

Bruce Botanical Food Gardens Strategic Actions

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Bruce Botanical Food Gardens

Introduction

The Bruce Botanical Food Gardens (BBFG), founded in 2012, is a non-profit organization displaying a diverse collection of sustainable, organic food plants of the rare, endangered and heirloom varieties. As a public learning centre and food-based tourist attraction, the BBFG offers a variety of educational programming and events for all ages based on issues surrounding food security and sustainable food production. The unique varieties of food harvested from the garden provide people with fresh, healthy, organic food options.



The BBFG is located in Ripley, Ontario in the Township of Huron-Kinloss, within the County of Bruce. The Township of Huron-Kinloss has provided strong leadership for innovative projects and enthusiastically supported the vision presented to them for the development of BBFG. The Township has provided land and other resources to the initiative.

The gardens are located close to a settled residential/senior's development, and recreational fields. The site is also close to the village trail system and is within walking distance to the downtown of Ripley.



Volunteers are the backbone of the organization. They come from within Ripley and they come from other communities within the area. Without these volunteers who help with everything from planting to harvesting to offering their expertise to building projects, BBFG could not operate. Children's projects have brought great joy to the Gardens with their wonder and excitement at seeing the seeds they planted and nurtured grow into edible produce.

BBFG is operated under the direction of a Board of Directors. The Board provides leadership and oversight to the operations of BBFG.

Developing Strategic Actions

In the Fall of 2018, the Board of Directors decided to initiate a process to identify strategic actions to help guide BBFG over the next several years. Dr. Wayne Caldwell provided assistance with the process and a workshop was held on December 1, 2018. Approximately 20 people participated. Participants helped develop a vision statement, they identified existing activities of BBFG and they

identified new actions to be considered. Participants then evaluated the merits of existing actions and potential new ones. The day concluded with a rating of each of the actions using a process whereby each participant had 10 votes to identify preferred activities. In total 19 actions were identified (existing and new). These in turn were reduced to 13 actions that were further flushed out by the Board.

The following presents the results from this process.



Key words used by workshop participants in helping to develop this vision statement.

Vision - The following vision statement was developed with the input of BBFG supporters who participated in the development of these strategic actions:

The Bruce Botanical Food Gardens will be a financially sustainable, accessible, educational destination with programs focused on addressing the issues of food insecurity and healthy food preparation, built on principles of organic and sustainable food production.



Resources Supporting the Bruce Botanical Food Gardens

There are many factors that contribute to the success of BBFG. While driven by leadership and volunteers, these resources and attributes can be summarized under the following headings: Human Resources, Finances, Environment, and Collaborations with other groups. These resources are summarized below.

<p><u>Human Resources</u> Garden Co-ordinator Summer Student Volunteers Township church groups Township service clubs Volunteer recognition</p>	<p><u>Finances</u> Harvest Dinner Donations Workshops Tours Grants</p>
<p><u>Environment</u> Land (.5 – 5 acres) Water (recycling)</p>	<p><u>Collaborations (other groups)</u> Township – Council Horticultural Society PRWIN Lions Club Legion School Community Living Mennonite community Other</p>

Current Activities

Since 2012, BBFG has developed and delivered a number of programs and activities. These activities focus on growing, protecting and showcasing heirloom and rare varieties of plants, combined with an important educational and community mandate. At the December, 2018 workshop the following were identified as the substantive things that BBFG currently does:

- seed saving
- living marketplace
- tours and workshops; agritourism
- grant funding/ fundraising/ Harvest Dinner / Promotion - calendar
- education/hands on
- varieties of plants - Showcase
- community gathering place (accessible)
- environment people/animals (organic)

Potential Activities

Part of the purpose of this project was to evaluate current activities and to identify additional activities that might be equally or more relevant given the overall mandate of BBFG. Participants at the December 2018 workshop were asked to identify potential activities and foci that could be undertaken. These activities are listed below:

- Marketing (targeted) - Youth!
- New targeted programs
 - youth
 - seniors
 - mental health
 - disabilities
- Events at the Garden
- Shade structure – rest area
- Herb harvesting and drying / Processing
- Develop recipes
 - Cookbook
 - Utilize mud oven
- Build community connection – volunteer recruitment
- Build financial capacity
 - staff
 - capital projects
- Increase organic resources/methods
 - compost
 - contained
- Increase size
 - - food forest
 - community garden plots
- Supply Food Bank



Developing an Action Plan

The “Current” and “Potential” activities were evaluated and ranked by the workshop participants. Participants were asked to consider the potential impact of an existing or new activity (i.e. how impactful is it in terms of helping to achieve BBFG’s mandate) and they were asked to consider the effort or feasibility of making it happen (i.e. does BBFG have or can it secure the resources to make it happen). Based on this perceived benefit and anticipated effort to make a specific action

happen, participants were then asked to vote for their preferred activities (each participant had 10 votes).

These preferred activities were then categorized, reviewed and confirmed by the Board. They were evaluated against the Vision Statement to help ensure that they were consistent and supportive of this vision. In addition, responsibility for individual actions and relative timing was confirmed.

The overall purpose of the action plan is to provide the Board and staff with a template against which they may continue with existing activities, initiate new ones and gauge progress over time. The Action Plan should be viewed as flexible – circumstances, resources and opportunities change and the Board should be willing to adjust as needed. The results are presented in the following table.



Action Plan: Bruce Botanical Food Gardens

	Actions/ Activities	Responsibility	Timing
Fundraising, Volunteer Recruitment and Capacity	Recruit volunteers and facilitate their involvement. This includes volunteer training and guides for their involvement. The involvement of volunteers is key to the BBFG mandate.	Board and staff (garden manager)	On-going
	Grant funding/ fundraising/ Harvest Dinner / Promotion – calendar. BBFG will continue to emphasize the importance of fundraising. This is a key aspect of financial sustainability.	Board	On-going
	Build financial capacity (staff, capital projects). BBFG recognizes that on-going financial support for staff and capital projects (structures and enhancements) is essential. Individuals, community groups, foundations, the Municipality, the Province and Federal governments are all potential partners/ supporters. Volunteer development is also important in the development of financial capacity.	Board	Short-term and On-going
	Develop recipes (Cookbook, Utilize mud oven). Promote and profile the plants grown at BBFG (recognizing the related potential for fundraising).	Volunteer led	Short-term (on-going)
	Events at the Garden. Use the Garden as a hub for events and activities. This will help raise the profile of BBFG.	Partnership – Board and Garden Manager	Short-term and On-going
Capital Projects	Shade structure – rest area. The Garden is an important meeting area. It largely depends on volunteers. Space needs to be provided that helps to enhance the space as welcoming – a place where people want to be.	Garden Manager	Short-term
	Evaluate opportunities for increasing the size of BBFG. During the development of this strategy two opportunities were identified. These include the potential for a “food forest” and the potential for “community garden plots.” Both ideas may have merit, but need to be considered further.	Board	Long-term
Growing & sharing	Living marketplace. BBFG is a space where people come together to share in the growing, harvesting and processing of rare, endangered and heirloom varieties of plants from Canada and around the world. As part of this there is the opportunity for sharing food and education connected to the food sector and the BBFG mandate. BBFG will continue with and enhance this work.	Garden Manager	On-going

Seed Pres'vn	Seed saving. BBFG actively engages in the collection, growing, demonstration, storage and preservation of heritage varieties of seeds (from Ontario and elsewhere). This occurs from season-season through propagation.	Garden Manager	On-going
Education & Demonstrations	Education/hands on. Education and experiential learning is a major mandate of BBFG. BBFG will continue to look for opportunities to enhance this initiative.	Board	On-going
	Tours and workshops; agri-tourism. BBFG will continue to offer tours and workshops that profile BBFG and which help to contribute to knowledge of plants, related gardening, healthy eating and the storage/processing of food products and seeds.	Garden Manager and Volunteers	On-going
	Varieties of plants - Showcase. BBFG will continue to showcase rare, endangered and heirloom varieties of plants from Canada and around the world.	Garden Manager	On-going (requires long-term strategy)
	New targeted programs (youth, seniors, mental health, disabilities). BBFG recognizes that there are special needs within society. Many seniors for example, are avid gardeners and keen to participate in BBFG and related programs. Likewise there are numerous health benefits in participating in activities associated with BBFG.	Board	Short-term (planning and grant writing) Medium term (strategy required)
Food Production	Supply Food Bank – BBFG can contribute fresh food to the Food Bank. There is a related opportunity to contribute education and hands on experience in the processing and storage of fresh foods (canning, drying, etc.).	Volunteers (with Garden Manager)	Medium term
	Herb harvesting and drying / Processing. BBFG engages in the growing of herbs and vegetables. These need to be harvested, and prepared for storage (through drying).	Volunteers (with Garden Manager)	On-going

Timing: Short-term – next year; Intermediate Term – 1-3 years; Long-term – 3-5 years
Ongoing (continues, with no foreseeable end date)

