The City of Waterloo’s Official Plan identifies the value of generating public appreciation and stewardship of the natural environment (urban forest, waterways) and encourages public education and involvement. We foster environmental awareness and stewardship through the provision of local environmental events, e-news and community stewardship programs in neighbourhood parks. Neighbourhood Associations, individuals, schools, churches, and corporate teams lend a hand with community park projects while hundreds of individuals and families attend City events and other local initiatives, creating environmental awareness and action.

The City of Waterloo’s Neighbourhood Strategy (2018) focuses on building community through supporting resident-led initiatives. The City is committed to empowering residents to lead and deliver neighbourhood initiatives that improve their neighbourhood park with support through our existing environmental stewardship programs.

Below is an outline of community park projects and one-time stewardship activities that took place within neighbourhoods parks in Waterloo in 2021. Due to the global pandemic, public events & festivals were modified to meet provincial and Public Health guidelines.
Education at local environmental events

The City of Waterloo is a proud partner in the Bee City Canada initiative. As a “Bee City”, our goal is to inspire our community to take stewardship action towards creating healthy native pollinator habitat and to develop a greater awareness and appreciation for native pollinators.

As part of this initiative, a Pollinator Working Group was established in May 2018, made up to 12 volunteers and the City’s Stewardship Coordinator. This staff working group plans their involvement in events within Waterloo Region where they offer educational displays and pollinator crafts to educate youth and adults about native pollinator species. They also plan community stewardship activities in public parks in Waterloo to remove invasive plant species and create pollinator habitat with native wildflowers, shrubs and trees. Learn how to get involved: www.waterloo.ca/BeeCity

2021 Bee City education & stewardship

Various City divisions took the initiative to support our Bee City initiatives as seen below:

- Bee City Canada pollinator signs were installed by Parks Services in city parks where community groups have established native pollinator gardens or fedges around community vegetable gardens. These signs will help create awareness about the Bee City program and educate the public about the importance of native species and choosing to be pesticide free.

- “Show me the city” virtual tour in Waterloo Park – Friends of Waterloo Park, together with the City of Waterloo Museum, created a virtual tour with 24 stops featuring interesting historical stories of different areas and features in Waterloo Park. One of the panels near the butterfly garden featured the importance of pollinators and a key message of our Pollinator Working Group – reduce your lawn, plant a pollinator patch!
2021 Bee City education & stewardship

Various City divisions took the initiative to support our Bee City initiatives as seen below:

- City Forestry staff planted 1237 street trees within street boulevards and 265 trees in parks within Waterloo in 2021

- With support from Arts & Culture, the Visitor Centre created 80 craft kits for children and families to show the importance of pollinators (“bee hotel” on right)

- Arts & Culture created pollinator awareness through a Neighbourhood Gardens Picnic Table program which featured the artwork of 18 local artists. The painted picnic tables, many of which had a pollinator theme, were placed within six communities in Waterloo. View the city map showing the creative artwork.

Bee-Dazzled by Tara Nix - "It's inspired by Waterloo aka "Bee City" and the mission to educate and spread pollinator awareness to protect our bees. The bee on the table was captured in mid-flight to symbolize the importance of bees' role in beautifying our land."
Bee City education & stewardship: Pollinator Working Group

Waterloo Public Library virtual Pollinator event (April 24, 2021)

On April 24, residents had an opportunity to learn about the important role bees play in our ecosystem with Waterloo Public Library’s virtual pollinator event geared to families.

The City of Waterloo’s Pollinator Working Group prepared educational materials for participants including our pollinator flower poster, a Word Search/colouring page, envirostik pencil and seed packet of dill weed.

City of Waterloo’s “At-home garden kit giveaway” (May 15)

On Saturday May 15, participants picked up their at-home garden kits from the City of Waterloo Service Centre greenhouse. Kits contained two tomato plants, an assortment of herbs, petunia, two large pots, soil, fertilizer and planting instructions, prepared by City Horticultural staff. The City’s Pollinator Working Group volunteers helped support the contactless pick-up and provided educational materials including “our favorite flowers” pollinator poster.

This program is a free opportunity to support resident health and well-being during the pandemic. It provides a low-cost opportunity for food access and strengthens neighbourhood connections through sharing of garden tips, tricks, and ideas.
Bee City education & stewardship: Pollinator Working Group

Waterloo Bee City and Waterloo Public Library Bookmark contest (May-June)

May 20 is UN World Bee Day! As a means to create awareness about our native pollinators, youth ages 9-14 had an opportunity to design their very own bookmark through our bookmark contest. The City of Waterloo’s Pollinator Working Group and Waterloo Public Library recognized contest winners with their name and bookmark design online during National Pollinator Week (June 21-27).

The Pollinator Working Group evaluated the bookmark submissions based on skillfulness, originality and interpretation of topic. They were all very creative!

2021 Pollinator Bookmark Contest winners:

Age 9-11: Rhys (9), Theo (10), Marshall (9)

Age 12-13: Sadie (12), Eva (12), Alyssa (13)
Bee City education & stewardship: Pollinator Working Group

Bee Region pollinator garden sign giveaway (June 2021)

As a means to celebrate pollinators during National Pollinator Week (June 21-27), Bee Region hosted a project involving the distribution of Bee City Canada pollinator garden signs for residents that have a native pollinator garden within Waterloo Region.

The intent was to create awareness about the Bee City Canada program and the value of pollinators and healthy habitat in our community. The Bee Region Coordinating Committee overseen this project, and was implemented by local Bee Cities (Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Wellesley).

Homeowners were encouraged to complete the Bee City Canada’s Pollinator Pledge, to show their support in creating pollinator habitat by adding native plants to the garden. The 12”x12” aluminum sign can be installed within a garden bed on private property on their front or side lawn that is in a visible location from the sidewalk/street.

A total of 154 residents signed up to receive a sign and complete Bee City Canada’s Pollinator Pledge: Kitchener (68), Waterloo (46), Cambridge (27), Townships (Wellesley, Wilmot, Woolwich) (13).

Our distribution event was to take place within a parking lot at the Kitchener Auditorium through curbside pick-up on the morning of Saturday, June 26. Unfortunately, with thunderstorms in the forecast, we cancelled the event due to safety protocols and anticipated lineups/confusion that may have occurred. As a result, each Bee City made arrangements for sign distribution to their residents.
Partners in Parks program

The City of Waterloo’s Partners in Parks program was initiated in 1996 as an opportunity for citizens to help maintain municipal parkland through park projects outlined below:

- Short-term stewardship activities include community litter clean-up, community planting, mulching woodland trails, plant salvaging and bird house maintenance
- Long-term park projects include planting and maintaining a garden bed or living fence buffer at rear of property into park, turf maintenance, invasive plant species management and installing little libraries and community message boards

Community litter clean-up in a park

The majority of litter clean-ups take place after the snow melts through the City’s Earth Day Community Clean-up initiative in April. From May to October, groups can also lend a hand removing litter from public parks in Waterloo through the City’s Partners in Parks program. The City of Waterloo also supports clean-ups on city parkland through Ocean Wise & WWF’s Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup program.

In fall 2021, six organizations contributed their time and effort, making our city a more beautiful place to live. Thank you to the following teams for removing litter from Waterloo’s parks this fall!

- **Home Depot Waterloo #7105** employees removed litter from Albert McCormick Park near Albert McCormick Centre
- **Wilfrid Laurier University EcoHawks Committee**: 17 university students took to the streets to cleanup litter after homecoming, collecting 16 bags of litter during their annual fall clean-up
- **ISACA Toronto Chapter**: 6 participants had to search hard to find any litter at Waterloo Park during their community service day in September
- **Canada TEMS Academy**: this school for international Korean students were excited to care for their neighbourhood park; 23 students and instructors collected 4 full bags of litter from the woodland trails in Sugarbush Park
- **University of Waterloo Science Society**: a team of 30 university students scoured the natural areas in Waterloo Park and collected 7 full bags of litter
- **Magnet Forensics Order Operations Team**: a team of 6 participants removed litter from Clair Lake Park this October
Partners in Parks program

Managing invasive plant species: Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)

This invasive, perennial herbaceous plant is native to eastern Asia. Introduced to North America in the 19th century as an ornamental shrub, this plant has become an aggressive invader of natural areas. Forming dense thickets of bamboo-like vegetation, this species out-competes native plants and negatively impacts wetlands and waterways (Source: 2013, Ontario Invasive Plant Council).


The 5th year of harvesting this invasive non-native plant in Westvale Park by the Laurel Creek Citizens Working Group took place in 2021. As a pilot project, control measures used involve continual cutting of the plant stems approximately 3 times per year for a minimum of five years to weaken underground rhizomes.

In July 2021, a small group of volunteers harvested the Japanese knotweed from two locations in Westvale Park off Appledale Crescent. Each patch is about 10 metres x 5 metres. We monitored the vegetation throughout the summer and fall, which remained relatively sparse, despite the ample heat and rain this year. Plants were only a few inches tall so a 2nd harvesting was not required - a good indication that the roots are weakening!
**Partners in Parks program**

**Managing invasive plant species: Common (European) Buckthorn**

Common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) is an invasive, non-native shrub or small tree. Introduced to North America in the 1880’s as an ornamental shrub, this plant forms dense thickets that crowds out and shades native plants. Spread occurs when birds and wildlife eat the fruit and deposit the seeds in their droppings. A key identifying feature is a short-sharp thorn found on the end of most branches older than one year. Through mechanical means using shovels and a tool called an extractigator, small shrubs can be hand-pulled and removed from the site on a regular basis throughout spring to fall. (Source: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. European Buckthorn Fact Sheet).

For more information on invasive species: [http://www.eddmaps.org/ontario/distribution/](http://www.eddmaps.org/ontario/distribution/)

The Miller Group tackled an invasive shrub called Common Buckthorn that has aggressively spread within a large open meadow just south of a wetland in Bechtel park (top photo). In October, The Miller E-team of 15 adults helped remove a truckload of small buckthorn trees/shrubs in preparation for future re-planting with native wildflowers in the meadow and native trees along the trail.
Partners in Parks program

Community planting in parks

The City of Waterloo and Neighbourhood Associations & neighbourhood groups work together to host small community planting events within neighborhood parks on or around National Forest Week in September or October as a means to enhance the urban forest.

Parks are selected based on community interest, need for native vegetation and significance of the area. Priorities include establishing buffers around woodlands and waterways, creating noise/visibility barriers and limiting unnecessary mowing in passive areas. Planting native trees, shrubs and wildflowers provides healthy habitat for native pollinators and other wildlife, improves water and air quality, increases the urban tree canopy and reduces the urban heat island effect thereby cooling our cities. Dig in and plant a tree!

For more information on how to get involved, visit: www.waterloo.ca/CommunityPlanting

Why living fence buffers?

Living fence buffers consist of native vegetation and helps buffer natural areas such as a water feature or woodland. Creek corridor buffers can range in size, reaching up to 30 metres around perennial streams. The benefits of these vegetated buffers are many:

- enable woodland, wetland and creek bank vegetation to grow naturally outwards, thus healing human impacts from agricultural, logging and development
- provide wildlife and pollinator habitat (food and shelter)
- provide connecting linkages for plant and animal movement
- filter overland flows of chemicals such as road salt, soil and sediment
- provide a delineation between city-owned environmental lands and private property
- provide additional opportunities to appreciate nature close to home
- vegetation provides many benefits as outlined above
Partners in Parks program

Community planting of large trees in parks

In 2021, our community planting program focused on creating habitat to support native pollinators and to provide additional shade in neighbourhood parks.

Residents within the Vermont Neighbourhood Association planted five 10 gallon trees (Red maple and Serviceberry) in Vermont Park and commit to maintaining them through watering for two years after planting to ensure plant survival.

Plant for pollinators!

Native pollinators, like bees and butterflies, need a continuous source of food from early spring to fall. Early spring flowering trees, like serviceberry, Eastern redbud and red maple provide food sources in April – May when the majority of wildflowers are not in bloom. Our community planting program provides a list of recommended tree species to support pollinators.
**Partners in Parks program**

**Community planting within natural areas in parks**

The City’s two environmental working groups carry out community planting in natural areas such as around woodland edges, riparian areas and meadows, annually with the help of the neighbouring community.

**Westvale Park community planting**

The [Laurel Creek Citizens working group](#) and community enhanced a section of stream buffer in Westvale Park with 150 native wildflowers and 50 native shrubs.
**Partners in Parks program**

**Community planting within natural areas in parks**

**Bechtel Park wildflower meadow creation**

The City of Waterloo's [Pollinator Working Group](#) and community enhanced an open meadow with approximately 175 native wildflowers and 6 early-spring flowering trees along the public trail, as seen below. Two plots were established in the spring with mulch covered cardboard to prepare soil for a fall planting. The City of Waterloo gratefully acknowledges the financial support from the [Grand River Conservation Foundation](#) for the purchase of native vegetation.
Environmental awareness & stewardship summary 2021
Promoting community stewardship in neighbourhood parks in Waterloo

Partners in Parks program: Long-term projects

Partners in Parks long-term projects are community-driven improvement projects on municipal parkland that aims to build community, enhance the level of service and/or contribute to the ecological health, safety and beautification of Waterloo’s greenspaces.

Long-term park projects include:

- Adopt-a-park involving regular litter clean-ups, maintaining existing garden beds or other park maintenance activities within the adopted park
- Invasive plant species management of specific plant species
- Planting and maintaining garden beds within a park or creating a living fence buffer consisting of native shrubs at rear of private property into parkland
- Installing a Little Library or community message board

Congratulations to 75 PIP Community Group Representatives and Individual Project Volunteers for your dedication to improving Waterloo’s greenspaces!

Partners in Parks long-term projects are located in the following greenspaces:

- Alexandra Park
- Algonquin Dr
- Amberwood Park
- Angler Way Park
- Anndale Park
- Bluestream Park
- Carnegie Green
- Chancery Pl
- Clair Woods
- Conservation Meadows
- Ennismore Pl
- Forwell Park
- Glenridge Pl
- Ironwood Pl
- Karen Pl
- Mary Allen Park
- McCrae Park
- Memorial Park
- Old Post Park
- Pinebrook Park
- Pinery Trail Park
- Pitfield Pl
- Quickfall Pl
- Roselea Park
- Sable Crt
- Somerset Cres
- St. Moritz Park
- Stonehaven Park
- Teakwood Pl
- University Downs Park
- Vermont Park
- Waterbury Lane
- Wasaga Park
- Waterton Crt
- Werni Park
- Westmount Corners
- Westvale Park
- Whitecap Park
Partners in Parks program: Long-term projects

Native pollinator patches in parks

As part of Waterloo’s Bee City objectives, we encourage the creation of pollinator patches or fedges (living fence buffer around community vegetable gardens) to reduce mown turf and expand native pollinator habitat.

In 2021, Bee City Canada pollinator signs were installed in six city parks where community groups have established native pollinator gardens or fedges around community vegetable gardens. These signs create awareness about the Bee City program and educate the public about the importance of native species and choosing to have a pesticide free garden.

Little Libraries in parks

Neighbourhood Associations or a group of neighbours may be interested in having a Little Library installed in their neighbourhood park. Little Libraries are small, weather-proof boxes attached to a wooden post. The volunteers commit to maintaining the box and its contents to ensure it is filled with books so that residents can “take a book, leave a book”. The purpose of the Little Library is to promote literacy and connect the community.

In 2021, Little Libraries were installed in Roselea Park and Bluestream Park. Thank you to Partners in Parks volunteers from the Lincoln Heights Neighbourhood Group and the Foxhunt Neighbourhood Group for building, painting and maintaining a Little Library in your neighbourhood park.