



Canadian Society for Organic Urban Land Care Annual General Meeting March 2nd, 2021

Executive Director Annual Report for 2021 AGM

While SOUL's plans changed part way through the year, the huge increase in public interest in gardening lead to 2020 being one of the more active years for SOUL and SOUL members. The discussion around, and demand for, land care centered spaces, services and resources continues to grow and SOUL will continue in our work:

- **To foster and promote the practice of organic land care**
- **To provide opportunities for education in all aspects of organic land care**
- **To establish and promote guidelines, standards and specifications for all aspects of organic land care**
- **To establish procedures for certification of organic land care practitioners**
- **To establish and develop a means for the exchange of information and ideas between the public and the organic land care industry.**

2020 activities and updates:

Presenting at the virtual Living Soil Symposium, hosted by Regeneration Canada on the topic of 'Regenerating the Urban Landscape' A copy of the presentation can be found on the SOUL presentations page <https://organiclandcare.ca/presentations>

The 2020 Trillium seed grant application was not successful, but the initial stages of the development of a local land care hub in Ottawa did proceed under the volunteer guidance of SOUL members. The group continues to grow and meet virtually, and in physically distanced outdoor gatherings, to offer peer support and networking as participants work on growing their land care livelihood work and skills. There is a page on this project on the SOUL website https://organiclandcare.ca/land_care_community

The development of a Grow Local App, for listing, finding, selling and exchanging locally grown plants was approved for participation in the Random Hacks of Kindness hackathon, but the hackathon was put on indefinite hold due to the pandemic. We will return to this project when/if the hackathons start up again.

SOUL Formed two new committees:

- **Organic Park Certification**, in response to query from City of Toronto staff on the possibility of developing a recognition process for public lands that are organically maintained. If you would like to approach your municipality about participating in this process, please let us know and we can provide support and information resources.

- **Membership Engagement**, to explore ways of providing more engagement opportunities and services for SOUL members. One of the projects has been the development of some in depth member profiles <https://organiclandcare.ca/profiles>

The SOUL discussion series on the Role of Horticulture in Cultivating Social and Land Equity launched in October and will continue through April. The series has been well received and has continued to grow SOUL's network, with roughly 100 new contacts through event registration and SOUL's Facebook post reach increasing from several hundred to several thousand impressions for event related posts. Recordings of the first three sessions are posted on the SOUL website, with more to be added as the series proceeds. <https://organiclandcare.ca/equity>

Developing a Self Assessment Tool

In the fall of 2020, SOUL participated in a Community Service Learning program, working with Telfer School of Business students on a semester long project. The outcome of this participation was a decision by the SOUL board to proceed with the development of a responsive, self assessment tool to help users identify and understand different landscaping, gardening and land care practices and evaluate how implementing them affects the health of the local and global ecosystem. We hope to eventually expand the tool to include business and professional aspects of land care services to help decision makers gauge how sustainable or regenerative their work is.

The first phase of development will be a project for SOUL members and our close partners (Gaia College instructors and alumni for example). Initial plans are to follow the format of the Organic Land Care Practices section of the SOUL Standard. A social equity section may also be included, in addition to the topics already outlined in the Standard, drawn from the outcomes of the ongoing discussion series. The development is expected to take place over the course of 2021 and we would welcome input and participation in the process from the broader SOUL membership. Please watch the SOUL newsletter for an invitation to participate in the development and evaluation process.

SOUL relies heavily of the support of our members and volunteers and we are grateful for all of your ongoing work and support in the promotion and application of organic land care practices.

Thank you,



Sundaura Alford-Purvis, CLD, BCIN

Executive Director

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