



The SEEDLING

Newsletter of the Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens Association



FLOWER BEDS & ORCHARD REPORT

by Ramiro Coto

Fruit Tree Guilds

Very few things compare to the wonder of a fruit tree both when blooming and when it is full of fruits. Sadly not all areas in Canada are as lucky as ours for having a climate that favours many different fruit species and cultivars including apples, pears, peaches, cherries, plums, etc. The list is much larger if we include trees from other parts of the world such as loquats, persimmons, figs, etc. Our orchard is finally taking shape and with that a lot of members are becoming more and more interested in adopting one of the trees. Here we want to discuss the opportunity to take fruit tree care to the next level.

Tree Guilds

Fruit tree guild design is one way to optimize a planting space and create a more diverse producing food garden. A guild is made of communities of plants that form a self-sufficient system, with each plant having multiple functions and performing a unique role in the ecosystem that benefits the surrounding plants. Usually, guilds are set up around a central fruit tree, with understory shrubs, perennials, and ground covers planted to complement the central tree and enhance its health and productivity.

How to Start

A guild starts with a centerpiece; a tall and often widespread overstory tree. Then measure a circle around the fruit tree using sticks or flags to mark the mature width. This perimeter is called the drip line. The roots of the tree will eventually extend to this point, and perhaps even farther. Try to create sections in the form of "pizza slices" starting at the base of the tree leaving a small path between each slice so you can walk to or have access to the tree.

The next step will be to plant herbs and perennials within the slices. Remember that you'll want to select plants that will repel pests: mint, garlic, daffodils, basil, lavender, etc.

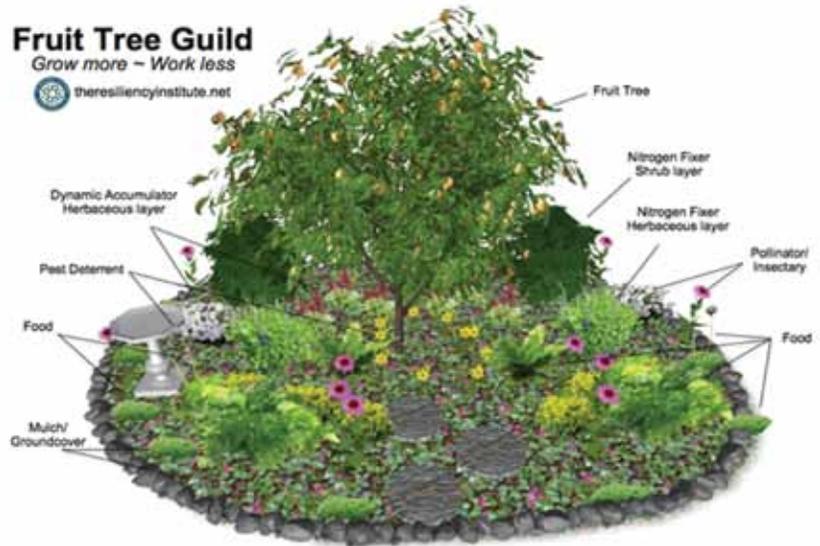
- Mulch and accumulate nutrients: comfrey or borage
- Fertilize and fix nitrogen: lupines, clover, etc.
- Attract pollinators: bee balm, yarrow, sedum, etc.
- For ground cover and food: strawberries
- For medicine and beauty: echinacea
- For culinary use: chives

This is just a small sample list; there are many other wonderful and useful low growing plants that can be used as well.

Care and Maintenance of a Guild

Plant your understory selections carefully, weeding, watering them well, and cleaning as necessary throughout the seasons. Later in the growing season and especially in the fall, removal of dead or brown tops may be necessary.

A guild not only enhances the health of an orchard; with good care, it can become a diverse and beautiful landscape.



March 2018

Flower Beds & Orchard Report - Tree Guilds	1
Board Director's Message Important Dates AGM 2018 Plot Inspections and Maintenance for 2018	2
Cultivating The Soil Upcoming SGM	3
Board of Directors Contact Information Helpful Hints	4

BOARD DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

by Sarah Gordon

THE 2018 BOARD TEAM

Thank you to Dick M, Don, Doug E, Dullss, Jana, Ramiro, and Sheila S for continuing to serve BARAGA and its members. Dick continues as Vice President, Jana as Treasurer, Don as Director-at-Large, Doug as Membership, Dullss as Waitlist and Plot Rentals, Ramiro as Landscape, Sheila R as Inspections, and Sheila S as Community Service Hours. Dick, Dullss, Ramiro, and Sheila S continue to help with work parties.

BARAGA welcomes Sheila R., Anna, Grace, Mark, Monica, Rolf, Sarah, and Vania to this year's Board. Sheila R as Inspections, Anna will be assembling the Seedling, Grace will be Events Co-ordinator, Mark will be working on Plots with Doug and Dullss, Monica is our Food Bank Liaison, Rolf is a Director-at -Large, and Vania is the Board's Liaison to the Special Committee for the Transition Bylaws. Sarah is the new President.

Plot Inspections and Maintenance for 2018

Whether you're a new gardener at BARAGA, or have been here for many years, early spring is a good time to let you know what the plot inspection team will be looking for in the year ahead.

The committee tries to be as fair and consistent with everyone, but if the plot has a problem noted on inspection day, you will be receiving a letter. Three (3) letters over a gardening season may mean your ability to stay in BARAGA is in jeopardy. If you then receive a termination letter, you have the right to appeal within 2 weeks.

Here are the main items you need to take care of:

- ◇ cultivation must be started no later than May 1, and the plot must be cultivated all growing season
- ◇ by November 1, plots should be cleared except for winter crops, mulches or perennials
- ◇ weeds need to be kept under control – in the garden, greenhouse and pathways – all season long Excessive weeds will result in a letter
- ◇ the plot must have a flower bed at one end (2 by 20 feet)
- ◇ the plot must be reasonably tidy and free of garbage, debris, old pots, rotting wood, etc
- ◇ pathways
 - the pathways between plots needs to be a minimum of 30 inches
 - kept open and clear of hanging plants and material, hoses, boards, etc
 - kept weed free and mowed (where they are planted with grass)Note: gardeners are responsible for the North and West paths around the plot.
- ◇ fruit bearing trees and shrubs cannot be higher than 7 feet
- ◇ greenhouses, sheds and fences must be in a safe condition

If you are not clear on these requirements or are having trouble keeping your garden up, please do contact us at inspections@baraga.ca or call a Director at (604) 600-6939. Together we can usually come up with a solution that works for you, your plot neighbours and BARAGA as a whole.

The 2018 AGM

This year's AGM was held January 13 at the Alan Emmott Centre. Thank you to Ann for her excellent service as President, Carly for doing the Seedling, Cathy for Secretary, and Jonathan as Communications Director. Jonathan continues to manage BARAGA's website and email server. Serving on the Board requires a large commitment of time and BARAGA is very grateful to all its volunteers.

BARAGA's financial position remains strong. The membership adopted a balanced operating budget for the current financial year. Additional \$8,000 from the Contingency Fund was approved to complete some much-needed larger projects: repair to the entrances, park renovations, purchase of new picnic benches and a trailer for tractor.

Members also voted to allow the Board to spend up to \$3,000 for administrative assistance this year. So far, we are managing without paid help, but we still need a volunteer to serve as Secretary for 2018.

The new Bylaws Handbook did not pass with two-thirds majority at the AGM. Several members expressed concerns regarding the proposed document and a Special Committee was approved by members at the AGM. The revised Bylaws Handbook will be the subject of a Special General Meeting, and the information package will be sent by June 2, 2018.

... **First Work Party** ...
Saturday, April 14
Get a jump start on your hours!

IMPORTANT DATES

Plot Inspection Dates:						
May 5	Jun 2	Jul 7	Aug 4	Sep 1	Oct 6	Nov3
Work Parties:						
Apr 14	May 12	Jun 9	Jul 14	Aug 11	Sep 8	Oct 13
Board Meetings:						
Mar 14	Apr 11	May 9	Jun 13	Jul 11	Aug 8	Sep 12
Oct 10	Nov14	Dec12				
SGM: Sat, June 16 at 1:00 pm						
Picnic: Sat, August 11						
Food Bank pickup- Monday after 10:00 am Be on the lookout for notices - approximate startup date is late June.						

CULTIVATING THE SOIL

by David Tamblin



BARAGA SGM

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING (SGM)

WHEN

Sat, June 16, 2018
1:00 pm

WHERE

Alan Emmott Centre
6650 Southoaks Crescent
Burnaby, BC

(Same place as where the AGM
was held)

Purpose of the SGM: For members to review and vote on proposed changes to BARAGA's bylaws.

The proposed changes were not approved at the AGM in January and a Special Committee is addressing the concerns expressed by members.

Glenn volunteered to chair the committee at the AGM and is already working with the team. BARAGA must submit its new bylaws as part of the Provincial Government's new Societies Act Transition process.

Any questions or concerns regarding the new Handbook or the Transition process can be sent to directors@baraga.ca.

The landmass of planet Earth is largely covered by a very thin layer of material. From this fragile layer many plants and animals including billions of human beings derive their living – **the soil**. We are totally dependent on it; it deserves our respect and gratitude and a much kinder moniker than “dirt”.

Soil is far from inert fragments of rocks. It is full of life although a microscope is required to see much of it. Besides tiny rock particles (sand, loam, clay depending on size) there is “the living, the dead and the very dead”. The living are millions (millions per cubic foot of soil) of bacteria, fungi and a myriad of other minute life forms. The dead are all kinds of detritus and debris from once living things. The very dead are unbroken down organic remains known as humus.

At BARAGA the soil was once a peat bog. It was extremely acidic (4.5 pH) and often waterlogged. Cleared of its very specialized vegetation and drained, the soil in the allotment garden still has characteristics of its origin. The soil is almost completely organic in origin, making it light (when partly dry) and very easy to work. The remains of the peat bog still lies underneath and in winter the water table rises to saturate garden beds. (Peat is a combustible product and the danger of long, slow burning fire should be in all gardeners' minds.)

Looking at a typical plant about fifty per cent of it is above the soil. This part of the plant performs photosynthesis producing the simple sugars that are the building blocks of organic life. The hydrogen, oxygen and carbon needed are readily available in air and water. The rest of the plant is root structure which anchors the plant in the soil and finds the water and the nutrients that the plant needs. These nutrients are minerals. A fertilizer will contain three major mineral ingredients: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (NPK). There are three other minerals required, calcium, magnesium and sulphur - usually present in soils quite abundantly. Finally there are eight “trace” elements which are somewhat mysterious minerals required in minuscule amounts. Organic soils occasionally lack one of these and strangely deformed plants result. Trace elements are sometimes added to balanced fertilizers – read the bag or container.

The purpose of cultivation is produce a soil in which meets all of a plant's needs. “Tilth” is a term used to describe soil which is broken up by spade/fork so it is loose enough for plants roots to easily grow through it. It is fine enough to allow water penetration through capillary action and loose enough for a supply of air. Cultivation often incorporates organic materials lying on the surface into the soil so the micro-organisms in the soil can feed on it. These break it down so the nutrients become soluble in water and available to plant roots. Many weeds on the surface get buried in the process and naturally decompose; some, especially perennial ones, need to be physically removed.

Often the soil in BARAGA allotments doesn't need much cultivation. If it is light enough tilth to allow good air and water penetration and nutrients are readily available, nothing needs to be done but planting. If a mulch of some kind (there are many from compost, to leaves, to grass clippings, to black plastic, etc.) is applied in fall and maintained, planting crops can go ahead in spring. The gardener must avoid compacting the soil, either by using stepping boards between rows or by growing in raised beds that are never trampled on. Compaction can be estimated by inserting a sharp stick or ruler into the soil; if it penetrates easily to a good planting depth, cultivation may be unnecessary.

The term “pH” describes a scale (from 0 to 14) used to measure the acidity/alkalinity of soil; a small pH denotes an acid or sour soil; pH 7 is neutral; and a higher pH is alkaline or sweet. Most vegetables are tolerant of a pH from 5.5 to 8. The catch is the microbes in the soil which require a more specific pH to thrive (and hence produce nutrients). Since BARAGA soil pH is quite low adding lime at the recommended rate every three years keeps the soil pH balanced.

Gardeners like everyone else don't get something from nothing. Crops are harvested and the soil must be replenished. The three principle fertilizers (NPK, but particularly nitrogen) are likely reduced and need to be added to yearly. The organic constituent of the soil is likely broken down and need replacement. There are many ways to do this. Composted materials can be produced on the allotment or brought in. Manures from several different sources can be found or bought. Organic fertilizers are available. So too are chemical fertilizers that can be used to supplement depleted soil nutrients.

Gardeners who want to know more can consult past newsletters readily available on the BARAGA website. There are books on the topic of building or improving soil in the local libraries for those who really want to explore the topic in depth. And right at your finger tips are the plentiful resources of the world wide web.

Mark Twain famously said “Buy land, they're not making it any more.” We can't do that at BARAGA but we can value the soil we have the use of. Good soil is better than pay dirt.

Board of Directors

Sarah Gordon
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directors@baraga.ca

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Vice-President
directors@baraga.ca

(Not filled)
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directors@baraga.ca

Jana Solnickova
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Membership
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Dullss Kleamyck
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By-Laws & Handbook
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Landscaping & Flower Beds
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Directors at Large - directors@baraga.ca

Vania Alexieva
Mark Anderson
Rolf Schrader
Monica Jones



Helpful Hints:

SPRING CLEAN UP TIME

While we're starting our seeds and waiting for the soil to warm, now is the time to clean the winter debris and get your plot ready to plant.

The first plot inspection will be May 5, starting 9:00 am.

Inspectors will be checking plots to see they are weeded, under cultivation; trees, shrubs, and vines are pruned to below 2.15 m (7 ft); pathways are clear and weed free; structures are in good repair; and garbage is not stored on your plot.

FIRE ANTS

The new president, Sarah, would like to map the fire ants this year. The map will be used to monitor the spread of the infestation and to target areas with their favourite habitats, such as rotten wood. If you have fire ants on or near your plot, please email directors@baraga.ca with your name and plot #. For more information, the Provincial site link below uses data from the study conducted at BARAGA.

<https://bcinvasives.ca/news-events/media/articles/european-fire-ants/>

RECYLING AND GARBAGE

We encourage members to compost on their plots and in addition do provide a common composting area for excess compostable material.

Burnaby Garbage is collected weekly on Mondays.

The construction bins are emptied when full.

The plastics and cardboard container is collected every second Wednesday starting in May and ending in October.

Mailing Address

Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens Association
Box 209, 4974 Kingsway
Burnaby, BC V5H 4M9

Telephone: (604) 600-6939



Thank you to Alex from West Coast Seeds for being part of our BARAGA AGM.

We look forward to touring the demonstration garden in Ladner again soon!