THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association
BARAGA , Volume 29, Number 3, October 2010

Private Beekeeping for Profit: a BARAGA Issue

It is likely there will be discussion of beekeeping by individual members of BARAGA at the upcoming AGM.

In order to understand the situation it is first necessary to review a bit of history. About two years ago a beehive was sneaked onto an allotment and kept hidden. This year another member also installed hives on his garden. Unfortunately the board was not consulted. Until the bees were discovered the question of beekeeping by individual members was not raised at board meetings. These actions by these two members appeared to directly contravene section 15, bylaw 80 of the BARAGA Constitution and Bylaws which states "No livestock or pets shall be brought on the allotment garden site."

As almost all members will know BARAGA keeps its own bees and some members devote their volunteer hours to maintaining the beehives. Despite battles with disease (honey bees all over North America have been plagued by mites and other debilitating problems in recent years) BARAGA bees have flourished and small amounts of honey have been offered for sale to BARAGA members (usually at the time of the picnic). The board consulted the beekeepers at BARAGA; they did not welcome the prospect of other bee hives on the same property and noted the probability of more disease being introduced by unregulated bee colonies.

After some discussion by members of the board a motion to include a further paragraph in the Handbook under "Animals" stating "No individual plotholder may bring to or tend honey bees on the BARAGA site; orchard mason bees are permitted" was passed. The same motion was carried at the next AGM in January, 2010 by a large majority of the membership in attendance. The board expected that the beehives would then be removed by the members who owned them. This did not happen and finally a letter demanding their removal was written in August, 2010.

It should be noted that the board is not in any way opposed to keeping bees. On the contrary bees are essential for fertilization of several vegetables and fruits and all gardeners need them in order to ensure a good yield of many of their crops. Vibrant bee colonies on the BARAGA site are needed by all of us. (Continued over)

However the board has several reasons for the rejection of beekeeping by individual members on their plots:

1. The board believes the bee colonies maintained by our professionals as well as volunteers for many years is an appropriate way to meet the needs of gardeners for plant pollination. This is all the pollination that is required and there is no need to upset or replace an established and effective practice.
2. Bee keeping by individuals would be a haphazard procedure. If some hives were allowed how many other gardeners would want to introduce their own operations? How would this activity be regulated? What could be done to make sure colonies are kept healthy and properly maintained? While bee-keeping appears to be a very popular activity at this time, it is exacting, labour intensive and unrewarding in poor years; what would then happen to pollination if the individuals opted out of this activity?

Board News & Views

Theft at BARAGA: unfortunately this is still an ongoing problem. Gardeners who spot untoward events should report them. The board has powers to act in cases where the dishonesty is clearly demonstrated. Avoid storing valuable possessions at the allotments if possible and mark your property with a clear identification mark if this is possible.

Fall Clean-Up: BARAGA regulations call for a clean-up of all gardens. Spent crops and especially weeds should be removed and the site left tidy for the winter. Many crops are still growing , of course, and perennials can be left in place. Consider a mulch whether it be a green crop (fall rye, etc.) or a covering of shredded leaves, black plastic, etc. to protect your growing beds from winter weather.

Disposal & Dumping: Members are urged to remember responsible practices when doing their clean-ups. Compost as much spent material as possible on site. Diseased crops should be disposed of in the provided bins or taken home and recycled with city garbage pickups. Don't take the easy route and just DUMP anywhere on the edge of or just outside BARAGA property.

Fees in Advance: or those planning a Winter Get-Away during the cold, near sunless days of winter, do not forget to take care of your plot renewal for 2011 before you depart. Although regular renewal notices will not be mailed until the beginning of December, you can request an early renewal form by contacting the BARAGA mailing address. Note that fees for 2011 will be $65 if you qualify for volunteer hours, otherwise $100 as per the increase voted at the 2010 AGM. The renewal deadline is January 31st, 2011; if you delay beyond that date you risk losing your allotment.

3. Whereas the present beekeeping operation distributes honey to interested members at a very reasonable price when available, if honey production was turned over to individuals, they (and, perhaps, their friends) would be the sole beneficiaries.

Plenty of pollination potential here - BARAGA's bee hives at their new location on the west side of the gardens.

4. Beekeeping by BARAGA is assigned to an appropriate area that has limited access and is well away from passers-by. Beekeeping on individual allotments does not allow for a hive to be sited far enough away from pathways which are or can be used by all. Children are most at risk because they may not know that lifting the lid on a bee hive will disturb the bees enough to cause them to sting.
5. The mission of the allotment gardens is to provide an opportunity for "fruit and vegetable growing"; the only mention of livestock (of which bees are part) in the Constitution is to forbid its presence in the gardens.

BARAGA Needs You

While running an allotment garden as smoothly as possible may seem small potatoes compared to the world of business and high finance, working with the members of a board can be an interesting and challenging experience. That is one reason why members should think seriously about volunteering for the board positions that are likely to be available at the AGM in 2011. The pay may make the minimum wage look like a fortune, but think of the prestige it will bring to your resume. Besides BARAGA NEEDS YOU!

Sad News

Roy Pegler, a long time member, died on Friday, October 8th. This follows an illness that must have sorely tried such a keen gardener as Roy because it kept him from his favourite occupation - gardening. Roy was known as the "Urban Gardener" and wrote a column for this newsletter called "In Your Veggie Patch". So keen was Roy to get a head start on spring that he devised ways of planting his fava beans, peas and garlic in fall. The beans, protected under a cloche, grew a good root system and leapt ahead in spring. He was an ardent composter and the soil in his plot was fertile with a healthy balance - we tested it.

Roy was treasurer for several years and a contributor to other local garden clubs.

More on Composting

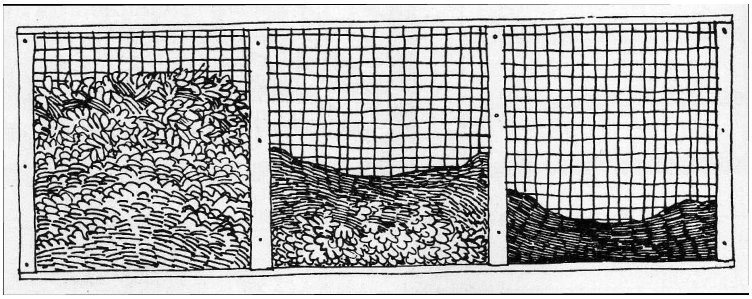
There is a circle of life; it begins with energy from the sun absorbed by plants on which all living things depend, their growth, and death. But the full circle includes the breakdown of all organisms to their constituent parts so they are available as new nutrients for new plants as the circle continues. This breakdown is the natural way to regrowth and regeneration. This composting cycle is mainly accomplished by bacteria, fungi and other soil organisms. When we compost we are just aiding and abetting this natural process.

The product of the ultimate breakdown is what we call humus - the decayed organic part of the soil that is capable of supplying nutrients for new life. Lots of humus means plants can realise their full potential in size and quantity. Although the decomposition process would happen anyway, what we do when we make compost is assist nature, increase its speed somewhat, and magnify the amount by our additions.
Proportion of carbon/nitrogen: two important nutrients required for both the breakdown process (to feed the bacteria, etc. that decompose) and in the feeding of new plants are carbon and nitrogen. There is usually plenty of carbon, but nitrogen may be in short supply. An ideal situation is when carbon rich components are equalled by nitrogen rich components. Hence gardening guidebooks will often recommend adding brown and green ingredients in equal quantity.

Brown material might consist of such things as leaves, wood chips, coffee grounds, and many others. Green material can be weeds, grass clippings, rotted manure and many others. When building the pile alternate layers of both types of material about 10cm (4 inches) depth will provide the balance that will lead to fast breakdown into a nutrient-high compost.

Size of pile/heat, moisture, air(oxygen) levels: there is no exact recipe for the most efficient piles, but a cubic metre seems a good size. Too small a pile will lose heat quickly and be slow to break down, too large a pile will overheat and could even catch on fire, certainly it will may kill aerobic (see below) decomposers. A well sized pile will be light enough to admit plenty of air and be easy to keep moist in dry weather, and to cover to prevent cold sogginess when it rains.

Using a starter/activator: while any pile of compostible material will eventually breakdown the process can be speeded up by using a “starter” or “activator”. Commercial starters are likely to contain the same or similar decomposers to the ones already in a successful compost, so a thrifty gardener can save a little ready made compost and sprinkle that on a new pile



Three Box Composting Method: in box one raw material is mixed in, then turned into box two which breaks down to finished compost collected in box three.

to get it going.

Aerobic / anaerobic bacteria: some decomposers need plenty of air - the aerobic ones, others can do without - the anaerobic. The bacteria and yeasts in such products as bread, wine, beer, cheese, etc. are anaerobic. Anaerobic bacteria tend to faster breakdown and higher temperatures. They also have undesirable by products such as acids, ammonia and hydrogen sulphide which smell bad (stink!). Aerobic compost is described as "sweet", perhaps not to taste but with a pleasant earthy smell.

The original article on composting appeared in The Seedling (Dec. 2007). A copy can be retrieved on the BARAGA website

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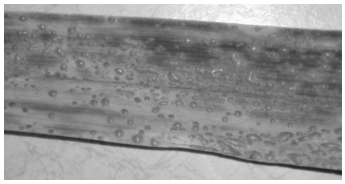
Rust on Garlic

A quick look at the allotments in early summer revealed that many garlic crops were suffering from an invasion of rust. A long cool spring following a mild winter is the most likely cause.



Rust pustules on garlic leaf.

This rust is probably Puccinia pori, "primarily a disease of garlic, although onion, leeks, shallots, and wild species of allium are sometime alternative hosts. Small, reddish to dull orange oval-shaped pustules develop on leaf blades. Reddish airborne urediospores (rusts have complicated cycles producing up to five different spore types) are copiously produced within the lesions. Later in the growing season, the lesions may appear dark because black teliospores develop within the pustules. Heavily infected leaves turn yellow and may collapse prematurely. When infection is severe bulb size and quality are reduced."

"Rust is a sporadic disease that generally causes little or no economic damage. Since 1998, however, rust has caused severe damage in some garlic growing areas. Apparently, the disease only damages onions when they are planted next to a heavily infected garlic field. The fungus probably overwinters on garlic and volunteer Allium crops."

There are several things that gardeners can do:

1. Harvest the infected garlic crop immediately upon discovery. Either discard all the foliage into the garbage or bury it very deeply. Hot composts should destroy the spores, but spores will likely persist in soil or in cool composts.
2. Remove all weeds and any other growth from the garlic patch and treat in the same way.
3. Consider using uninfected garlic to produce next year's crop. If saving your own garlic treat the cloves to a twelve hour bath before planting. The recommended mixture for the bath is one gallon of water to which one tablespoon of cider vinegar OR one tablespoon of baking soda (NOT BOTH) is added.
4. Rotate next years garlic and other alliums as far away from past plantings as possible. Unfortunately some spores may survive for two to three years in the soil. Do not water garlic or other alliums from overhead. Avoid working near the garlic patch on wet days.
5. There are fungicides on Burnaby's list of permitted pesticides. (The grapevine says that fungicides were sold out in some garden stores this year!)

Saving Seeds

October is perhaps a strange time to be thinking of seeds and seeding, but there are good reasons to do this.

For starters this about the last opportunity to save seeds from your own crops if growing from your own seeds. If your seeds are heirloom varieties they are savable year after year. (See the following for handling your surplus.) You probably know someone, often a family member, who has saved their favourite variety for twenty years or more. Lots of plants set seeds that come true year after year (even in a big allotment garden) . Some, of course, do not; squash is a prime example. Suppliers of F1 seeds teach you that their seeds cannot be saved. That is not always true; it is worth a try to save from any successful plant.

The seeds you save should be cleaned (the debris removed) and allowed to cure, which is basically a slow drying that defeats molds. Seed savers may turn out to be the heroes of future generations. Preserving distinct varieties, some with unique qualities, and certainly with genetic diversity, these may well to be the seeds of the future.

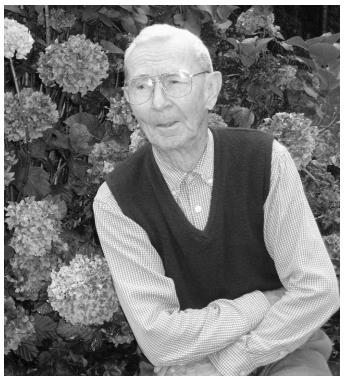
If you are not saving your own seeds, this is a good time to order or pick up a seed catalogue.

It is also a good time to take stock of the seeds you have on hand. If you marked your seed packets with a date (the year is most important) when you bought them, you can assess which are likely to be still viable next year. Stored in cool dry conditions most seeds survive three years or more. Corn, onions, parsley and parsnip are likely the only exceptions. Make a list of what you have and another of what you need to buy.

Seeds improperly stored, subjected to heat or dampness, or just exposed to fluctuations in temperature are not likely to grow. This excludes a lot seeds offered in nurseries or worse seeds in bargain racks in more general stores. Even if the price is a bargain, seeds that fail to germinate do not have much value. Seeds from suppliers who store their seeds carefully until they mail them to you are much more likely to grow.

The King of Kale

One of our gardeners is Christian Rumpf. Despite his eighty years of age he is at BARAGA not long after sunrise almost every day. He bicycles from his home high on the central ridge of Burnaby and home again when his gardening day is done. Very often Christian is to be found on his allotment.


Christian Rumpt

So it was no great surprise when Mario Bartel, hunting for a news story for the Burnaby Newsleader at the end of March, stopped at BARAGA and found Christian in his customary occupation. That day Christian had a bumper crop of kale so the story and photograph featured Christian as "King of Kale."

Kale was one of the members of the cabbage family featured in the previous Seedling, Perhaps its virtues would have been sung louder by Christian. Although kale grows easily, Christian's grow very impressively. In the Newsleader's picture, the gardener is featured with plants reaching above his waist. He assures us the 2010-11 crop is going to be a big one.

Christian is a year round gardener. Kale is not his only winter vegetable; in previous articles he described how he keeps his beet supply all winter. He has a crop of corn salad every year grown from seed he has saved for many years.

Christian has a recipe for Kale Salad well worth repeating for those who may have missed the Newleader's story.

Kale Salad

INGREDIENTS
2 cups finely chopped kale
2 cups grated carrots
1 cup of red or green cabbage, finely cut
1/4 cup of pumpkin seeds
handful of raisins, currants or dried cranberries (optional)
2 tablespoons sauerkraut (optional)

FOR THE DRESSING
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp wine, balsamic or cider vinegar
2 tbsp Bragg brown sauce
½ teaspoon of dried oregana

METHOD
Mix the vegetables in a mixing bowl. Prepare the dressing and sprinkle it over the salad. Put it into the refrigerator for two hours to let the spices in the dressing saturate the greens.

It is important to cut the kale very fine; for those who want it really tender, it can be steamed quickly before chopping.

Plant Relations - a Follow Up. The midsummer ***Seedling*** described some of the ways plants interact with each other. At the same time the scientific journal, Nature, published an article on experiments with plant roots. Using the information derived from their chemical emissions it was shown that plants can detect the presence of other plants in the soil, they can detect areas with high concentrations of nutrients, and can alter their

root growth, albeit very slowly, to adapt to their particular circumstances.

Pepper Jelly

With the cooling weather there seems a rush ripening peppers. Here is an unusual way to use some of them before they become soggy in the refrigerator.

INGREDIENTS
1 ½ cups finely diced peppers, red, orange or yellow whatever is available
1/4 cup white wine vinegar
3 cups granulated sugar
1 pouch liquid pectin

METHOD
Combine peppers, vinegar and sugar in a large stainless steel or enamel saucepan. Bring to a full boil over high heat and boil hard for one minute stirring constantly. Add the pectin, return to a boil, and boil rapidly for one minute. Remove from heat. Ladle into sterilized jars and process as for jelly or jam. Yield is 3 ½ cups.

Use with a spread of cream cheese on rounds of melba toast. Or top with a sliver of sharp cheddar cheese on a cracker. Serve with meats in lieu of a sweet and sour sauce. The peppers used can be varied to accommodate what is on hand. Jalapeno peppers can be used too to give an extra kick.

A Gift Book - VanDusen Garden is advertising a book that is sold in their garden shop: It is Vegetables, Herbs & Fruit: an Illustrated Encyclopedia by Matthew Biggs, Jekka McVicar, and Bob Flowerdew. It is a "comprehensive encyclopedia of edible plants that provides solid gardening tips and many tempting recipes. Although a large book, it is relatively inexpensive and provides great value at $29.95." This book is also available from Amazon.ca and probably several other sources. Reviewers gave it five stars - a top rating. It might just suit a keen gardener on your list; remember it is less than three months to Christmas.

Info About BARAGA

✦✦✦✦ The BARAGA mailing address is:
Burnaby and Region Allotment Gardens Association
Box 209, 141- 4200 McKay Avenue,
Burnaby, B.C.
V5H 4M9

✦✦ To get Approval for the construction of greenhouses and sheds (or when making repairs) phone Don Hatch 604-433-8055 or Derrill Thompson 604-436-0324.

✦✦ Contact phone number for plot rental or getting on the wait list is 604-842-8571. Please note that the waiting time for a plot is now about two years.

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

This newsletter was edited by David Tamblin. Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of BARAGA.