

# THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association  
BARAGA, Volume 26, Number 2, July 2007

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## **The 7th Annual Picnic**

Saturday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm: mark the date on your calendar now!

Fun for all BARAGA members and their families! Everyone who gardens (together with their families, of course) are invited to this annual get-together.

**FUN, FESTIVITIES,  
FOOD ....**



Potluck Meal: bring some salad, dinner, or dessert to share. Traditionally BARAGA supplies coffee, tea, soft drinks and cutlery.

Show off the best you can produce: prizes for the best vegetables,

fruit, flowers, presentation, preserves, etc.

This is a great opportunity to meet your fellow gardeners and celebrate the results of all our hard work in our gardens! Make sure you are there.

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## **Earning Volunteer Hours**

To ensure that they earn credit for their six volunteer hours members must do two things:

1. Make sure their names appear on the list posted on the wall of the office; all the different volunteer jobs available are on this list. If your name is not on the list, pick out a job that is not full and place your plot number on the sheet and fill out a yellow volunteer sign up form and drop it into the box beside the door. (For those who wish to do flower beds please contact Janet Filippelli at 604-432-9379.)
2. When you are called for work parties

or have performed other tasks make sure that someone knows about it and enters a signed time sheet in your name.

For those members that have already signed up and have not yet done any volunteer time please check the listing on the wall to make sure your plot number is listed. If your plot number is not on the list you have been missed or your sign up was incomplete.

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## **Fire and Water**

Although at the time of writing it hardly looks as if there will be any need for additional watering, the arrival of hot summer days can soon make a huge difference. BARAGA members are reminded that hoses (sprinklers, etc.) must not be left unattended. And please do not leave your hose connected to the water system; some people have problems releasing attached hoses.

There are strategies a gardener can adopt to minimize the watering chore (and at the same time decrease the use of water, an expensive charge on our balance sheet).

1. The water table at the garden is quite high; where the writer gardens water will seep into a pit at less than two feet depth. Gardeners can take advantage of this by planting deep and encouraging roots to grow

deeply. Water infrequently, but thoroughly. There's a rule of thumb about how much water is needed - about one inch (2.5 cm) per week.

2. Cover the soil with a mulch (any material from black plastic to organic mixtures); this will reduce water loss due to evaporation and incidentally reduce weed germination.

3. Hand water as much as possible; this ensures the water goes exactly where it's needed and again avoids the loss by evaporation that sprinklers cause. If you can, water early in the day; this minimizes the loss by evaporation, avoids lengthy wetting of foliage, and ensures plants are ready for the hot afternoon sun.

If the municipality or the GVRD impose watering restrictions the BARAGA board will post them at the entrance.

The other great hazard of a long, hot summer is fire. In peat the danger is extreme; many of you will recall the fire that burned for weeks in Burns Bog. Such a fire would be devastating for our gardens; imagine losing most of the fall crop because the garden was closed. So gardener's will want to adhere to the "No Fire" rule.

## **What to do with garbage**

Seems like our world is overflowing with "garbage, garbage, garbage". Fortunately this need not be the case at BARAGA. If there is lots of unwanted stuff on your allotment, here's what to do with it. First you must decide what you have to get rid of and which category "the stuff" belongs in. The practice of placing everything not wanted in the garbage is outdated and unacceptable in our time.

Compostible materials: spent flowers and vegetables, weeds, etc. are best disposed where they are, in a small compost pile. Only a few square feet in an out of way corner is needed to establish a compost heap, a bin, cone or other commercial container is fine, or build your own. (Look for advice on composting in a future issue.) That way you recycle the nutrients into your own garden.

Some people just pile their material up, a practice that soon becomes unsightly and unruly. Better is to dig a pit or trench, cut the waste material up and bury it. It can later be worked back into the soil when fully broken down.

Organic material that can not be handled on site for whatever

reason can be taken to a municipal recycling facility. Weeds that have gone to seed, etc. can be handled this way. Diseased material (e.g. potatoes or tomatoes with blight) should go in the big garbage bin.

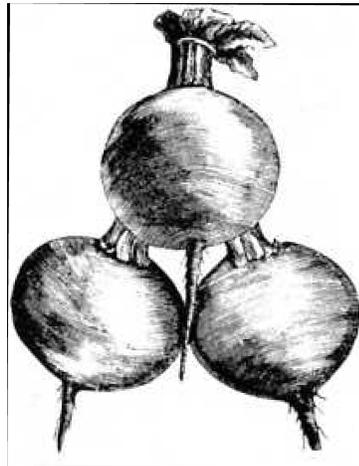
Plastic materials (plant pots, etc. ) can sometimes be recycled and so can metal. BARAGA does not have the facility to do this, so take it with you to recycle. Non-recyclable plastic, decayed lumber, etc. can be placed in the big garbage bin near the entrance.

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## **Pick Up Your Handbook**

The new handbook was available some time ago. If you still have not picked up a copy - and many of you have not - drop by the office and sign yours out.

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## **Bees at BARAGA**

*a report by Ann Talbot*

Our Bees: as most of you know, we have four colonies of bees here at BARAGA. They are kept in a fenced area in the centre of the garden and we're happy to report that this year, they are healthy and keeping busy pollinating your plants, collecting nectar and pollen and making honey. By the time this newsletter goes to print, we hope to have extracted the first batch of honey. Unfortunately, we won't have a lot of honey this year. Last fall, we had to combine four weak hives down to two strong ones in order to ensure they survived the winter, so this spring we had to bring in two new colonies from New Zealand. Hopefully, by next year, we'll have four strong colonies that can produce more honey. We aren't the only beekeepers struggling with bee health issues - the last issue of the BC BeesCene magazine (May, 2007) reported "heavy over-winter losses, upwards of 90%". Dick Gould has been doing a wonderful job of keeping the bees and staying up-to-date on management protocols. It is a complex science with on-going developments and challenges. We're hoping that after a few tough years,

we may be on an up-swing.

Some Interesting News: as some of you may have heard, there has been a lot of news lately on the "Colony Collapse Disorder" (CCD) phenomenon. The good news is that it hasn't been reported in BC. Basically, CCD happens when the worker bee population declines dramatically within a 2-14 day period, leaving the queen with only a handful of bees and bee brood. There has been much speculation on the possible causes of this phenomenon. As stated in a Vancouver Sun article (*Honey Bee Crisis Tied to Farming, Expert Says, May 19, 2007*): "Explanations for the crisis range from the plausible – over-use of pesticides and the infestation of different kinds of fungus and mites – to the far-fetched – that cellphone frequencies are somehow interfering with bees' homing instincts." Mark Winston, a well-known and respected bee expert from Simon Fraser University goes on to say in the article that this phenomenon is likely caused by a number of factors such as stress (due to forced migrations from one crop to another), vulnerability to disease and parasites (due to a lack of a varied diet), pesticides and climate

change. He advocates:

- ◆ Encouraging other species of bees to help take some of the pollination responsibilities off of the honey bees
- ◆ Providing diversity in plants available to the bees to provide more nutrients in a varied diet
- ◆ Avoiding pesticides!

So, please keep this in mind when you garden at BARAGA!

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## **Plant a Row Grow a**

**Row** - BARAGA gardeners support local Food Bank  
*a report from Isobel McDonald*

A grand thank you to all the BARAGA gardeners who have supported the local food bank by providing fresh produce from their gardens for the last four years.

From mid June to mid October every Sunday morning at 9:30 Steve Vegh and Isobel McDonald (with help from Laura Zazarra) pick up wonderful BARAGA produce left in the white food bank box beside the bulletin board in the front parking lot.

We take it to the Plant a Row, Grow a Row depot at St. Aidan's Church in New Westminster where it is washed, sorted and distributed to a variety of sites where people in need can receive it, including soup

kitchens, shelters and the food bank.

CBC radio listeners will know that this program is Canada wide and was started by local gardening icon Brian Minter. Brian has the highest praise for the New Westminster chapter because it is the HIGHEST contributing group in Canada.

BARAGA gardeners are part of this effort – and hopefully more will join in. All produce is welcome – if it is good for you and your family it is most gratefully received by those in need. Occasionally we receive produce that is over grown (especially chard and zucchinis) and we are not able to use this so please hold back on donations that you wouldn't want for your own family and friends. Also, we have generous people who donate food and goods that are not produce and we respectfully ask that only garden produce is donated as this is what we are set up to deal with.

BARAGA gardeners can donate produce to the box any time – ideally, for the more perishable veggies – they would be picked Saturday evening or Sunday morning.

We thank you, Brian Minter thanks you, the Plant a Row, Grow a Row people thank you, the members

of St. Aidan's parish thank you and most of all the Moms and kids and other hungry people in need thank you. Way to go generous BARAGA gardeners!

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## Summer Visits

Most knowledge is accumulated by observing others; if they fall on their faces, we won't trip on the same wire; if they have a better way, we change our own methods to follow suit. Gardeners can learn a lot from other's experience - good or bad.

An obvious way to learn is by walking around BARAGA, talking to your neighbours and discovering how and what they are growing. But there are many other opportunities.

One unique concept is the 1896 vegetable garden being grown at VanDusen Garden this summer. It is located in the vicinity of the maze. It features the vegetables that might have been grown by an early resident of this area. These will, of course, be heirloom varieties, but some of the old standbys are just that - standbys. When planting, the VanDusen crew was very aware that there were no super stores in 1896, what a homeowner grew in the backyard constituted all the vegetables

available. Seed suppliers were in their infancy and mail delivery a hazardous business; in those days open polinated seed that the grower could save was in great demand.

Perhaps a look forward in time is more to your taste than a look backwards. In Delta, West Coast Seeds plants a trial garden every year. If you would like to explore new varieties and see how they perform under local conditions, this might be a worthwhile destination especially in August when the crops ripen. The West Coast Seeds farm is located at 3925 - 64<sup>th</sup> Street in Delta.

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## Tomato Blight

One of the great joys of gardening is picking a vine ripened tomato; no other tastes half as good. Those store tomatoes trucked in refrigerators and ripened by methane cannot begin to compete. So it is doubly disappointing to lose any part of the crop to late blight.

Late blight is a fungal disease, *Phytophthora infestans*, which strikes both potatoes and tomatoes. It can be a devastating disease, so notorious the Irish potato famine it caused in the 1840s is still remembered. The fungus lurks overwinter in the soil from diseased foliage, stems, roots of peppers, potatoes and tomatoes of previous years. When cool moist nights and damp muggy days follow one another, or there is week of rainfall, conditions are ripe for the fungal spores to float off in the air and find a new host.

The first signs are water soaked splotches on the leaves, which turn paler or darker, then wither to a papery black. The fungus rapidly colonizes its victim internally. Tomatoes appear with greyish-green spots and develop a white mold, quickly rotting and stinking.

Some tomato varieties are more resistant than others, but the gardener can take three effective preventative measures.

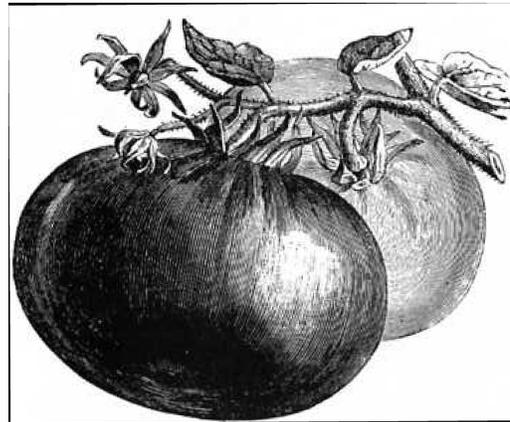
1. Keep tomato foliage completely dry, a temporary plastic cover will do fine if you don't have your plants in a

greenhouse.

2. Spray the tomato plants in advance with an antifungal spray; several sulphur sprays are included on the list of products that Burnaby permits.

3. If there are diseased pepper plants, potato plants, or tomato plants in your garden, completely remove and destroy them. Don't even think of composting them.

Here's to another long, hot, dry summer; that will help our tomato crop and we will enjoy a feast!



**The Seedling** is the BARAGA newsletter. This issue was edited by David Tamblin. Phone: 604-521-4318 Email: [d\\_tamblin@telus.net](mailto:d_tamblin@telus.net).

- ◆ Members are invited to contribute their articles, artwork or pictures to future issues.
- ◆ Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of BARAGA..

## **Those Wonderful Beets** - article by Christian Rump

In my book beets are the Number One "All Year Round" vegetable, one that I harvest every month of the year! But first of all, why do I treasure those beautiful red roots? Because I know that they strengthen our immune system, ease infections (or might prevent them), because of their antibacterial properties and because they just taste wonderful, hot or cold.

There are reports from Greek and Roman folks, who already praise their benefits as long as 2,500 years ago, famous men like Hippocrates (the father of medicine), the Greek physician Dioskorides and the Swiss scientist Paracelsus among them; the list of their benefits is an arm long.

Besides their already mentioned medicinal benefits beets contain iron, several B vitamins, flavonoids that reduce 'unfriendly' substances found in most antibiotics, etc. Even if you do not like them, you owe it to yourself to read up on their many medicinal benefits.

For myself, I just love them in several ways - raw, steamed, in salads, or in drinks. I find more and more uses for them. In my younger days I even made delicious beet wines or added extract to home made liqueurs for their wonderful colour.

Returning to my claim to enjoy them all year, this is what I do. In late fall while most of my neighbours clean

up their gardens, I take 2-3 dozen of my best specimens (many the size of turnips), dig a deep trench up to 20" deep and set these beauties with their short roots and leafy tops down in it. Then I fill up with nice loose soil. With the winters we have here, I have not had one frozen beet whenever I removed them during the winter and spring months. They stop growing, of course, but their red leafy tops sprout a little.

You can do the same by setting them deep inside your greenhouse where, in case of a longer frost season, you can remove them a little easier when needed.

Their Latin name is 'Beta vulgaris cruenta rubra'. Beets are, of course, a very close relative of all the chards, which also can be enjoyed during spring by planting some of them in late fall in your greenhouse and watering them regularly.

Beets are annuals, although technically they are biennial. Some can already be enjoyed 2-3 months after seeding, and while gardening books state that they are hard to transplant in early summer I have never had any problem with that.

All I can say, if you only know beets of the pickled style, you owe it to yourself to discover a lot more uses for this valuable and nutritious all-year-round vegetable.

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