

GroundWork Project

**Final Report
March 31, 2011**



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**Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society
GroundWork Project
Completion Report
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The objective of the GroundWork Project was the creation of all the necessary infrastructure and support buildings to move forward with the full development of a botanical garden.

Summary of Work, Methodology and Completion

Originally the project was scheduled to begin in September, 2009 and complete by March 31st, 2011. However, as we did not receive full go ahead until October, it did not truly start until November, 2009.

To begin with, there was simultaneous gathering of a tree inventory and demolition of buildings deemed not fit to be renovated.



December 6: The Sechelt Volunteer Firefighters held a practice burn on the old farmhouse at the site. The exercise included several weeks of practices, and an all-day learning and burning session Sunday, with 28 firefighters in attendance. "This opportunity is so valuable," said one firefighter. "It will save lives."



The old farm house became a practice burn for the local firefighters and the A-frame we had hoped would be a volunteer lounge was carefully demolished by a skilled operator saving reusable beams.

Another early task was the clearance of overgrown invasive species and a large quantity of alder trees. Many of those trees were responsible for the choking of the drainage ditches. As these became more functional, we were able to see more clearly how the land drained.



The clearing crew repeated felling alders and other tasks for many days.

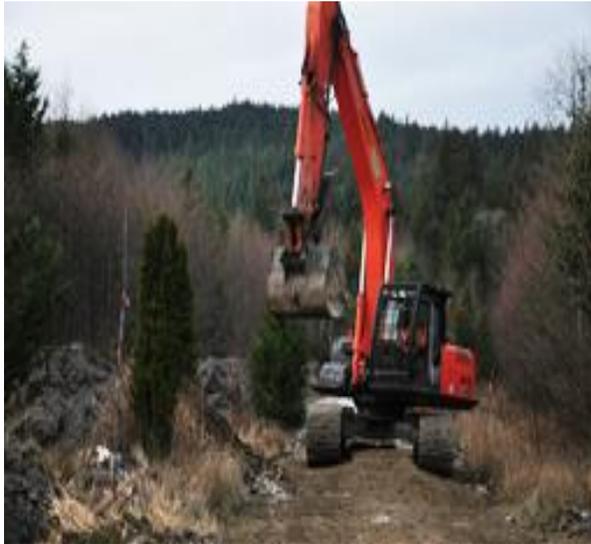


With the clearing underway, fence repair and installation could start in order to address the frequently visiting elk population and the next door farmer's wandering bull.



The views were also improved for the both the northeast and northwest ponds.

At the same time, the building of a new road from east to west, some distance in from the boggy southern boundary, ensured we had a true ring road around the main portion of the garden.



The new east-west road towards the southern end of the garden, facing west, begins off the newly created southern volunteer parking lot entrance and curves on to join the western roadway. It also feeds north behind the plant storage and vegetable garden to join the eastern road across the front the property.

While it was initially shocking to see such a barren, major road when all our other roadways need mowing several times a summer, it has made the entire garden accessible by motorized, wheeled equipment. This includes our newly donated golf cart, which allows us to tour those with mobility issues around the site. We are confident Mother Nature will green this new one up soon.

This took considerably more time and material than expected – the first indication that this site was wetter than we had expected. Rumor has it that there is a place near the area of the new road where, in the past, things no longer wanted were put and they would eventually sink away. That seemed to happen to some of the large rocks brought in to begin the road base foundation.

The reason for all the water became clear with the discovery that the water table was at ground level and that a bed of clay was not very far below the surface in some areas. This necessitated the engineering of a sophisticated, peat based above-ground central septic system to serve both the volunteer lounge and the new building.

None of this was a bad news story - except for the budget, of course. The more sophisticated system was more than triple the cost of the initial figure in the budget. But that a garden has lots of water and is able to demonstrate an innovative solution for septic when the field needs to be above ground - common in our area - are both positive things.



Western end of new road starts at the fenced plant storage area with repositioned, renovated hoop house seen empty and in use on the day of our annual plant sale fundraiser.

And this newly renovated warm and dry potting shed means a revenue stream for a long time.



New footings



New walls and water line



Old window in a new spot, potting tables and the results

Next, the multipurpose building received refurbishment including a cement floor, double doors, two wheelchair-accessible washrooms, a garage bay door, a new roof and the required rewiring and plumbing. This created three new areas in which to provide messy workshops and classes for people from Elder College to school kids as well as supporting the work of the garden.



Works yard multipurpose building:

Left double doors, 1st window is a dirt allowed teaching and workspace (composting workshop below).



Center door enters volunteer lounge area with a small office on the right,



where the framing and the volunteer cupboard installation and painting created



an inviting and comfortable space for hard working volunteers.

Right door enters the maintenance and vehicle storage shop, which has a garage door on the end wall,



providing a home for our newly donated golf cart for touring those with disabilities.

The other features in the works yard include the material bins, improved fencing around all of the veggie garden and a small new greenhouse, courtesy of another small grant.

One of the life bloods of a botanical garden's funding stream is plants. All of these amenities mean that this work which gets done entirely by volunteers – often in cold and wet times of the year – can be more readily accomplished.

Our volunteers are delighted with their new work area that is bright, dry, heated and has ample storage for pots and equipment in the other half of the potting shed. As well they take great pleasure in having a lovely space to rest, meet and plan with a little office in which to organize and keep track of their efforts. It is precisely what they deserve.

While all of this effort in the works yard was going on, a small team went to work on the new general assembly building. After the demolition of the buildings deemed non-repairable, these square footages were added together and an application was submitted to the Agricultural Land Conservancy to combine the aggregated square footage in order to create a larger building. This resulted in permission to create a nearly 2,500-square-foot facility.

Clearing had revealed that our property was even more beautiful than we had known. Columns of trees previously hidden in alders magically appeared. One, now called the Birch Allee, became a feature to be considered immediately as we sought permission to move the public assembly building closer to one edge of the property near the area best suited for a parking lot.

A previous owner of the property has used one corner of the land as a dump for untold manner of things. The small corner of the land was filled with items unlikely to support botanicals but not bad fill underneath a parking lot. However it was some distance from the old farmhouse which had been considered the original site for our new building. That location also lacked the large meadow gathering space we wanted adjacent to the building. Those factors led us to also seek and receive permission from the Agricultural Land Conservancy to relocate the footprint of the building.



Site work for the new building and designing the parking lot

As the works yard phase was wrapping up the design and plans for the new build reached completion. The team had worked tirelessly designing our new public assembly building. Working with the architect they used the combined knowledge of experienced community organizers, a caterer and the partially donated services of the most respected interior designer on the coast.

The basic shape of the building echoes the shed-barn shape of not only the potting shed but a classic shape seen on many farms in British Columbia. This made sense to us because the property is located in an agricultural area in the edge of Sechelt where similar rooflines are seen.



Foundation



Framing



Walls

Became This



While the building process was taking place the perimeter path was levelled and top-dressed and the shape and layout of the new parking lot was further developed since it needed careful consideration to accommodate the entry of emergency vehicles. The patio outside the great room was also designed and built using large pieces of donated rock trucked in from the clearing for another site.

The high water table necessitated a floating cement pad foundation and given that we could not dig into the ground to level the building site, the feature floor-to-ceiling window and glass doors wall overlooking the garden is some three to four feet above grade, which meant creating a large paver stone patio outside. A benefit in terms of the building's exterior easily being part of the interior for fine weather gatherings as well as a stage for performance events since a large meadow sits beyond the patio. Actually this is a huge improvement on the original design concept. We managed to secure a donation of labour to lay all the pavers but the materials had to be paid for, of course.



Pavilion and patio, covered drive up to kitchen entry on the right.

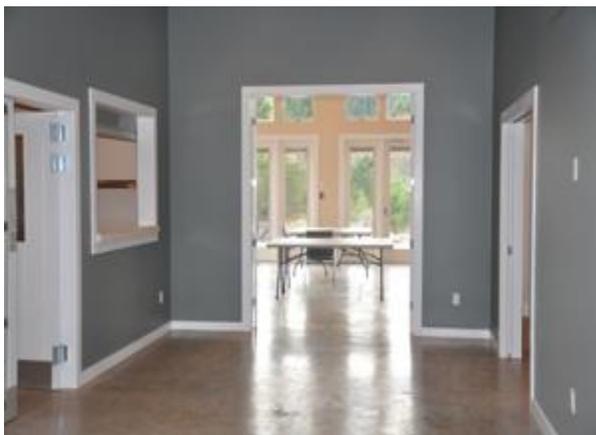


Pavilion entry, office on the right, washrooms on the left.

The entry opens into a spacious lobby which looks into the main room and out to the garden. It is a bright open area, with two skylights, that can be used to hold a medium-sized meeting or as the bar or dessert/coffee area during celebrations.

At the front of the lobby on the right is an office and on the left washrooms which can be locked off from the rest of the building so that they are open even if the rest of the building is not in use.

Further in, a commercial kitchen on the left, with pass-thrus to the lobby and outside for eventual food events or sales outside in the garden, is directly across from a small board room with sliding doors on the lobby and great room sides. This enables a buffet meal to be set up while a workshop is going on and then the doors opened up to allow a flow through of guests to obtain their meal.



Looking through the lobby to the great room, kitchen on left with board room on right.



Commercial kitchen with dual ovens, large cooler and high speed dishwasher.

On a later weekend in October, we held several open houses. Saturday the 23rd was an event for the dignitaries and primary people involved in funding and building the project. Gibsons Mayor Barry Janyk addressed those present in his role as Chair of the ICET Board. The next day, Sunday the 24th was an open house held for the public.

We are delighted with the results of the project and believe we have created both a community treasure and an income generator that will benefit the Society and the community.

Completion of Project Objectives

In our application we said:

The objective of the GroundWork Project is to move from an abandoned, overgrown tree farm to a botanical garden site that has all the necessary infrastructure and support buildings to:

- deliver and expand our slate of events and programs on our own property
Nine events have been held since October to end of March.
- develop educational programming for all ages
Preschoolers, elementary and high school students, Elder College as well as regular workshops have all taken place already.
- create social enterprise(s) in order to broaden the base of sustainability for the garden as well as offering benefits to the community
First is our rental of meeting spaces with several other ideas now possible as well.
- develop an *ex situ* population of *Rhododendron macrophyllum*, a species distinct to the Sunshine Coast and threatened with extinction
These starter plants being grown by Society volunteers will be included in the native garden which is now undergoing planning as our first formal garden area, beyond those surrounding our new building.
- work with the Sechelt nation to include Shishalhth nomenclature for interpretive signs of native plants
Our hope is that we can include this on our signage in the native garden.

Pertinent Project Information and Items Not Yet Completed

The project has run over budget and we expect to have a balance left on our line of credit that will take some time and effort to clear.

The costs for the project were higher than anticipated. As mentioned the ground level water table tripled the septic cost and the amount of fill required to stabilize road and parking lots was not anticipated. Trucking costs were a significant factor despite donations from all involved.

Beyond that was the requirement for a public gathering facility in a rural location to have state of the art firewalls and fire suppression and alarm systems engineered into the building. Design engineering fees, testing and inspections as well as the equipment and installation were all extras.

We know where the bulk of the overages came from and accept that this is the nature of a large building project. Because of those extra costs we were forced to forego any thought of working

on the south pond development or the concrete rill. The dressing of the entry gate, signage and garden benches will also need to wait until funds are raised for their installation.

Changes in funding include an increase from the Federal Government Community Adjustment Fund of \$61,399 and a \$2,000 grant from the Sunshine Coast Regional District to help in defraying dumping fees from the demolition of the old buildings on the site.

Economic Impacts

During the course of the project 226 person months of employment were created or maintained. As well Society volunteers and community members contributed 6,171 volunteer hours.

To date, we have not created any permanent employment. Our funding has been needed to contribute to the GroundWork project. One of the goals for our next year is to work on setting aside the funds in the hopes that the Federal government will award us a summer student. As we now have wonderful infrastructure, we can turn our efforts to generating the income to both plant the garden and develop financial benefit from it and our facilities.

At this point, we have had seven rental events, five of which involved caterers. Feedback has been very positive and we continue taking bookings for various events in the pavilion and works yard workshop room. The buzz in the community is building as many people come for their first visit to the site.

There are also three weddings booked for this summer. A wonderful event planner who has a specialty in destination weddings is promoting our location and the Sunshine Coast across Canada through Sears Travel. One of the three is her booking and it is a fully off-coast one. This has already meant several day trips to set the bookings for various other aspects and the actual event will mean meals and accommodations for all the guests as well as the local caterer, photographer and florist.

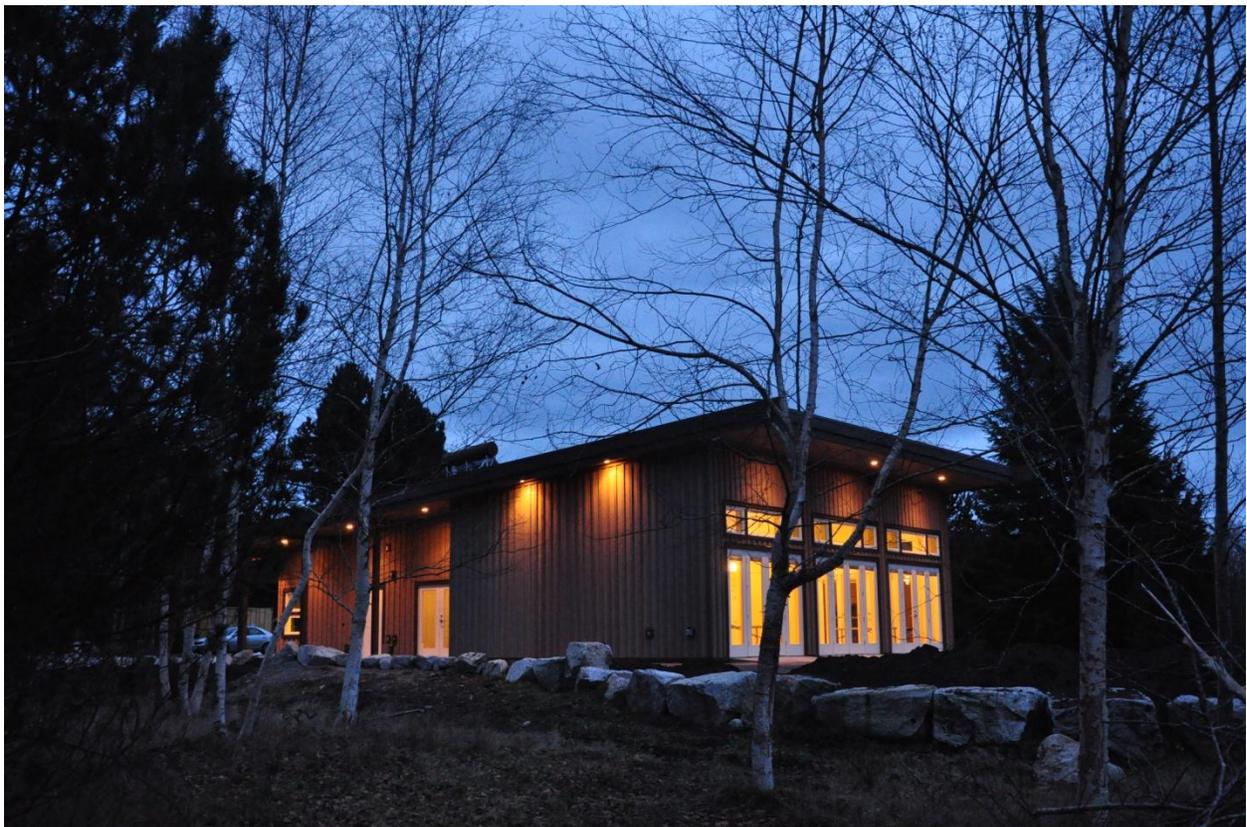
The CEO of the Sunshine Coast Credit Union has told us she believes we have tremendous potential as a gathering space for both personal and business gatherings. She is offering her assistance to the Society in order to move on that potential.

This project has moved us forward in a very major way. We now have the infrastructure necessary to offer high quality teaching experiences, a magnificent building for countless community events and gatherings as well as personal celebrations. Besides being wonderful experiences themselves, these will provide for some of the financial sustainability for the garden.

Now that the land is draining properly and there is a complete ring road we can begin the work of developing the formal garden areas. This is a 40 acre site. Those of us who have been involved with GroundWork will not live to see all of it developed and can only dream of what is to come.

We held in our minds as we did this work the concept that we were laying a foundation for generations not yet born. While it was a significant responsibility, it was also an honour and a privilege to be involved.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society,
the members of the Society and the many other people who have already enjoyed our
new facilities and all those who will learn and celebrate with us for many years to come
– our deepest gratitude for the assistance ICET provided to us.
We absolutely could not have done it without your help.



Thank You



Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society

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GroundWork Project

Period: October 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011

Project Expenditures

General and Start Up	\$ 36,018
Road and Site Work	\$ 127,058
Drainage Works and Sewage	\$ 221,993
Buildings	\$ 846,054
Outdoor Facilities, Landscape, Electrical	\$ 264,043
SCGGS Project Management	\$ 29,141
Contingency	\$ 0

Total Expenditures **\$1,524,307**

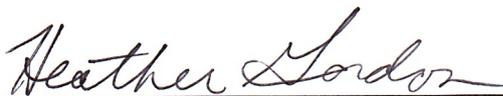
Project Income (Sources of Funding)

Community Adjustment Fund	\$ 778,479
ICET	\$ 370,295
District of Sechelt	\$ 15,000
Sunshine Coast Regional District	\$ 2,000
Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden	\$120,000
In kind donations	\$214,257

Total Income (Sources of Funding) **\$1,500,031**

Balance \$ -24,276 (from SCBGS income)

I hereby certify that this statement accurately represents all project expenditures and all sources of project funding



Financial officer


Date

Heather Gordon
Treasurer, Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society