

Roots and Shoots

The Newsletter of the Community Garden Network
of Edmonton and Area



OF EDMONTON AND AREA

“...the voice that promotes and supports community gardening”

November
2007

Indoor Gardening for the Winter
Months

Lobbyist Act Update

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

What a man
needs in
gardening is a
cast iron back
with a hinge
on it.

~ Charles Dudley
Warner (1829-1900)

When our gardens are covered in snow houseplants can still provide us with the pleasure of foliage and flowers indoors through the winter, as well as improving a room's air quality by absorbing toxins and increasing humidity.

If we want our houseplants to thrive we must provide them with the light, warmth, humidity and food that they need.

No plant will grow without some light, but a snake plant, ivy or fern might thrive in a shady room where other plants would fail. Sponge the leaves of shiny leaved plants occasionally.

Plants differ in their need for water. Most flowering plants need compost that is moist at all times, but for foliage plants let the top half inch of compost dry out

between watering. For cacti and succulents, let the compost dry out almost completely during the winter.

African violets will not tolerate a cold room. Other plants may tolerate cooler temperatures, but only cacti will tolerate cold draughts.

Houseplants also differ in their need for humidity. Papery leaves generally need more humidity than thick leathery ones. We can increase humidity by misting with a fine spray -- use tepid water, or by grouping the plants together, which is also be an attractive way of displaying a plant collection.

Most houseplants are resting during the winter, not actively growing, which means they do not need feeding. The exceptions are flowering plants such as poinsettias.

Not-for-profit organizations have won the battle to be exempted from the new Lobbyist Act.

By lumping voluntary organizations with well-heeled lobbyist groups the Act had threatened to put an unreasonable administrative burden on already overstretched groups.

Alberta's government has listened to the campaigners and introduced a 'public good exemption' which will exempt charitable and not-for-profit organizations, provided they don't represent corporate or trade-union interests.

'We were extremely pleased the government heard the message we were sending, heard the problems it would have created for the sector and decided to act,' said Bob Wyatt, the executive director of the Muttart Foundation,

Our thanks go to Bob Wyatt and the Muttart Foundation for the lead they took on this issue.



A Community Garden on a Different Scale

My name is Carol Cooper and I am a Master Composter/Recycler with the city of Edmonton, I have volunteered with the Community Garden Network for a couple of events and I am also a volunteer with Ripple Africa - a charity in Malawi, Africa. I am planning my first volunteer trip to Malawi in April and May 2008 and am very excited about getting my "hands dirty". Malawi is at the south end of Africa's Great Rift Valley and is a small country of about 118,000 square km (similar to Portugal) with a population of 13 million. It is an agrarian economy with a small tourism sector. Although according to its gross national income it is the poorest country in Africa, it is a peaceful democracy and referred to as "the warm heart of Africa" because of the friendly people.

I will be going to a rural district in northern Malawi along the shores of Lake Malawi. The people here are subsistence farmers and fishermen who live a traditional village life where they work for the betterment and survival of the village as a whole. Homes are often made of mud with a thatch roof and women cook over open fires. Life is simple, close to nature (there is no electricity) and there is a strong sense of community.

I want to tell you about the gardening initiatives. The local diet is very limited and Ripple Africa has set up an experimental vegetable garden to show people that it is possible to grow a larger variety of vegetables and fruit and to encourage and educate them to set up their own gardens. They teach composting, fruit growing and drying, cover environmental issues, and introduce new foods for improved nutrition. While they are encouraging families to have their own gardens and fruit trees, this year they have assisted the local community to set up five large vegetable gardens. After the initial support by Ripple the community will run the gardens as their own businesses. The goal is to teach by example and then give each individual the skills to be self sufficient and for the community to build small business. Ripple Africa is also funding an AIDS Support Group to set up a maize and vegetable garden so they can provide their own food and generate income for their own needs.

As the gardens are now producing, the next step is to have a good market for them. Ripple Africa has negotiated with the local chief for a prime site near a major roadblock where all traffic on this lakeside road has to stop. The goal is to build a

large vegetable market with a consistent quality product. This will have a huge impact for the home and community gardeners, to have a prime location to sell their product. In addition they can sell other goods that they are starting to produce, such as peanut butter, dried fruits and wooden furniture. The plan to thatch the market building roof will cap it all off as that will highlight the newly-found thatching skills in the area.

What stands out for me throughout all these plans is the sense of community – it is community land, everyone contributes, skills are learned and shared in order to improve the health and welfare of their village and community. This is community gardening.

Ripple Africa has many initiatives in the health, education and environmental fields and I invite you to go to their website for specific information. www.rippleafrica.org

If you are interested in donating to any of the programs I ask you to use this site as it helps me accomplish my fundraising goal. The money will go directly to Ripple Africa and not to me:
<http://www.justgiving.com/SupportingMalawi>

MORE INFORMATION

- Carbon Footprint: If people are considering offsetting their Carbon Footprint, Ripple Africa has a massive tree planting program as well as a fuel efficient cooking stove program. The website has a simple carbon offset calculator to help you see the impact we create in the west and how investing here will help the community as well as the world.
- Christmas gift idea. What about a donation as a gift to someone. If you donate through my fundraising site and send me an e-mail, I will send a note of thanks and acknowledgement for you to give. Items to consider: Sponsorship for a secondary student to go to school \$70 a year.
 - Donation to the new library to buy secondary school textbooks and books in the local language - any amount is welcomed.
 - A bicycle ambulance. This is a brilliantly simple idea for rural areas and ideal particularly for pregnant women. \$300 each.
 - Toys and other supplies for the Nursery schools - any amount will make a difference.
- My fundraising site is www.justgiving.com/SupportingMalawi
- My email address is caroljcooper@shaw.ca

Call for Board Members!

Community Garden Network is currently seeking candidates for its Board of Directors. It is expected that monthly meetings and additional committee responsibilities will be approximately 6-10 hours per month. Candidates are asked to consider a commitment to the Community Garden Network Board for a three year rotation. Please contact Susan Penstone or Trudy Spooner for more information, 447-9600.

Annual General Meeting Announcement

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) has been announced for **February 23rd**.

Please mark your calendars! We will be hosting our Annual Meeting followed by a workshop (topic yet to be announced).

At this time we are also **looking for volunteers** to help coordinate and organize. If you are interested please contact Trudy at info@edmcommunitygardens.org

Community Leagues and Community Gardens...Naturally!

Make a difference in your community by starting a community garden with your Community League. It's an excellent way to encourage people to get outside and socialize, provide an excellent opportunity for exercise and fresh air, allow children to learn about the food growing process, reduce crime in the area and create a beautiful space for all community members to enjoy!

For more information please contact Trudy Spooner with the Community Garden Network at 447-9600 or info@edmcommunitygardens.org



Stopping By Woods On A Snowy Evening

By Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.



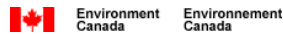
MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Thank you so much for another successful and fun year of Community Gardening and Community building. Your work, commitment and dedication to community gardening help to make Edmonton a great place to live and play!

Thank you to our sponsors



Edmonton Federation of
Community Leagues



Edmonton Horticultural Society



If you wish to submit articles or notices for the upcoming edition of Roots and Shoots, the next deadline is January 2, 2008. For newsletter submissions or inquiries, please contact Jane Leaper at jane_leaper@hotmail.com.