, Love). There are benches and resting spots located throughout the gardens that offer quiet places to sit and provide some lovely vistas of the flowering perennials that bloom at various times during the warmer months. The gardens are also used as a memorial space with select trees and shrubs dedicated to loved ones. Some artfully-designed benches and a bird bath and even a few sculptural pieces have also been included as memorials.

The Meditation Garden has evolved into an ecological space and a native bee sanctuary. There are no pesticides used in the garden and native plants that provide nectar and pollen have been carefully selected for the 30 different species of bees that call the garden home. There are also various nesting locations and objects provided for the bees. All wildlife are celebrated, as a sign at the entrance to the garden indicates: “Birds and animals live in the gardens. As a guest in their home, please do not disturb them.” and another sign reminds visitors to “Please leave the berries for wildlife to eat.” The gardens are seen as a “reflection of Unitarians’ respect for nature” and an opportunity to “nurture the web of life and build connection among humans, animals, plants, water and soil.” It’s an insect’s paradise as another sign reminds visitors “Please do not disturb, Ants Hard at Work”.

There’s even a less formal area where wildflowers such as Jewelweed, Goldenrod and Joe Pie Weed bloom along a small stream. Volunteers are asked to stay out of this portion of the garden, so as not to cause erosion and disturb the fine ecological balance. The wildflowers are left alone to do their own thing.
MEMORABLE MOMENTS

The weekly “work party” for volunteers is essential to keeping the garden looking good and it also encourages a sense of camaraderie among the volunteers and a place to share ideas.

The annual Halloween Treats sale at the end of October was a delight. All of the treats were sold out and the sale helped raise the profile of the garden and the gardeners’ activities in the congregation.

CENTRETOWN UNITED CHURCH

URBAN SIDEWALK COMMUNITY GARDEN

At Centretown United Church, raised sidewalk planters that held trees for more than 30 years have been transformed by the installation of a community garden. Something valuable has been created from the derelict empty planters for the church, the community and for Centre 507, a downtown Drop-In. This downtown space is now animated with vibrant green gardens which provide a positive impact for everyone that walks by.

BACKGROUND

When the City of Ottawa removed many of the dying downtown ash trees, it provided an opportunity for two centretown faith communities. Empty spaces where the trees used to be sparked an idea for a new type of garden in front of two churches. These two community gardens are visible demonstrations of the faith communities dedication to the care for creation and also to local social issues such as healthy produce for community members in need.
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CENTRETOWN UNITED CHURCH

LESSONS LEARNED

Having two key team members made the project progress at a faster pace: With one key team member willing to do the management and organization and the other team member possessing gardening knowledge and experience it was easier to initiate the project. It would have been a lot harder if there wasn’t that gardening knowledge and passion for gardens.

Having a gardening expert, helped free up the time for the second organizer to focus on funding opportunities, finding recruits and streamlining tasks and work events.

Local resources help the gardening projects flourish: Centretown United Church appreciated all the local resources including funding support for local community gardens and educational opportunities on various gardening topics provided by Just Food. The garden also receives a small but significant donation of healthy seedlings from a local farmer. There is hope that the more this information gets out into the community, the more community gardens we will see in the city, especially if funding support increases both in amount and in the number of grant sources.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Centretown United Church lost their sidewalk trees which were growing in raised wooden planters. After they were removed in 2015, a new idea for the empty raised beds was inspired by the United Church of Canada’s policy on Food Sovereignty. The seven pillars of food sovereignty endorsed and lifted up in the United Church of Canada’s report, “Toward Food Sovereignty For All” are:

1) Focus on Food for People,
2) Value Food Providers,
3) Localize Food Systems,
4) Put Control Locally,
5) Build Knowledge and Skills,
6) Work with Nature,
7) Recognize That Food Is Sacred.

So with this new idea for a community garden, the faith community and Centre 507, a not-for-profit Drop-In Centre, located on the 2nd floor of the church, applied for funding from the City of Ottawa’s Community Garden Development Fund.

RESULTS

The harvest for the first year included climbing beans, kale, leeks, climbing tomatoes, zucchini, chard, radishes, beets, carrots and peppers. During the first season, signs were added thanking people for not picking the vegetables. Other signs reminded visitors that they were welcome to join the community for lunch at Centre 507. For the most part, the garden and the food were respected by most people who passed by. There was limited littering and the garden beds were not littered on.

More permanent signs the second year were added, providing details on the project, listing sponsors and displaying contact information for all who walk by.

Centretown United is looking into better watering/irrigation options for the upcoming year. They considered water barrels and using the spout that came from a flat roof portion of the building. However, the roof water was quite dirty and came down too forcefully to make it easy to get the water into the barrels so they are looking at other options.

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BACKGROUND

Empty spaces that had once held city shade trees for more than 30 years have been transformed by St. Luke’s Parish through the installation of gardens to grow fresh produce for the local St. Luke’s Table meal program. These gardens are now a valuable community asset and have brought back to life a treasured local green oasis that had turned into a grey corner of the dense urban neighborhood.

ST. LUKE’S ANGLICAN CHURCH

URBAN SIDEWALK COMMUNITY GARDEN

Empty spaces where the trees used to be sparked an idea for a new type of garden. It is very visible, and demonstrates that faith communities can care for creation while working to improve local food security.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

The ingenuity of the delivery truck driver of the garden soil saved the Centretown volunteers many hours of work. Six cubic metres of soil were delivered in May on Bank Street, and the plan was to have them dropped off beside each planter. Volunteers had been lined up to help shovel all the soil into the raised beds. But as the delivery person hoisted the bagged soil off the truck he realized that he could suspend the bagged soil right over each planter and cut a large “X” in the bottom of the bag – so that the soil could be emptied right into the raised garden beds. This saved the gardeners a ton of work that day!

An anonymous artist created colourful paper flowers out of recycled sheets of music and “planted” them among the growing vegetables. These beautiful flowers sprouted magically over night and greeted members of the congregation attending Sunday worship the next morning.

Gardening in front of the parish has brought about unexpected connections. Centretown United has noticed how truly interested the general public is in the urban garden. Various people walking by, condo owners, congregational members, students and other local neighbours and community business people, have become interested in the project. One office worker even comes on their lunch break to volunteer and has since become an integral partner in the project, recruiting other office members to join in the project.
Raised bed gardening provides many benefits: These types of beds are really practical for small spaces and sidewalk gardens. The raised beds also make it easier for seniors and those with mobility challenges to help with gardening. Keep in mind that the beds should not be too wide as you want to be able to easily reach into the middle.

Local resources for funding and knowledge are keys to success: St. Luke’s appreciated all the local resources including funding support for local community gardens and educational opportunities on various gardening topics through both the community gardening network and a local gardening club that had a presentation on container gardening. More funding support for local community gardens from various sources would be beneficial. Faith communities can apply for environmental grants as a charity but may be more successful if working with multiple partners.

Have a “Plan B” for your gardening project: Any type of greening is beneficial to a parish and its surrounding community. If there are not enough volunteers to maintain a community garden, consider a landscaping option that requires less maintenance. Add perennials and shrubs and symbolic plants such as Bleeding Heart (a recommendation of KAIROS, following the completion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Report). Any beautification efforts will be appreciated. It could be as simple as geraniums and chocolate mint.
Faith & The Common Good

OUTDOOR GREENING CASE STUDIES

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OUTDOOR GREENING CASE STUDIES

BACKGROUND

St John's Church in Kanata provides an outdoor meditation experience for both its congregation and the larger neighbourhood community with their labyrinth garden. An outdoor labyrinth is a versatile addition to a faith community. A labyrinth walk is a spiritual and meditative tool that can be used for various purposes. It's also a pleasant and unique landscape design that is both symbolic and inspiring for all who visit.

St John's Anglican Parish of March church in Kanata offers a unique outdoor walking meditation experience through its prayer labyrinth. The labyrinth and the gardens surrounding it have been an evolving outdoor landscape, starting in 2006 when the paving stones were installed to create the eleven-circuit, forty-two foot diameter "Chartres design" labyrinth behind the church.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

St. Luke's Community Garden has become an extension of the parish's mission beyond the walls of the building. It's a visible sign of creation and a means of engaging people and has helped them become a more integral part of the community. When the volunteer gardeners are there, they chat with passersby who show interest in what's going on. The gardeners have often been there when The Table and the church were not open. On several occasions, they assisted people in need. It's just what happens when ministry isn't limited by bricks and mortar!

THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF MARCH

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

OUTDOOR PRAYER LABYRINTH

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St. Luke's Anglican Church
760 Somerset Street West
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StLukesOttawa.ca

Photo Courtesy of Katherine Forster
The labyrinth has become an integral part of St. John’s Church, especially as Mrs. Paryas has become a certified facilitator to help others experience a labyrinth walk. It is used for various events during the year by the parishioners and also by visitors, either through an organized event or for personal use. The labyrinth can be used by up to 30 people at a time and it is about an hour-long experience, with about twenty minutes to walk into the centre and back out.

A second labyrinth was installed indoors. Some of the groups that use the two prayer labyrinths include the children of March Academy (who rent space in the church hall), the St John's Summer Bible Camp, grief support groups and the Day Hospice Program at the new Ruddy-Shenkman Hospice in the west end of Ottawa. The church has also held events with the Certified Labyrinth Facilitators including an event for World Labyrinth Day (which is held on the first Saturday of May) and a Labyrinth Facilitators workshop to train new facilitators.

RESULTS

Test out the labyrinth experience first: If a parish is considering to install a labyrinth, there are trained labyrinth facilitators that can organize a labyrinth event using large tarps with the labyrinth painted on it or by setting up candles or other materials to define the path. This way, parishioners can experience an event and determine whether they want to explore a more permanent set-up.

Maintenance requirements can be an important factor: When a parish considers installing a labyrinth, the cost is one key consideration while maintenance should be another. This will help determine what type of material is used to build the labyrinth.

There is tremendous scope for the use of the labyrinth: Both the parish and general public can benefit from the labyrinth. The labyrinth walks can be adapted for many uses including solstice events and for charity walks as in the example of the Food Cupboard Charity Walk, where participants brought canned food and put it around the lines of the labyrinth.
MEMORABLE MOMENTS

Each labyrinth walk is moving and has its own significance, from having young children experience the walk for the first time, to the benefits of a labyrinth walk for grief support groups where tissues are essential. Emotions can be very strong while doing a labyrinth walk and people have found much relief and peace through the ritual. They go to the center, meditating and praying as they walk. In the center they have the opportunity to reflect and receive and when they are ready, they start the journey back. The walk out of the labyrinth allows them the time to assimilate the learning as they walk slowly out of the labyrinth.

RESOURCES

- The Labyrinth Society - LabyrinthSociety.org
- World-Wide Labyrinth Locator - LabyrinthLocator.com
- Veriditas - Veriditas.org

Ottawa Facilitator (and labyrinth installations):
Dr. Vanessa Compton
WalkingCircles.wordpress.com

OTHER OUTDOOR LABYRINTHS

- Bells Corners United (3955 Old Richmond Rd.) – Paving Stone, Medieval Chartres Design (12.8 Metres diameter)
- St. Stephen’s Anglican (930 Watson St.) – Brick/Paver, Classical Concentric 7 circuit (9.7 Metres diameter)
- St. John’s Anglican (67 Fowler St., Richmond) – Brick lines w Grass paths, Chartres Design 11 circuit (15.8 Metres diameter)
- First United All Saints Westboro (347 Richmond Rd.) – Brick/Paver, Classical 7 circuit (unknown diameter)

The Anglican Parish of March
325 Sandhill Road
Kanata ON
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ParishofMarch.ca

FACEBOOK

Glebe St. James United Church

SACRED MEDICINE WHEEL GARDEN

The Glebe-St. James United Church Sacred Medicine Wheel garden is a visible sign of the faith community’s allyship with First Nation communities. A Medicine Wheel garden represents the cycles of nature and is grown for medicinal purposes and harvested to be used as peace offerings. The First Nation relationship with the earth is a spiritual experience and many ceremonies and rituals, including the Medicine Wheel, honor this relationship.

BACKGROUND

Glebe-St. James United Church with a congregational attendance of about 80 congregants, welcomes all who come through their doors. As stated on their website: “All races, colours, ages, sexual orientations, genders, faiths, and any other categories are most welcome here. We don’t simply tolerate difference, we celebrate it.” The building itself has been in the Glebe community since 1905.
Greening of their church is integrated into all aspects of their building and operations including celebrating the “Season of Creation” annually and staff. The Minister of Christian Development, Jessica Hetherington, holds a PhD with a specialization in ecology and theology. She incorporates ecological healing and social justice into her ministry at Glebe-St. James. The church’s care for creation is also reflected in the sanctuary with a live tree (and banners). So it was a natural extension to have an outdoor garden that reflects these values and shares them with their community.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

In 2015, the Reverend Teresa Burnett-Cole was inspired to create a sacred medicine garden and the idea was met with enthusiasm from the congregants and committees with whom she shared this vision. Various parishioners volunteered their time to help make this idea a reality. Some helped prepare the garden bed, others organized the planting of the sacred plants of cedar, sage, tobacco, and sweetgrass with the Sunday School youth and another (from the Stewardship Finance Committee) sought out the funding from Glebe-St. James United parishioners. Another volunteer does the maintenance of the garden throughout the warmer months.

The minister herself designed the dream catcher sculpture and had it commissioned by Mike Milligan Ironworks, a local iron forging company. And as fate would have it, two of the company’s employees who are Anishinaabe, were the ones to construct the sculpture for the church. It took around a month from conception to having the sculpture delivered and then again parishioners helped complete the piece of art by stringing wire to fill in the more intricate centre of the dreamcatcher.

The garden was installed in the fall of 2015 and can be seen by all who pass by along Lyon Street or First Avenue. The total cost of the project, including the design and construction of the sculpture was around $1000. While it is a practical and relatively inexpensive project, it is a strong visual statement for the parish. The intention of the sacred medicine garden and the dreamcatcher sculpture is to raise awareness of First Nation issues and to clearly signal that Glebe-St. James church is an ally.

“We want the wider community to know we take reconciliation with Canadian First Nations seriously,” Reverend Teresa Burnett-Cole states. One of the challenges was sourcing two of the plants (tobacco and sweetgrass). In the end it was decided to purchase an ornamental variety of tobacco that was found locally. The tobacco has to be planted annually, as does the sage. For the sweetgrass, the parish purchased seed and grew it inside at first. It only has to be planted once, as like the cedar, it is a perennial.

**RESULTS**

Glebe-St. James Church has received positive feedback and supportive comments from the community about their garden. The intention is to harvest the plants annually and give them as gifts when elders and guests visit. They hope to share them with other local First Nation communities and organizations in the future. This offering of tobacco or Assema blessing is a First Nation’s tradition, thanking the elder for blessing you with their wisdom and asking them to pray for you.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

- Be flexible when harvesting the plants: Glebe-St. James harvested the plants in the fall and then Reverend Burnett-Cole took them home to prepare them. She used a large dehydrator she already owned to dry the tobacco, sweet grass and sage. The sweetgrass wasn’t tall enough on the first harvest to weave, which is the traditional way to prepare it, so the plant was ground up.

- Employ a “Can-Do” attitude: The positive approach and enthusiasm that congregational members use to work at projects is a reason for their success. If a large church like Glebe-St. James can work to become green, this should provide inspiration for other communities of faith.
MEMORABLE MOMENTS

It was wonderful to see the planting of the garden with various church members involved. It took place as part of a regular Sunday service and it was fun to involve the Sunday School children in growing the plants and then planting them outdoors.

BACKGROUND

With a large expanse of lawn, support from the City of Ottawa’s Community Garden Network Fund and a generous bequest, Knox United Church has created a wonderful local gardening space that is open to both congregants and community members. Community gardens such as these allow people to grow local healthy fresh produce that doesn’t have to travel far from garden plot to dinner plate. They not only reduce food travel distances but also allow for local food hubs which provide easy access to healthy food, new gardening skills and local resiliency.

KNOX UNITED CHURCH

SUBURBAN COMMUNITY GARDEN

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BACKGROUND

Knox United Church is a suburban church in Nepean that was built on former farmland. Their unique building, a Panabode structure of cedar logs, is surrounded by a large property. As their website describes: “The log cabin style of the building creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere that fosters a real family atmosphere for services.” They have opted for chairs, instead of pews, that
can be moved to facilitate various events and services, so that their space is flexible.

The church received a bequest and established a committee to seek ideas to use the donation. The first project undertaken was the installation of solar panels. A community garden was the second project voted on by the congregation to be implemented with the funds and it received quite a high level of support from within the church. The parishioners were “enthusiastic about using their perfectly sunny location to transform a parcel of land into a thriving area for produce.” Members, if they had any concerns about the project, wanted to make sure that the resulting garden would add to the visual appeal of the site.

The garden project also supported the goals of the congregation’s mission such as community outreach, reducing emissions from food transportation, increasing local food resiliency and supporting local food banks with healthy local produce. The idea was that “by providing garden plots to those in the community who love to garden but have no space, they would be able to offer good health for the soul”. The garden would also support the United Church of Canada’s food sovereignty mission that includes uplifting locally-grown food, creating opportunities to increase local food producing skills and working with nature.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

The first step for the garden before implementation could take place was research. A few members of the congregation stepped up—some had gardening experience and another, a city councillor, knew of local resources. They researched the best type of garden design with L-shaped raised garden boxes, where the angles of the raised beds provided easy access for all gardeners.

Food. The next step was for the congregation to put together applications for funding from the City of Ottawa’s Community Garden program and also a second one to the United Church Foundation.

Garnering support from the larger community was also key, so Knox United Church held a community meeting to share their vision and the plan for the new garden. The community meeting in March was well received by the neighbourhood citizens who attended. With the community backing the project, and having been successful in receiving funding from both The City of Ottawa Community Garden Network Fund and The Seeds of Hope Fund of the United Church Foundation, the congregation was well on its way.

The proposed location for the garden was where the original farm buildings had been located (barn and tool shed), so due to the possibility of contamination, raised beds with new soil were planned. A congregation member provided a garden design with L-shaped raised garden boxes, where the angles of the raised beds provided easy access for all gardeners.

The installation of the garden beds was done over two weekends in May, with the help of approximately thirty adults and fifteen youth (both teens and younger children). The volunteers were from the congregation and the surrounding neighborhood including another nearby community garden in Leslie Park. The youth volunteers included two local Scouting groups and a Venturers group. This hard-working crew helped build the garden beds and add the needed sand and soil—a mixture important for the best growing conditions.

The community garden includes twenty beds in total, a large shed for storing tools and other equipment along with two large water storage totes and two well-ventilated compost bins. An Outdoor Dedication - Garden Blessing ceremony was held at the end of May, as part of the normal Sunday service with the full congregation attending service outdoors in front of the new garden beds. Updates on the progress of the garden have been shared on the church’s social media. The gardens have been a great success and Knox United even organized a Salsa Canning workshop in September. In the end, the cost for the full first year of the project was $15,000 which paid for the materials to build the raised beds and the soil to fill the beds and the shed. Signage is planned to raise awareness of the local organizations supporting the project.
**Memorable Moments**

Two memorable moments for the church minister, were the outdoor garden service that included the Blessing of the Garden in May and seeing how the garden was expanding beyond what anyone had even imagined at the beginning. It’s always wonderful to be able to worship outdoors and it was especially great to be able to celebrate the new project and all the hard work that had been done so far with the full congregation on a lovely spring day!

One of the gardeners is actually from another parish and was keen to be able to show his congregation what they were doing at Knox United. So he set up a tour with a committee from his church which was marvelous to see. It’s great to think that the garden project can inspire others. Once people actually start gardening, it’s easy to get hooked. The key is to get them to try – even children are keen to learn once they get their hands in the dirt and learn where their vegetables come from!

**Keys to Success**

The main key to success for this project was the enthusiastic volunteers. This project could not have been done without a lot of sweat equity – both in building the gardens and in the running of the garden. Volunteers supported this project for the full growing season, ensuring that the large water totes were filled regularly and that the two community garden beds were taken care of also. It was wonderful to see people helping each other out also – carrying heavy water jugs for other gardeners and sharing gardening knowledge with novice gardeners. Knox United received generous donations of equipment and occasional labour from a number of congregation members, too. A strong, caring community was created!

**Lessons Learned**

Local Community can make a change: One of the lessons learned was in regards to how keen people were in terms of support. It’s hard to gauge the response from the community when a project is started but the response in supporting the garden was great! It was important to have the community support and the congregation made a great effort by going door to door, dropping off flyers and reaching out to communities that might benefit from the community garden (such as townhouse neighbours who might not have space for their own garden). They also had great support from the local community association who posted information on their website and Facebook page and from the local community garden organization: Just Food. These partnerships were key to helping getting the word out.

**Next Steps**

With a successful first year, Knox United is looking into expanding the community garden by adding new plots. They are also working on two new garden projects: a First Nations Healing Garden and a children’s garden, where they can use the garden as an educational component, developing a curriculum for the Sunday School, and starting the children with growing seeds in the winter to planting and gardening in the warmer season.
CASE STUDY TEN

OTHER SHORT PROFILES OF OTTAWA GARDENS

This case study shares some of the details of three other special faith community and cultural gardens found in Ottawa. They are an inspiration for their ingenuity, community spirit and cultural significance. Each has a unique focus and approach and have been successful in gathering local support and volunteer dedication. We hope that these outstanding garden initiatives spark other faith communities to consider starting their own outdoor greening projects.

GLOUCESTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Gloucester Presbyterian Church, founded in 1926, is located near Hunt Club road and backs onto land owned by the National Capital Commission that provides space for a bike path. They are a friendly and diverse community of congregants from at least 17 different countries and they celebrate their diversity during holidays and services. They started their garden project with the church’s Sunday School of children (age range from 4 – 12). The youth planted several batches of seeds indoors with the guidance of teen aged Sunday School assistants and Church Elders in February and March. Then the youth transferred the seedlings of hot peppers, lettuces, tomatoes and herbs to the outdoor garden beds in May.

The first year of the garden program was a success and shows what can be done with a small budget, a clear vision and congregational support. Parishioners donated the material to build four garden beds and other volunteers helped build and fill the beds so that they were prepared for the spring planting by the youth. The continued effort of the volunteers throughout the gardening season with weeding and watering, helped to ensure a good harvest. One Church Elder researched ways to improve and expand the garden by visiting another church that had implemented an irrigation system with water barrels and drip irrigation and by exploring opportunities to use neighbouring land. In the fall the volunteers replenished the garden’s nutrients after the harvest to prepare the beds in advance for the next year’s spring plantings.
THE LEGACY ROOF TOP GARDEN
AT THE WABANO CENTRE FOR
ABORIGINAL HEALTH

Wabano’s Legacy Rooftop Garden is an Indigenous community teaching garden that was created to commemorate residential school survivors. First Nations Elders teach that “in order to heal, we must first start with our connection to the land.” To support community healing, Wabano chose three different themes for their raised gardens: medicine, ceremony and children. The traditional plants and flowers are a wonderful “reminder that we are all connected.”

The ceremonial garden contains the four traditional medicine plants: tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass and sage, as well as a bearberry shrub, which helps the tobacco grow. In the medicinal garden, plants include service berry, colts foot, wild bergamot, white yarrow and juniper. In the children’s garden, visitors will find daisy, wild rose shrub, milkweed, wild strawberries and mint.

The Legacy Rooftop Garden is part of the Truth and Reconciliation Residential Schools Exhibit located on the third floor balcony of Wabano’s beautiful new extension. The exhibit also includes an interactive display that allows visitors to make their own “prayer ties” with dried and fragrant plant medicines to be used as a reminder of what is sacred. Wabano often hosts traditional teachings and cultural symposiums that are open to the public. This is a great local resource for faith communities interested in creating gardens that include traditional plants and medicines.

URBAN SHADES COMMUNITY GARDEN

This is a unique gardening program located in Sandy Hill, on what used to be the All Saints Church property that offers a different approach to sharing gardening space.

The Urban Shades Community garden was the idea of Caroline John and the youth of Faith House Ottawa, which is a “multi-faith community of young adults committed to justice and social action from an interfaith perspective”. The work and the harvest are shared communally at this garden. It was started in 2014 with the support of the local ward councilor, neighbourhood businesses, community and local organizations and Just Food’s CGN (which provided funding). The funds were used to build raised garden beds (as the soil was contaminated) and add new soil. Residents of Faith House and community supporters, approximately thirty people in total, helped build the beds and prepare the gardens for its first season. Along with the beds, the garden also has three rain barrels and compost site and has now completed its third harvest at the end of 2016.

As a communal garden, anyone from the community is welcome to come on a Sunday “Work Bee” to help in the garden and bring home some of the “fruits” of their labour. Members of this community do not own or rent individual plots - this is communal in the true sense. The garden harvests weekly to donate food to the Ottawa Mission. Some of the food grown in the twenty-two raised beds by members include: kale, beans, peas, mustard greens, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers, lettuces and radishes. A new location for this garden in Sandy Hill will be determined once the development at Allsaints is underway.