

Annual Report 2022-23

Mission

To inspire a community of environmentally active citizens through education, action, and advocacy.

Program Summaries

Community Gardens (Barry Place, Blow Me Down, Caribou Road, Heights and Reid Street)

In partnership with the City of Corner Brook we now operate 5 gardens in the city, all of which were almost completely full again in 2022.

The most recent garden is at Barry Place in Curling, which opened last spring with 11 beds. This project also includes a new partnership with Barry Group Inc.

At the Caribou Road Garden we continued with major upgrades from the previous year. With an infrastructure grant we were able get sods laid to make the space more green and welcoming, and we also got the shed painted, added a second picnic table, two fruit trees and a big water tank. This garden was also supported by a partnership with a visual arts faculty member at Grenfell Campus who organized a public arts workshop last May at the garden, and contributed financially to some upgrades.

Reid Street remains the most popular garden, and even with 20 beds, we have a waitlist for this garden every year. One of the main issues at Reid Street is a consistent water supply, and we continue to work with the city to address this.

We were able supply all the gardens with natural soil amendments and seeds last year, and we got all the garden sheds painted. The Heights Garden received walkway upgrades in 2022, and at Blow Me Down we introduced some beehives.

Plans for 2023 include a small greenhouse for the Barry Place Garden and infrastructure improvements at the Heights Garden.

Food Skills Workshops

In 2022, we ran 18 workshops both online and in-person for the general public – topics included fermenting vegetables, making kombucha, microgreens, harvesting chaga, backyard hens, seed starting, container gardening, beekeeping, foraging plants and mushrooms, fall gardening and bottling. Overall we had about 300 people attend our workshops.

We also had a series just for kids, and we held over 20 sessions on gardening topics for classes of all ages at the Immaculate Heart School greenhouse. We also participated in Grenfell Campus day camps, providing sessions on gardening and composting.

We've already started this year with 7 workshops including sourdough baking, seed starting, sprouting and microgreens, maple tapping, and preparing your soil for spring. We have a beekeeping workshop planned for May 11th.

Humber Valley Fruit Rescue

The fruit rescue project was set up in 2017 as a community initiative to prevent food waste. Since then over 2300 lbs have been rescued in our region.

Homeowners can contact us if they have fruit they are unable to pick, and we send volunteers to harvest on their property. We provide all the equipment needed. The harvest is divided three ways, between the homeowner, volunteers and charity. WEC will donate the fruit to various organizations, and in the past have also sold it at local markets.

Over 700lbs of apples, pears, and plums were rescued in 2022. Picks happened at 15 households with the help of 13 volunteers. Over 200 lbs of fruit was donated to local groups and charities.

Community Composting

We continued to run three composting programs (Reid Street, Caribou Road and Heights), and we were able to get our composters delivered to Barry Place in fall 2022. We have one built at that site, with one more to assemble this spring so that the program can be launched there as well.

Each program accommodates 30-40 households, as well as the garden waste from each community garden. Participants simply have to drop off their kitchen scraps to their designated site, and we do the rest.

We have 3-4 volunteers per site that monitor the bins for contaminants, spin the bins, add softwood pellets, sift and harvest the finished compost. The finished compost is available to participants and community gardeners.

Green Drinks Speaker Series

Our Green Drinks Speakers Series features a short talk on a themed environmental question from one academic and one community speaker followed by audience questions in an informal atmosphere at Bootleg Brew Pub on a Wednesday evening. This speaker series became really popular since we introduced it in the fall of 2018. After a couple years hiatus we brought the series back in-person in 2022. Our topics and speakers were:

- August: How can small scale fisheries thrive in NL? Paul Foley (Grenfell Campus) and Sherry (FFAW)
- September: How can the arts create positive environmental change? Mery Perez (Grenfell Campus) and Louise Gauthier (CB Nuit)
- November: How should NL develop wind energy? Camille Ouellet-Dallaire (Grenfell Campus) and Paul Wylezol (International Appalachian Trail)
- February: How can we protect NL oceans? Robert Henvegeld (Grenfell Campus) and Rebecca Brushett (Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative)

Public Policy & Consultations

In 2022, we participated in the following ways in public policy:

- Wind Energy: We formed a board sub-committee to decide how WEC would engage in the emerging wind energy discussions in the province and region. We sent a letter to the provincial Minister of Environment in July 2022 outlining our position on the Port au Port-Stephenville Wind/Hydrogen Energy Project Proposal. Later in the year we submitted comments to the draft guidelines of the provincial Environmental Impact Statement for that project. We also encouraged our community to get involved through social media posts and emails, and participated in some media interviews about our participation. We also partnered with the Environmental Policy Institute at Grenfell Campus to have a student do some background research on the Port au Port project.
- Just Transition Coalition: We have been participating in a provincial Just Transition Coalition. A project proposal was developed by the coalition to organize a series of meetings in 4 communities about a Just Transition. The first of these meetings will likely happen this fall.

Membership and Communication Highlights

Membership

2022 was the second year of the new and improved membership program. Member fees stayed the same (\$15/year), but in 2021 we brought in more services and member benefits, and improved our member database and communications. Members continue to access free workshops and voting privileges at our AGM. In addition, they now also get access to:

- monthly member updates
- all workshop video recordings
- prize draws for eco-friendly products
- input into upcoming WEC projects
- first notification on events, jobs and volunteer opportunities via a monthly update email
- the chance to take part in group buying opportunities for products like seeds and sprouting supplies
- a private members-only Facebook page where resources are posted

The improved member program has been a success, with member numbers doubling in the first year. In 2022 we again saw an increase of over 10% and in total we had 200 members. This year we aim to increase that number again, and we already have about 170 members so far this year.

Communications

We continued in 2022 with numerous communication tools. We have a website, and a monthly email to subscribers. We are also active on social media, primarily Facebook and Instagram, and produce a print newsletter 2-3 times a year.

In 2022, our main social media platform was Facebook. We have a general WEC Page plus three Facebook Groups – one called Western NL Food Skills where people can share info, questions and resources related to food skills; WEC NL Community Gardens which connects all the gardeners in our 4 gardens; and WECNL Members, which is a private group for members for posting resources and videos.

We increased our Facebook Page Followers by 1/3 (over 400) in the past year, and now have over 1618 Page followers. Our Instagram account has about 1000 followers.

The numbers on our monthly email list continued to grow steadily in 2022. We added about 70 more email subscribers and have now reached 826 subscribers. We also get a great rate of engagement with the monthly email.

In 2022, we also produced two issues of WEC's bi-annual newsletter, containing summaries of projects, our written submissions on various issues, book reviews, sustainability tips, and more. The newsletter was posted on the WEC website, sent to our email list, and distributed at local coffee shops and libraries.