

Episode 49 | Joseph Morrisette

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Sarah Smith 0:28

Hello and welcome back to Discover Stories on Re-Imagine Radio. I'm Sarah Smith, your host of the podcast and a student intern at the Vancouver Adapted Music Society. My guest today is Joseph Morrisette. Joseph is a gardener with the Disabled Independent Gardeners Association, or DIGA, and has also recently joined as a member of their Board of Directors. Before we get into our conversation, it's important that I acknowledge the land on which we are fortunate to host this podcast. This is the unceded and ancestral territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and has been stewarded by them since time immemorial. Vancouver is located on territory that was never ceded or given up to the crown by these peoples. The term unceded acknowledges the dispossession of the land and the inherent rights that Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh hold to the territory. The term serves as a reminder that these Peoples have never left their territories and will always retain their jurisdiction and relationships with the land. Joseph, welcome to Discover Stories. Thanks for joining me. Thank you very much. Yeah, could you maybe just introduce yourself and tell us your story, or tell us about you.

Joseph Morrisette 2:03

Yeah, I was teaching in Ottawa, business management and real estate, and I had a degree from university in real estate and management, and then I had my own company, until 2008, I had a car accident, and that's when I became disabled, and I sold my company, and then we decided to, my wife and I would decide to move to Vancouver, because they have a better service for neurology, and I had a quite a bit of brain damage through the accident and getting a lot of seizures and different things like that. And then about five years ago, I had a stroke, and I was totally paralyzed. And then I was at GF Strong for six months, and then I'm still semi-paralyzed. On my left side, my arm is paralyzed, but beside that, life is good, and I love Vancouver, and I love baking. I can't bake too much anymore,

but I did like to do it a lot, and gardening was introduced to me by Shareen, and because I met her in in a Zoom meeting, and she invited me to go to DIGA, And that's how it started. And since then, and I love it.

Sarah Smith 4:05

That's great. That's a really cool sort of story arc. So it was after you had your accident and then your stroke that you started gardening.

Joseph Morrisette 4:15

Yeah.

Sarah Smith 4:15

Okay.

Joseph Morrisette 4:18

So, yeah, I never gardened before.

Sarah Smith 4:21

Okay, so you're new, totally new. Nice. What do you like most about gardening with DIGA?

Joseph Morrisette 4:31

I like right now I'm doing the gardening at GF Strong, because they have a new garden there, and we got quite a bit of help to guide us with it. Plus, I receive a garden box from the Disability Foundation of DIGA, and I have it on my balcony, and I worked last year on it, but it was not successful because I used the wrong type of vegetables. At this time, I have a lot of guidance from different people, from DIGA, of what I should grow, and right now, I'm just working on the soil to make sure it's ready for the seeding.

Sarah Smith 5:27

Cool. Okay, so they're sort of like guiding you in what works in Vancouver for, like, the climate and what grows here.

Joseph Morrisette 5:34

Yeah.

Sarah Smith 5:35

Cool, really cool. Do you know yet what you're going to be growing this gardening season in your home garden box?

Joseph Morrisette 5:41

Yeah, they wrote it down for me. I'm going to be growing a lot of leaves, some radishes, beets and what else I have? A whole list of different things she told me I could do and what else I have, beans, lots of stuff. I want to use every little inch I have in the box.

Sarah Smith 6:16

Yeah, that's great. Take advantage of it as much as you can.

Joseph Morrisette 6:21

Exactly, with the cost of food now, it's nice to have stuff growing on the balcony, and it's nice to see it every you know, every week it's growing and growing and growing. And that's what I like.

Sarah Smith 6:41

That's really cool. Yeah, you can see it as it goes and all the way along as it progresses, and then you get to eat it at the end of it, or cook with it, or do something that's fantastic. Yeah, that's awesome. And then you said you're working on the garden at GF Strong as well. Is that one like vegetables and fruits that you can eat, or is it more flowers?

Joseph Morrisette 7:02

No, no flowers. It's, it's very hot there the, I don't know if you went there, but the garden at GF Strong, it's in the square and the sun is really, really good. But last year I had so many tomatoes I had, must've had about 35 tomatoes.

Sarah Smith 7:23

Wow.

Joseph Morrisette 7:24

And I was so excited. And then I went over and all my tomatoes had holes in it.

Sarah Smith 7:29

Oh, no.

Joseph Morrisette 7:31

And what happened here? And I realized I had a lot of hummingbirds, they suck the juice from the tomatoes. But this year DIGA will be able to help me put a net over tomatoes, that way I won't get caught again. But when I was there, I saw a lot of hummingbirds, but I never thought they were threats. They love tomatoes. So it gets hot there that I will be growing

some tomatoes, and I'll be growing some of my jalapenos. I use a lot of jalapenos in my cooking.

Sarah Smith 8:28

Cool. That's awesome. That sounds really great, that you get to, like, grow them and then eat them and see the whole process. That's fantastic. And I heard that you have been gardening with DIGA for a while, but now you're also a board member at DIGA. Can you talk a little bit about why you wanted to be on the Board?

Joseph Morrisette 8:52

The reason why is because I want to, I want people to know more about DIGA, because I didn't know about it until I met Shareen. But as a disabled person, I had no clue it did exist. And now, as a board member, I want to provide some information of my own experience with DIGA and what I'm looking for and what other people are looking for, and that way we could all work together on the board to be able to provide all the tools for the volunteers and the staff to do a great job as they are doing now. But even the greater one, because of the need out there for the gardening, because I think it's a great idea. I know it's a great idea, and there's so many gardens that DIGA is doing all over the place, and there's so many people who love gardening, and I'm trying to get seniors who are dependent to be able to provide volunteer work for us, because, you know, they know a lot of gardening and stuff like that, and you know, would be good for them, good for us, as a disabled person, to know more about it.

Sarah Smith 10:27

Yeah, that's a really cool idea to like, have seniors come in and help volunteer, and so that you get to have more people involved, and more people can garden and benefit from it. Like you said.

Joseph Morrisette 10:39

Yeah, yes, that's what I'm looking for.

Sarah Smith 10:42

That's a really great idea. I love that. I have one other question. I was wondering, what advice would you give to persons with disabilities who are interested in gardening for the first time?

Joseph Morrisette 10:58

Don't be scared. You know, and just enjoy the moment. If it's okay, if it's growing, it's growing, if it's not growing because of a mistake, you know, you could try it again. You know, the first time I did it, I did it somewhere else, one of the gardens they had, and I didn't do a good job. You know, and so the next year, I did better. Between every year to be better, it's good. You know, you meet people you know, especially you need to be to be socialized and to give it the opportunity to be able to communicate with the people and to have different interests. Because right now I started the same time I did the gardening, I started doing painting, and I'm doing a lot of paintings, I have paintings and I do gardening, but the gardening is coming up, I'm getting anxious for it.

Sarah Smith 12:17

That's cool. Those sound like really cool hobbies, and it sounds like you're really excited for the gardening season, really? Yeah, that's fantastic. Well, thank you so much for sharing all of this. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about your experience with gardening or with DIGA, or anything else before we wrap up?

Joseph Morrisette 12:34

No, no, I'm happy that everything is working well with the gardening, and I'm sure this year it will be great. And thank you so much for inviting me.

Sarah Smith 12:52

Yeah, of course, happy to have you here. And I hope all of the best for your tomatoes and the battle with the hummingbirds this this summer. And happy gardening. And thanks for joining me.

Joseph Morrisette 13:03

Thank you so much.

Sarah Smith 13:04

And to all of our listeners, thanks for tuning in today. We hope you join us next time on Discover Stories.