

The Daly House Garden: A Year In Review

by Judy Olmstead & Jane Neil, Garden Volunteers



In 2021, the Victorian Garden was the site of five wedding ceremonies and photography sessions, one birthday party and one bridal shower. What a lovely venue for these occasions. The garden volunteers worked 245 hours to maintain the garden.

In year two of a pandemic, the garden was a good place to be for fresh air and activity. However, as the Daly House volunteer gardeners had to work with the health restrictions, it reduced our opportunity to do everything we would have liked. Dedicated members of Westman Gardeners and Daly House Board members worked at the garden, cleaning, planting, pruning, weeding and watering.

A scarlet lily beetle infestation was our major challenge and it was decided to remove most of the lily plants in the hope that the remaining 10 clumps of lilies could survive. This proved more manageable yet still required hours of labour weekly to “squish the beetles”. It is hoped that by not covering the beds with mulch in the fall, and applying wood ash in the spring, fewer beetles will overwinter and emerge in 2022.

With large empty areas of flower beds left, we were lucky to receive dahlia bulbs, iris, gladioli, daylilies and mini hostas from McKenzie Seeds to fill the spaces, and volunteers were kept busy planting these replacements. As well, in June, we received numerous trays of bedding plants from the City of Brandon greenhouse to add colour.



Top: Hostas in the garden;
Above: Volunteers separating dahlia bulbs; Right:
Volunteers Brad Toth & Judy
Olmstead planting flowers
from the City of Brandon.

With no school visits last year, the “children’s garden” along 18th street had to be rethought. We kept whatever perennials were there and then seeded with an annual red-white-and blue pollinator mix – crimson clover, buckwheat, borage, phacelia - and added some calendula seedlings and salvia to add colour.

The Daly House Garden was designated a Pollinator-Friendly Habitat in 2021 by Bee Better Manitoba. The Pollinator Patch, on the west side of the house, is now in its 5th year and was created as an area of the garden dedicated to supporting bees, butterflies and other pollinators. But, of course, pollinators don’t just stay in one spot and so we have made sure we follow pollinator-friendly best practices throughout the Daly House Garden.

Here, briefly, is what we follow.

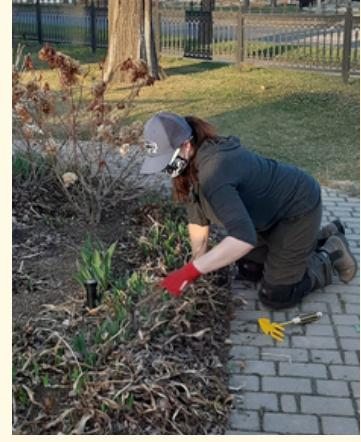
- Adding native plants to the garden.
- Planting at least 3 flowering plants to bloom in each season.
- Pesticides are not used and we plant pesticide – free plants
- We choose to “leave the leaves” and the seed heads in the garden over the winter.

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The underground watering system also received upgrades in 2021. As the plants have matured and grown taller, the sprinkler heads were not tall enough to reach over the plants and water the center or back of the beds. New, taller sprinkler heads were installed, as well as some additional heads to maintain adequate moisture for the plants, especially during a dry summer.

Looking forward to spring and summer 2022, the garden will require the addition of perennials to fill the spaces left by the lilies and we need to add more autumn colour to the garden. This will mean some fundraising will be needed if we want to make sure the garden can fully recover from the lily beetle infestation and COVID-restricted activities. We also need more volunteers to plant and maintain the garden so it continues to be a beautiful gathering spot in Brandon for weddings and other special occasions.



Left to right: Volunteer Rod McGinn pruning the junipers; Hydrangeas in the garden; Volunteer Ally Wowchuck preparing beds for planting

Winter in Brandon One Hundred Years Ago



'Chilly Dawn - Brandon' Postcard image captured by Brandon photographer Ernest Jerrett c.1930
Patterson Collection (2021.7. 147), Daly House

While we might want to forget the cold and snowy winter we had this year we can take heart in knowing that our ancestors also faced some harsh winters. A hundred years ago on March 24, 1922 Brandon was digging out of six inches of snow which created three feet high drifts after the winds got up. It made roads impassable but the trains remained running on time. Temperatures after the storm dropped to 14 degrees Fahrenheit (-10 C) but some February storms that year had temperatures below zero (-18 C).

The Saturday March 25, 1922 edition of the Brandon Daily Sun stated "People plodding through the three feet drifts this morning hoped that this was winter's final kick at the coming of spring." A sentiment that most of us can relate to after this winter season.