



**Neighbourhood  
Small Grants  
Bowen Island**

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## **Project Story: Belterra Pollinator Garden**

**Michelle Johnson**

Belterra Cohousing Community's mission statement begins with this goal: *To create and sustain an evolving community that embraces respect for a diverse group of ecologically accountable and socially responsible people.* One of the ways that we have come together as a community to support ecological accountability is through our Pollinator Garden Project.

In addition to creating the physical gardens, this project also presented opportunities for learning as well as adapting to issues ranging from unexpected weather to changing timelines and evolving visions, as we will describe below. Throughout, it also involved working together, combining our skills, and sharing our knowledge as the plan for the project came together.

In the interim report, we explained that we reduced the size of the original garden to make the terracing more manageable and create a more compact space that would be more sustainable for watering. But because we reduced this area, we were able to put indigenous plants into another area at Belterra where terrace building was already in progress. As a result, we were able to create two different gardens with indigenous plants that will bring pollinators to both our vegetable garden and our landscaped hillside.

### The learning:

It was important to determine which plants will support indigenous pollinators (not honeybees!) throughout the three seasons – spring, summer, and fall. Several of our members are experienced gardeners who are knowledgeable about indigenous plants, and another member is currently participating in a Pollinator Stewardship Certification programme. Together, they researched and identified indigenous plants that adhere to the 3x3x3 principle: 3 types of plants at 3 heights for 3 seasons. The plant choices and where to plant them was discussed by everyone as we went along.



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**Neighbourhood**  
**Small Grants**  
**Bowen Island**



*Assessing the site*

We assessed the site by the vegetable garden to design the pollinator garden and located the indigenous plants that were already there. We found huckleberry at the top, pearly everlasting at the bottom and side, and trailing huckleberry. At this point, we decided to make two significant changes in the garden's design: it would be smaller and terraced with rock rather than logs. The rocks will last longer, and with a smaller area, we could plant more densely.

Belterra has lots of rocks (lots and lots) and the strata owns a tractor. The community's tractor operator brought rocks to the top of the site, and volunteers prepared the site and built the terraces, learning and modifying as we went.



← *Laying rocks*

→ *Finished terraced beds*



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At the same time, terrace building was going on at another area in the strata. This area was rock rubble on a hillside created during the construction of the strata. We decided that along with the original pollinator garden, this garden too should be planted with indigenous plants attractive to pollinators.

In both gardens we learned that building terraces takes a great deal of work and strategizing, whether it's with rocks or lumber!



*Building the  
terraces above  
the road*



### Adapting to weather:

The original timeline for planting shifted into fall because of the drought. To avoid intensive watering, we planted at the end of October and in November. The plants should have time to settle in and be ready to take off in the spring.



A downside of planting in the fall is that the pictures of what we accomplished don't show plants in bloom, or even with leaves with few exceptions.



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**Neighbourhood  
Small Grants  
Bowen Island**

The outcomes:

Gardens are always in the process of becoming, growing and changing with each year. These pictures are from the two gardens, with some hints of how the plants will be.



*This terrace bed is planted with golden rod, osoberry, woolly sunflower, Douglas Aster, and red sorrel.*



*Osoberry in bloom – How they will look in early spring.*



*Pacific Crabapple  
now in the rock  
terraces  
← and what the  
future blooms will  
look like. →*





**Neighbourhood**  
**Small Grants**  
**Bowen Island**



*The fencing has been purchased, (we decided to go with fencing rather than deer spray) but it won't be installed until spring when deer will be attracted to new growth. In the meantime, the beds are under a thick layer of protective mulch.*



*Above, Red Currant, still with leaves and surrounded by temporary fencing. This was planted in early spring, prior to the terraced bed.*

*Below, The landscaped hill garden with the wood terracing.*



*Below, Columbine at the base of a Hawthorne tree.*







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Small Grants  
Bowen Island**

List of Indigenous Plants:

Flowering Red Currant  
Stonecrop  
Pacific Crabapple  
Osoberry (Indian Plum) Red  
Sorrel

Woolly Sunflower  
Douglas Astor Golden  
Rod  
Hazelnut trees  
Nodding Onion

Mock Orange  
Common Camas  
Lingonberry  
Columbine  
Hawthorne



*Our final wrap-up. We're already looking forward to spring!*

Thank you, Bowen Island Community Foundation and Vancouver Foundation, for the opportunity to work together to add beauty and biodiversity to our community. We're proud of what we've accomplished. Both terraced gardens will support our native pollinators, and they in turn will help grow our gardens.



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