
Crops of the Parkland – Yorkton Saskatchewan

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With over 80% of Canada's population classified as urban and less than 1% of Canadians now classified as farmers, most of the population has lost touch with where their food comes from!

The Crops of the Parkland was conceived over a 2 year period with discussions between Thom Weir, Phil DeVos – Mayor of Yorkton and Randy Goulden – Executive Director of Tourism Yorkton. These discussions resulted in a concept based on 2 principals.

To provide a demonstration of crops that are grown in the area to:

- Demonstrate to and educate the population about where their food comes from and the importance of agriculture to Yorkton, the parkland area, Saskatchewan and western Canada.
- Create an Agro-Tourism opportunity to attract tourism to Yorkton and area

The Crops of the Parkland is a partnership between City of Yorkton, Tourism Yorkton, Yorkton Chamber of Commerce & Viterra.

The plots were initiated in the spring of 2006 and repeated in 2007. They consisted of plots divided into 9 groups. Each area was sponsored. They included:

<u>Crop</u>	<u>2007 Sponsor</u>
• Oilseeds	TD Canada Trust
• Canola	Saskatchewan Canola Commission
• Pulse Crops	SSCA & Morris
• Barley	Viterra
• Special Crops	Flamen Sales
• Wheat	Canadian Wheat Board
• Oats	Saskatchewan Oat Commission
• Annual Forage	Western Farm Leadership Co-op
• Heritage Crops	Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists – Yorkton Branch

There were also plots showing agronomic practices including weed control, insect and disease control with seed treatment, disease control with fungicide, hybrid seed production, fertility and herbicide tolerant wheat.

A pamphlet and self guided walking tour was prepared. This served as a pamphlet to attract attention in the Tourism Yorkton and surrounding tourism offices as well as being the self guided walking tour for the site.

This was the information distributed in the 2007 to local press.

Have you ever wondered what that yellow-blossomed crop you just passed on the way into Yorkton is? Or about that field of blue that looked like a prairie mirage? Stop in at Tourism Yorkton's Visitor Centre to find the answers.

A fully labeled demonstration shows all the crops grown in the area as part of a display located right next to the visitor centre. One can experience up close what the plants look like in addition to seeing the products that comes from them. As well, a series of plots trace the development of the crop we now call wheat from it's earliest origins such as "einkorn", "emmer" and "spelt" through to varieties that opened the west like "Red Fife" and "Marquis".

Special Crops such as Quinoa, Borage and Coriander are also shown at the demonstration. This year's demonstration includes a number of new plots including Hemp and Buckwheat.

Facts about the crops are available when one takes the self-guided crop tour using a pamphlet attained from Tourism Yorkton's friendly staff or from a self serve box after hours. Larger groups can pre-book a guided tour by professional agrologists.

No longer will the oilseed grown by Saskatchewan farmers that ends up as canola oil or bio-diesel; the seed that becomes mustard on your hot dog bun; or the many uses for oats, barley, wheat, and other crops, be a mystery.

The plots are adjacent to the Tourism Yorkton office on Hwy 16 – just south of Yorkton. This office has over visitors during the summer months. The plots have been used for local schools to visit, to augment their science and agriculture classes. They were also visited by a high school football team from an inter city school in Winnipeg. As well, local service organizations have held supper bar-b-ques at the site and toured the plots.

There are a number of things that we would like to do with the plots.

- We have established perennial forage plots at the site and will be touring them in 2008. These include both domestic and native forages.
- We will be installing a short range FM transmitter for accompaniment with the self-guided tour plan.
- We would also like to establish monthly open houses through the summer to try and get more local people to visit.
- In the long term, we are going to look at establishing an interpretive centre to showcase modern agricultural techniques farmers utilize to grow safe and nutritious food as well as feed, fibre and fuel for North America and the world.