

2014 Communities in Bloom

The award is housed at the Town of Ituna Administration Center. Please stop by and take a look. It takes an entire community to achieve this award. Blooms are awarded by percentage. Up to 55% is 1 bloom. 56% to 63% is 2 blooms. 64% to 72% is 3 blooms. 73% to 81% is 4 blooms; and anything above 82% is 5 blooms. The Community in Bloom committee is proud to announce that our overall percentage from 2013 was raised by 5%. The Town of Ituna was evaluated on August 9, 2014 by Roger and Sheila Nordick.

Congratulations Ituna!

The following are the comments, suggestions, observations and recommendations from the judges who evaluated our community:

General Comments and Suggestions:

Visitors have a new experience in store when they approach the perimeters of the Town of Ituna; new 'Welcome to Ituna' signs. It bodes well for the experience that is in store for anyone who enters this cultural town of approximately 800 people. When we met the enthusiastic and passionate members of the Communities in Bloom 'committee of seven' you see that they are indeed the integral part of the planning committee that serves Ituna well. They work cooperatively with all the volunteers and the town crew in making Ituna a beautiful quaint town. In reaching downtown, Millennium Park defines the theme of preservation of not only the wide streets and historical buildings, but the preservation of the names of the people who are here now; and who have been here before. Across the street, the steam engine reminds us of the forefathers who came before and made Ituna their home. The hanging baskets and large plant pots are another serene element to the downtown core. Also groomed yards are evident in much of the residential areas. With the coming of the Avena Gardens "oat plant" and fledgling Fruit Orchard, there is that potential in making Ituna even more of a kaleidoscope. Ituna is an impressive community.

***Tidiness Score: 134 out of 150**

Observations: Remarkable to see a community so neat and tidy everywhere we looked (from all entrances to the community). Congratulations to Ira Martin for the meticulous work he does in the Regional Park and Golf and Country Club. WELL DONE. Ownership in the overall tidiness of the community has been well established through various commercial entities accepting volunteer responsibilities each month.

Recommendations: Creating a bank of large, three sided bins with clay/ dirt backing out of stacked rail ties at the landfill would provide neat and tidy areas for separating various recyclables. If constructed properly, a pay loader could then scoop up the products (i.e. compost, etc.) and easily turn them or lift them for removal to a truck.

***Environmental Action: Score: 119 out of 150**

Observations: It was so nice to see residents donating wood from fallen trees on their property to the campground for use in their fire pits. We understand that the campgrounds are doing so well that plans are already in the works to expand the park in the upcoming year. There are large areas of waterways and marshlands around the town that are utilized by the community for a variety of water sports and educational uses. The governing officials have given approval to protect these resources for the benefit of citizens and their families for years to come. During our visit to the lagoon we were impressed to see how well the area was trimmed. The surroundings were totally free of any debris.

Recommendations: Possibly seek out a partnership with Ducks Unlimited or maybe a grant through that organization for installation of habitat identification signage around the waterways which could be used by schools as an excellent tool for children's education. We noted a few signs that need to be updated and maintained regularly. We didn't see the need for complete fencing at the landfill in the location it presently exists. Dense trees cup three sides of the location. If any fencing is considered, it should be installed on the entry side.

***Heritage Conservation: Score: 131 out of 150**

Observations: A monumental oat stem was installed to showcase a new park adjacent to the main street. The object appears relatively simple by design upon first glance, but a closer look indicated that it is quite detailed and of remarkable quality; one that should last for decades to come. The cemeteries and churches are each very well maintained. The perpetual cemetery fund is a great way to ensure such places of importance will continue to be maintained place. It was nice to see a vacant heritage building was still very effectively maintained even though there is no clear direction for its use in the near future.

Recommendations: Possibly consider some color at the Cenotaph by maybe adding poppies or a nature backdrop of tall perennial grasses. We concur with the previous visitor evaluators who suggested moving the museum to the downtown. It would certainly enhance the large steam engine display already located within the town core. It would be nice to see your group continue to strive for more connective walking/ bicycle paths through your very attractive community.

***Urban Forestry Score: 150.5 out of 175**

Observations: Fantastic co-operation was given by the community volunteers, including school children, toward the establishment of a community orchard. It looks terrific and is already bearing the fruits of your labor. Great asset to your community! There appears to be a very good working relationship between your community and SaskPower. This partnership has provided the community with much needed mulch for trees throughout the community in support of water conservation efforts.

Recommendations: As old trees lived their life and now need to be removed, give some consideration to keeping the stumps in place and encouraging a decorative look. This could be a beautiful asset to any community. Possibly consider some type of donation from those who obtain fruit from the orchard, or maybe some sponsorship to re-coup particular operational costs going forward with your community orchard. (I.e. fertilizer) Topsoil and mulch piled in the orchard would be much tidier if bins were constructed.

***Landscape Score: 169.5 out of 200**

Observation: You are to be commended on the research and planning you've done as a committee in preparation for the various parks & gardens for all to enjoy in your community. Properties all over the community are behind the CiB movement and trimmed their lawns, clipped their hedges, and removed any litter from the streets. Super eye pleasing community!

Recommendations: Try to acquire some more unique inanimate objects that showcase the history of your community. These can be added to your parks and gardens and will provide focal points and peak additional interest in these spaces while giving the parks an enhanced three dimensional appearance. It would be an added touch if there was signage on each of the pieces of farm equipment placed within the parks. Signs would provide a palette for educating present children as well as future generations, and could also provide the space to recognize those who donated the articles.

*** Floral Displays: Score 156 out of 175**

Observation: We certainly noticed that the message spread throughout the community regarding the color scheme selected by the CiB committee for floral displays this season. Signs of the same or similar color schemes were abound throughout the town of Ituna; residential, commercial, and industrial establishments. It is admirable for the town office to lead by example. Several displays were seen around the office and were quite pleasingly maintained as well.

Recommendations: We look forward to the Town of Ituna CiB committee, who are hard at work as they plan for future décor around the newly acquired entrance signs for 2015. As mentioned earlier, floral displays or other features around the cenotaph would be welcome.

General Comments from the Judges: CiB committee leaders and members that met with us and toured the community are indeed an inspirational group. We loved your jovial approach to carrying out huge responsibilities and projects especially since you are volunteers at this work. We appreciate that you have embraced the positive attributes of the CiB model and molded them into a peak level throughout your entire community. Most important is the fact that you've changed the attitudes of nearly everyone in your entire community. In doing so, it appears that you have instilled a heightened sense of community pride; as well as a sense of caring for one another which translates into an increased comfort in the place that you proudly call your home. An idea for improving the outcomes of your community orchard may be to research the use of Mason bees for improved pollination. The LED sign at the town office appears to be very well utilized and is an excellent tool for the CiB committee in getting out messages to the majority of the community. Consider looking into the recognition of long term volunteers through municipal approved programs as well as provincial Volunteer Medal nominations. It was nice to hear that Geri and her husband water the orchard; and Carol and her husband provide the truck and tank to water other plants throughout the community. Well Done Folks! The community gets very involved with extra sales, etc. in support of a large and very popular community garage sale held each year during Tidiness Week. Great community involvement!

The Community in Bloom committee would like to thank each and every one in our community that helped us along the way. We would also like to thank the judges; Roger and Sheila Nordick. We look forward to continually improving our community.

What's in Store for 2015?

The Communities in Bloom Committee was asked to compete nationally for 2015 but after careful consideration, we decided to compete provincially for 2015. We have a couple of projects we want to improve or complete before we compete nationally – 2016 possibly. But in saying this, we know that without the participation of everyone in our community, the success of the Community in Bloom Program in Ituna would not be what we have today Its spring and nice outside again! Our thoughts are about our landscaping; planting flowers, cleaning our yards, planting gardens and the list goes on. . The CiB Committee and the Town of Ituna is very appreciative of all the work everyone has done to help make Ituna win these awards and it is the best place to live.

“Thank You” to you all!

Happy Gardening!

Added note from the CiB Committee:

Communities in Bloom and the Town of Ituna applied and were awarded two grants from CN EcoConnexions and Agrium. The grant money was used to prepare the sites (adding soil, leveling, drilling holes for the orchard, etc), purchasing planting stock, groundcovers, and communications for the two new green spaces, the Ituna Community Fruit Orchard and Avena Gardens. These two landscaping projects for CiB are now completed.

The fundraising, fabrication and site preparation for the permanent structures that are to be done at Avena Gardens are an 'Oat Stem Committee Project' and are not connected to Communities in Bloom. Our CiB project was to landscape these areas with the grant funding.

We would like to "Thank" Each and Everyone in our community who helped us along the way. We would also like to thank our grant sponsors CN EcoConnexions, Agrium, Crop Productions Service and Tree Canada.

Committee Members:

Carol Korchinski—Chair, Helen Hillier, Yvonne Medvescek, Linda Kowalyk, Elaine Elash, Trudy Billett and Geri Kreway