
Transcript of SD64 Primary School Gardens School Board presentation today

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Hi Rob, Scott and everyone I interviewed about how your school garden is growing right now. Just in case you'd like to know what was passed along, here's a transcript of what I shared at the Zoom call meeting with the School Board this afternoon. It's very brief. Please feel welcome to share with your schools/other garden champions there. Hopefully we'll have more time and space to celebrate school gardens sometime soon. Best wishes & beautiful work~ Robin

Happy spring afternoon! And thanks for this opportunity to share about school gardens at Gulf Islands primary schools during this strange Covid time.

A group of us were supposed to present to you this past February about all of the wonderful things that have happened in the school gardens around the District this past year, since our last presentation in January 2019. Things have changed now, so this Zoom presentation will be short and sweet and focus on what's happening right now in the gardens.

To gather this info, I called around to garden champions at all eight primary schools and got brief updates on what's happening, which I'll share with you, then will share a District-level update and a final pitch.

Galiano - Without students to involve right now, Tricia Sharpe, the School Garden Program Coordinator with the Galiano Food Program has decided to focus on building raised beds to replace the ground-level beds and on improving the soil this spring so that it's ready for the new school year in September.

Pender - Arthur Kikuchi, a parent and garden guru, is maintaining the space and taking extra food to the food bank. There's a chance they'll do a once day/week garden club for kids, but so many more kids now have gardens at home! Trustee Greg Lucas added that they're adding a concrete pad and pathway next to the pizza oven with funding from their PAC.

Saturna - Al Stonehouse has helped maintain the two school/ELF beds in the community garden he coordinates. One bed is strawberries and the other will be pumpkins.

Mayne - Selena Flood, a parent, is planting and maintaining the garden with some weeding help from administrator Katya Korinth and Principal Amy Dearden, when they need to stretch their legs between Zoom meetings. All extra food will go to the food bank.

Phoenix - Before spring break, a number of involved parents led several garden sessions for both classes and planted garlic, greens, and lots of seeds. They have a new composter and lumber waiting for raised bed repairs.

Fulford - Led by parent Glen Wilson, volunteer families have installed a 5000 gallon solar-powered rainwater system, have gathered the materials for repairing the greenhouse and building beds, and are rabbit-proofing the fence. Administrator and school neighbour Rebecca Nygard is caring for the garden right now.

Fernwood - Teacher and school neighbour Andy McPhee's class mentored four other classes before spring break to plant seeds in the greenhouse and work in the garden. He's sold these seedlings on his own Rocking-A Farmstand this spring and raised \$1000 towards next year's garden activities.

Salt Spring Elementary - Parent and school neighbour, me (Robin Jenkinson), was working with four classes before spring break on plantings and garden learning including an Indigenous Food project with camas. Last month, we planted many fruit, nut, and native conifer trees in the front schoolyard along with a boulder circle. Next month, a mud kitchen will be constructed by the front garden. This summer, the plan is to grow a 3-sisters garden for fall learning and harvest. Since Covid, we've made four videos with teacher Linda McDaniel and distributed home garden grow kits to 40 households of burlap sack potatoes, pollinator May Day gardens, and sunflowers, with squash and beans next.

At a District level, funded in part by an Island Savings Community Endowment grant this year, among other things, I've maintained the www.schoolgarden.ca website, coordinated learning circles with other school garden champions and

District staff this past spring and fall at Galiano and Mayne Island schools, and organised a garden-based learning workshop for this year's District Pro-D Day with BC Farm to School in February, attended by 10 teachers. And, I'd love to do more.

In this new Covid world, outdoor learning is safer and school gardens provide great spaces for that. It's remarkable that all the primary schools have active gardens, as well as SIMS and GISS. Annual financial support from the District for these would really help! In addition, funding for a garden-based learning facilitator could help all programs thrive.

With the climate change emergency coupled with this global pandemic, the practical skill of growing food is very important. Many families have related that their kids have shown them how to plant and how to compost as they've created new home gardens these past months. Investing in school gardens in partnership with our islands' many generous and supportive farms and community groups is a great way to build Southern Gulf Island food security and climate resilience in a safe way for all.