



## **Project Story: Regenerative Community Gardening for Seniors**

**Elaine Cameron (Bowen Island Food Resilience Society)**

On April 22, 2023, Bowen Island Food Resilience Society (BIFS) received notice that it had been given a Neighbourhood Small Grant for five yards of organic soil and its delivery cost for new, seniors' raised garden beds. The notice was great timing because the beds were being built and would soon be ready for filling.

Initially, we planned on 5 beds, but by changing from cedar to wood that we treated with an environmentally safe preservative, we were able to have 8 beds built. The beds are 3 ft. high, by 3 ft. wide, by 6 ft. long. That takes a lot of soil! To ensure that we had enough soil, we filled the new beds using the "hügelkultur" method. This meant filling most of each box with wood -- small logs, branches, and untreated scrap lumber -- along with chopped comfrey, manure, compost, and hairy vetch, and topping it with 6 inches of organic soil bought with our Neighbourhood Small Grant. Hügelkultur takes advantage of the slow release of nitrogen provided by the decomposition of wood as well as the wood's natural water retention. It's ideal for Bowen where organic soil is in short supply, and it's a good method for dealing with drought.



*Chopping comfrey leaves for the boxes*





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Filling the beds was hard work. Fortunately, BIFS had a new connection with the Bowen Island Gymnastic Club through the Bowen Island Rotary Club. Four young gymnasts, a parent and an instructor arrived at the garden on Sunday, May 28th, and spent 2 hours working with Grafton Commons' volunteers gathering and wheelbarrowing the various materials and filling the beds. Altogether, the labour of all volunteers, including chopping comfrey and vetch, shovelling, wheelbarrowing and shovelling again, came to approximately 26 hours.



*Adding manure*



*Shovelling the soil into a box*



*Almost done!*



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The seniors' beds were advertised through Bowen Island Food Resilience Society's mailing list, on local social media, and with posters that were put up outside the General Store, the Ruddy, and the Caring Circle. Their availability was also announced at a lunch at the Legion.



## Gardening with ease at Grafton Gardens

### Raised garden beds for seniors

- 3 ft. high, 3 ft wide, 6 ft. long
- Ready for your organic seeds and seedlings
- Learn about organic, regenerative gardening while you garden

*Boxes are available on a first-come, first-served basis.*



Contact  
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All beds have been claimed and planted and the ongoing work of tending them is underway.



*For one senior, it was the very first time she had planted anything, ever.*



*And this was her box on July 7th.*

The board members and volunteers at Grafton Commons thank the Neighbourhood Small Grants, the Bowen Island Community Foundation, and the Vancouver Foundation for awarding BIFS the grant for the Regenerative Community Gardening for Seniors.



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