



ST. GABRIEL'S GARDEN GROWING NEWS

About Our Garden Ministry

Another growing season in St. Gabriel's Garden is coming to a close, and as always, it has been busy and productive! We have been battling fungus infestation on some of our fruit trees. Thankfully, ongoing treatment with fungicide sprays (that are environmentally responsible) seems to be working. A success story in that regard was a bountiful cherry harvest this year! (Last year, we were plagued with worms in the fruit.)

Once again, we were blessed with the additional help of our two Summer Students Ryan Rahmaty and Timothy Sustar, with the help of their mentor Elia Valenzuela. They were in the garden daily during the week for the term of their employment through July and August. We don't even like to think of where we'd be without their youthful energy.



We continue to donate our food harvests, from the fruit trees and bushes as well as the community garden boxes, to the Good Shepherd Ministries downtown, aiding in their mission to feed the homeless. Another success story is pictured here, with Kevin holding a giant turnip, just one of the many we were able to grow.

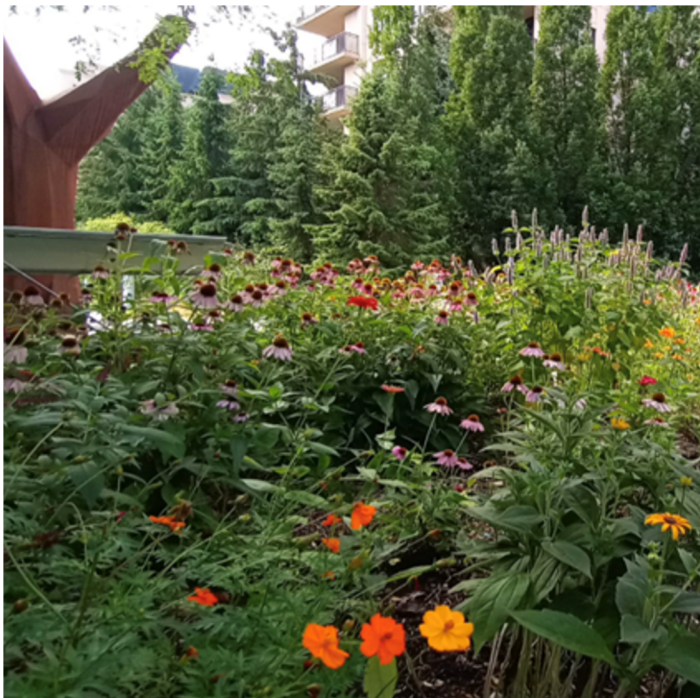
The Drought-Resistant Garden is still in the works, due to several "growing pains", but we hope to make more progress on that project next year. We are also looking to increase our inventory of drought-tolerant plants elsewhere in our garden going forward, as we acknowledge the reality of climate change. We also wish to acknowledge and express our gratitude for plant donations from some parishioners, sharing the abundance of plants from their own gardens with us.

In early July, we helped to host the 2nd Annual Elder Retreat, another successful day-long event of prayerful singing, learning and fellowship in the Garden. Our weekly "Join Us in the Garden" invitations have also been successful in bringing people, on Saturday mornings, to participate in the important and daunting task of caring for our outdoor Sacred Space. We welcomed some new Garden Ministry members; more are always welcome!



Spotlight on the Pollinator Garden

In our ongoing efforts to make the most of our garden space (and to hopefully qualify for a Pollinator Garden Grant from the city), the Garden Ministry has been working for a couple of years on our own Pollinator Garden, located along the walkway near the Tree of Life sculpture. Of course, everything that blooms in the St. Gabriel's Garden is offering sources of food to the myriad pollinators in our environment. There are others, but the ones most people think of are insects: primarily bees, butterflies and beetles, as well as some wasps and flies. While we can help them to procure the sustenance they need, we ourselves are totally dependent the hard work God so brilliantly created pollinators to do on our behalf, for most of the food we eat.



Our pollinator garden is full of plants whose blossoms provide the nectar and pollen to satisfy these pollinating creatures' needs for energy and protein. We have a long list of plants prized by pollinators, and you will find blooms from late spring (Anise Hyssop, Blanket Flower, Catmint) through the whole summer (Blazing Star, Cosmos, Echinacea/ Coneflower) into fall, even to frost (Stonecrop, Yarrow, Zinnia). Our aim is to keep a constant food source blooming, regardless of when during the season they come searching. Next year, look for some new additions to add to already established displays. Feast your eyes and senses on the glorious "Rise of the Flowers" in St. Gabriel's Pollinator Garden.

PEACE WITH CREATION Prayer of the Season of Creation

Jubilee Year, 2025

Creator of all,
we praise you for the gift of life
and for the faith that unites us in care
for our common home.
We confess how estranged we have become—
from one another, from your Creation,
and from our truest selves.
We acknowledge that our greed
and destructive impulses
have fractured our relationships
with you, with others, and with the Earth.
Fertile fields have become barren,
forests lie desolate,
oceans and rivers are polluted.
Thriving communities have become
places of suffering,
and the earth cries out.

Beloved Christ,
who spoke "Shalom" to frightened hearts,
stir us to compassionate action.
Inspire us to work for the end of conflict,
and for the full restoration
of broken relationships—
with you,
with the ecumenical community,
with the human family,
and with all Creation.

Prince of Peace,
through your wounds,
teach us to stand in solidarity
with the woundedness
of others, of creation, and of the world.
Through your resurrection,
make us people of hope—
with a vision of swords turned
into ploughshares
and tears transformed into joy.
May we come together as one family,
to labor for your peace—
a *shalom* where all your people
may dwell in safety,
and rest in quiet places.
Amen.

On September 20th, the Garden Ministry was invited to join the 10th Anniversary Celebration *Laudato Si'*, to reflect upon the impact of Pope Francis' encyclical emphasizing the interconnectedness of all creation, and to pray, as he urged, for our continued, collective response to the ecological crises we face.





How Nature Reflects God's Plan

by Marlene Bourdon-King, Editor

Once again, it has been a summer of extremes in nature: heat waves across the Northern Hemisphere, including Europe; wildfires raging in all parts of Canada; torrential rains and floods sweeping away young lives in Texas; ever-worsening hurricane and typhoon seasons, and devastating earthquakes. All remind us that the planet is not necessarily on "solid ground".

And yet, we find ourselves once more in the midst of "The Season of Creation." One need not go far—maybe only into a backyard, or park, or forested area, even those in the city—to find the peace and hope that Creation in the natural world still perennially provides. "Tree bathing", bird watching, star gazing, the splendour of sunrises and sunsets, and the reminder of God's covenant in the rainbow...all of these remind us that "God's in his heaven and all's right in God's world". (Though please note that the word "the" was replaced with "God's" in that quotation from Robert Browning's 1841 poem, "Pippa's Passing", since reiterated in Canadian L.M. Montgomery's much-beloved *Anne of Green Gables*, as well as elsewhere.) Despite humans having thought otherwise, we *don't* know better than Nature, and it's proven folly to think we can improve on God's Creation as revealed in the natural world.

Were humans to follow God's divine plan, were we to adopt sustainable lifestyles and practices, we would not have to acknowledge "not rightness", and witness how human transgression is spilling into the natural world. Sadly, for far too much of the planet's "developed" space, we have definitely opted for destruction over production—unless that "production" fuels monetary gain, which too often entails misuse and unsustainability.

The enforced "pause" of COVID-19 protocols proved that, left on its own, the planet begins to recover. Where Marine Preserves have been established, the health of the ocean's ecosystem improves. When wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park in the US, the whole ecosystem returned to healthy balance, and the same thing happened



on our Pacific Coast when sea otters were returned to the kelp forests. Most hopefully, this year's count of salmon returning to spawn in the Fraser River system is record-breaking: 7.3 million fish *higher* than the 2.3 million fish predicted. This is cause for great celebration, because it means conservation efforts are clearly working—as long as we don't repeat the mistakes of over-consumption in fishing, and continuing habitat destruction.



God's non-human creation knows its limits, and when left alone, thrives within its own rhythms. And indigenous peoples, dependent on the gifts of the land for their own survival, have characteristically known how to respect the limits of their habitats.

Recently, I read a book by Robin Wall Kimmerer, the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. I was drawn to her new book, because of its title: *The Serviceberry - Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World*. The cover illustration features the Cedar Waxwing (a four-season bird I've admired since childhood), fluttering in ripening clumps of a berry that goes by many names. There's the one in the title, Serviceberry, (that's most commonly used in Ontario), but it also goes by Saskatoon (what I knew it as), Juneberry, Shadbush, Shadblow, Sugarplum, and Sarvis. When we were selecting trees for the St. Gabriel's Garden, I requested that we include the Serviceberry, particularly in the south garden, in view of the huge window, because it provides gifts in three seasons of the year.



Clothed in a white froth of blossoms in the spring, it then produces a relatively early crop of large, abundant clumps of juicy, plump berries. These are rather like a blueberry in a tree, and therefore much beloved of birds, such that humans have to be quick to harvest them if they want any! In the fall, the tree's leaves turn resplendent shades of red, burnt orange and purple, a riot of colour in one place.

The tree puts me in mind of Jesus's parable in Matthew 6:26, when he admonishes his listeners for fretting about their well-being: "Look at the birds of the air. They neither reap or sow or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them." Kimmerer's new book illustrates the truth of Jesus's parable. The quotation on the back says, "All Flourishing Is Mutual". It is a simple but profound truth. The tree produces an abundance of fruit, freely shared with harvesters, human and non-human alike. Humans share in kindness. The well-fed bird spreads the seeds which pass through its system, planting the future generations of the tree. Everything benefits.

Unfortunately, as Kimmerer points out, the "first world" economy "...is rooted in scarcity, competition, and the hoarding of resources, and we have surrendered our values to a system that actively harms what we love." God created the Earth with abundant resources. Jesus illustrated the abundance of God's generosity in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish. Once Jesus blessed the freely given offering, it provided enough to feed the crowd of five thousand, with enough left over to fill twelve baskets.

Our Garden Ministry seeks to practise the reciprocity of abundance. We nurture our vast garden space as a showcase of the glory of God's creation. We provide habitat in a largely inhospitable urban environment for the natural

creatures, both plant and animal, so our garden can be their home. We have shared the bounty of our community gardens with immigrant families new to Canada, and with the Good Shepherd Ministries, feeding the homeless in our city. In sharing our abundance, we are blessed.

My 3-year-old granddaughter is fond of reciting the maxim learned in daycare: "Sharing is Caring", which is sometimes a hard lesson for children of all ages to learn. Though we are all children of God, it is easy for us to forget that truth. Sometimes, we forget to share; sometimes our "caring" is very self-centred.

In oversimplified terms, it is what Jesus did for us—sharing the Father's love and care for us in all that he lived and taught, and giving of his human life in service and redemptive love. We are called to share our gifts in service and the generosity of love. Nature shows us the way to love our neighbour as ourselves. And Nature provides us, anywhere we look, with evidence of the wondrous bounty of God's love.

It is often hard for us to follow the examples of both Jesus and Nature. We often miss the connection between caring and sharing. Nevertheless, the reciprocity of love is indisputable. Within it, all flourishing is mutual, whether in the temporal or spiritual realm.



"Growing News" is the newsletter of the St. Gabriel's Garden Ministry, published quarterly, at the turn of each season.

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