



**LIFE CYCLES**

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**2025**





# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LifeCycles Project Society operates on the traditional and unceded territories of the ləkʷəŋən people – the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations – and WSÁNEĆ peoples.

We are committed to continually deepening our understanding of Indigenous histories, rights, and ways of being, and to building respectful, reciprocal relationships with the lands and the peoples who have stewarded them since time immemorial.

As an organization rooted in food systems, we recognize that many of the plants, practices, and landscapes we work with are shaped by colonial histories that displaced Indigenous food systems and relationships to land. We acknowledge these ongoing impacts, and commit to tending the land in ways that support soil health, biodiversity, and resilient local food systems, while learning from and respecting Indigenous knowledge, and working toward more just and reciprocal relationships with the land and people of these lands.

# OUR STAFF



ALEX MCARDLE  
Executive Director



LISA SMALL  
Communications  
Coordinator



RIVER STEVENS  
Welland Coordinator



ELLA SWAN  
Fruit Tree Project  
Manager



JESSIE PATERSON  
Harvest Support &  
Orchard Assistant



HANNAH KIRK  
Harvest and Volunteer  
Coordinator

# OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

ORVIS STARKWEATHER  
Chair

PIERRE CHAUVIN  
Vice Chair

SOPHIE BIRGEL  
Treasurer

## Directors at Large:

ADDTTHYA VERMA  
KARA MULLIN  
MIKA CHOUDHARY

RAHEAL GHIRMAY  
VIVIAN WALSH

## Youth Board Members:

APOLLIN LU  
SOPHIE BUCKLEY  
YASHITA KAKU

This past year has been one of remarkable growth for our organization. Our Fruit Tree Project experienced a bumper fruit crop – one of the largest harvests on record – which staff and volunteers met with enthusiasm, allowing us to expand our reach and share more fresh, healthy food across Greater Victoria.

Simultaneously, our work parties at Welland Legacy Orchard saw consistent volunteer engagement, with many of the participants returning again and again to contribute to the stewardship of this unique public heritage orchard. Participants expressed the joy of learning in such a welcoming and collaborative environment alongside our Welland Coordinator.

Our workshop series also continued to expand and adjust to the wants and needs of our community members and participants. In 2025, we introduced food preservation as a new series topic.

At the heart of all of this work is a simple but powerful goal: building a resilient local food system by growing, harvesting, and sharing food. Through our programs, we empower volunteers, participants, and staff with the tools and knowledge to become leaders in food systems change.

Our volunteers remain the backbone of this work. In 2025, 437 unique individuals contributed over 1800 hours of their time, with one volunteer alone offering over 100 hours across multiple programs! Their dedication fuels not only our day-to-day operations, but a broader movement—one that reconnects people with the land, with their food, and with each other. We are grateful for all that they do.

To all our volunteers, staff, partners, and supporters—thank you for helping build this growing movement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex McArdle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Alex McArdle, Executive Director

# FRUIT TREE PROJECT



Through the Fruit Tree Project, we harvest fruit that would otherwise go to waste, in backyards across Greater Victoria –and ensure it reaches community members who need it most.

2025 was a bumper crop year! We had one of our biggest harvests recorded since this program began in 1994.



## 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

**64,674 lbs**

TOTAL FRUIT PICKED

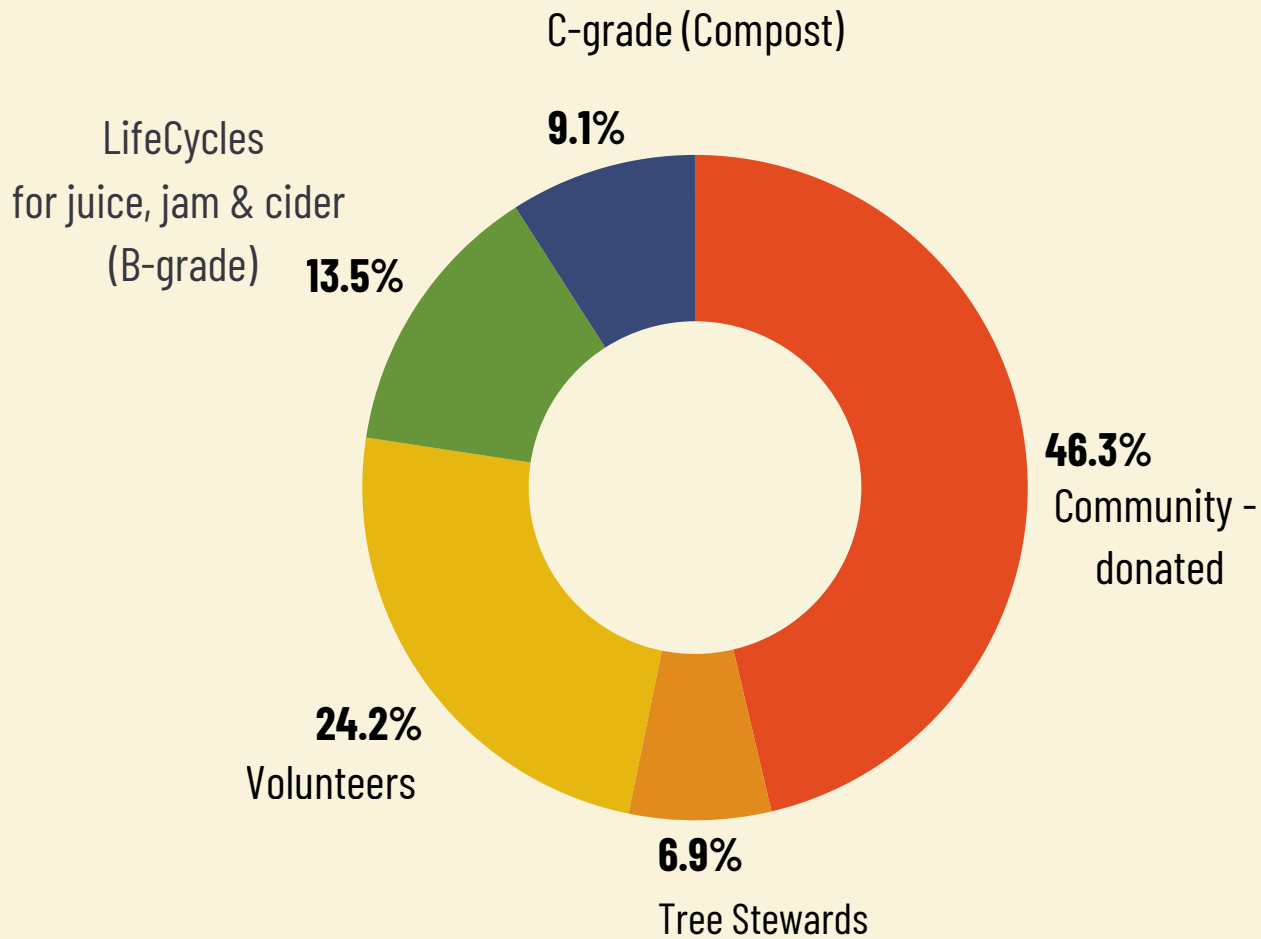
**267**

UNIQUE VOLUNTEERS

**462**

TREES PICKED

## Distribution breakdown of the 64,674 lbs of fruit picked:

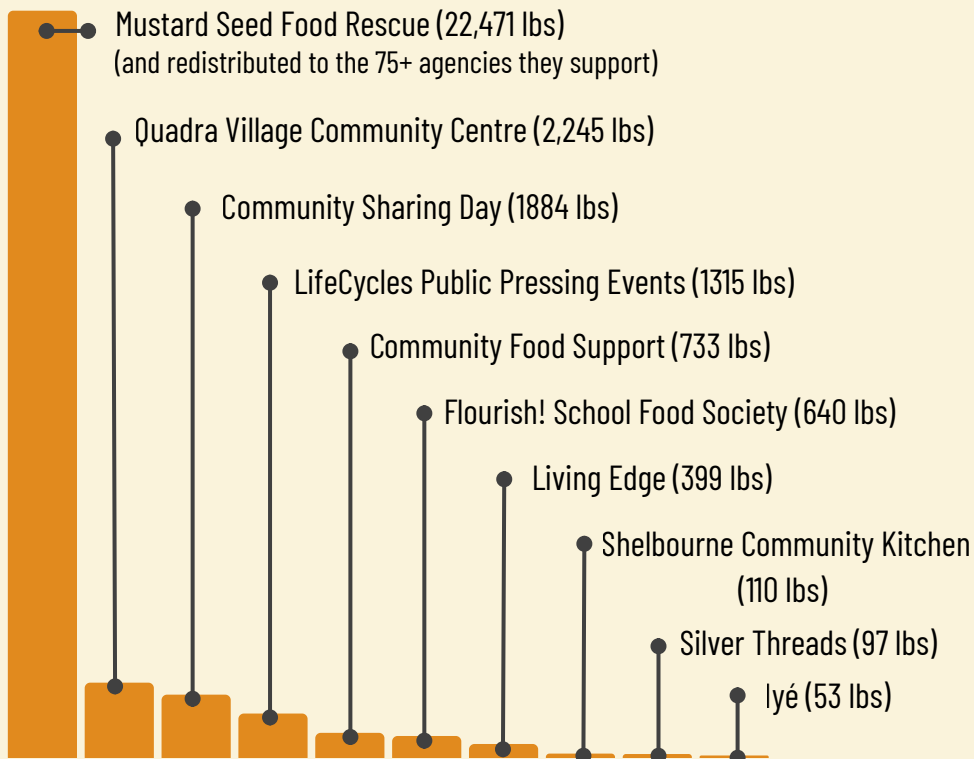


"The LifeCycles Program is about more than picking and saving fruit. It allows all participants, from home owners to every level of volunteer, especially seniors, to be engaged with other people which is extremely healthy. The social benefits are not something you can put a price on."

-Bob Skura, Volunteer



# Distribution breakdown of the 29,947 lbs that was Community Donated



"In 2025, our partnership with LifeCycles played a meaningful role in supporting the Capital Region Food Share Network and The Mustard Seed's Food Rescue Program. Lifecycles provided 39,191 lbs of fresh, locally grown fruit and vegetables [across all their projects] to over 75 community organizations across the CRD, as well as to communities in Duncan and the Gulf Islands.

This helped increase access to fresh produce for individuals experiencing food insecurity, including families and seniors, while also introducing fruits people may not often try, like figs and quince, building connection to local, seasonal foods. We also helped make sure nothing went to waste, imperfect apples were turned into nourishing meals like apple crisp, served through our hospitality centre.

Overall, this partnership is a great example of what's possible when organizations work together, redirecting surplus food in a way that supports people, reduces waste, and strengthens our local food system."

-Trevor Premack, Manager of Food Security at *The Mustard Seed*

In 2025, LifeCycles offered three workshops focused on food processing and preservation, teaching techniques such as jam making, canning, pie making, and apple pressing and preserving. We also launched an online store to sell products made from fruit gleaned through our programs and expanded sales through the South Island Farm Hub, making our products more widely accessible.

Additionally, we collaborated with Spinnakers Brewery to produce a hard cider – our popular “Backyard Blend” – made entirely from apples picked in Greater Victoria backyards!



“My only regret was that I was only able to make one apple juicing session. A new experience and enjoyable day; the bonus sample enjoyed by my grand daughters who proclaimed it ‘the best apple juice ever!’”

- Volunteer

# WELLAND COMMUNITY ORCHARD



Since 2013, LifeCycles has stewarded the incredible Welland Community Orchard, in View Royal, which is home to nearly 200 fruit trees and vines, including many rare varieties of apple, pear, plum, fig, grape, hazelnut, kiwi, paw paw, and more!

## 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

**65**

**VOLUNTEER  
WORK PARTIES**

**200+**

**UNIQUE  
VOLUNTEERS**

**1000+**

**VOLUNTEER HOURS**

**11**

**PUBLIC WORKSHOPS**

## A space for learning...

In 2025, the orchard continued to serve as a vibrant hub for community connection and learning. We hosted 65 volunteer work parties, engaging over 200 unique volunteers who contributed their time and energy to caring for the space. We delivered 11 educational tours and 11 public workshops at the orchard, covering a range of topics including irrigation, natural dyeing, mushroom cultivation, and fruit tree pruning. In addition, we facilitated five workshops at other community locations throughout Greater Victoria. These hands-on learning opportunities supported participants in building practical skills and deepening their connection to food systems and land stewardship.

This year we also launched our pruning apprenticeship program, with both summer and winter sessions. The program provided participants with free, more in-depth, hands-on training in fruit tree care.

We hosted our annual *Community Sharing Day*, welcoming approximately 400 visitors to the orchard for a day of celebration, fruit sharing, learning, and connection.

Together, these programs fostered strong community engagement and contributed to a shared sense of care and responsibility for the orchard.



"I am so grateful to LifeCycles for offering this exceptional and free pruning education! I love the sense of community that LifeCycles has fostered. Eating the literal fruits of your labours is very fulfilling!"

-Catherine Kavelaars



## A space for stewardship...

Alongside the community programming, significant work was undertaken in 2025 to care for and improve the orchard's infrastructure and ecological health.

We restored our nursery and distributed more than 50 free fruit trees to the community, supporting the expansion of local food systems beyond the orchard itself. Essential maintenance was also carried out, including the pruning of the 100-year-old King of Tompkins County apple trees, helping to preserve these heritage trees for future generations.

Infrastructure improvements, included accessibility upgrades to the composting toilet, help to enhance the usability of the space for a wider range of visitors. Volunteers also supported with the creation and installation of hand-painted educational signage, highlighting the orchard's diverse fruit tree varieties.

Overall, 2025 was a successful year, marked by meaningful improvements to infrastructure and continued care for the land.



## Prune Alongs!

Prune Alongs are opportunities for land-owners to learn about pruning at their own homes, with their own trees. Our team visits their property to assess the health and condition of their tree(s), instruct how to care for and maintain their fruit tree(s), introduce proper pruning techniques, and develop a tailored pruning plan that aligns with their goals.

From January to March 2025, during the peak winter pruning season, our team provided 20 Prune Alongs across the Greater Victoria Area, increasing participants' pruning knowledge and improving the health and longevity of local fruit trees.



"LifeCycles is an amazing organization run by a professional, passionate and tireless group of young leaders."

- Nicole MacKinnon, Volunteer

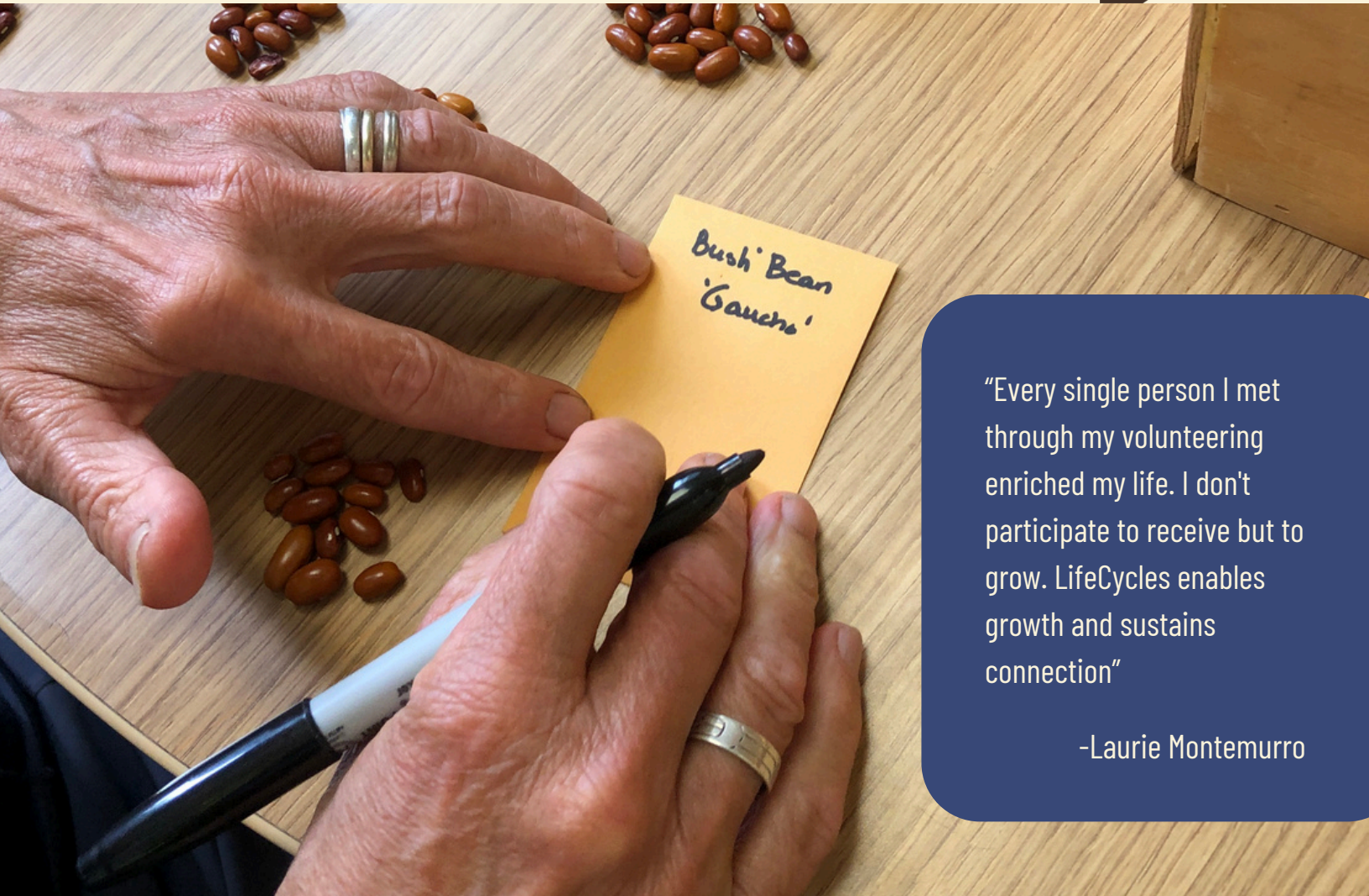
# FARM GLEANING



Our region's farmers are skilled and dedicated, producing an incredible diversity of food. However, not all produce makes it to market each week. Through our Farm Gleaning Project, we work with local farmers to harvest surplus produce and redistribute it through the Food Share Network, ensuring fresh, nutritious food reaches community members who need it.

In 2025, the Farm Gleaning Project rescued a total of **14,246 lbs** of produce from eight local farms. This included a wide variety of crops such as beets, beans, carrots, greens, cucumbers, onions, melons, peppers, squash, tomatoes, strawberries, and more!

# VICTORIA SEED LIBRARY



"Every single person I met through my volunteering enriched my life. I don't participate to receive but to grow. LifeCycles enables growth and sustains connection"

-Laurie Montemurro

In 2025, the Seed Library underwent a major revitalization. After being out of operation since the pandemic, the program was reimagined and prepared for its return.

With the support of 62 volunteers, hundreds of seed varieties were sorted and germination tested to ensure quality and viability. Look out for the relaunching the Victoria Seed Library in Greater Victoria Public Libraries in 2026!



# THANK YOU

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported our work this year. This work is a collective effort, and it would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of our community. To our hundreds of volunteers: this work simply would not be possible without your time, energy, and care!

We are deeply grateful to our many private donors who believe in this work and invest in its future. Your contributions help sustain and grow our programs. Finally, we extend our sincere appreciation to our funders, whose ongoing support provides the stability needed to keep this work alive and evolving.

Thank you for being part of this shared effort – we couldn't do it without you.



## OUR FUNDERS:

We acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia  
Anonymous Fund through the Victoria Foundation  
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Provincial Employee Community Service Fund  
Saanich Peninsula Community Foundation

BC Rehab Foundation

BGO Properties

City of Victoria

Capital Regional District

District of Saanich

Government of Canada

Royal Oak Women's Institute

United Way British Columbia

View Royal

Western Financial Group

"I have been with LifeCycles for 20 plus years, and the experiences I have had picking luscious fruit with interesting, environmentally-conscious people is so rewarding. Lifecycles has grown into an amazing, highly respected, multi-faceted community program that is a window into what our future could look like if we applied all these values of sharing, working together, simplicity, and respecting nature."

- Rita Irwin, Volunteer



# CONTACT US



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