

## Seedling initiative with the Trust

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Those interested in starting their own food garden are invited to stop by the North Hastings Community Trust for their second annual Seedling Initiative.

Last year when Seedy Saturday was cancelled due to COVID-19 and the Trust started trying to work out whether or not the Community Gardens would be considered essential and be allowed to be kept open. That's when community members decided to help out.

"The community just continued to plow ahead and start seedlings," says Community Garden coordinator Jo-Anne Reynolds. "Just by chance they were bringing them in and we saw close to 500 seedlings last year donated and adopted back out to the community. All this during the turmoil of the pandemic. This year we thought let's make it official. Let's solidify growing food and fight the food insincerity, let's do that in our community."

Currently, the program is off to a growing start, with vegetable and fruit seedlings of all kinds being delivered to the Trust. The Northern Outdoor Studies class also got involved and built two raised garden beds/display tables that sit out on the sidewalk below the windows of the Trust, at 23B Bridge Street West, so that people can come and drop off or pick up their seedlings while physically and socially distanced. The Trust hopes that they will reach the goal of 1,000 seedlings being donated and adopted back out into the community. Those interested in picking up or dropping off seedlings are welcome to stop by the Trust during its operating hours, from Tuesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Adopt it, water it, love it, grow it," that is the theme for this year's Seedling Initiative. All seedlings are welcome and all those that are donated will be planted. So far the seedlings are being adopted out almost as fast as they are being donated. "This [program] comes from the love and support I've seen our community give," says Reynolds.

A couple of the community garden beds have been held for what the Trust calls "leftovers". They have also developed a "snacking bed" over at Riverside Park. It is Bed Number Nine, and it is where those who are visiting the park can feel free to pick something to snack on during their visit and enjoy. This is to help those who might need some food, while helping gardeners of other beds to continue to grow their food and put away food for the long winter months.

"I would also like to congratulate the ROCK group and the community members who mentor members of the program for their dedication to the gardens at the Riverstone Residents," says Reynolds. This is their third year managing the Riverstone Rural Outreach Community Kindness Gardens.