

PEOPLE, PLANTS AND PRIDE...
Growing Together
 BC COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM NEWSLETTER

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Making a Difference

Andrea Walker - [Ashcroft, British Columbia](#)

While at the recent Communities in Bloom National Symposium and Awards held in Kamloops, BC, one of the speakers posed a very thought provoking statement: ***“Think about how your community would appear if you took away all the things that Communities in Bloom have accomplished since it began.”***

Wow! As members of the Communities in Bloom family, be it as a volunteer or a paid employee, we are always looking ahead, at what we are going to improve-on in our communities. Looking back never really occurs to us; however, in this instance it really opened our eyes to what we have accomplished.

When we began the CiB program in 2006 we knew very little about it, but soon discovered that the “bloom” part is certainly a lot more than just flowers; a play on words that we still find difficult to get across to people. We won the Provincial 5-Blooms in 2008 and moved in to the National competition which we won in 2013.



Our CiB group is comprised totally of community volunteers with a council representative. As with almost all communities in BC, the municipal workers are unionized and as such, working with them can be a bit of a challenge. Our committee has worked very hard to build a good working relationship with our village workers as they initially were very distrustful of what our vision was and what we wanted to do.

We had an existing park in our downtown core that was neglected and looking worse every year. This was really through no fault of the workers, they simply did not have the time nor the expertise required to do the work that was required. The park had been a product of a Millennium grant and was designed and completed by volunteers, and, once completed turned over to the Village to maintain. Not only was it labour intensive due to the plants and mediums chosen, but it was built with materials that were non sustainable. This park was the CiB committee's main focus when we formed - to refurbish the park so it was not only low maintenance, thus making it less work for the workers, but also environmentally and aesthetically

pleasing and user friendly. Over the past 9 years we have accomplished that and more. We now have a jewel in our downtown core that residents use extensively, it is an oasis on a hot day and a destination for visitors. But the biggest achievement is the working relationship we have forged with our Village workers. We plan and work together as a team for the same goals. They see their Village through different eyes, with a pride of ownership rather than just as a job and it is very evident.

The CiB program has given us the opportunity to increase community pride, hold educational workshops, work with children in the school programs, forge a working relationship with our business community, work with community members of all ages, beautify our Village and so much more.

The positives are too many to mention.

Each year after we receive our judge's evaluation we go through it to see how we did and look at areas where we need to work to do better. We use the judge's comments and suggestions to help us. We share the evaluation with our councillors, mayor and work crew, and we honor the crew with a visit, a thank you and a cake during their coffee break. Then, we get re-energized and start to plan what we will do the next year!

So, if we are asked if Communities in Bloom has made a difference, the answer is a resounding YES!! It is a program that every community should embrace as it is all positive.



Geographic Location: Ashcroft lies on a flat bench next to the Thompson River in a unique desert setting. Rolling hills that rise steeply in the east and extend to the west to form the Highland Valley Plateau surround the community that is centrally located in the South Central Interior of the Province of British Columbia.

The elevation of the community is 335.2 meters above sea level. Its latitude and longitude coordinates are 50° 5' north by 121° west.



Winterize your Garden Responsibly: Be PlantWise

Have you heard? Without proper prevention, invasive plants can have serious, long-term impacts to

our communities and citizens. Fortunately, more informed gardeners than ever are reaching out and becoming 'PlantWise' to help protect the celebrated natural resources that make BC beautiful.

Join the trend! Many invasive plants are easily found for sale online and in many retail outlets across BC; knowing which plants to avoid planting or purchasing is the first step you can take.

To support the horticulture industry in their transition to remove invasive plants from retail shelves, and to support gardeners to choose non-invasive plants, a new PlantWise mobile app and website developed by the Invasive Species Council of BC (ISCBC) is a great place to begin. Here, discover the 26 most unwanted invasive horticulture plants in BC, along with attractive, exotic and native alternative plants to choose instead – Be PlantWise!

Have you heard of invasive knotweeds? Gaining attention on local news with its broad leaves and bamboo-like stems, **knotweed** can bust through concrete and jeopardize property values, and costs taxpayers in highway maintenance and infrastructure.

Water-based invaders like **purple loosestrife** spread quickly with millions of seeds carried by birds and wind from private property, where they take over fragile wetland ecosystems and displace wildlife. Another water-loving invader, **yellow flag iris**, is a gardening favourite and widely available, but is incredibly difficult and costly to remove with its expansive root systems that clog waterways and reduce recreational opportunities.

Take a walk and scan your property for invaders lurking in your garden. You may be surprised at what you find... **start being PlantWise today!** While winterizing your property and preparing for cooler weather, remove invasive plants with proper disposal methods, and think ahead to spring planting

and know what you grow.

Dumping garden waste in open areas such as parks, forests or over yard fences is one of the leading ways in which invasive plants spread. Instead, **dispose invasive plants responsibly:**



- Connect with your local municipality for disposal options and recycling green waste programs such as specific landfill drop-off areas for invasive plants and incineration/burial options
- NEVER compost invasive plants, as many invasive plant species can regrow from small vegetative fragments and seeds
- Bag all invasive plants and plant parts, and ensure your load is securely covered while transporting to the landfill. Please don't dump green waste illegally.

The key is to know what you grow. Be PlantWise and look up plant labels before you buy, know what's in your garden using the mobile app and website resources, and seek out non-invasive alternatives. The PlantWise app and website also provides links to retailers across BC who are taking the lead and becoming invasive-free—a very special thanks to all PlantWise partners!

For more information about **PlantWise**, or to become a **PlantWise partner** in your community, please visit www.bcinvasives.ca.

About the Invasive Species Council of BC

The Invasive Species Council of BC (ISCBC) is a registered charity working to minimize the ecological, social, and economic impacts caused by invasive species. Their goals are to: educate the public and professionals about invasive species and their risk to ecosystems and economies through activities such as workshops, seminars and newsletters; coordinate research relating to invasive species and make this available to the public; and undertake and support actions that improve the health of BC's natural ecosystems. For more information or to find your local invasive species committee visit www.bcinvasives.ca.

Funding for this project has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the BC Ministry of Agriculture through the Canada-BC Agri-Innovation Program under Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The program is delivered by the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC.



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What's Growing On

2016 BC Communities in Bloom Registration Form Available Now

Need more information, and how to get your community on board for next year?

Go to our [website](#) or contact Catherine Kennedy at c.kennedy@telus.net

Membership has its rewards ... Have you ever considered being a Judge?

Membership is the first step in letting us know of your interest in helping our provincial organization. Our judges value the positive experience of traveling the province, meeting people passionate about their community, and writing useful reports with a judging partner. The added benefit you get our monthly newsletters and a voice at the AGM!

Community & Corporate Memberships also have their benefits - please see the attached pdf or [download the form](#).

More Photos from Kamloops

and if you want to download your community's award presentation photo go to our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/cibbc> or [National CiB](#) facebook page.

