



## **FY19-20, Backyard Habitat Certification Program, Quarter 1 Report**

July 1, 2019 – September 30, 2019

### **Background**

Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, in partnership with Friends of Tryon Creek (FOTC), launched the expansion of the Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BHCP) into Lake Oswego on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. The program provides assistance and incentives to residents with small lots (an acre or smaller) who seek to restore native wildlife habitat to their backyards. At that time, the program had already operated successfully in Portland since its city-wide launch in 2009. Today, there are over 5,900 enrolled properties region-wide.

We are in our eighth year of implementing the BHCP within Lake Oswego. With each year, the program continues to sustain its growth at a consistent rate, meeting and then exceeding deliverables. Overall, the Backyard Habitat Certification Program has enrolled and provided our high-quality technical assistance and educational services to 491 sites within the City of Lake Oswego. These sites are mostly single family residential lots, but also include several multi-family dwellings, and other public demonstration sites like schools and religious institutions. Cumulatively, backyard habitats now span nearly 142 acres of the City of Lake Oswego. Each site receives crucial resources to create habitat and manage stormwater onsite.

### **Narrative - Success toward FY2019-20 Program Deliverables**

The attached table outlines program accomplishments made during quarter 1 of FY19-20.

#### *Primary Deliverables*

- *Site Assessments and Certifications* - During Q1 Friends of Tryon Creek, with support from Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, conducted 15 Site Assessments on newly enrolled properties, and certified 7 additional properties. This reflects the positive responses we've been getting from outreach efforts.
- *Community Demonstration Projects* – FOTC continued to develop relationships and support ongoing habitat restoration at the community demonstration sites listed below. FOTC maintains ongoing relationships with community demonstration site stewards, offering guidance and leadership in a unified effort to reach the shared goal of certification. In June 2017 we negotiated revised program deliverables for FY17-18 that allow staff to focus on supporting community

demonstration sites on working towards certification goals. Staff increased the level of support and follow-up assistance for demonstration gardens in the following ways:

*In this quarter, Gabe Sheoships and Cindy Ellison, invited each LO BHCP members to the annual Fall workshop hosted by FOTC and the City of Lake Oswego, as a way to build community and re-engage.*

- The Lake Oswego program has 21 community demonstration sites (\*Certified):
  - Friends of Rogerson Clematis Garden (2014-2015)\*
  - Brighton HOA - Fosberg Rd (2014-2015)
  - 3930 Lake Grove HOA (2014-2015)
  - 4340 Botticelli (2014-2015)
  - Leslie Commons Home Owners Association (2014-2015)
  - Westlake Fire Station (2014-2015)
  - Tryon Pool Corp (2014-2015)\*
  - Lake Oswego United Church of Christ (2013-2014)
  - River Grove Elementary (2013-2014)
  - Lakeridge Junior High (2013 -2014)\*
  - Lake Oswego United Methodist Church (2012-2013)\*
  - Forest Hills Elementary (2012-2013)\*
  - Oak Creek Elementary (2015 – 2016)
  - Weatherstone HOA - Mountain Park (2015-2016)
  - Campbell Native Garden (2015-2016)
  - Oswego Bay Condominiums (2015-2016)
  - Dennis' 7 Dees Garden Center (2016-2017)
  - 1571 Glenmorrie Drive (2017-2018)
  - Palisades Elementary School (2017-2018)\*
  - Melrose Court HOA (2018-2019)
  - Worker's Cottage Museum (2018-2019)

### ***Secondary Deliverables***

- *Community outreach and education* – During Q1, Friends of Tryon Creek (FOTC) promoted the Backyard Habitat Certification Program through a myriad of creative ways. On Saturday, July 27th, FOTC staff and volunteers led a free, public program as part of their Classroom Discovery Days series, which is a monthly open house at TCNSA. BHCP tabling materials and educational activities were on display. We were able to interact with 51 people this day. On Saturday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, FOTC staff and volunteers continued their free, public program as part of their Classroom Discovery Days series, which is a monthly open house at TCNSA. BHCP tabling materials and educational activities were on display. We were able to interact with 66 people this day. On Saturday, September 21<sup>st</sup> Cindy Ellison, and Gabe Sheoships, in partnership with the City of Lake Oswego,

hosted a workshop and native plant hike focused getting started in the BHCP program. We proudly spent a productive morning with 19 eager program participants. On Saturday, September 28, BHCP tabling materials were on display at the monthly Classroom Discovery Days series, at TCSNA. We were able to interact with 75 people this morning.

Education is a core component of the program. Site stewards are inspired to contribute to a healthy regional ecosystem by information provided throughout the course of the program. They receive tips for natural gardening, information on the benefits of weed removal, native plantings, and on-site stormwater management on water quality (including stream temperatures), and how each of these works together to keep our water and air clean, while providing crucial habitat for wildlife.

- *Native Plant Sales/Native Plant Discount Flyer* - Each spring and fall, Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon have made discounted native plants available as an exclusive perk for BHCP participants through our popular sales. The fall sale has been led by Portland Audubon, while Columbia Land Trust has led the spring sale, in partnership with Echo Valley Nursery. The sales are currently being assessed to determine if they meet the growing needs of program participants, and whether it's time to transition away from BHCP-hosted sales. In order to provide native plant discounts to participants throughout the expanded program area, BHCP has created a Native Plant Discount Flier that will offer discounts to 6-10 regional retail nurseries that sell native plants. The flier will be mailed to each participant this fall, and will incentivize neighborhood nurseries to stock a great quantity and a greater diversity of native plants, which will in turn allow participants to shop locally, boosting the local green economy. In Q1 staff designed the Flyer and contacted nurseries to promote opportunity and confirm nursery participation.
- *Open Garden Projects* – This new Portland-metro project originated as an effort to support program current participants in their certification goals and to deepen participants' understanding of located ecology and their connections to one-another. It is largely volunteer managed, making it an excellent investment. The concept is that program volunteers agree to open their gardens at a specific date and time. A schedule of open gardens is listed on a password protected page on the BHCP website. All program participants were encouraged to register for the project, in order to receive access to view the online calendar. In its first year, 595 program participants registered for the Open Gardens Project. This summer the tour was open from April – Sept and boasted over 26 open gardens, which feature an impressive range of habitat garden styles for education and inspiration. On average, each open garden receives between 15 – 50 visitors.
- *In-Kind Incentives to BHCP Participants* - Incentives help drive changes in backyards by reducing barriers to restoration activities and creating motivation. Each of the new participants in FY19-20 will receive a resource packet chock-full of educational materials and coupons for discounts on native plants at three regional nurseries. Additionally, each of the participants who become certified will receive a Certification Benefits Package that recognizes and honors their efforts with free memberships to Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon, a gift card to the Backyard Bird Shop, and coupons to One Green World Nursery and Timber Press publishing house. These certification benefits strategically serve several purposes: they incentivize certification, reduce barriers for participants to reach consecutively higher levels of certification, support our region's

local green businesses and the green economy, while connecting participants to broader conservation initiatives of the Land Trust and Portland Audubon.

- *Professional Landscaper Directory and Partner Nurseries* - Backyard Habitat Program staff manage a portfolio of local landscaping professionals who specialize in sustainable landscaping management. These partner companies are trained by the BHCP and sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon stating they will follow the certification criteria standards on BHCP properties. This Directory now boasts 45 landscape professionals committed to landscaping practiced that contribute to wildlife habitat and cleaner air and water. Our next training will be held in early December, when we anticipate adding 20+ professionals to the list.
- *Social and Electronic Media* - The Backyard Habitat Facebook page, managed by Portland Audubon and Columbia Land Trust, now has about 4,171 “followers” and very high traffic volumes. In addition to our official program Facebook presence, a program volunteer has started a spin off public Facebook group of “Friends of Backyard Habitats”. This unofficial program page is a fan club of sorts, with over 1,405 members that are using the online community as a tool for crowd sourcing plant identification, sharing plants, and getting their gardening questions answered by each other. This Facebook group has proven to be an extraordinarily effective tool for building community and support around participants working toward certification. Lastly, the Backyard Habitat Certification website, [www.backyardhabitats.org](http://www.backyardhabitats.org), was launched in Aug 2014 and has become a widely-used community resource for Backyard Habitat Program participants in Lake Oswego, as well as the other cities we serve, and even residents outside of our service areas that are working to make a difference. Last year we added an interactive map to our website showing retail, wholesale and seed nurseries in the region that sell native plants, as well as information about each nursery’s native plant availability and whether they sell plants treated with neonicotinoids. We’ve also added more information and resources so that anyone, even larger property owners that aren’t able to participate in the program, can access and use.
- *BHCP E-Newsletter* – Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon collaborated and distributed the *Summer 2019* edition of the Backyard Habitat E-News on September 19, 2019. More than 6,324 individuals received this E-news and see it as an invaluable resource for their projects; brimming with resources, information about region-wide workshops, plant sales, presentations and other habitat-friendly programming and encouragement.
- *Volunteer Component* - There are currently about 119 Backyard Habitat Program volunteers. Overall, in Q1, Backyard Habitat volunteers dedicated over 167 hours to the program. Their activities include time conducting follow-up certification visits, follow-up calls to program participants, stuffing resource packets, data entry, and planning our multi-month open garden tour.