



Bee-Friendly Garden Builds Community in Alberta



BFG Member Ashley Livingston exemplifies what it means to be a BFG Ambassador. Not only does she have a registered BFG in her own yard, but she decided to use her talents to create a pollinator garden at a home that serves individuals with disabilities. She used her connections to teach the staff and residents about gardening for pollinators and the importance of habitat to their well-being. “I had been chatting and teaching them (staff and individuals in the home) about BFG and what a pollinator garden can look like in their home and what it all means,” Ashley said. She was thrilled when she asked if she could work together with them to create their very own BFG.



When applying for her ambassador badge, she stated “We are all excited for this. I will take lead/teach/plant and help create an awesome garden for them all! I will then register their garden once we complete it and make all the requirements for the garden to be BFG certified.” Due to limited financial means, Ashley became resourceful, taking a scavenger hunt through plant sales and the clearance section of garden centers and seeking grants.

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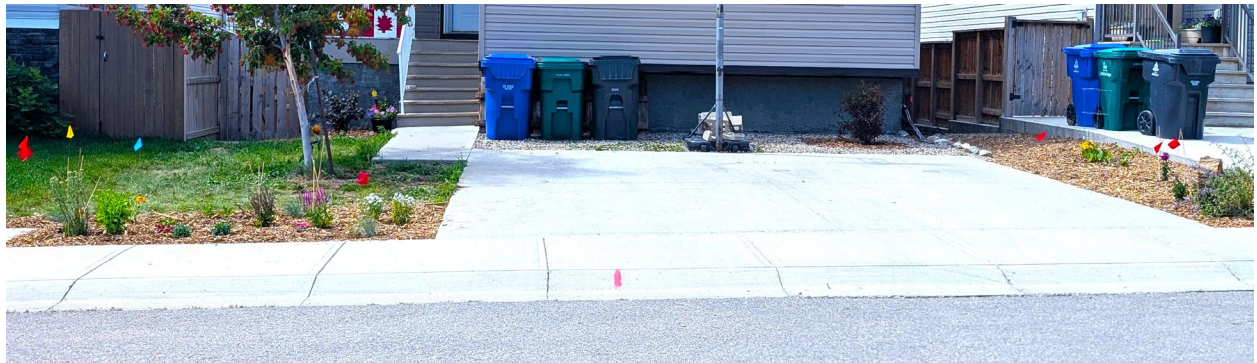
She said, “Our garden will not be extravagant, but it will be native, beautiful, and pollinator supportive!!!”



Fast forward, and the residents are now able to enjoy their BFG on a daily basis. “It was a fabulous experience. We spent a few weeks in July gathering, researching, learning, teaching, planting and sweating.” Ashley provided photos of the process. “I wanted to share a bit more about how beautiful this experience was in so many different ways. The impact of the garden creation led to me sharing with multiple neighbors that walked by about the BFG program, native plants and pollinators, efforts to help provide safe habitats, and what plants are best for pollinators in our specific region. While we worked out front pulling sod, laying mulch, and sweating like crazy while redesigning the entire front space many kids also stopped to ask why we were doing what we were doing. It provided further opportunities to share with the younger ones. As days went on the kids returned to see what the garden was changing into. Some voiced their fear of bees, so we took the opportunity to show that when they are hard at work because you provide them with food resources in the garden, they are too busy to even notice us! Many of the neighbors voiced their interest in including a few native plants in their own yards as well. So not only was this community garden a teaching tool for the home and its occupants, but it blossomed into so much more. The project grew into much needed community connections, bee habitat discussions with neighbors of the group home, and the advancement of positive inclusion efforts to unify the community through bee friendly gardening. It was beautiful. In the end, my efforts to educate, support and help create a BFG for the group home turned into all of that and more for the neighborhood in ways I did not predict. I am pleased to share this journey!”

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