

VICTORIA

# Going green is no flight of fancy

Victoria Butterfly Gardens finds smart ways to save energy – and money



CVS Cruise Victoria has a long history of sustainable business management and operates its vehicle fleet on 100% biodiesel, a carbon-neutral fuel source



Giant Atlas moths rest on Kurtis Herperger's hands

BY GOODY NIOSI

Operating a green business doesn't just make ethical sense, it's also a good business move, and it's a move Kurtis Herperger knows well. The gardens manager of **Victoria Butterfly Gardens** in Brentwood Bay offers many examples where increasing the sustainability of the popular tourism destination – from recycling programs to replacing an old heating system – has positively affected the bottom line.

When Victoria Butterfly Gardens was purchased by the **Truffles Group** in 2008, it began to institute a series of environmental initiatives. The changes it made earned it an Eco-Star award from the **Capital Regional District (CRD)** in 2010. Joining the **Climate Smart Business** program in spring of 2011 allowed the company to measure how far it had come and where it was going.

"They wanted to make sure that they were keeping engaged with community initiatives," said Climate Smart client adviser manager **Lyle Perry**, "so they came through a training program that was sponsored by the CRD, the **City of Victoria** and Saanich."

"We made a lot of the changes before," Herperger said. "Climate Smart was the tool that we used to actually gauge it, prove it and log it, and finalize how this was affecting our bottom line. This is a reputable source so we're not just greenwashing. We were already leaders in the community in sustainability efforts."

It all started with recycling. With more than 100,000 visits to Butterfly Gardens every year, the business creates a great deal of waste. By making recycling containers available and by sorting

through all its waste, the business reduced its garbage by one-tenth to only one garbage bag per week.

Every little thing makes a difference, Herperger said. For example, all the cleaning products used by Butterfly Gardens are green.

"There are more and more green products available," Herperger said. "When we're buying, we don't just look at the price, we also look at the effect on the environment. We live on a peninsula on an island; we're surrounded by ocean. We realize this all goes somewhere."

Butterfly Gardens also did a full audit of its electrical system including fans, heating and lighting. It switched to eco-friendly bulbs where possible and put its office thermostats on a timer. Herperger said that by switching the light on just one exit sign to LED, the savings amounted to \$95 for one year.

The company's biggest overhead item was its gas heating. The 12,000-square-foot greenhouse has to be heated to tropical temperatures, and 20 years after being built, there were big inefficiencies in the system.

Herperger's suggestion to the owners was to enclose the greenhouse in a poly-membrane with a four-inch air space between the poly and the glass. The savings amounted to 25% – 40% per month, meaning the expenditure paid for itself within eight months.

Six months ago, well after starting on the Climate Smart program, the business also installed a new, more efficient boiler. Savings on the heating bill so far have averaged about 25% per month. Perry said the initial expenditure, with help from a **Fortis BC** retrofit

program, was \$16,000, but the natural gas savings amounted to \$2,000 per month.

"It's great to get a quick win like that," he said.

Other programs include reproducing as many butterflies in-house as possible to avoid long-distance shipping and encouraging employees to car pool or use greener forms of transportation. The greenhouse is also 100% pesticide free, relying on beneficial insects to control bugs.

"A lot of the time going green is associated with expensive technology retrofits," said Perry, "but a lot of times, if you can leverage incentive programs offered by various utilities, and then just look at common sense operational management, you'll get to green and to lower costs at the same time."

It's no longer expensive to be green, added Herperger. "We're proof that it's the other way around."

Other Victoria area businesses that have worked with Climate Smart:

**Rogers' Chocolates** has been a Climate Smart certified company since 2011 and is currently working on its 2013 certification. It has performed extensive lighting retrofits at its Vancouver Island and Lower Mainland stores as well as in its factory in Saanich.

These retrofits will drastically reduce overhead costs to make the company more profitable in the short term. The company has also started to hold more executive and managerial meetings via web conferencing to reduce the number of flights taken to and from the Lower Mainland.

Although **CVS Cruise Victoria Ltd.** has been a Climate Smart certified company since 2012, the company has a long history

of sustainable business management. Throughout the entire tourism high season, CVS operates its vehicle fleet on 100% biodiesel, a carbon-neutral fuel source. The company also uses a state-of-

the-art fleet management system comprised of fleet tracking units, engine control modules and advanced preventative maintenance to make sure its vehicles are operating as efficiently as possible. ■

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