

THE SEEDLING

*The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association
BARAGA, Volume 27, Number 1, April 2008*

The 2008 AGM

For members who did not attend (for whatever reason) BARAGA's AGM of was held on January 12th, 2008. Judging by the speed reports were received and approved there were no contentious issues. All the board members from 2007 were willing to continue. There were no elections since there were no other nominations. While this makes for a simple process, fresh blood that brings new perspectives and ideas is always good for organizations. It is to be hoped there will be a few members contesting board positions next year. (See below for board member's names and contact information.)

Two highlights of the AGM were the acceptance of the Treasurer's statement and budget and the report on the state of the garden by the President.

The treasurer reported that most expenses had come close to the budgetary expectations for 2007. The purchase of a tractor to assist in garden maintenance was a major expense, but BARAGA's reserves

for contingencies remain at a healthy level. Don Hatch reported that the board had elected him president in April 2007, after Rick Gates resigned. The volunteer system is working and most of the tasks are carried out by hard working members. There will have to be adjustments in volunteer numbers for some tasks, less for flowerbeds and more for other areas. New members, in particular, and others with no volunteer hours should watch for the revised sign-up sheets to be posted on the office wall. Most members will already have assigned tasks and do not need to sign again.

Land along Meadow Avenue south of the property line belongs to the city of Burnaby; no sheds or other structures are permissible for the adjacent plot holders. Some members now have their updated Handbooks (2007) which were available last year and at the AGM. However the sign-up sheet indicates many members still need to pick up their copies. They will be available at the office once spring gardening gets underway.

The tractor purchase, a new gate at

the main entrance, a twenty foot storage container, and the rebuilding of the west bridge over the main ditch were among improvements carried out. We had another successful picnic. The bees are flourishing

and producing honey.

In conclusion Don stated “as we strive to continually improve by working together, we can be assured that we have the best community garden in the region.”

Board Announcements

Steel Gate Usage: Due to unwanted traffic after hours in our main parking lot we, have installed a steel gate at the entrance.

If you are the first person to arrive in the morning please open the gate at the center by sliding the bar sideways and push each gate gently to the stopping posts.

If you are the last person to leave in the evening please close the gate.

There is no lock on the gate but there may be a bolt and nut to be put in the hole in the overlapping gates.

Your cooperation would be much appreciated. Thank you

Garden Plot Borders: It has come to the attention of the board of directors that borders around plots can become an extreme hazard. Several plots have rotting wood borders that have fallen away from supporting structures. These then fall into the pathway and become a great danger to anyone walking by. In order to help correct this problem we ask that you carefully examine the condition of all your borders. Please replace or repair all that have fallen down or stick out into the pathways. In order to keep a consistent vigil on this problem the inspection committee will include this in the monthly inspection routine. If your border is not in good order you will receive a letter giving you only two weeks to repair before a final inspection and the possible registered letter revoking your plot rental agreement.

Pathway Hazards: Please make a note of all stumps and depressions in pathways that could be a tripping hazard. Tell us what it is and what plot is the nearest and drop your note into the box on the office wall. Thanks

NO Fires: At the February board meeting the directors discussed a possible barbecue area. They concluded that the high risk of fire and the devastating effects of a peat fire made this suggestion too hazardous. Open flame barbecues are not and will not be permitted anywhere on BARAGA property. Peat fires are not rapid events, rather they burn insidiously and spread underground and it may take weeks to extinguish one. If BARAGA did have a fire, the whole garden might be closed for a period of weeks.

Smokers are asked to be extremely careful and make sure cigarette butts are fully extinguished. There were a couple of instances in the past when a cigarette end carelessly discarded actually started fires.

Crop Rotation

All gardening authors seem to agree that you should not grow a vegetable in the same spot year after year. However, not everyone is able or willing to follow a three to 5-year crop rotation schedule, so sometimes all thought of crop rotation is abandoned. If that is your case, one author says it would be much better to adopt the following very simple routine – roots this year, an above-ground vegetable next year, and then back to a root

crop...with the proviso that if a vegetable does badly one year then you should *never* follow it next year with one from the same group. The article below is from West Coast Seeds 2008 catalogue and used with their permission. Their rotation plan is based mainly on the acid needs of plants. Other crop rotation plans may differ slightly, especially those that are based on manuring or other feeding practices.

- Janet Filippelli

WHY ROTATE YOUR CROPS?

1. Disease and insect prevention: Rotating crop families will break up disease and insect life cycles. Do not grow plants from the same family in the same place more often than every 3 or 4 years. This is especially important for Cole family (Brassicaceae), Tomato family (Solanaceae), and Onion family (Alliaceae).

2. Make the most of soil nutrients. Plants that make big roots use different nutrients than plants that have lots of leafy growth. By rotating groups of plants that use different soil nutrients, you can optimize nutrient use.

3. Some plants do better in acid soil (like ours on the Coast), others like limed soil, so you can rotate according to when you limed the soil., Here is a possible 3-year rotation for 1 area:

Begin with adding compost and lime to the area, then plant:

Year 1: Cole family, lettuce, spinach

Year 2: Peas, beans, onions, squash and flowers or buckwheat.

Year 3: Root crops and tomato family

Now add lime and compost to the bed and cover crop before Year 1 again.

Higher pH (limed)

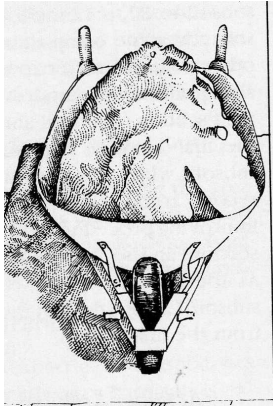
Brassicas
Spinach
Salad

Medium pH (Year 2)

Squash
Peas
Beans
Alliums

Low pH (acidic)

Solanum
Root Crops



Mulching

One of the most useful gardening techniques is mulching. Basically “mulching” is applying any kind of cover, whether natural or artificial, over the surface of the soil.

In old woodlands and forests this is a natural process. Needles, leaves, twigs, etc fall to the ground. Perennial plants wither and die in fall, leaving a brown cover carpeting the ground. As the years go by this layer accumulates, but at the bottom all the detritus is rotting away and returning to the soil as nutrients for future generations. Some of the very best soil is leaf mould, humus dug from the forest floor.

Quite a different kind of cover is applied in ornamental landscaping. The surface is covered by landscape fabric, then covered by a decorative layer of gravel, bark nuggets, etc. Here the purpose is mainly the suppression of weeds (and any other unwanted plants). The mulch keeps weed seed buried far from the light and denies adventitious interlopers the chance to get a foothold.

While ornamental landscaping is remote from the vegetable gardeners’ purpose, elements of both natural mulching and artificial can be useful; the gardener wants to improve the soil and suppress the growth of the unwanted. But there are other

good reasons for applying a layer of mulch.

Mulch often impedes evaporation of moisture from the soil; it dries out more slowly decreasing the need to water. Some mulches act a bit like sponges (and like compost) and retain moisture a long time. In the forest you can often squeeze a few drops of moisture from a well rotted hemlock log even in a dry summer.

Some mulches can alter the temperature of the soil. In winter the added layer between air and roots prevents the penetration of frost in soil. A hearty layer of mulch will protect the lower stem and roots of sub-tropicals that might be killed by winter cold.

Other mulches can warm the soil for an earlier start in spring. Decomposing grass clippings piled high often generate heat; this can warm the soil, destroy weed seeds, but it can damage plant roots if the mulch is too close to the plants.

In summer some mulches act as insulation, they shade the soil keeping roots cool and moist.

Almost any kind of material can be considered a cover and hence a mulch. Among them are hay, straw, raked-up leaves, grass clippings, ground up bark, wood chips, peat moss, sawdust, newsprint, broken stone, gravel, lava rock, black plastic sheets, scraps of indoor carpeting. Many of the things that might go into a compost pile can be considered as a mulch. Some of them are useful in a vegetable patch and worth looking at in more detail:

Grass Clippings: used thinly spread around seedlings. They are easy to apply and free. If

spread too thickly they will get hot and slimy. Beware of taking clippings from lawns where the grass or weeds have gone to seed or where a product such as "feed n'weed" was used. Hay may be okay too, but it almost always has undesirable seeds.

Straw: used thinly spread it can be useful to cover bare areas where crops such as cucumbers and squash are grown. Generally it is more durable than grass and free of weeds, but is only good for one short season. One bale is a reasonably small investment and covers quite a large area.

Leaves: these are an excellent mulching material containing nutrients including minerals. They work best if chopped (it makes them more porous and decay faster), but can be cut up and bagged by a lawnmower. Unfortunately many BARAGA gardeners live in apartments and do not have access.

Green Manure: there are several crops that can be planted in fall, left to grow over winter and then dug into the soil in early spring, partially protecting the soil over winter and breaking down into enriching nutrients for the spring. I have tried fall rye, but other plants such as alfalfa, clover, winter peas etc. are often recommended.

Wood chips, ground bark, sawdust: these are more suitable for semi-permanent covers for pathways than spreading around crops. Wood products tend to steal nitrogen from the soil as they rot. Some are much more durable than others; which the gardener chooses to use depends how long the cover is required.

Black Plastic: this is very useful for

suppressing weed seed germination and warming the soil where later season crops (cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, etc.) are to grow. A heavier grade can be used over and over.

Newspaper: shredded paper can form a viable cover. It is very cheap, of course, and uses a recyclable material. Many mulches tend to be unsightly; this is possibly the worst. A couple of sources suggested using newsprint (shredded or whole) with another mulch over top, usually hay. We tried this many years ago: weeds were suppressed, but the hayseed sprouted soon penetrating the paper, forming a resistant layer of sod. It was very hard to break up and till under.

One of the books I consulted had over fifty suggestions for mulching materials, everything from coffee grounds, oyster shells, fibreglass, etc to walnut shells, red plastic and processed sludge. Many of them were too exotic to be available in our area.

In general some mulches tend to be unsightly, but rightly applied they can save the gardener both work and time. Some of them offer real benefits to the soil.

INFORMATION WANTED - Roy and Dorothy Pegler helped plant daffodils this Spring. There were three other men, one may have been a young Chinese man. We would like to credit those three for their volunteer hours. Please call Janet at telephone: 604-432-9379. Thanks.

Baraga Bee News

Spring has sprung and so have the bees! The BARAGA bees came through the winter quite well this year with only 1 out of 4 hives failing due to a case of “foulbrood”.

American foulbrood is a spore-forming bacteria which is spread through larvae eventually killing off the hive. It is incredibly contagious and infected equipment should be burned.

We have brought in another colony from New Zealand and they are already going ‘gangbusters’ as Dick (our intrepid beekeeper) would say. They are now being fed pollen and syrup to build up their colonies for the upcoming season. Hopefully, we’ll have a great season in terms of honey production.



Some interesting Bee facts:

◆ For every pound of beeswax produced, the bees must consume 7 pounds of honey. The wax is produced by 8 glands in the bee’s abdomen. It is secreted in small flakes usually during warm weather when foraging is active.

- ◆ It is legal to have bees on residential property in almost all municipalities in the lower mainland, except for Richmond.
 - ◆ A well-known beekeeper, Jim Medill once kept 10 hives on the roof of an apartment building in the downtown eastside of Vancouver.
 - ◆ “Although widely believed to alleviate allergies, local honey has been shown to be no more effective than placebos in controlled studies. This may be because most seasonal allergies are caused by tree and grass pollens, which honeybees do not collect.” Wikipedia
 - ◆ “Some studies suggest that the topical use of honey may reduce swelling, and scarring when used to treat wounds.” Wikipedia
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- Ann Talbot

Plants reduce carbon

The process of photosynthesis is central to life; when photosynthesizing a plant uses energy from the sun and chemical elements it has stored to produce glucose. One of the elements that plants store is carbon dioxide.

Some plants are particularly good at removing carbon dioxide from the air and storing it for future use. Among the house-plants that remove lots of carbon are orchids, cacti, and Christmas cacti. In these days of tight buildings it is nice to have a natural air cleaner.

Want to know more about this process and which plants can clean up the atmosphere in your house or apartment? Go to the Jan./Feb. 2008 edition of *Gardens West*; the full article appeared there.

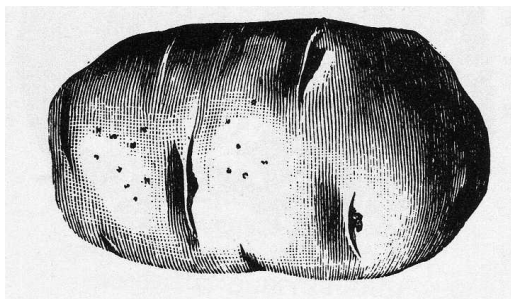
Blame the Weather

for a poor Garden year last year.

The March rainfall was double what we usually get and sunshine was only half. Most of March had less than one hour of sunshine per day and only three days were dry. On March 11, the Pineapple Express hit Vancouver and we got more than 50 mm of rain in a 30 hour stretch. The Coquitlam River rose to its highest water level in 10 years.

Strange July Weather: At the beginning of July, temperatures soared all over the Lower Mainland . On July 11,Victoria registered the highest temperature since record-keeping began, hitting 36.3°C. Victoria also experienced the hottest night ever on July 12 when the temperature only dropped to 19.6°C, beating the old record by 1.3°C set in 1944. The same day, Gonzales weather station recorded 36°C, the hottest temperature taken there since 1898. The high temperatures triggered BC Hydro to ask the owners of buildings in Vancouver to reduce energy consumption, during peak hours. Following the two-week hot spell, the weather turned surprisingly poor with seven straight days of rain, and cool conditions. Vancouver set a new record for July with seven consecutive days of rain. For Vancouver, this is normally the driest part of the year.

- Don Hatch



The “Year of the Potato”

Did you notice that 2008 was designated the “International Year of the Potato” by the United Nations. According to Wendy Turnbull writing in **The Record** (Feb. 23/08) the potato is ideally suited to places where land is limited and labour is abundant.” Potatoes produce “more nutritious food more quickly on less land than any other major crop.” Something to consider when planning your allotment crops.

Check the varieties available in the local nursery centres; there are potatoes in many sizes, colours, shapes and textures. It is mainly a matter of your taste preference and the way the potatoes are used. While potato varieties like “Yukon Gold” are household words, it is worth exploring some of the less known and discovering their virtues; gardeners have the world at their finger tips, shoppers have to be content with the superstore.

Food Bank/Plant a Row

While planning for your allotment planting you might want to include space for a little extra. Every year generous BARAGA members contribute some of their produce to the local food bank. Incidentally, the local food bank is one of the most successful in the lower mainland, in all of Canada for that matter. Volunteers distributing food add fresh produce (and sometimes cooking advice) to several hundred recipients. The most suitable produce, of course, is the most durable since the vegetables must be handled and preserved a couple of days before they reach their destination. So think root crops, rather than perishables, although everything is gratefully received.

Bargain Plant Buys

When looking for good buys to fill your borders, remember that some merchants will offer a discount if you show your BARAGA membership card. Garden Works offers 10% discount (15% on Customer Appreciation Days - the 3rd Thursday of the month). Other local nurseries offer 5%. There are also plant sales to watch for:
BRAGS: April 20, 9 A.M.-1 P.M. Burnaby Village Museum
VanDusen Garden: April 27th
NWHS: May 4, 10 A.M. - 4P.M. Glenbrook Middle School Gymnasium

Guide to Baraga Contacts

Structure Approval or Water System Problems	
Don Hatch	604-312-3003
Derrill Thompson	604-436-0324
Wait List	
Derrill Thompson	604-436-0324
Baraga Officers for 2008	
President	
Don Hatch	604-312-3003
Vice President	
Derrill Thompson	604-436-0324
Secretary	
John Florek	604-526-4710
Treasurer	
Joyce Wishart	604-412-3890
Directors	
Roman Bobrownik	604-520-1846
Aldo Chervatin	604-439-1503
Janet Filippelli	604-432-9379
Liliana Hoogland	604-433-6346
David Tamblin	604-521-4318

Editorial Policy

Included in this newsletter are items of business that all BARAGA members need to know about; there are also articles of more general interest. Newsletters increase in interest if there is a widespread input; members who can share information or have a special outlook on gardens, gardening and any other topic common to BARAGA members are invited to contribute their articles. Also welcome are art work or pictures of special occasions at the garden. Contact David Tamblin (by phone at 604-521-4318 or by email at d_tamblin@telus.net). Views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of BARAGA.

