

**Subject:** Pelham Year of the Garden 2022 Options**Recommendation:**

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2021-0186 – Pelham Year of the Garden 2022 Options for information;**

**AND THAT Council authorize and direct staff to proceed with option(s) \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Background:**

At the October 4, 2021 regular meeting of Council, Council passed the following motion designating 2022 as the “Year of the Garden” in the Town of Pelham:

**WHEREAS the Year of the Garden celebrates the Centennial of Canada’s horticulture sector;**

**AND WHEREAS gardens and gardening contribute to the quality of life of the municipality and create safe and healthy places where people can come together;**

**AND WHEREAS gardens and gardening have helped Pelham face the challenges of the COVID pandemic;**

**AND WHEREAS the Year of the Garden will highlight and celebrate the important contributions of our local gardening organizations and horticulture professionals and businesses;**

**AND WHEREAS Communities in Bloom in collaboration with the Canadian Garden Council, invites all municipalities to celebrate the Year of the Garden;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Town of Pelham hereby proclaims 2022 as the Year of the Garden in celebration of the contribution of gardens and gardening to the development of the country, the municipality and the lives of residents in terms of health, quality of life and**

**environmental challenges;**

**AND THAT the Saturday before Father's Day, June 18, 2022, be recognized as Garden Day in the Town of Pelham as a legacy of Canada's Year of the Garden 2022;**

**AND THAT the Town of Pelham is committed to be a Garden Friendly Town supporting the development of its garden culture;**

**AND THAT all municipalities across Canada be invited to proclaim 2022 to be the Year of the Garden in their respective municipalities, and that a copy of this Proclamation be provided to the FCM, AMO, and sent to MP Dean Allison for that purpose.**

At the October 18, 2021 regular meeting of Council, Council passed the following motion directing staff to research various gardening initiatives in the Town of Pelham and to report back to Council by December 2021:

**WHEREAS the Town of Pelham is committed to enhancing engagement with the community and building strong communities;**

**AND WHEREAS the Council for the Town of Pelham has proclaimed the year 2022 as the Year of the Garden;**

**AND WHEREAS gardening is an activity enjoyed by many which provides numerous benefits to the gardener;**

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Town of Pelham Council direct staff to research various gardening initiatives the Town of Pelham can consider launching in 2022, including but not limited to a garden bed competition, community vegetable gardens and bee friendly gardens;**

**AND THAT Council direct staff to include potential budget implications in the said report back to Council; AND THAT Council direct staff to report back by December, 2021.**

This report is written in response to both of the aforementioned directives of Council.

Both motions follow the Town's 2020 pilot project with a community garden competition. While that project was not entirely successful, it was launched early in the pandemic and there was not enough lead time for a traditional communications

campaign for promotion. Residents of Pelham clearly have a passion for gardening, which is an activity that is engaged in both for commercial and recreational purposes. There is every reason to believe that any of the options contained within this report would be successful given appropriate lead time and the benefits of lessons learned.

From January 1 to December 31, 2022, The Year of the Garden, 2022 a Centennial Celebration of Pelham's horticulture sector, the Town will celebrate its vibrant garden culture and create important legacies for a sustainable future.

The Year of the Garden, 2022 is a unique opportunity for Pelham to engage citizens and the community to highlight and make progress on priorities such as: post-COVID recovery, quality of life, healthy citizens, environmental climate action, economic growth, enhance cultural vibrancy, reconciliation, and inclusivity tourism destination readiness. The Year of the Garden 2022 campaign will reach and inspire the public to learn about the connections gardens and gardening have with many important community quality of life benefits including:

### **Environmental Benefits:**

- (1) Integration of more plants into city life: tree canopy, community gardens, public parks, green roofs, green infrastructure.
- (2) More plants and more gardens produce more oxygen, sequester more carbon, mitigate heat island effect in urban areas; and
- (3) Engaging Canadians in the Federal government's commitment to plant 2 billion trees, and commitment to fight Climate Change Contribute to attaining sustainable development goals.

### **Economic Benefits:**

- (1) Gardens and gardening generate economic activity for local agri-businesses,
- (2) The impact of public garden visitation, a demonstrated major tourism draw,
- (3) Generate economic development, attracting residents, businesses, and visitors in communities across the country; and
- (4) Enhancing quality of life favours the economic stability of Canadians.

### **Health and Wellness Benefits:**

- (1) The relation between improved health and gardening is well documented,
- (2) Active living for all ages,
- (3) Contribute to healthier Canadians and reduced health costs; and
- (4) Engage Canadians with Canada's healthy eating strategy.

### **Cultural Benefits:**

- (1) Better understanding of the role gardens and gardening play in the development of communities and the country,
- (2) Contribute to the reconciliation with First Nations who prioritize and emphasize living in harmony with nature,
- (3) Contribute to Canada's inclusivity agenda since "in the garden there are no differences", just plants, and people of all ages and cultures who love them; and
- (4) Support the integration of a garden culture in schools and the community-at-large.

### **Analysis:**

Staff have identified a number of gardening related options which may be appropriate for the community as part of the "Year of the Garden".

**1. The establishment of vegetable garden plots in Town parks.** This is a service that the Town offered years ago and has grown rapidly in popularity in other municipalities. For a modest fee (proposed at \$25, however Council could waive this or provide staff with authority to waive the fee for low-income residents), staff could create perhaps two dozen plots as a pilot project in area parks (suggested 100-300 sq. feet for differently sized households). Other than the initial labour (which is a sunk cost) to remove sod, the plots would largely not be maintained by town staff. An additional garbage can and a few rain barrels at each location would be serviced by staff on a routine basis.

Community vegetable gardens are a shared space where people gather together to grow fruits, vegetables, and/or flowers collectively. Community gardens vary widely in their structure, purpose and format. They can consist of collective plots, individual plots, or a combination of the two. Food may be grown for the garden's

members, for local service organizations, or general consumption within the community. The most common type of community garden is one in which garden plots are rented or made available to community members on an annual basis to plant vegetables for their own consumption and enjoyment.

Community gardens provide health, economic, educational, social, and environmental benefits to participants and the community at large. They act to strengthen neighborhoods, by enabling people to produce their own food, beautifying the area, and sharing their passion and knowledge for growing food. Community gardens encourage physical activity for all age groups; create a social gathering place for the community that fosters the sharing of inter-generational and inter-cultural knowledge; helps improve mental health amongst participants as they interact with other people, plants, and nature; and are bee friendly as fruits and vegetables crops require pollination to produce.

Community Gardens are easily constructed at a relatively low cost. Raised garden beds measuring two (2') feet wide by ten inches (10") high may be constructed out of cedar in four foot (4') sections and filled with a garden blend soil for an estimated \$25 per linear foot. Depending on their location the gardens may be serviced with a water spigot supplied with municipal water and installed by staff at a cost of approximately \$2,500. If site control is required, a fence may be constructed around the garden plots. Fencing costs range from \$3 per foot for wire farm fence to \$20 per foot for chain link. A number of parks within the Town of Pelham could support Community Garden projects: Riverview Park on Bergenstein Crescent has been identified by staff as a potential site for the creation of a test project; however, locations should be chosen based on community interest, desire and engagement.

It is anticipated that people living in multi-unit developments in the East Fonthill, where many have no individual yards will seek opportunities to enjoy outdoor spaces and connections to nature. Council could decide on a number of different models to offer garden programs including grants offered to volunteer groups to develop and operate them or operate them as a staff lead programs. As Community Gardens are typically volunteer based, once developed they have little impact on Municipal Operations staff or budgets, as long as there is an interest in the community, and there exists a group of volunteers who feel committed to the development of a garden and have time to devote to it.

**2. Pollinator Gardens.** These could be established in certain municipal parks and naturalized storm water management facilities and/or could be encouraged on private property. The seed packets that would start these gardens could be locally sourced, and Council could decide to subsidize them or provide them free of charge. It is likely that some sort of partnership with local greenhouse businesses could be

arranged. The cost of initial preparation of the pollinator garden beds and planting would be approximately \$500 - \$750 per location. The ongoing maintenance required to upkeep these pollinator gardens would be relatively minimal and could be absorbed in the annual operating budget for Public Works.

The world's food supply depends on pollinators. Birds, bats, bees, butterflies, beetles, and other beneficial insects and small mammals pollinate plants that: (1) bring countless fruits, vegetables, and nuts; (2) support half of the world's edible oils, fibers and raw materials; (3) prevent soil erosion; and (4) increase carbon sequestration. A pollinator garden supports and protects these important creatures by providing food and shelter.

Pollinator Gardens use a variety of flower shapes to attract different types of pollinators. They use a mix of plants which flower at different times of the year so you have blooms all season. It is important to choose native plant species and to let plant debris stand over winter to provide shelter for insects and food for birds. Further bird baths and bee houses can be added close by to keep insects and birds returning to your garden each year. In addition, one of the benefits of pollinator gardens can be to promote ground water re-charging and control of storm water. In fact, pollinator gardens can be used as Low Impact Development (LID) engineering strategies. The implementation of Pollinator Gardens could be considered in public parks placed away from travelled paths and play structures and would fit in well within naturalized spaces such as storm water management facilities.

**3. Potential partnership with Pelham Cares.** Pelham Cares operates an impressive system whereby community partners and volunteers supplied the labour and materials required to create "Home Garden" kits. The kits were assembled in 2021 and included a lined outdoor garden box, garden tools, beginner growing resources and vegetable/herb plants. Completed kits were distributed to families supported by Pelham Cares to assist in access to fresh produce through the summer season. Should this venture again be pursued, Town staff could assist with either construction or delivery of materials.

**4. Potential partnership with the Pelham Garden Club ("PGC").** The PGC already operates a "garden walk" in June of each year. Town administration would rather support the augmentation of an existing program and activities than create competing loyalties. One manner in which the Town can be supportive of the PGC is through its communications department. The Town's communications specialist has considerable skills with respect to event organization and promotion and strong relationships with local media, as well as control over the Town's social media channels, all of which could be made to benefit the PGC.

**5. Joining “Communities in Bloom”.** Pelham has previously participated in this competition in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2013. Corporate records do not indicate why this was discontinued. Communities in Bloom offers all residents of Pelham a chance to participate, be that by hanging flowering baskets from apartment balconies to creating spectacular gardens in their yards. Communities in Bloom is a point of civic pride for many communities and can be a fun and inexpensive way to bring people together in common cause. For a relatively modest cost (\$700/year), Pelham can register for the competition. One of the many benefits of participation (beyond the widely understood tourism boost) is the sense of community pride which is inspired by participation. A healthy portion of the judging is based on gardens on private lands, so every property owner can participate.

**6. Create a rain barrel campaign.** This has been done occasionally in the past. Other local municipalities including the City of St. Catharines have an annual program that provides subsidized rain barrels to residents. Pelham could look to partner with a neighboring municipality, since the barrel makers generally prefer to sell in bulk (by the truckload). It is unclear what level of demand there is, and Council could choose to subsidize the rain barrels similarly to the City of St. Catharines. The city currently subsidizes approximately 20 percent of the cost of each rain barrel. The cost from the manufacturer is expected to be between \$70 and \$80 per barrel and the delivery cost for a tractor trailer of product is estimated at \$1500 per load. Each tractor trailer load carries approximately 400 barrels. If the Town of Pelham purchased 200 barrels for its residents the total cost of subsidizing the program would be approximately \$5,000 plus advertising and promotion for the event.

This would fit into and advance the stated goals of the environmental and sustainability components of the Town’s strategic plan. In addition, the implementation of this program would satisfy at least one action item in the Town’s Climate Change Adaption Plan that was endorsed by Council in July of 2021. Costs of such an initiative would definitely vary based on how much, if any, the Town wished to subsidize the purchase of rain barrels and would be dependent on the number of barrels ordered. As a value added-service, the Town could possibly arrange to deliver the barrels to residential addresses in Pelham using its fleet of vehicles.

**7. Not proceed with a 2022 Garden Bed Competition.** In 2020, Council endorsed the implementation of a community gardening competition. The program was initiated in the face of the COVID 19 pandemic with the goal of reducing operation costs for the organization by limiting the amount of resources used to beautify the community while providing an outdoor activity for community members.

The competition was launched and encouraged local businesses, service groups or private residents to apply to adopt one of the designated garden locations throughout the Town. Competitors were to provide plant material, and maintenance of the garden including watering and weeding for the duration of the competition. Ten locations were identified for the program and four were selected by a service group, a local interest club, a business and a private resident.

Undertaking a competitive gardening competition creates the following issues:

- 1) Creates an inequitable and unfair advantage for larger corporations that sponsor gardening beds;
- 2) Creates an unfair advantage to a sponsor that selects a gardening bed that already contains perennial plantings planted by Town staff;
- 3) Fosters a competitive environment that tends to go against the essence of what gardening is all about;
- 4) Places the Town at risk regarding the sponsorship of garden beds located on Town property (especially for planting beds located adjacent to roadways).
- 5) Creates potential labour issues with the unionized work force that is responsible for the preparation, placement, and maintenance of the planting beds; and
- 6) Results in a non-uniform and inconsistent approach to the design and planting of the Town's gardening beds.

The Beautification Committee, at its meeting held on October 27<sup>th</sup>, passed the following motion with respect to the Town undertaking a competitive gardening competition:

**THAT the Beautification Committee recommends the promotion of co-operative gardening with recognition rather than competitive gardening, which tends to be non-inclusive.**

The committee endorses the concept of a community based gardening program, but does not endorse a program that would involve a competitive competition as this creates an unfair advantage for some groups depending on the location and type of planting bed is sponsored, as well as, the financial resources available to different sponsors.



In addition, the use of Town owned planting beds on public property may cause labour issues with CUPE Local 1287. Staff have met with and requested a position from the union regarding the concept of a gardening competition using Town owned public property. At the time of writing this report staff have not received an official response from CUPE Local 1287. Further, the Public Works Beautification staff take great pride in the work that they do in making the public spaces throughout the Town look beautiful. Using Public Works staff and resources to maintain the planting beds on public property ensures a consistent approach to the design and maintenance of the beds throughout the Town.

### **Financial Considerations:**

Costs tend to vary with the options contained in this report. None are cost prohibitive. Council can choose to add funding to the operating budget which it is scheduled to approve in January, 2022.

Beyond levy funding, there is currently an opportunity to apply for a private sector grant from Intact Insurance, which is the Town's service provider.

The Municipal Climate Resiliency Grant (MCRG) provides funding for municipalities towards effective, practical solutions that mitigate flood and wildfire risk. Applications are open to any municipality across Canada, or in partnership with an NGO that has a mission to prevent the impacts of flood or wildfire. The MCRG funds initiatives up to \$100,000 for one year and will invest in projects that can increase community resiliency to mitigate flood and wildfire risks. Projects must be slated to start before or by October 2022 and can support operating or select capital expenditures.

It is staff's opinion that this grant can be used to support low impact development related projects such as rain barrel programs, rain gardens, community gardens, and pollinator gardens these features act to control storm water runoff and provide infiltration opportunities prior to the storm water runoff entering the Town's storm water management system.

### **Alternatives Reviewed:**

This report contains 7 options. It is of course open to Council to direct staff to investigate other options, to combine options, or to simply receive and file the report with no further action to be taken.

### **Strategic Plan Relationship: Strong Organization**

Gardening is an excellent activity for the production of healthy food, to beautify the community, to provide moderate exercise and to bring people together for common

purpose and shared interests, all of which builds a stronger community. Similarly, it is hard to deny that gardening forms a key element of culture in both Pelham and the Niagara Region as a whole.

**Consultation:**

This report and the various options were reviewed by most of the senior leadership team, staff from the Public Works Department, staff from the Recreation, Culture and Wellness Department and some of the concepts were reviewed with the Town's Beautification Committee.

**Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:**

Communities In Bloom – Year of the Garden 2022 Invitation to Municipalities  
How To Participate in Communities In Bloom  
Communities In Bloom Ontario 2022 Registration Form

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