



# THE SEEDLING

Newsletter of the Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens Association



## Golden Apple, Wolf Peach, and the Pride of Every Gardener

by Sarah Gordon

*Solanum pimpinellifolium* (Kenpei, 2008 CC)

### September 2018

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What better taste is there in the garden than the first tomato of the season? By fall, most of us have full pantries of meaty, plump varieties canned, frozen or sundried to see us through the winter. There are hundreds of varieties and special techniques for growing each one - as many as there are gardeners. Every gardener at BARAGA has their own "recipe" for growing the perfect tomato, based on their experience, tastes and the end product they use the produce for. A little history on how the tomato came to take its special spot in the edible garden will make us all appreciate them even more.

Tomatoes have had quite the journey from Peru to Europe and back to the Americas, along with their close nightshade relatives such as potatoes, eggplants and peppers. The precursor of our delicious fruits is most likely *Solanum pimpinellifolium*, a pea-sized wild tomato that hides in craggy areas in the Andes. These tiny perennial tomatoes are disease and drought resistant. The Aztecs started crossbreeding larger varieties of wild tomatoes to achieve the style of tomato we recognize today. The Spanish colonizers took seeds back with them to Europe. This small genetic pool is the origin of most modern cultivars. (Westbrook, 2015)

From the Spanish ships in the 15th century, tomatoes spread across the Mediterranean. The first larger cultivars may have been golden coloured, possibly resulting in the Italian name, *pomi d'oro* - golden apple. The French probably knew of the Aztec belief in tomatoes as aphrodisiacs and called them *pomme d'amour* - love apples. By the mid 16th century, tomatoes were even being used in Nepalese cooking (History of tomatoes, n.d.). Southern Europe knew a good thing when they tasted it and tomatoes became a staple in regional cuisine.

Northern Europe; however, associated the plant with its cousin *Atropa belladonna* - deadly nightshade. The luscious tomato was considered poisonous because the leaves and flowers were similar to the dangerous belladonna and mandrake. *Solanum lycopersicon*, the botanical name for tomatoes, is derived from the German "wolf peach" and reflects the folk belief that werewolves could be summoned by using these plants. Lycos, meaning wolf, is also the Latin root of lycopene, one of the key nutrients tomatoes are recognized for today. Amusingly, researchers breed them for the maximum of this antioxidant werewolf juice now. Despite being grown just to the South in Mexico, tomatoes came to North America via Europeans. The fruits were grown only for their decorative appeal well into the 19th century in large areas of Europe and colonial North America.

As the tomato became more widespread it began to take on a political dimension in the next centuries. During the French revolution, tomatoes were eaten as a sign of support for republicanism and the revolution. Aristocrats would never eat them, believing them to be poisonous, so tomatoes were largely a food of the lower income groups. Eating tomatoes helped you keep your head, literally. Prejudice against tomatoes, and the immigrant families who grew them persisted. It was not until the late 1800's that tomatoes became a staple in North American diets. By the 1920's, "hot tomato" was considered a compliment.

One of the most famous tomatoes in the San Marzano. These meaty treats are a bit pointier than Roma varieties, and not quite so acidic. They are a premium plum tomato from the Campania region of Italy, first grown around 1770. To earn the EU protected Designation of Origin status, the tomatoes must be grown in Valle del Sarno, or the village of San Marzano sul Sarno, near Naples. This special valley has volcanic soil from Mt Vesuvius. The demand for authentic San Marzano tomatoes is so great, counterfeit cans are a multimillion-dollar criminal enterprise. (Wikipedia, n.d.)

In the past decade, tomatoes have been a catalyst for change all over the world. Dutch organizers staged a huge tomato fight in 2014 to protest Russian sanctions. Money raised went to subsidize farmers hurt by the trade spat. In 2015, migrant workers in the tomato fields of Florida successfully negotiated with many large companies, such as McDonald's, to improve their wages and working conditions through the Fair Food Program.

As gardeners we all know the amount of hard work that goes in to planting, caring for and harvesting tomatoes. Too few non-gardeners appreciate this and just want cheap red slices on their burgers. Bargain basement pricing had developed into severe human rights abuses against the migrant tomato pickers. Pickers were paid just 30¢ per 32 lb basket, picked in the hot sun with no water breaks allowed. By negotiating a mere 1¢ per pound payment direct to the workers, their wages increase from \$10000 per year to \$17000 (Solomon, 2015). This enables them to achieve better housing, health care and respite from dangerous working conditions. Now that the tomato has proudly led the way, the Fair Food Program is moving on to other crops, like strawberries. The model is used as an example worldwide in both human rights and business cases.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

by Sarah Gordon

## Fall Cleanup

The rain is here and it's time to harvest all the bounty from our plots for the winter. Fall greens and garlic can be planted to extend the garden a few months. This is a great time to assess what crops did well for you, what cultivars were the most productive, and review pest and disease issues for the past year. The best part about gardening is that there is always a better year ahead next year.

**By November 1, 2018** all plots should be cleaned up for the winter - except for actively growing crops, perennials, and fruits. Please compost on your own plot. Fall is also the best time to lime your plot, as the winter rains help work the lime into the soil for spring. Lime is a great way to reduce horsetail, which is a stubborn garden visitor for many of us.

A fall cleaning of your greenhouse will help reduce pests and diseases next spring. As many of you know, sanitation is key to successful greenhouse production. Last winter saw many greenhouses and sheds were damaged due to high winds, please secure and reinforce your structures. Remove any wood waste, recycling, and garbage from your plot and place in the appropriate bin. The wood waste bin will be in place for a few months for those of you wanting to renew structures and borders. Ensure that you are removing anything of value from your sheds and greenhouses if you will not be using them over the winter. See the section on thefts, which have been increasing this year.

## Thefts in the Garden

This year has seen a large number of thefts and shed break-ins. The President has spoken to the City of Burnaby and the Burnaby RCMP regarding some disturbing incidents. We are trying to gather as much data as possible for the police, so that they may focus patrols at the most likely time to catch the culprits. If you have had a theft or break in from your plot, please email [directors@baraga.ca](mailto:directors@baraga.ca) with the date, items taken and your plot number. Any other details you can think of, such as you saw people you don't recognize around the garden, would also be useful. If you have had your shed broke into recently or tools stolen, please contact the RCMP as well. Those of you who have already emailed, thank you very much for your help and the information has been discussed with the police already.

One thing we can all do is to get to know our plot neighbours. Do not leave valuables in your plot. Remove any hiding spaces for intruders, such as piles of wood blocking the view of your shed. We have had three reported incidents of intruders showing aggressive

behaviour, member safety is the most important issue. If you don't recognize someone in your neighbour's plot, do NOT put yourself in an unsafe situation by confronting them. The Board has been discussing a number of strategies including: barriers, lighting, cameras, pass systems, and security companies. Some of these options are expensive and require compliance with City of Burnaby policies. Members are expected to vote on any budgeted expenditures for theft deterrents. While bold intruders may be getting the most attention this season, members are also reminded that stealing from someone else's plot or the BARAGA grounds will result in immediate termination of rental and membership. There is zero reason for anyone to be taking flowers from the flowerbeds or helping themselves to a neighbour's ripe produce and good tools.

Again, please report any thefts or incidents to [directors@baraga.ca](mailto:directors@baraga.ca), if you have not done so already.

## Call for Nominations

It's coming up to the AGM again and time for members to put their names forward to serve on the Board. BARAGA has offices of President, Vice-president, Treasurer, Secretary, and Director-at-Large. Currently the Board is 14 members. There was no Secretary in 2018, and the 2018 President will not be returning. There are 423 members to choose from, with their ideas and goals to move BARAGA forward.

One of the larger issues for the Board this year has been modernizing the Handbook. Currently we have another draft of the Bylaws and are working on completing Rules and Policies. The Handbook can only be approved by SGM. The Board has incorporated Member feedback from the SGM meeting in June and we are trying to complete the documents as soon as we can. Some excellent teamwork between the Special Committee and the Board has the end in sight.

While the harvest is winding down, BARAGA membership renewal paperwork will be starting. Please ensure you update all your contact information with us if there were any changes this year. Membership renewals will be by email for most members, and postal mail for those without email. Signed, completed Community Service Hours forms must be handed in by October 25 (emailed scans are acceptable). We will have membership renewal sessions prior to the AGM again this year, watch for the dates in an upcoming bulletin.

Thank you



## BARAGA Annual Picnic August 11

Great food and a gorgeous day are hallmarks of the Annual picnic. This year, best plot was judged by 3 BARAGA members who spent hours walking the entire garden. Many thanks to Janet, Sam and Vasyl for taking such care while viewing and deliberating. Judging criteria included variety, abundance, health, colour and maintenance.

### Category 2018 winners are:

**Best plot:** #1 – **Hanna**, plot 176; #2 – **Jovica**, plot 241; #3 – **Radmila**, plot 354

**Best flower bed:** #1 – **Beverly**, bed 9; #2 – **Marjorie**, bed 15; #3 – **Elsa**, bed 23

**Best baking:** #1 – **Kathleen**, lemon blueberry bread

**Best canning/preserves:** #1 and #2 – **Grace** for her zucchini relish and blackberry jam.

Grace has graciously shared with us the prize winning recipe - see page 4 in this Seedling issue.

**Best floral arrangement:** #1 – **Chris**, "Bouquet!"; #2 – **Anna**, "Ice and Fire Bouquet"

**Best vegetable:** #1 – **Eduardo**, "Gourd"; #2 – **Vladimir**, "Big Beet"

**Most unusual:** #1 – **Elaine**, "Natalino"; #2 – **Bevan**, "Siamese Cucumber"

There were no fruit or presentation entries this year.

This year there was also the **BARAGA Special Mention category**, which was awarded to our amazing pasta and sausage team, led by **Walter, Rocco, Renzo, Marko** and their families.

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped put together a fabulous day in the garden.

Plot Inspection Dates: October 6 and November 3  
Board Meetings Dates: October 10, November 14 and December 12



## Have you done your Community Service Hours?

The last work party of the season is on Saturday, October 13th and its the last supervised opportunity to complete your volunteer hours!

<----- Meet at the BARAGA office at 9:00 am.

All members need to have their completed and signed Community Service Hours (CSH) form handed in by October 25th.

In addition to the plot rental and membership fees, each member must complete 6 volunteer hours or they will be charged \$100 for a full plot and \$50 for a half plot in lieu of CSH hours. This payment has been approved by AGM vote by members.

Please contact [workhours@baraga.ca](mailto:workhours@baraga.ca), [membership@baraga.ca](mailto:membership@baraga.ca), or [directors@baraga.ca](mailto:directors@baraga.ca) if you have any questions or need a job on your own time to complete your volunteer hours.

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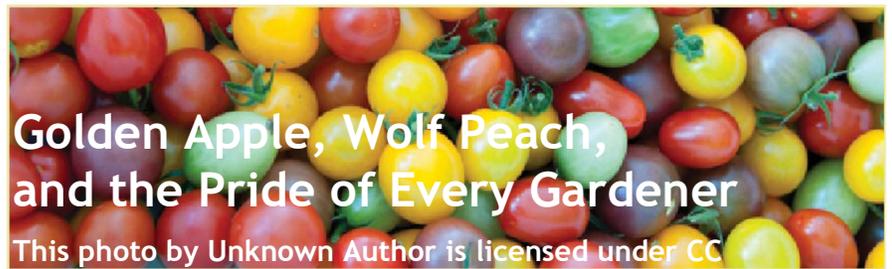
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## Golden Apple, Wolf Peach, and the Pride of Every Gardener

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The future of the tomato is looking towards its wild origins to build more robust cultivars, with better flavour and greater nutrient content. Increased marketability of heritage varieties has growers producing more cultivars for us to try, bred with our local conditions in mind. Local universities and greenhouses are breeding varieties to be resistant to fusarium wilt, mosaic virus, and blossom end rot. The new Tasti-Lee, carried locally by West Coast Seeds, also boasts twice the lycopene, great flavour and a long shelf life.

Many BARAGA gardeners have their own special seeds. One of the founding BARAGA families, the Aiello, brought their seeds with them from Calabria when they immigrated to Canada. As our local area conditions change, we will have success with different varieties and techniques, and hopefully still some old family favourites. We can choose cherry, currant, beefsteak, Roma, TOV, plum, or heritage varieties. Far from being just red anymore, adding heritage genes to new breeds has opened yellows, oranges, greens, purples, stripes, and multicolored to our range of seeds. It's difficult to imagine a food garden without tomatoes now. What a delicious way to celebrate that scraggly pea-sized tomato that started it all.

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## Ryan's Rainbow Foodbank

Thank you to all the gardeners who donated to the food bank at Ryan's Rainbow this year.

The donation box is now closed. Please look for the pick-up times and dates next summer.



At the AGM in January, we will launch a **Grow A Row - Donate a Row** program with seeds donated from West Coast Seeds.

## 1st Place Winner Zucchini Relish Recipe

Shared by Grace Shigenobu

8 cups grated zucchini  
2 cups finely chopped onion  
½ cup finely chopped green pepper  
1 cup finely chopped red pepper  
¼ cup salt

2 ½ cup sugar  
1 ½ cup white vinegar  
1 ½ tsp dry mustard  
½ tsp pepper  
1 tsp celery  
½ tsp turmeric



Combine first five ingredients and let stand 1 - 2 hours. Combine remaining ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to boil and add to vegetable mixture. Thicken with 2-3 Tbsp cornstarch if desired. Process for 20 minutes in a hot water bath.

Makes approximately 5 - 500 ml jars.