

AVENA GARDENS AND THE ITUNA COMMUNITY FRUIT ORCHARD

Two areas in our community are soon to become beautiful landscapes. The first area is “**Avena Gardens**”.

After our Centennial celebrations in 2010, funds earned from this event were later donated to several organizations. The Oat Stem committee was fortunate to receive \$6,000.00 of these funds from the Centennial Board. The Oat Stem committee comprises of Kristine Spilchuk, Allan Ivey, Lorne Fuller and Ted Semchyshn. The plan was to erect a landmark which would pay tribute to the oat grain as an important and historical crop type for our prairie region and to recognize that ‘Ituna is the birthplace of the Prairie Oat Growers Association. The land chosen for this landmark is south of the Canada Post building.

A little history to why this landmark is important. In January of 1998, the three prairie province oat associations gathered for a meeting in Ituna to discuss concerns regarding who was speaking for the oat growers when it came to marketing, research, government and industry policy. The result from this meeting was the official creation of the Prairie Oat Growers Association. The provisional board of directors consisted of Bob Anderson and Lorne Kyle from Manitoba, Richard Nordstrom and Ken Perrault from Alberta and Bill Cooper, Michael Spilchuk, Jack Shymko and Diane Olech (board secretary) from Saskatchewan.

The Oat Stem committee has received \$4,000.00 from the Prairie Oat Growers Association to help fund the project of the sculpture and Mr. Dennis Muzyka has been commissioned to design and install the 3 stem oat plant sculpture which is 30 feet high and approximately 30 feet wide. To date the donations from the Town of Ituna, POGA, SaskEnergy and personal/business totals \$15,500.00.

In 2012, three new members were added to the committee; Diane Olech, representative of the Centennial Committee, Carol Korchinski, chair of Communities in Bloom and Geri Kreway, Ituna EDO/CiB member. Some site preparation has been done but more will be required to reach its full potential. Two communities in bloom grant applications forms were completed to help with landscaping. The grants are very rigid and your budget must identify the eligible expenses including planting stock costs, landscaping (ie: grading, groundcovers, site preparation and communications. Collaborating with other organizations is an advantage as this shows that there is support for these projects.

Our first application for a CiB grant was with ‘CN EconConnexions from the Group Up’ and the second application was to “Agrium Community Green Spaces Program.

The guideline and criteria for the CN EcoConnexions grant spans to five different areas and the three areas we concentrated on in our grant was traffic calming and safety, transforming spaces and naturalizing areas, park creation or restoration. This is where we expanded the application to also include the plans for an **Ituna Community Fruit Orchard** located on the south side of the CN sideline.

CN EcoConnexions would then evaluate and award the grant on the thoroughness of the submission in meeting the criteria in each of the following areas:

Overall program

Community engagement

Sustainable Development

In the Agrium Community Green Spaces Program grant we had to show the need, nature and scope of our request for funding. The guideline and criteria again were very rigid and only soil, trees, shrubs, flowers and groundcovers are to be included. Evaluations and awarding the grant was very similar to the criteria for CN EcoConnexions.

This is Agrium's inaugural year of 'Community Green Spaces Program'. Agrium's grant is awarded to only two applications from Alberta and two from Saskatchewan.

We are very fortunate that we have been awarded \$25,000.00 from CN EcoConnexions and \$10,000.00 from Agrium to complete the Avena Garden Project (Avena is the botanical name for oats) and the Ituna Community Fruit Orchard Project as per our applications.

In the application we stated that these projects will build on the Saskatchewan spirit and transform these two areas into productive and beautiful landscapes. We spoke of how our community residents when called upon will volunteer their time to enhance our community.

Please help us complete our projects and come out and show your Saskatchewan spirit on August 31st, 2013. Representatives from CN, Tree Canada, Communities in Bloom (Quebec and Saskatchewan), Agrium, Prairie oat Growers Association, and Government officials will all be here to launch the community planting day scheduled for August 31st, 2013.

It is truly amazing what can be accomplished when we work together. The Oat Stem Committee started with the plan to create and display a landmark of the oat stem to commemorate the birthplace of the The Prairie Oat Growers Association. With the help of the Town of Ituna, Centennial Committee, POGA, Communities in Bloom, CN EcoConnexions, Agrium, Tree Canada and all contributors and all the volunteers, Ituna will create two beautiful landscaped areas "Avena Gardens and the Community Fruit Orchard" for generations to enjoy.

There will be many jobs to do; some to plant, some to be team leaders, some to offer refreshments. Please consider helping us out on these community projects.

A signup sheet will be at the town office or you can contact the writer by phone at 306 795-3303 or email itunaedc@sasktel.net to add your name as a volunteer.

Geri Kreway
Ituna Economic Development Officer

