

Roots & Shoots

"...the voice that promotes and supports community gardening."

MAY-JUNE 2009

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE



OF EDMONTON AND AREA

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Write to us! Send your comments, recipes, article submissions, etc. by post or e-mail.

Free Seeds

Are you a member of the CGN? If so, then you have access to **free seeds** for your garden! Benefits of membership with CGN include:

- ✓ Guidance and support on setting up and maintaining your garden.
- ✓ Potential access to funding for new garden start-ups.
- ✓ Opportunity to network with other gardens.
- ✓ A connection between gardens and city & community leaders.
- ✓ The ability to vote at the Annual General Meeting (early spring each year).
- ✓ A CGN Membership Kit.

Yearly Memberships are just \$10 per garden. Call the CGN office to buy or renew.

Advertise in Roots & Shoots

Reach interested gardeners in and near Edmonton throughout the year. Contact our office for details.



Card Artwork Contest!

The CGN is creating "Thank You" cards to give out to donors, supporters and volunteers. Submit your design for the card and you may win a CGN prize pack! Send your submissions by August 31, 2009 to Ginger Potts at the CGN office (post or email); original art will be returned upon request.

Just Food Edmonton Logo Contest

www.foodforalledmonton.org

We are looking for a simple logo that can represent what we do, on items like letterhead, t-shirts and the like.

The grand prize is:

- ✓ \$100 gift certificate to Strathcona Farmer's Market,
 - ✓ \$100 Gift certificate to The Blue Pear
 - ✓ A copy of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan
- Deadline June 1, 2009. Open to all ages.

E-mail your idea as a JPEG to info@foodforalledmonton.org

The City of Edmonton is looking for a group of 'green thumbs' to take on the coordination and operation of the Greenhouse located in the ACT Recreation Centre in Edmonton's beautiful Rundle Park. This is an exciting opportunity to develop a thriving greenhouse and coordinate special events, workshops and activities for the community with the support of City of Edmonton Staff. For more details please contact Volunteer Services Program Manager, Anna Barkway at 780-496-4935 or email anna.barkway@edmonton.ca 🌿

Question for readers: do you have any information about the safety of either plastic rain barrels or metal (especially rusty) rain barrels? Write to us and let us know your take on this. Answers will be provided in next edition!



Plant a Row, Grow a Row

*By Tamara Stecyk
Resource Development Assistant
Edmonton's Food Bank*

Community gardens across Edmonton have an opportunity to make an impact this summer by participating in Plant A Row, Grow A Row.

Gardeners can allocate one or more rows of vegetables to donate to Edmonton's Food Bank. The Food Bank appreciates receiving fresh root vegetables, such as potatoes, cabbage, carrots as well as peas, beans, tomatoes, radishes, parsnips, sweet peppers, summer squash, apples and pears.

The Terwilliger Community Garden Network, which is in its first year, is an example of one garden planning to set aside plots for Edmonton's Food Bank.

Chair Steve Johnson said the garden has a total of 60 plots and estimates between 10 and 20 plots will be used to grow produce for the Food Bank this summer.

"When you have the time and bounty, you share," said Johnson.

Whether it is one row or a plot, any donation is appreciated by Edmonton's Food Bank.

The Plant A Row, Grow A Row project was initially started in Winnipeg in 1986 and arrived in Edmonton in 1998. The program is supported nationally by Food Banks Canada.

The City of Edmonton, Edmonton's Food Bank and the Yellowhead Youth Centre is partnering again this year to plant a garden at the Muttart Conservatory. The Yellowhead Youth Centre volunteers plant, maintain and harvest the garden and donate all produce to the Food Bank to support Edmontonians in need. ♻️

June 2, 2009 is National Hunger Awareness Day.

Gardeners can mark this occasion by participating in the program. Due to the fragile nature of fruits and vegetables, donors are asked to drop off the produce directly to Edmonton's Food Bank at 11508 - 120 Street, Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. **Please let the Food Bank know that your donation is designated for the Plant A Row, Grow A Row project** so it can be weighed and added to our total. For more information, please contact Edmonton's Food Bank at 780.425.2133 or www.edmontonsfoodbank.com

“Our vegetable garden is coming along well, with radishes and beans up, and we are less worried about revolution than we used to be.” –E. B. White

While we may not be in a revolution per se, many of us have turmoil and conflicts in our lives.

For me the act of gardening; from tilling the soil, planting the seeds, tending to their needs, ultimately enjoying the harvest, then putting it all to rest for the winter is truly enjoyable.

Whether spending hours or mere minutes to stop and pull some weeds, one can forget the day's troubles and revel in the beauty and strength of nature.


Last year we all thought our plots were done for after a late July hail storm. Not only did most crops survive, they came on even stronger!

I visited my plot daily, usually with my Cocker Spaniel in tow and sometimes my husband being dragged along by both of us! While sprinkling water gently from my can, my husband sprinkled words of encouragement gently from his resting spot in the shade.

We don't use pesticides at our site and I had great results with planting Marigolds among my vegetables. These weren't just any

little bloom, THESE WERE GIANTS. Unfortunately, not only attractive to beneficial creatures but also attractive to the Junior High kids our site is adjacent to, and I found a couple of plants uprooted and lying on the sidewalk. Yet again another testament to hope and endurance, I tucked them back in the bed and they flourished.

As last year was our inaugural year, we had brought in truckloads of good topsoil and compost from the University. My potatoes, yellow bush beans, carrots and beets loved it. I had no insect damage and very few weeds. I packed a lot into my garden so the weeds didn't really have a place to grow. While we had 12 raised beds planted, I rarely met up with my “comrades in cultivation” but enjoyed watching their gardens progress. I took solace and felt rejuvenated just being there. Actually consuming the vegetables was very rewarding and the fact that I new them to be truly organic was all the more delicious. I would hope, as I community, that this would be a step towards practising the concepts of “The 100 Mile Diet” (authors Alisa Smith and J.B. Mackinnon).

I'll just leave you with a final thought, a Chinese proverb: “Life begins the day you plant a garden”. 

Della Letnes, Allendale Community Gardener

The Gross Factor by Greg de Jong

The saying goes, “sometimes you just have to get your hands dirty.” Any gardener appreciates this, although every person seems to have a personal threshold for what kinds of ‘dirt’ s/he is willing to physically touch, let alone smell or even lay eyes on.

The tendency to avoid something based on how ‘gross’ it is may be instinctive as much as learned, a vestige of some antecedent training that taught us at least how to keep our hands clean and at best how to avoid potentially deadly effects. For example, we can often identify putrid material by smell and will know to take precautions such as wearing protection when handling it or that it is probably not food.

But that instinct, if pronounced in a person, can hinder her/him from fully enjoying some otherwise beneficial and amazing pastimes. It can take a real effort to ‘untrain’ oneself of an irrational aversion. Sometimes the best way to dispel notions is to better understand why the feelings arise and what is actually happening with the so-called ‘gross’ material beyond its initial, unpleasant traits.

This becomes ever more important as we come to realize the problems with how waste is produced, the ways it can be reduced, and the huge opportunities to turn types of waste into again useful

material. But, many of the steps are not pretty. Still, it's the way things have worked for all time. Hygiene is good practice and is certainly a part of the cycle of dealing with waste; it should not preclude the cycle.

Ultimately, most of the key changes humankind can make on behalf of the planet are merely changes in habit. The counterpoint is that habit is one of the strongest forces known. Contending with an inconvenient ‘yuck’ reaction requires a realization that the reaction is habitual and can be thought of in different terms, those which accept that not everything is ‘clean’ and that hardly anything ‘dirty’ is a threat to your person.


Composting is a poignant study. It is a way we can participate in the decay process, not to mention help it happen more quickly. By doing so, it may be an opportunity to come to terms with the gross factor and then more easily make a habit of this kind of project.

A common complaint about composting is that it is gross, whether because of odours (potential or real), the creatures involved, or perhaps the inherent ‘dirtiness’ of compost. There are many tactics for avoiding a nasty compost pile, as any Internet search or research visit to the library can demonstrate. Learning about proper aeration and moisture levels

will make all the difference.

But we're still dealing with rot. The workings of the macro- and micro-organisms that make composting happen might still be more mystery than known science, but it is no secret that gross (to some) things are in the pile.

Vermicomposting has grown in popularity and presents a greater challenge to the gross-sensitive. Merely knowing that worms are alive in that otherwise tidy bin is enough to make some people run screaming. But who doesn't recall being the child or knowing one who was fearless with worms? Science fiction and an entrenched need for cleanliness might both be to blame for an adult's revulsion toward these innocuous creatures. When I started my worm bin, I was reluctant to touch the bedding. But I've come to understand what is happening in there, and I wash my hands afterward. Overall, it is the absolute easiest thing I have done on behalf of the environment.

A conscious decision to deal with phobias is the first step towards controlling them. It's not as though you must come to love the mire—though a select few do. But filth is temporary: you can wash your hands, and that pile of kitchen scraps can be turned into wonderful new plants and food. Nature has good habits; trust her! 

W.P. Wagner's Annual Bedding Plant Sale

May 14th 7:30 AM – 6:30 PM

6310 Wagner Rd - Greenhouse

We have a lovely selection of geraniums, hanging baskets, bedding plants, basket stuffers, vegetable transplants. Plants are grown in our greenhouse by the horticulture students and sales support the program.

Early Bird Sale of geraniums in 6" pots – \$7.50

Hanging Baskets are also available for Mother's Day.

For more information contact Maureen at melhatto@epsb.ca

International Biodiversity Day May 22, 2009

Arch Greenhouse, 3152 97 Street, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Every province will be celebrating International Biodiversity Day. The Edmonton Naturalization Group (ENG) was selected by the Canadian Environmental Network to host Alberta's celebration. The theme this year is "Invasive Alien Species" and ENG will be partnering with the City of Edmonton in the front of the greenhouse to answer all your "weedy" questions.

- ✓ There will be a weed identification table: bring in a sample of that mystery weed and find out what it is.
- ✓ ENG and Arch Greenhouses will both be selling native wildflowers and grasses. Gardening experts will be on hand to answer all your gardening questions.
- ✓ Markus Eymann will be here to show you how to make your own bee shelter for native bees. Bring in a small or medium sized birch or poplar log, and go home with a nice rustic native bee habitat. Native bees are solitary, so you won't have to worry about a hive in your backyard.
- ✓ The Guerrilla Gardeners will also be celebrating International Biodiversity Day with a mass wildflower planting. E-mail Dustin at dustin.bajer@gmail.com to volunteer.

Edmonton Horticultural Society Perennial Swap and Sale

Saturday May 30. 10746 178 Street, in the parking lot of EHS

10:00 am – 12:00 pm: Plants are received and separated into categories in the staging area. NOTE: Only EHS volunteers are permitted in the staging area.

11:00 am – 2:00 pm: Sale of plants on the sales table.

12:00 pm – 12:30 pm: People can enter the staging area to exchange their credits for plants. Don't be late or you might miss out!

12:30 pm – 2:00 pm: Remaining plants are sold.



Pre-registration and pre-payment req'd.

Phone: (780) 221-4800

Email: theurbanfarmer@shaw.ca

No-Till Vegetable Gardening

Thursday, May 14, 6:30 – 9:00 pm

10926 93 Street, Edmonton

Cost: \$45.00

This workshop will offer a mix of theory and hands-on no-till preparation and planting at an Edmonton urban garden site.

Edible "Forest Gardening"

Saturday, May 23, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Location TBA

Cost: \$90.00

This workshop will explore forest gardening models for urban environments and will include work on the installation of an urban forest garden.

Creating an Urban Oasis

An Introduction to Backyard Permaculture

Saturday, June 20, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

10926 93 Street, Edmonton

Cost: \$90.00

This class will provide an introduction to the wisdom of permaculture and the possibilities for its application in the Edmonton area through a dynamic interplay of theory, site visits and hands-on activities.

www.theurbanfarmer.ca

Come Grow With Us!

The Community Garden Network of Edmonton & Area is volunteer-run and supports dozens of active gardens.

- ✓ Special events
- ✓ Workshops
- ✓ Volunteer coordination
- ✓ Fundraising
- ✓ Presentations
- ✓ Fun!
- ✓ Programming
- ✓ Advocacy

Contact our office for details: info@edmcommunitygardens.org



T-Shirts!

We have "Blissful Beet" (shown) and "Let's Get Dirty." These great T-shirts sell individually for \$25 each.

Does your garden need to do some fundraising? T-Shirts can be purchased from the CGN in bulk for \$15 ea. Call us!

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THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR-PARTNERS:



www.edmcommunitygardens.org



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Edmonton, AB T5V 1K8
Phone (780) 447-9600
Email: info@edmcommunitygardens.org

Membership & Volunteer Form

I would like to support the work of the Community Garden Network of Edmonton & Area through:

MEMBERSHIP

- Yes, I would like to become a member of the Community Garden Network.
Enclosed is my \$10 membership fee.
Please make Cheques payable to: **Community Garden Network**

VOLUNTEERING

Many skills are welcomed and needed. Volunteer as a garden buddy, write for the newsletter, become a Board member, work on the website, promote the benefits of membership, or advocate for community gardening in the Edmonton area.

- I would like to volunteer.

DONATIONS

- Enclosed is my donation of \$ _____
 I have gardening supplies, equipment, or services to donate.

How to contact you!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

Email: _____