

Communities in Bloom – 2013 Community Orchard Planting Day

Aug. 31/13 - What a remarkable day!



In the true meaning of 'community', more than 150 volunteers with shovels in hand, came together in pouring rain, to plant 270 fruit trees in the Ituna Community Fruit Orchard and 207 lilacs, roses, shrubs and perennials in Avena Gardens. Volunteers helped to prepare and serve the lovely BBQ lunch we later enjoyed. Our 'Launch Day' would not have occurred if our community had not been awarded two Communities in Bloom grants; CN EcoConnexions from the Ground Up and Agrium 2013 Community Green Spaces and with the help of all the volunteers, we succeeded in converting these two areas into productive and scenic sites. Our community will now have a Fruit Orchard for all residents to utilize and a beautiful park (Avena Gardens) fully landscaped that will later house a 30 foot Oat stem, walkway, history and recognition plaques. The grants enabled us to purchase planting stock, landscaping (ie: grading, groundcovers), site preparation and communications. Thank you to each and every volunteer. We asked for your help, and in the true Saskatchewan spirit you were there on a long weekend to help create history.

Volunteers started arriving at both sites at 8:30 am and started to plant. Each site had team leaders from the communities in bloom committee to coordinate the planting. The sites were filled with our community residents, students from Ituna School, the Ituna Seniors Girls Volleyball team, Ituna Trojan football team as well as parents and grandparents. They were all busy planting and even though it was heavy rain, everyone was having fun. CTV News reporter, Creeson Agecoutay captured these moments and the province saw how extremely proud our volunteers are of their community. This was one of two Hallmark moments in the next five days.

The Motherwell Homestead donated oat sheaves to be displayed at Avena Gardens as the oat stem fabricator has not completed the sculpture. To all participating in the day, the sheaves provided the setting of why this site obtained its name, Avena Gardens.

It only took 45 minutes to plant all the trees and shrubs. In organizing this event, the time slotted for planting was to be 2 plus hours and then break for a BBQ lunch at the Ituna & District Golf Course. Instead, volunteers went home to change into dry clothing and returned at 11:30 am (the rain had stopped) to not only enjoy the lunch, but to hear congratulatory messages from the many dignitaries present. In attendance to convey their messages were Honourable Andrew Scheer, Speaker of the House of Commons; Honourable Ken Krawetz, Deputy Premier of Saskatchewan, Minister of Finance; Mayor Joe Garchinski; Mr. Bill Cooper representing the Prairie Oat Growers; Mr. Jim Feeny, CN EcoConnexions, Director of Public & Government Affairs, from Montreal, Quebec; Mr. Nolan Elford, Crop Production Services, CPS is a division of Agrium, Noland is from Regina, Sask.; Mr. Andrew Exelby,

Parks and Open Spaces Consultant and Provincial Communities in Bloom Coordinator from Regina, Sask; and Mr. Raymond Carriere, founding president of Communities in Bloom from Montreal, Quebec. Mr. Glen Hart asked to have his message announced as he was currently out of the country.

During the closing remarks, I expressed how grateful we are to all the dignitaries that attended our 'Launch Event' and a special thank you to CN, Agrium, Crop Productions Services and Tree Canada in believing in our grant applications and how their contribution will enrich our community not only for today but in future generations to come. To all the volunteers whether you were a volunteer who planted, taxied people, set up the speaker system at the program, prepared lunch or employees of the Cornerstone Credit Union, -- to every volunteer, not only today but for the last month and half, your help is truly appreciated and that is why we are near to completion on these landscaping projects.

At the end of the program we asked attendees to consider volunteering again, to finalize one more aspect of the project – to lay sod at Avena Gardens on Wednesday, September 4th, 2013 at 1:00 pm.

With the program complete, the local communities in bloom committee invited the National and Saskatchewan Communities in Bloom Officials and CN EcoConnexions, Mr. Jim Feeny to join them to have a walking tour of the newly created sites Their feedback was very positive in regards to how and what has been accomplished since the awarding of the grants.

The Launch of the Community Planting day was perfect in every way.

Congratulations Ituna!