

How to Participate in Communities in Bloom

Growing Great Places Together



THE PROGRAM

Communities in Bloom is a volunteer and partnership-driven charitable organization that uses a multi-tiered competitive evaluation process to foster community strength, involvement and continuous improvement. This is accomplished by nurturing environmental sustainability, enhancements of green spaces, and heritage conservation, in cultural and natural environments encompassing municipal, residential, commercial, and institutional spaces. National beautification programs have flourished in Europe – including Great Britain, France and Ireland – for decades, and were the inspiration for Communities in Bloom.

The program began in 1995 with 29 Canadian communities and has grown to improve the quality of life in hundreds of participating communities in the provincial, national and international editions.

All communities are invited to participate in the provincial or national editions, within their population category. Trained volunteer judges travel across Canada during the summer to evaluate communities and the overall contributions of municipality, businesses & institutions and residents, including volunteer efforts in regards to the following criteria:

Community Appearance reflects an overall effort by the municipality, businesses, institutions and the residents throughout the community to create great first impressions and a sense that there is continuous attention and upkeep to critical elements of a community that benefit quality of life and economic vitality. Elements for evaluation are: parks and green spaces, medians, boulevards, sidewalks, streets; municipal, commercial, institutional and residential properties; ditches, road shoulders, vacant lots, signs and buildings; weed control, litter clean-up, graffiti prevention/removal and vandalism deterrent programs.



Lambton Shores, ON

Tree Management Woodlands, Canopy Management, Urban and Rural Forestry includes the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents with regards to written policies, by-laws, standards for tree management protection (selection, planting, and maintenance), long and short-term management plans, tree replacement policies, pollinator-friendly tree selection, tree inventory including heritage, memorial, and commemorative trees, and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs.

Environmental Action pertains to the impact of human activities on the environment and the subsequent efforts and achievements of the community with respect to: environmental stewardship, policies, by-laws, programs and best practices for waste reduction and landfill diversion, composting sites, landfill sites, hazardous waste collections, water conservation, energy conservation, and activities under the guiding principles of sustainable development pertaining to green spaces.



Orangeville, ON

Landscape includes planning, design, construction and maintenance of parks, green spaces and cemeteries suitable for the intended use and location on a year-round basis. Elements for evaluation include native and introduced materials; biodiversity, materials and constructed elements; appropriate integration of hard surfaces and art elements, use of turf and groundcovers. Landscape design should harmonize the interests of all sectors of the community and provide safe and secure public spaces. Standards of execution and maintenance should demonstrate best practices, including quality of naturalization, use of groundcovers and wildflowers along with turf management.

Heritage Conservation includes efforts to preserve and protect both natural and cultural heritage within the community. Preservation of natural heritage pertains to policies, plans and actions concerning all elements of biodiversity including flora and fauna ecosystems and associated geological structures and formations. Cultural conservation represents the “persona” of a community and refers to the heritage that helps define the community including the legacy of tangible elements such as heritage buildings, monuments, memorials, cemeteries, artifacts, museums and intangible elements such as traditions, customs, festivals and celebrations.



Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON

Plant and Floral Displays evaluates the efforts of the municipality, businesses, institutions and residents to design, plan, execute, and maintain plant and floral displays of high-quality standards. Evaluation includes the design and arrangements of flowers and plants (annuals, perennials, bulbs, ornamental grasses, edible plants, water efficient and pollinator friendly plants) in the context of originality, distribution, location, diversity and balance, colour, and harmony. It also pertains to flowerbeds, carpet bedding, containers, baskets and window boxes.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Communities in Bloom is designed to be a continuous community improvement program. It is divided into three phases: Provincial, National and International.

Provincial Editions

Communities participate in their population category within their province and are awarded a bloom rating of 1 to 5 blooms at a provincial awards ceremony in the fall. Based on provincial guidelines, success in a provincially evaluated category leads to the community being invited to the national program.

Any community is allowed to participate in a non-competitive provincial category either to learn about the program or, if they are past participants, to maintain their initiatives, program and committees. Both evaluated and non-evaluated options are available in Ontario.

Each provincial organization also offers special programs and categories specific to provincial context and objectives.

National Edition

Who is invited to participate in the national edition?

Population

- Past National finalists from the previous year's national edition are invited back to the national competition
- Communities from the previous year's provincial editions as recommended by the respective provincial organization.

Circle of Excellence

A non-competitive category for National Winners without an evaluation.

Class of Champions

A category where Canadian communities who have won in the Population category compete amongst themselves.

Grand Champions

A category where past winners of the Population, International Challenge and Class of Champions compete amongst themselves.

Special Attractions

A category that features green attractions such as parks, living history museums, public gardens, etc.

International Challenge

A competitive category between national and international winners.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

Communities have recognized numerous benefits from participating in the program:

- Increased civic pride and community involvement
- Environmental stewardship through the enhancement of green spaces
- Mobilization of citizens, groups, organizations, businesses and the municipality
- Best practices and Information exchange
- Valuable information and feedback from the judges
- Economic development and increased property values
- Marketing and promotional opportunities
- Positive benefits for the tourism, hospitality and retail industries
- Improved quality of life
- Participation from all ages and walks of life of the community

PROCESS FOR PARTICIPATION

Registrations

Helpful Information on the program and the evaluation form are available by contacting the CiB ON Provincial Organization by visiting:
<https://cibontario.ca/>

You can access the on-line registration form by following this link:
[2024 CiB ON Registration Form](#)

Cost

Evaluated category (by population)

Up to 5,000 population: \$400 CAD
5,001- 10,000 population: \$575 CAD
10,001 - 20,000 population: \$700 CAD
20,000 – 50,000 population: \$800 CAD
Over 50,001 population: \$1,000 CAD

Non evaluated category

Networking (Non-Evaluated): \$250 CAD

Your Local Committee

The committee is usually composed of local citizens, including one member of council and members of associations, businesses and organizations interested in horticulture, heritage and improving community life.

The committee's objectives are:

- To involve the community by means of local contests, which increase awareness about the program, its benefits and opportunities.
- To act as a liaison with the municipal authorities and Communities in Bloom.

Budget

While participation in the program does not require considerable financial resources, obtaining funds to promote the program, involve the community, honour participants and volunteers, attend the award ceremonies, etc. is recommended.

It is suggested for the community to prepare an estimated budget and to find sources of funding, such as fundraising programs, community events, etc. Communities in Bloom can provide fundraising ideas and examples from other communities.

Bloom Ratings

Communities are rated from 1 to 5 Blooms

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|---------------------|----------|
| Up to 55 points: | 1 Bloom |
| 56-63 points: | 2 Blooms |
| 64-72 points: | 3 Blooms |
| 73-81 points: | 4 Blooms |
| 82 points and more: | 5 Blooms |

There are four (4) levels of 5 Blooms exclusive to the National and International Edition, for evaluated communities only.

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|--------------------|--------------|
| 5 Blooms: | 82 to 83.9% |
| 5 Blooms (Bronze): | 84 to 86.9% |
| 5 Blooms (Silver): | 87 to 89.9% |
| 5 Blooms (Gold): | 90% and over |

- A community does not have to be entered in a competitive category, but will need to be evaluated.

- With the introduction of this enhanced higher award standards, the marking of scores will be more critical.



PROGRAM COMMITMENT

The participating communities have a responsibility to:

- Involve the entire community to participate (with the support of municipal council)
- Prepare for the judging during the summer
- Provide lodging for 1 or 2 nights for 2 judges.
- Provide transportation for the judges to and from the nearest airport/train station.
- Attend the Provincial and/or National awards ceremonies.
- Pay a registration fee, based on population categories and level of competition.

THE JUDGES' VISIT – USEFUL TIPS

- Prepare information that addresses all criteria in the evaluation form.
- Make good use of the time spent by the judges in your community, to benefit from their expertise.
- The judges' itinerary should include all of the criteria.
- Provide the judges with the opportunity to interact with key individuals and network in your community.
- Let them see that you are proud of your achievements.



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AWARDS CEREMONIES

The Provincial Awards Ceremonies are held in the fall and include presentations and awards to all participants along with the judges' feedback.

The National Awards Ceremonies is held in the fall, in conjunction with the National Symposium on Parks and Grounds. All National Finalists are encouraged to attend. The communities are showcased by means of community exhibits and promotional material.

PROMOTIONS

www.communitiesinbloom.ca: CiB's website gives visibility to our participants in the NewsComm and Explore our Communities section of our website. The website also includes a resource centre featuring information from sponsors and communities along with electronic copies of our magazines.

Social Networks: CiB participants are welcomed to send us updates, news and photos to post on our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages:
www.facebook.com/communitiesinbloom
www.twitter.com/cibcef
www.instagram.com/cibcef/

Within the context of climate change and environmental concerns, all communities involved in the program can be proud of their efforts, which benefit all of society.

2023 Partners & Supporters of CIB Ontario:

As a Provincial Organization, Communities in Bloom Ontario maintains a professional relationship with a growing number of key similar minded sector members. These relationships and the crafting of creative partnerships is but another reason to join our growing family of supporters and participants. A real sense of Community and respect for the environment is reflected in all we do. We cordially invite you to be part of our growing influence in Ontario.

