

Friday, May 6, 2022 | For Immediate Release

Get Growing, Victoria! Wins B.C. Award

VICTORIA, BC — The City of Victoria’s *Get Growing, Victoria!* program is the recipient of the BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) Program Excellence Award. The award recognizes an innovative program that has been successful in improving individual and community-level social and physical well-being. The program is also acknowledged for serving as a model for other local governments and organizations to enhance their services.

“We’re absolutely thrilled to receive this award in recognition of the positive impact *Get Growing, Victoria!* has in our community,” said Mayor Lisa Helps. “Growing food should be accessible to everyone. Our creative staff designed this program to improve access to garden materials for people who might not otherwise experience the joy of planting seedlings and helping them grow. The meaningful benefits for mental health, sustainability and building community will be lifelong.”

“It is great to see this acknowledgement of the commitment and contributions from staff and volunteers to implement this new initiative,” said Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities. “The program has been very well-received by the community and can serve as a template of sorts for other organizations.”

Get Growing, Victoria! shares free garden resources, including vegetable and herb seedlings, garden materials like compost and mulch, and gardening education with people who face barriers to growing their own food. Seedlings are grown in the City’s nursery and distributed in partnership with community organizations.

In 2022, which the City is celebrating as Year of the Garden, the *Get Growing, Victoria!* program is on track to distribute 100,000 seedlings in partnership with community organizations, neighbourhood associations, supportive and affordable housing organizations, environmental stewardship organizations, groups that support newcomers and many other organizations.

In the program’s first year in 2020, over 81,500 edible plants were grown and 200 cubic yards of garden materials were distributed, supported by over 44 community partners that directly served over 10,000 households. In 2021, over 86,500 edible plants were grown and 250 cubic yards of garden materials were distributed, supported by over 60 community partners that directly served over 12,000 households.

The Program Excellence Award is one of five provincial awards of excellence presented during BCRPA’s annual symposium conference. Each award is presented on behalf of over 4,000 recreation and parks sector members from across B.C. working to enhance the physical and mental health, wellness, connectedness and quality of life of their communities.

For more information about *Get Growing, Victoria!* including upcoming seedling distribution events in every Victoria neighbourhood this spring, visit victoria.ca/getgrowing.

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