

GREEN WOOD COALITION

For Immediate Release

Fighting back with plant power!

Port Hope, ON (June 21, 2021): Two non-profits are teaming up to wage a counter attack on more than a year of social and physical disconnection by spreading the healing power of gardens around local neighbourhoods.

Initiated by Cultivate Festival founder Jeff Bray and aided by Green Wood Coalition, raised herb boxes and community vegetable beds are springing up alongside sidewalks in a community-led campaign to bring people together around food, sharing and the conversations they are sure to inspire.

“Food is the ultimate connector. I think it’s a great opportunity to keep our community connected,” says Bray. “They’re something that can remind people that we’re all in this together.”

Ten herb gardens, standing two feet off the ground in custom-built boxes, have been installed at various properties in Cobourg and Port Hope whose residents are happy to tend them. Each of the boxes bears the sign, “Community Herb Boxes,” inviting passers-by to help themselves.

As Cultivate launched its herb box initiative, Green Wood Coalition was looking to expand the reach of its community garden, as the pandemic made it all but impossible for people to come to it.

“It’s a neat experiment,” says Green Wood Executive Director David Sheffield. “We’re seeing the gifts of the community revealed. We’re helping launch the gardens by providing the boxes, soil, seeds and plants, but then we’ll step back and let the people who are involved run with them. We’re excited to see how the gardens connect people and create a sense of community.”

At Greenwood Tower in Port Hope, where an herb box and two raised vegetable gardens have been established, some of the residents were already leading the way, having built and planted raised beds using scrap lumber. At a multi-resident house in Cobourg where an herb box and raised vegetable garden now stand, one of the men living there used to work at a restaurant and knows all about herbs, while another had worked on a farm.

For both Cultivate and Green Wood, the gardens are a way to strengthen community connection during a time when most normal channels of interaction have been disrupted. And for each, building strong, healthy communities based on inclusion and respect is central to their mission.

“Walking by and clipping off a sprig of parsley for your dinner or just seeing a beautiful garden growing in your neighbourhood is a good reason to stop and chat with the person tending it,” says Sheffield. “It’s really all positive.”

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