

THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association

BARAGA, Volume 31, Number 2, December 2012

Notice of the Annual General Meeting

Time and Place: The BARAGA Annual General Meeting will be held on January 19th, 2013. Time: 1:00 P.M. As usual it will be held in the Lions Hall at 5024 Rumble Street in Burnaby.

Business: The business of the meeting will include the President's report on the state of the garden, approval of the 2012 Financial Report, the budget and election of officers for 2013. Any member wishing to make a motion during the business part of the meeting must submit the motion in writing to the board of directors in order that it may be included in the meeting agenda. It may be mailed to the BARAGA postal box or e-mailed to support@baraga.ca. No motions from the floor for new business will be allowed during the meeting.

Special Vote on bees at BARAGA will be taken prior to the meeting by Secret ballot only. The results will be read during the meeting. Please see the Report on Bees on page 4.

Elections:

Members will be electing a President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary and Directors at large (the number is to be determined by motion at the meeting). All members of BARAGA in good standing - means dues are paid - are eligible for election; you may nominate any member for any position - providing you have their assent - either by prior nomination or at the meeting. Members may also nominate themselves. BARAGA needs and

encourages new faces in our organization. Members can get a full description of board positions on our web site baraga.ca from now until January 20, 2013.

Nominations: Members can submit the nominations for BARAGA positions to Camilla Dietrich no later than January 6th 2013, either by mail to 214 - 67 Miner Street, New Westminster, BC V3L 5N5 or by email to camillamdietrich@gmail.com

Door Prizes and Refreshments:

There will be door prizes and light refreshments will be served following the meeting. This is an opportunity for members, especially new members, to meet each other. There will be some time available for questions and an opportunity to input ideas.

Renewals: Membership renewals will be processed between 11:00 a.m. and 12:55 P.M. before the meeting begins. Members should bring their completed and signed renewal forms with them. Please bring your cheque, dated before February 1 and include everything in the envelope mailed with the renewal form.

Our Thanks

Some members of the present board of directors are ending their terms of office in January.

The positions involve a great deal more time and work than the normal six hours of volunteer time expected of the average member. There is, of course, no financial compensation whatever for all this work which often goes unrecognized. We should like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the contribution to BARAGA that these members make.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The membership fees will be going up to \$20. The plot rental fee for 2014 may also be going up. The amount will be determined at this AGM. If we cannot get enough volunteers then we will have to hire outside help to do the work at \$18+ per hour. The board has also determined that the amount of volunteer hours required of each member may be raised to 10 hours. The old rate was not getting enough volunteers to keep up with the work required. Volunteer hours will also earn a possible greater reduction in plot rental fees. If this is an important issue to you please come to the AGM and vote on this issue.

Urgent Notice

BARAGA requires members to step forward and take on positions at the board of directors. It is necessary that we have a good working board of directors that can responsibly run the affairs of our gardening organization.

All positions on the board are open and available during the AGM. Any member may put forth their name for any position on the executive as well as the directors at large. That is what elections are for in a democratic organization. Some positions on the board may be filled by the current member by acclamation if no one comes forward and contests the position. The board needs the positions of secretary, and the new position of membership secretary to be filled. We have a member that will continue as treasurer.

Other than those executive positions we have possibly four or five of the current directors who will stay on as board members. The board suggests that the current number of directors including executive members be held at 15 members to enable a consistent workload for all directors.

Anyone who wishes to run for office, please contact Camilla Dietrich the elections coordinator prior to January 6th, 2013. See nominations on page one.

Fire ants in our gardens

For the nests, it seems that they don't go that deep into the ground (especially given the high water table at the garden) though in any one opening, there maybe be multiple 'colonies' – imagine a set of lungs with two pockets, fire ants may have numerous pockets... the secret would be to make sure that all the ants in all the pockets are dead.

Rob Higgins is doing tests on the borax/sugar solution and is finding that it is only controlling the colonies, not killing them. The key is to kill the queens - within a colony, the worker ants will 'taste' the food for the queens. So, once they determine that something is poisonous, they don't feed it to the queens! You should continue to use the borax to control the spread of ants, but it will not kill back any infestations.

So, the ants are quite intolerant to water, and apparently the cold (though they seem to survive our winters). If the garden floods this fall, it might be worthwhile to try digging up the colonies (they will form into balls) and remove them. I had also thought, if the gardens are wet, and we are expecting them to freeze, we could overturn the beds and expose the colonies to freezing. Again, here, it will be key to dig up all the colonies, and make sure all the queens are dead.

So, it seems the key at the garden is to focus on not spreading the infestation. Currently, there is nothing that will kill the fire ants. Until that time, it's all about controlling the spread!

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Please do not dump any materials next to the dumpster bins or on the ramp up to the dumpsters. If the dumpsters are full you will have to wait until they are emptied. The city empties the dumpsters on Tuesday and Friday.

All members should be composting Plant material on their plots. Only diseased plants should be put into the dumpsters. Rotten wood, plastic and cardboard can be put into the dumpsters.

Head-hunter flies decapitate fire ants

– hope for the future

By Matt Walker Editor, BBC Nature



A decapitating fly takes aim

It's a story worthy of a Halloween film.

A plague of alien ants sweeps across a country, attacking wildlife and people, and killing some.

In a bid to halt their advance, scientists turn to another, even more insidious creature: a type of fly that literally "head-hunts" ants, decapitating them. The fly hunts down the ant and injects an egg into it. The egg hatches into a maggot, which then migrates into the ant's head.

Here the maggot releases a chemical that dissolves membranes, causing the ant's head to fall off.

The maggot proceeds to eat the ant from the inside out, eventually making its home in the empty severed body part.

Finally the maggot becomes a fly - ready to join a new generation of head-hunters.

But this isn't science fiction; instead it's a description of the latest efforts being undertaken to halt the spread of an invasive ant species that has been imported into, and is spreading across, the US.

These **fire ants** can cause havoc, damaging agriculture, homes and even costing some people their life.

Red fire ants (*Solenopsis invicta*) were accidentally introduced into the US from the Formosa province of north-east Argentina during the 1930s.

They have colonised agricultural areas, deserts and coastal habitats as well as towns and cities, becoming a pervasive problem, spreading across the south of the country. They have also spread to other countries such as China and New Zealand.

The ants are small, just 2-6mm long, but they are aggressive and occur in high densities.

They breed and spread rapidly and, if disturbed, can relocate quickly to ensure survival of the colony.

Tiny killers

Fire ants can devastate native ant populations.

Research published last month demonstrated for the first time that not only do introduced fire ants

compete with native ants for food, they also exclude other ants from creating mutually beneficial relationships with other animals. Ants often protect aphids, for example, in exchange for feeding on a sugary honey dew produced by the smaller insects. Fire ants eat a variety of foods, and use stings to subdue and kill their prey, deterring other larger animals from where they are living.

They can kill frogs, lizards or small mammals and they can invade swimming pools, houses and even institutions.

They can also kill people.

Their stings may cause an allergic reaction in humans and medical literature records tens of individuals having died after suffering anaphylactic shock from fire ant bites. Last month, researchers published research attempting to analyse the chemical constituents of red fire ant venom, to better understand how to counteract it.

This ant invasion costs individual states billions of dollars each year, so scientists are exploring ways to control them.

In their native range the ants are controlled by several dozen natural enemies, including viruses, nematode worms, a parasitic ant and a wasp.

But these enemies are absent in the US, allowing fire ant populations to grow to numbers five to 10 times greater than in their native homelands.

So scientists are turning to various species of tiny, head-hunting flies, which help to control ant numbers in their native Argentina.

Researchers have been examining whether, and how, these flies might be introduced into the US to challenge the invasive ants.

Six species of fly have been released and two are now spreading with the ants, says Dr Sanford Porter of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), based in Gainesville, Florida, who has been working on the biocontrol of fire ants for 15 years.

Several more species have been released more recently and scientists are now trying to measure their impact.

The latest battle ground is north-central Florida. There Dr Porter and colleague Dr Luis Calcaterra, who works for the Foundation for the Study of Invasive Species and the USDA in Buenos Aires, Argentina, have conducted a study into which species of head-hunting fly are most effective against the ants.

The idea is not eradicate to fire ants in the US, but to create an ecological balance between fire ant and native ant populations.

In the journal Biological Control, they report on the success of releasing three different species of fly in the same territory, to see whether they would do better collectively.

The experiment was a success, with the third species already competing well with its head-hunting rivals and expanding its range.

"More is better because they attack different sizes of fire ants at different times of day and in more habitats," says Dr Porter.

However successful, "decapitating flies are part of a larger biocontrol effort, which includes pathogens and other parasites," he explains.

BARAGA AD HOC BEE COMMITTEE REPORT

This report is the culmination of 4 meetings held. The purpose of the committee was to discuss the keeping of bees at BARAGA to include keeping of bees by individual plot holders.

The findings of the committee are as follows:
That the directors need to approach the City of Burnaby in writing, regarding an amendment of the lease to include the keeping of honey bees on BARAGA land. The lease agreement is up in November 2011. Although BARAGA land is zoned Agricultural, the lease states that no livestock is allowed. Bees are livestock. Of the eight community gardens in the lower mainland known to have bees, none allow bees on individual plots. Some of those bees are privately owned and managed by one beekeeper. Those beekeepers are required to be registered with the BC Ministry of Agriculture. A Community Garden has a sandwich board stating that the beekeepers are working with the bees. Most of the garden allotments researched were significantly smaller in area than BARAGA. One community garden has a coordinator and a bee committee. It requires that each beekeeper committee member must have at least a beginner beekeeping certificate. There are three places in the lower mainland to take beekeeping courses.

Keeping too many colonies in too small an area can increase the possibility for disease and parasite transfer.

Medicating should be done to ALL bees in the vicinity with the same treatment and at the same time.

BARAGA has 2 million dollars liability insurance which may/ may not include the bees.

Those people who are allergic to insect stings should be carrying proper medication.

Some people are afraid of bees.

Zoning regulations are up for interpretation because BARAGA is ALR but is administered by the Parks and Recreation Commission of the City of Burnaby. It is also not Residential land.

The Zoning bylaws have guidelines for the keeping of honey bees on Single family Residential lots.

The committee came up with the recommendation that there be a vote by the BARAGA members with the following choices:

1. Only BARAGA keeps honey bee colonies for the pollination of the gardens with the sale of honey to members used as a fundraiser to maintain the colonies.
2. BARAGA colonies plus a limited number of personally owned colonies being maintained in a specified bee yard.
3. BARAGA colonies plus a limited number of personally owned colonies being maintained on individual plots.

The committee also recommends that, should personally owned colonies be approved, the directors, along with a committee, should set up regulations and guidelines for the proper management of the bees. No matter what the vote, a committee should be struck to discuss and set guidelines for the existing colonies.

We recommend a statement be made that it is understood that no bees other than BARAGA bees be allowed by individuals until rules and regulations have been set.

Respectfully submitted by: Eleni Harvalias, Terry Copeland, Jaquie Bunse, Daniel Chiang, Dick Goold, Heather Ewasew, Luigi Aiello.

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Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of BARAGA.

To contact BARAGA - support@baraga.ca or by mail Box 209, 141- 4200 McKay Avenue, Burnaby, B.C. V5H 4M9