

# THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association  
BARAGA, Volume 27, Number 2, July 2008

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## The BARAGA Picnic

**When:** Saturday, August 9th 3:30 P.M.

**Where:** BARAGA Main Entrance and Park by the office

**What to Bring:** ✓ food, a potluck dish whether appetizer, salad, casserole, other main dish, desert (enough for five is about right), (for yourselves - beer or a bottle of wine.) Ethnic treats are especially welcome.



Picnic 2007: happy diners - Joan Campana

✓ Chairs, small folding garden chairs are best. We have some tables, but can always use more if you have them available.

✓ Your guests, children are especially welcome, bring your friends or family, just be prepared to bring enough to feed them.

**Sign-Up:** it is helpful to know how many we expect and what they intend to bring so please sign up on the sheet at the office.

**BARAGA provides:** plates, cutlery, coffee, tea and soft drinks.

**Entertainment:** feel free to bring garden games, bocce ball is popular. If you play an instrument, this is a good chance to strut your talent after the dinner and contest.

**The contest:** as usual gardeners are encouraged to bring vegetables, flowers, fruits they have grown at BARAGA for competition and display. Register your entry early. There will be prizes in several categories.

## Board Announcements

**Children at the Garden:** BARAGA's board welcomes children to the gardens and encourages parents to bring their children to the allotments. That is where they will learn where healthy food comes from and where we will educate the next generation of keen gardeners. However parents should be mindful that they are alone are responsible their children's safety and behaviour. BARAGA's allotments are not playgrounds but working gardens.

**Theft:** this has regrettably been a problem from the beginning of gardening at BARAGA. While policies and bylaws attempt to address this issue, in many instances there is no way to address the issue effectively. However there are some things we can do:

1. Do not leave valuables, chiefly tools unsecured. (Even locked sheds are poor protection against determined thieves.
2. Get to know your fellow gardeners and challenge (in a friendly way) strangers to the area. If you are challenged, don't be affronted, but let your right to be there known.
3. Gardeners often have reciprocal arrangements with their fellows. Make sure that anything you take from another's garden has their full and complete approval.

**No Fires:** once again we publish a warning about the hazards of fire on the BARAGA lands. Our policy is "NO FIRES period!" Smokers, please, be careful to fully extinguish your cigarettes.

**Watering:** water is an expensive item on BARAGA's budget. While watering is fine, it should be done as conservatively as possible. Water delivered to plant roots is the most effective way; deep infrequent watering encourages plants to root deeply; sprinkling wastes a lot of water through evaporation. No unattended watering is permitted. If Burnaby should impose watering restrictions, these are immediately in effect at BARAGA since the garden is Burnaby land. Please watch for notices if we experience drought conditions.

**General Appearance:** the city of Burnaby wants the BARAGA allotments to look good, in particular the south side of the gardens by Meadow Avenue. There is a strip of land between allotments numbered 1-34 and the ditch which is not part of BARAGA's rental, but used by many of our gardeners. The board would like this strip to be fully used and kept as attractive as possible, neatly planted and weed free. On no account can this area be used for storage of materials or for any structures. Lets present the nicest face possible to the world.

**Wanted** – We need 2 or 3 members with carpentry skills to assess repairs needed to the bridge at the East entrance from 14<sup>th</sup> St. and to carry them out after presenting their findings to Don or Derrill. If you would like to volunteer call Don Hatch at 604-433-8055 and leave a message. Thanks.

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## 📧 More Board Announcements

**YOU GOT MAIL??** Did you get a letter from the directors because your plot was not up to standard? Do you disagree with the finding of the inspection committee? We now have a new e-mail address that you can send your complaint to it is " support@baraga.ca". Remember it is the board of directors who sends out the letters. It is not the one individual who places their return address on the envelope. If you do not agree with the inspection letter either write to the board of directors or send us e-mail as above. If you phone and yell at the individual who puts their return address on the envelope it will not help your situation.

**Work Parties:** BARAGA has held a number of work parties on Saturday mornings in the last while. If you need more volunteer hours up to get your total of six you may join any of the upcoming ones. We will hold work parties most Saturdays except the Picnic Day. Please note that we will not be holding any more work parties **after the end of September**. If you need hours get them while you can. Future work parties will include ditch clean up, soil spreading on main pathways and parks maintenance, general clean up of parking area and the garbage bin area.

**Wanted** – We need 4 –6 volunteers for the inspection team. Inspections take place on the first Saturday of the month at 2:00 p.m. and last about one hour or less. Please leave your name, phone number and plot number at the office in the box for time slips beside the door.



## Support the Food Bank

**Food Bank:** gardeners' contributions to the Food Bank started on the weekend of July 12<sup>th</sup>. As our gardens begin to produce a bounty of harvested fruit and vegetables, give some thought to the surplus.

Contributions of all kinds are most welcome. Since there is a time lag between pickup at BARAGA (Saturday evening at the box in the shade by the quonset) and delivery (a couple of days later), try to protect your contributions as much as possible. For instance, leave the roots on lettuce.

Remember what you give may be the healthiest food many people get.

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## Corn Salad: My favourite winter salad green

- Article by Christian Rumpf

This green is known by many names: Lamb's lettuce, Mache, Fetticus, Korn Salad, and by its Latin name: Vallerianella locusta. But I call it corn salad.

Not too much has been written about this amazing winter green in previous "Seedlings", as far as I can see, so allow me to "blow my horn" about it here. And since its favourite planting time is August-September, it is not too soon to talk about it.

For the past forty-five years and in three different locations, I have had the pleasure and benefit of enjoying this wonderful plant and hope to do so for many more years here at BARAGA gardens.

Initially corn salad was found wild on grain and corn fields before it became domesticated and available as seeds from most seed companies. It has the remarkable ability to survive the toughest frosts and snow, but does best in cold frames or under some kind of protective cover. It can be sprinkled extremely sparingly under other plants as well; once they have been removed in fall, it comes into full growth on its own.

When fully grown corn salad is rarely larger than four inches in diameter. Wherever plants are too close together it should be thinned out so that the remaining leaves do not turn yellow. The little ones being thinned out should, of course, be added to your salads right away.

In the spring those plants remaining will begin to bloom and grow seeds, and it is very easy then to harvest your own seeds for the following season. My current seeds are descendants of the seeds I brought from

Germany some forty-five years ago!

I often feel sorry for the many empty garden plots in winter time, when they could provide the gardeners with the most delicious salad greens.

If you want more information, give me a call and I will send you a full page write-up with further details. (Call Christian at 604-521-1704).

Ed. Note: Corn salad is listed in the West Coast Seeds catalogue as Mache. The small, dark green, daisy-like leaves have a pleasant "rather nutty" flavour. There are many varieties with varying degrees of hardiness available in North America.

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## Two Other Winter Choices

While there are quite a number of vegetables that withstand the cold of winter, even if they do not grow actively, here are two more that can be recommended for the off season.

**Kale:** many kales are winter hardy and worth growing for winter and early spring greens. In particular a variety known as Red Russian is a spectacular plant (grey-green foliage with bright purple stems and tones in the leaves). If established in fall, it will grow over winter and really flourish in early spring, providing greens for many weeks. As a source of minerals and vitamins it is amongst the best. Most used as greens, tender growth can brighten a salad as well.

**Purple Broccoli:** this variety of broccoli is grown over winter from fall established plants. The florets are quite small, but very numerous. If picked regularly they will continue to sprout for a long period. The florets make a good ingredient in a stir fry or can be lightly steam cooked. All broccoli varieties are highly recommended as low calorie/high fibre foods; they are high in vitamin C and beta carotene.

## Garden Remedies

### Jeff Gillman *The Truth about Garden Remedies: what works and what doesn't and why* (Timber Press, Portland, OR, 2006)

Do you ever pause and wonder about the helpful, well-meaning, advice so liberally bestowed by our friends, fellow gardeners? Then again there are old remedies passed on from generation to generation; ever wonder if they really work? And if they do, why?

Jeff Gillman, a horticultural professor at the University of Minnesota, has produced a book that considers a number of recommendations from garden gurus. He describes the recipe and how it is expected to be applied. Then he considers exactly what it is supposed to do. Citing published research papers or experiments he himself has done he describes the probable results. Finally he considers the "Why" of what has happened or sometimes failed to happen.

As an example: the practice of controlling slugs by placing a saucer of beer (sometimes old and stale is recommended, sometimes a prime brew) near plants that require protection. The beer is supposed to attract the slugs (or snails) who fall in and drown - a glorious way to go. Studies have shown beer does attract some species of slugs, but not all. Many traps fail, however, because the slug must fall in and drown and not many are well enough designed to accomplish this. If the slug cannot get in the beer and drown it may well end up feasting on a nearby plant.

Another widely touted way to defend tender plants from hungry slugs and snails is to surround the plants needing protection with cracked egg shells. Besides requiring a lot of egg shells (and grinding) it turned out slugs were not

deterred, merely slowed down when a thick layer was applied. A much better choice, says Gillman, is diatomaceous earth which slugs really hate. It usually deters them but it doesn't necessarily kill them.

Some of the old recipes are truly dangerous - to us, humans. The essential ingredient might be a poison such as arsenic; or it might be derived from a toxic plant such as Green Hellebore (*Veratrum viride*, perhaps the most toxic plant in our province). Some recipes are harmful to the plants themselves.

A lot of recipes call for soap (to bind the ingredients together); but many soaps can be quite damaging to the foliage of plants. Insecticidal soap will cost much more, it probably won't kill insects so thoroughly, but it won't damage plants either.

Occasionally a recipe is a true dud; baking soda is supposed to protect roses from black spot and powdery mildew; Gillman found it is useless against black spot, but the water in the mix does help prevent powdery mildew if sprayed regularly.

Other recipes work much as advertised. They are equal to anything available on the garden store shelf - and usually much cheaper. A good example is garlic and hot peppers (capsaicin), often the prime ingredients in insecticidal mixtures. There is no doubt insects (and others) are deterred, if not killed, by recipes in which either of these is the prime ingredient.

If you want to be your own garden doctor, you could do worse than buy Gillman's book, now available for \$15. Otherwise take an experimental approach to any concoction you use. Ask questions such as "does it contain any dangerous ingredients?" Try it out on a few expendable plants first and observe the results. Be sure to follow instructions carefully and exactly.

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## **Oh, those pests that spoil the crop!**

Around this time of year, most of us gardeners are anticipating their crops. But there are always pitfalls to anticipate.. One of them is pests that attack just about everything at one time or another, reaping where they have not sown, feasting on the fruit of our labour. This article examines the history of our responses and, hopefully, points the way to some solutions.

When I was growing up (yes, it was a long time ago) my parents had a big vegetable garden. The only remedy for pests that I can remember them using was putting some liquid in a big sprayer, pumping it up for pressure and killing a few flies.

What poison they were using I never knew, but in that era the insecticide of choice was DDT. It took several decades before it was recognized that DDT posed a danger to more than the insect world; by that time its residues were widely spread and cumulative; unlucky animals at the top of the food chain were suffering horrible mutations or dying off. Human health itself faced an immediate peril.

While DDT came off the market, at least in Western countries, long ago, the possibilities of chemical control of nature became firmly ingrained in human thought. Using the results of advanced science and technology, industrial giants discovered lethal combinations to control many things; herbicides to control weeds, fungicides to stop fungal damage, insecticides to eliminate almost any perceived insect threat. There were rodenticides (for rodents), bactericides both to control bacteria and to fight fungi and insects, preparations to keep dogs and cats away, repellants for deer and bears. For almost every pest there was a chemical remedy.

Big corporations found these preparations a financial boon because they could be patented and sold exclusively. In this way the huge outlay in developing a pesticide could be recouped and the bottom line looked impressive. At the same time simpler, less toxic, means to combat pests tended to be neglected since they could not be patented. Governments tended to be slow in reacting; they lacked the data to determine toxicity threats and they were reluctant to restrain a profitable industry.

The early sprays were effective; they wiped out many insects, good and bad, indiscriminately. Insects that preyed on pests were knocked out and their return was much slower than the pests. These products often poisoned the land, leached into rivers and lakes and killed the fish. So a new generation of less toxic sprays that could be directed at only very specific pests came on the scene. A good example is bacillus thuringiensis (BT) which is supplied as a toxin from a dead bacteria which will only effect particular insects such as caterpillars, mosquito larvae, black flies, Colorado potato beetle larvae, etc.; the correct strain of BT must be used to kill the specified pest. Other very specific insecticides were developed from fungi, protozoa, and nematodes. All these insecticides have one drawback; the more effectively pests are eliminated, the faster a resistant strain of the same pest develops.

By the time we arrived in the twenty-first century, concerned scientists, individuals, and organizations were battling against this industry. They have claimed that the soil, the water supply and the food chain was full of toxic materials; further, a number of pesticides were self-defeating - they promoted the development of immune pests. The debate has raised a good deal of heat, but not enough light.

This writer is not equipped to enter the fray with an opinion of what we should or

should not use. The City of Burnaby is better equipped and has done so. In 2006 a list of acceptable substances for use in Burnaby was arrived at. It was available at the 2007 AGM and published in the April Seedling 2007. BARAGA allotments are part of the city lands and Burnaby's decisions on pesticides are final. Gardeners can only use pesticides on the Burnaby List - unless they want to do without them altogether.

There are, however, several ways to tackle the problems:

1. Know the Enemy: if homo sapiens has any advantage over fellow denizens of the earth it is knowledge. We can identify what we are facing, from memory (either our own past experience or obtained from books, the internet, our fellows) we can devise what tactics to adopt, what course of action to follow, assess what armaments the enemy possesses, how he will respond. So the first thing to do when damage is discovered is to say "who caused this?" Or if it is aliens invading, determine who they are.
2. Do Nothing: this may sound self-defeating, but sometimes it works and it certainly saves work. Let's face it, no garden is going to be entirely pest free. Accepting a certain amount of damage is inevitable. Besides beneficials need to make a living; if every aphid is eliminated, your ladybugs will fly off somewhere else so they can get a meal.
3. The Water Treatment: one step up from doing nothing is using water to wash the pest away. Use just enough pressure to dislodge the pests. Many insects cannot get back to their hosts.
4. Diversity: plant a variety of crops and mix the different kinds. That will often prevent a pest from getting established, or at least, ensure only a small part of the crop is lost.
5. Get Expert Advice: sometimes fellow gardeners can help; there are Master Gardeners

at BARAGA, so ask. There are also several places to take specimens for ID; garden centres, universities and colleges, often have the answer to a problem.

In future newsletters expect to see more on specific pests and problems likely to occur at our allotments. There are many creatures active in a garden, many of them, beneficial; we hope to identify some of them and describe just what they do. Many readers will have methods and remedies of their own; this is a good place to pass them on.

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## **Aggressive Weed - Lamium purpureum**

One of the most noticeable weeds at BARAGA is a blue-purple flowered winter grower - Lamium purpureum commonly known as purple deadnettle. A quick look at the stem confirms its squarish shape and membership in the mint family.

It starts to grow in autumn as soon as the weather cools and moisture levels increase. Because gardeners often take a winter break they can be faced with huge quantities of this weed by the time they get started again in the following spring. Uprooting alone is often not sufficient to kill this plant; it will swiftly regrow from a small part and it will set seeds for next year. It will outgrow many spring crops and the seeds once set will germinate year after year. Unfortunately it readily jumps from allotment to allotment and fills ditches and other areas too.

Not every weed is all bad. The purple (red to blue) flowers are very early in the season and provide a source of nectar and pollen for bees. Sources on the internet indicate the plant is edible; it can be used in stir fries, salads or finely chopped for sauces.

However, *Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit), a relative species with similar habits and appearance, is reported to be poisonous causing staggers in livestock.

Eliminating this weed from BARAGA will be difficult and require efforts from all gardeners. The easiest and most effective method is to prevent germination by applying a mulch or ground cover so the seeds in the soil do not germinate. Where purple deadnettle seedlings appear pull them early. Do not let these weeds flower and spread their seeds. And remember that plants left on the soil are capable of re-rooting themselves and/or continuing to mature their seeds.

Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) is similar to purple deadnettle in appearance. It is sometimes grown in gardens, but can spread aggressively, as can many members of the mint family. Perennials in the *Lamium* (or *Lamiastrum*) genus tend to be spreaders and need to be grown in restricted areas for better control.



*Larry Johnson presents prize to grower of a huge savoy cabbage at Picnic '07 - Joan Campana*



*Derrill Thompson, VP and host - Joan Campana*

## **Honey When ???**

Cold weather throughout spring has stymied our bees (and bees throughout the province). So we do not expect to have honey available until the end of August

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### **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

#### **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](mailto:d_tamblin@telus.net)).

