

Thames Annual Bedding

TO Thames Community Board
FROM Derek Thompson - Community Facilities Manager
DATE 11 September 2018
SUBJECT **Thames Annual Bedding**

1 Purpose of Report

To request Community Board approval to change some annual beds in Thames, from entirely ornamental species to edible ornamental species.

2 Background

Thames has benefited for a number of years from having a display of annual beds throughout the town. This display of annuals is a great sense of pride for the gardeners who maintain them, and they and Council often receive comments about their beauty from locals and visitors alike.

These annual beds are changed twice per annum. Winter annuals are planted around about Easter and come to fruition around September. Summer annuals are planted in October and depending upon weather and species can flower over the summer period. Occasional trials of edible annuals have occurred periodically in the town.

The annuals are maintained under the main parks contract, by Parks Contractor Smart Environmental Ltd. The annuals themselves are seeded and grown by commercial nurseries, and need to be pre-ordered months in advance.

3 Issue

The Thames Community Board has shown an interest in the garden beds and therefore approval to change from ornamental annuals to edible annuals in beds is sought.

4 Discussion

Edible plants are productive plants with parts that can be safely consumed by humans. The plants proposed to replace the annual ornamentals are plants that are both edible and ornamental. It is in effect, edible landscaping that uses food plants as aesthetic features in the landscape. Because of their ornamental features, the particular varieties of plants proposed for the bedding are not generally produced on a commercial scale and are generally not sold for food.

Edible landscaping is sometimes called foodscaping and is a progressive approach that encourages all people in their homes, public spaces and workplaces to promote growing local food. Edible landscaping that integrates food producing plants into ornamental designs is considered by landscapers to be a productive landscaping alternative.

By changing over to edible ornamental annuals, the Council will be providing an additional resource for the community that is not only aesthetic, but is also practical. This is an alternative that provides returns on investment of water, fertilizer, space and time. Edible ornamental annuals planted in appropriate beds would be able to be harvested by any members of the public should they so wish. It is intended that harvesting should be limited

for domestic purposes only and that harvesting should be promoted to be taken from the back of the planted bed.

The actual sites selected would be considered carefully to ensure that there is no hazard caused to or by members of the public harvesting the plants.

The proposed changeover of annuals from ornamental annuals to ornamental edible annuals will not cost the ratepayer any additional money. There would need to be appropriate signs to promote good behaviour regarding harvesting the edible portions of the plants. Additionally, signs will be provided should the ornamental edible annuals require spraying. Hand weeding would be carried out around the plants, and insecticides would not be sprayed. It is the intent to keep the plants as healthy as possible, but if the conditions are conducive for fungoid infections, then fungicides may be applied. All efforts to use organic sprays would be undertaken. Organic sprays require more frequent applications and when applied require a with-holding period before harvesting. This with-holding period would be advertised with signs at the appropriate beds. Council would also recommend that any portion of a plant that is harvested for consumption should be washed first.

Advantages of edible ornamental annuals are;

- Healthier communities
- Sustainable use of land
- Residents gaining a practical benefit from their rates
- Water savings
- Educational
- Socialisation.

Disadvantages of edible ornamental annuals are;

- Harvesting can leave plants looking bedraggled
- Harvesting can remove entire plants and sections leaving the bedding bare for long periods
- That members of the community could be disappointed with the loss of ornamental annuals
- Plants can be susceptible to insects and fungoid infections.

If the changeover is unsuccessful, then a change back to ornamental annuals can be implemented within the following 12 months. This would be implemented next winter.

5 Suggested Resolution(s)

That the Thames Community Board:

1. Receives the 'Thames Annual Bedding report, dated 11 September 2018.
2. Approves the changeover from ornamental annuals to edible ornamental annuals in the nominated beds in Thames