

THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association
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Fall Cleanup Time Is Here

The BARAGA bylaws state:

"All plots shall be cleared by November 1st of each year, except for actively growing winter crops, mulches, or perennials. Plots shall be left in a tidy condition so that the general appearance of the site is not offensive."

Sound gardening practice, however, dictates a lot of other considerations. The original writers of the bylaw seem to have expected that most plots would be abandoned by the gardeners after the end of October and not visited again until early spring. However there are many ambitious gardeners these days who want to have crops growing throughout winter. With the different varieties of seed available there are many crops that

can be grown all winter. West Coast Seeds publishes a list of crops considered suitable for winter; it is updated and available at this site.
http://www.westcoastseeds.com/admin/file/s/2011_winter_brochure.pdf

Our winters tend to be mild so many plants can survive in the ground with some protection. They do not grow much however, since the short dark days of winter do not allow photosynthesis to take place.

Some gardeners have devised ways of getting a jump on spring by fall planting (see the article on planting garlic as an example). Temporary cloches can be erected to protect crops from the excesses of winter. Why waste greenhouse space when a crop can be protected inside all winter?

Even if not growing crops, there are numerous things gardeners can do to protect their plots and soil,



The flowers of spring have turned to the crops of summer, and now to the brown leaves of fall.

their tools and be ready for an early start next year:

Protective mulches: rather than leave the soil bare to winter vagaries, it is better to cover it with some kind of mulch. There is good reason to expect nutrients to be leached away by winter rains. Many farmers no longer plough their spent crops under but wait until spring; this retains the nutrients, but also stops the soil from eroding. Gardeners can practice much the same thing. A good method is a green mulch, the favourite being winter rye, which can be grown all winter and dug into the soil as soon as it is workable. This protects the soil during winter and adds nutrients to grow next year's crops.

There are many other satisfactory mulches to cover the soil surface and choke out winter weeds (in particular BARAGA plots seem susceptible to chickweed and purple lamium which proliferate on bare earth). Fall brings an abundance of leaves. These make a useful mulch, especially if run over by a lawnmower first. If the late cut of grass clippings is included with the leaves this makes an ideal compost addition when it all breaks down by the following spring.

A quick and dirty method is buy a roll of black plastic. Lay lengths of this over the planting beds making sure to weight down the edges. This offers soil protection, but in addition suppresses weed growth. Next spring the soil underneath will

be marginally drier and several degrees warmer; the plastic can be rolled up and the ground is ready for an early crop.

Besides planting winter crops and protecting the soil, gardeners might want to consider their tools and other aspects of their plots. Hard frost can be very hard on a number of things. A list would include hoses and attachments, watering cans and buckets, especially metal ones. All these can be seriously damaged by expanding frozen water - ice!

Many gardeners have greenhouses and sheds on their allotments. Give some thought to the possibility of a heavy snowfall. Our area sometimes experiences snow that falls thick and heavy for days on end and if it rains it gets very heavy. The weight can be very hard on temporary structures. If your greenhouse is built of light materials, consider how to strengthen it. For the cost of a couple of two by fours a lot of time and grief can be saved.

When you put your tools away for the winter, have a look at their condition. Knock all the earth off forks and shovels. The metal can be cleaned and oiled to prevent rust. Check to see if the shovel

needs sharpening. A very fine finish can be made from mixing equal amounts of linseed oil and turpentine together. When this mixture is applied to old dry wooden handles it immediately gives them a handsome patina and adds years of life to the tool.



Announcements and Other Notices

AGM:The Annual General Meeting will be held January 14, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. in the Lions Hall at 5024 Rumble Street Burnaby.

Sharon Thompson elected to the board last January has resigned to assist in providing health care for her mother-in-law. Please consider joining our board of directors at the next AGM. We will also be electing a new president, secretary and treasurer.

Updating Personal Info: Notice to all members - please send your phone, e-mail, and address changes without delay to the BARAGA mail address or e-mail to support@baraga.ca. If you have questions or comments this is the best way to reach the board of directors.

Heading South for the winter?

Please send your request for early renewal to support@baraga.ca and we will send you the form for your plot rental. This along, with payment, must be in our hands before January 31, 2012. You can mail back a post dated cheque along with the form.

Reminder to all volunteers - Please make sure you have your **full 6 hours** of volunteer time in **before Nov. 15**, this year or you will not get your discount. We have volunteer jobs that still need doing. If you need more time to fulfill your 6 hours please send an e-mail to support@baraga.ca and we will get back to you.

Final Inspection: The last full plot inspection for the year will be Saturday Nov. 5th so please have your plots and pathways in good order by that date. If you are considering giving up your plot please let us know right away so that we can deal with it now instead of a pile of weeds later. Thank you.

Plot Boundaries: Plot boundaries must not be increased by marginal infringement into the pathways. Please look at your plot borders and make sure they are in a straight line with at least two plots on each side of your plot and do not reduce the standard path width of thirty inches or thirty six inches if you have a fence or other structure.

Please take note that the water system is shut off for the winter.

Planting Garlic Now

October is the ideal time to plant garlic. Garlic planted now will establish a deep root system and take off with spring. Garlic bulbs are available right now in the local nurseries. These bulbs are far different than the bulbs sold to eat in the vegetable market (these are varieties that flourish in such places as southern California). There are several varieties suitable for local use available; the choice is yours. A small outfit called "The Back Porch" in Agassiz offers ten different varieties.

Garlic likes moist, well drained, not wet, soil that is rich in nutrients. Plenty of compost worked into the soil is good. Garlic prefers a higher pH so add a bit of lime. When splitting the bulbs for planting brush off extra skin - helps with disease avoidance. Rows should be fairly widely spaced and the garlic at least an inch (2.5 cm) deep, but not deeper than 2.5 inches (6.5 cm). Try to plant in a spot where no allium family member has grown for three years. If your allotments has odd corners garlic will fit in these spaces.

Garlic forms scapes (around June). Anne Morrison recommends removing these immediately, but don't throw them away - they can be eaten in stir fries, or if already tough used as a flavouring agent in a tea-ball.

Although garlic itself is not disease free it is often recommended as a defence against garden pests. It is apparently a

sulphur accumulator so makes a good companion for roses and other plants prone to fungal disease. Its smell (or taste) also deters many critters who like garlic much less than Homo sapiens.

Open House at Agassiz Federal Experimental Farm & UBC Dairy Farm

Gardeners looking for modern techniques, information on watering and fertilizing or just helpful hints would have found a lot of information at this periodic open house - held on July 23rd this year. While there was a great deal to see and learn, it is admittedly a long way to go to do it.

The labs were open (sort of - contamination and potential damage to valuable equipment imposed limitations). The chromatographs and much other equipment used in advanced soil analysis were on display. Some of the ongoing experiments were featured; a scientist or team member in charge was on hand to explain what was going on.

Since it was the height of the raspberry season there was a display of the many fruit varieties on trial; some of these, (hopefully the most successful breeds in the development program) are passed on to commercial growers and are (or will be in the future) available to gardeners through local nurseries.

In another area a collection of weeds, many common at BARAGA, together with invasive species were

displayed in pots and identified for the public. An astonishing aspect of this was the length of time weed seeds can linger in the soil waiting for an opportune moment to germinate. Some remain viable for as long as 40 years - an additional incentive for gardeners to weed before seeds are set!

Here are a few of the features that might have caught the eye of an allotment gardener

♦ A display in the entomology (insect study) area of the many click beetles. Many of these are responsible for the wireworm (juveniles of the beetles) that attack and disfigure potatoes and many other root vegetables. A current project to defeat these pests is a fungus, metarhizium, that infects and kills wireworms. Unlike traditional insecticides it is very specific in which insect is eliminated. It can be an effective biological control even in minute amounts.

♦ The entomologists also featured two insects that gardeners overlook but which can be very helpful in the garden. Aphids, there are many species, can be a major problem, causing wilting, slowing plant growth, and introducing harmful viruses. Flies, members of the Syrphidae group, sometimes known as flower flies or hover flies, lay their eggs in aphid colonies. Each larvae is capable of eating up to 300 aphids per night. These flies are also useful pollinators. Many crops, but particularly cabbages and members of the cabbage family, are attacked by loopers who eat three times their weight in plant material

everyday. They have a natural enemy, the spined soldier bug. This rather ugly insect, known as *Podisus maculiventris*, has a voracious appetite for caterpillars of many kinds including gypsy moths, Colorado potato beetles, and the cabbage looper.

There is a lot of experimental work with blueberries, hardly surprising since BC is a major producer. Amongst the discoveries is the fact that moderate irrigation is very helpful in producing a good crop, but overwatering can spoil the berries. Nitrogen is very important to blueberries; the experiments indicate the most effective way of applying it is in moderate amounts dissolved in water through the irrigation system, a process nicknamed "fertigation".

Big Plants Wanted

When Snoop Dogg learned that gardener/farmer Ian Neale had grown the biggest rutabaga ever, he made the following offer through Facebook. He would supply two free tickets to his upcoming concert; in return Mr. Neale would advise Snoop Dogg how to grow big plants.

This story emerged in an interview Carol Off conducted on CBC 's window on the world called "As It Happens". Mr. Neale, it turned out had no idea who Snoop Dogg was or what his profession was. He did not even know what rap music was. Nevertheless he was persuaded to go to the interview and afterwards attend the

concert. Ian Neale is a real garden enthusiast. His speciality is apparently growing big crops. He was already in the Guiness Book of Records for producing the longest cucumber before he recently grew the heaviest (biggest) rutabaga ever. Rutabagas (or swede turnips - they originated in Scandinavia) grow slowly all season; they are yellow and stronger flavoured than turnips. Ian Neale hails from Newport in Wales where the gulf stream current gives a long growing season. His secret, as far as he was willing to divulge it to Ms. Off, was to give the roots a huge growing space and the plants lots of attention.

Exactly which crop Snoop Dogg wanted to apply this advice to was not specified, however, it is not one likely to be grown successfully at BARAGA. Stick to rutabagas. The full interview - podcast - should still be available at the CBC web site (Tuesday, Oct. 4th).



Beets, salsify and corn in Mrs. Beeton's garden at VanDusen this summer.

Mrs. Beeton's Garden

Isabella Beeton was born in March of 1836. She died of puerperal fever in January 1865 after giving birth to her fourth son. She was twenty-eight years old. Her short life was celebrated in a TV dramatization by the BBC (broadcast on PBS, Seattle, in 2006).

Mrs. Beeton's fame rests almost solely on one book on household management. It described how to do almost everything that a Victorian middle-class person would do. A butler, cook or head gardener in a upper class household would have found this their bible, containing all the information they needed to do their jobs. It was 1112 pages long and contained 900 recipes. Obviously Mrs. Beeton never had time to try everything out herself. Likely she did not write a good deal of it but just collected the knowledge from other sources. Today authors and publishers would cry foul and accuse her of plagiarism. Nevertheless it was an invaluable source book in its day and its fame lives on to our own times. Victorian gardens were usually walled in and tended by a gardener who attempted to produce the vegetable requirements demanded by the kitchen. Using seed supply houses that were new entrepreneurial ventures in those days, gardeners and cooks standardized the diet that we have inherited and grew many of

the varieties that we now know. While we may sometimes cook in more imaginative ways, what we cook is very much the same - one hundred and fifty years later. In those times there was a distinct prejudice towards things continental, especially French or Italian; cabbage was ordinary, "choux de la france" was a sure big seller. For your interest we are publishing below a list of the crops grown in Mrs. Beeton's garden which a featured display in the Heritage Garden at VanDusen this summer. All of these crops were known to be available around 1860 and many will be familiar to the reader.

- Artichoke - Violet de Provence
- Beets - three varieties - a) Chioggia b) Golden c) Crapaudine
- Broccoli
- Bush Beans - a) Dragon Tongue b) Yellow China
- Cabbage - a) Couer de Bue b) Premium Late Dutch c) Couer de Boeuf des Vertule d) Tete Noir
- Carrot - a) Saint Valery b) Scarlet Nantes c) Paris Market
- Chard - Rhubarb
- Cippolini onion - Allium cepa - a) Berelana Yellow b) Yellow of Pavina
- Cucumber - a) Fin de Meux b) Long Anglais
- Endive - a) De Meux (1860) b) DeLouviers
- Fava - Aquadulce
- Kale - Blue Curled Scotch
- Leek - Blue Solaise
- Lettuce - a) Oak-leaved b) Brune d'Hiver
- Parsnip - Hollow Crown
- Peas - a) Champion of England b) Tom Thumb
- Peas - blue pods - a variety for the front bed!
- Peas - edible pods - Corntope de Betiere
- Pole Bean - Painted Lady
- Potato - Lumber
- Radish - a) Helios b) Long Scarlet

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- Romaine - Forellenschuss
 - Salsify - Mammoth Sandwich Island
 - Spinach - Bloomsdale
 - Squash - a) Tours b) Pott marron
 - Tomato - Moneymaker
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Real Tomato Soup

If you are used to the kind of tomato soup that comes from a can - as in Andy Warhol's famous modern art - real tomato soup comes as an eye-opener. And the recipe is simple.



Cut up two tablespoons of onions. In a pan melt two tablespoons of butter (or substitute olive oil if you prefer). Take six large tomatoes, preferably quite ripe, peel them and coarsely chop. Saute the onions until soft, then add the tomato. Cook until the tomatoes are tender and add three cups of chicken soup stock (vegetable stock or beef stock is a fine substitute), saute another ten minutes.

The only other ingredient is one cup of milk or cream; add this now. Then mix in a blender until smooth. Return the soup to the pot and reheat as required. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Several variations are possible depending on your taste. You might wish to add basil or a clove of garlic for additional flavour. You can omit the milk/cream and add a tablespoon of plain

yoghurt to each bowl of soup. Whatever way you choose to finish this soup it will have a delicious, real tomato flavour. The recipe yields about four servings.

Vegetable Stock

If there is a secret to making vegetable soup stock, it is sauteing the vegetables at high heat before adding the liquid. They become caramelized bringing out the flavours.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped
1 medium leek, partly green
3 celery stalks, chopped
2 sliced carrots
2 russet potatoes (6-8 skins will do)

Saute first the onion, then the remainder of ingredients over high heat for 15 minutes. Add the following:

small bunch of fresh parsley (or 1 Tb dry)
1 teaspoon peppercorns
2 bay leaves
4 garlic cloves
2 quarts of water

Bring to a boil and then simmer for forty minutes. Add half a cup of white wine and cook a further ten minutes. Strain out the vegetables from the broth. Refrigerate and use as needed (for one week) or freeze in blocks for future use.

The vegetables can be substituted

freely to use whatever is on hand; fennel, parsnips, tomatoes, turnips for example. Avoid green peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, beets, etc.

Info About BARAGA

◆◆◆◆ The BARAGA mailing address is:
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◆◆ To get Approval for the construction of greenhouses and sheds (or when making repairs) phone Don Hatch 604-433-8055.

◆◆ To contact the president Don Hatch call 604-433-8055 and leave a message please. You may e-mail us at - support@baraga.ca

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This newsletter was edited by David Tamblin (unsigned articles are written by him). Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of BARAGA.