

# THE SEEDLING

The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association  
BARAGA, Volume 27, Number 3, October 2008

## Celebrating Community at the BARAGA Picnic

By Joan Campana and Don Hatch

It's become a hallmark of the BARAGA picnic: gardeners scouring their plots for their showiest veggies, fruits, and flowers and emerging with blueberries, garlic, sunflowers and dahlias, potatoes, squash, and the inevitable, enormous, wrinkled cabbage.

This year, the ninth annual picnic, was no exception, as gardeners entered the pride of their current crop into the annual "look at mine, isn't it gorgeous?" or, as it's formally known, the "best in garden" contest. Members competed in five categories: vegetable, fruit, most unusual, presentation, and flower.



Andy and friend selling honey Joan Campana

Winners--chosen as always by vote of their horticultural peers--received instant and noisy acclaim, a beautiful handmade first- or second-place ribbon, and one of several donated awards. This year lucky winners took away subscriptions to gardening magazines, books, and garden

tools. Because there weren't enough entrants, there were no second-place winners in three categories.

After a rain-out the weekend before, the picnic finally took place on Sunday August 16 under sunny skies, and--just in case--brightly colored green and blue canopies. About 90 gardeners queued up for pot-luck plenty, and feasted and visited

around the brightly painted picnic tables or in clusters of lawn chairs. I hope, like me, you had room for Renzo and crew's fabulous pasta followed by a second trip to the dessert table.



Fun at the picnic *Joan Campana*

Another much-anticipated feature of the picnic has come to be the annual honey harvest. Gardeners get to purchase honey made by our very own BARAGA bees (with help from beekeeper Ann Talbot and the other volunteers who tend the hives). If BARAGA has a taste, it's in that honey--an intoxicating distillation of all the goodness and sweetness of everything growing in these beautiful gardens.



Floral Winner receives her ribbon from Don Hatch and Larry Johnston *Joan Campana*

Thanks to Deb Applegarth, Larry Johnston, and all those gardeners who helped organize the picnic or volunteered on the day itself.

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And the winners were:

- Vegetable #1 - Anna, plot 231  
#2 - Natalino, plot 73
  - Fruit #1 - Mike, plot 263  
#2 - no entry
  - Most unusual #1 - Luciano, plot 368  
#2 - Colleen, plot 198
  - Presentation #1 - Vaughn, plot 121  
#2 - Heidi & Joan, plot 333
  - Flower #1 - Igor, plot 231  
#2 - Sheila, plot 119
  - Baking #1 - Anna, plot 260  
#2 - no entry
  - Canning #1 - Andy, plot 333  
#2 - no entry
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A Huge Prize Cabbage *Joan Campana*

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## **Pathways: All Members Take Note**

The inspection committee in the course of monthly Inspections has found that many pathways bordering your plots are not up to the standard width of 30 inches as per the BARAGA Handbook. This of course does not include the larger main pathways. Please take note that if you have a structure, being a greenhouse, shed or a fence that you must provide an additional 6 inches of pathway width to allow for passage of wheelbarrows past your plot. In addition to this there must not be any overhang of the roof line of any structure. Please take note of the following list of non-compliance items as one or more may pertain to your plot and the pathways and borders surrounding it.

It may be that:

- ☞ only a portion of your pathway is not wide enough
- ☞ your border on one side of your plot is not straight
- ☞ your border is straight but out of alignment with other plots
- ☞ your border has fallen over into the pathway reducing the width
- ☞ your compost box protrudes into the pathway and must to be moved
- ☞ your greenhouse or shed protrudes into the pathway and must to be moved\*
- ☞ your border wood curves into the pathway and has been staked incorrectly

☞ you have attached your border to the standpipe post in the wrong place

In order to remedy the inconsistencies and bring your plot into conformity with the BARAGA Handbook please attempt the required changes this fall if possible. The board of directors realize that not all changes can be done immediately and will allow for major changes to be done over time. We did take note that in some cases you will have to do major structural changes in order to comply. Please do the changes whenever conditions change and you have to do any rebuilding of borders or structures. Be reminded that when changing or building any structures you now have to have approval of the board of directors before any work is done.

If you have any questions about your situation please contact the board of directors by mail. The board will contact you by mail or phone to address your concerns. Thank you.

- The BARAGA directors

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## **Other Board News and Views**

**Special note:** Some members have dug up a strip along side their plot that borders on a main pathway and replaced the grass with wood chips. **This practice must stop.** The main pathways are not the responsibility of ploholders. Wood chips so placed are only thrown about all over the place when the grass mower goes over them. No

one appreciates wood chips thrown on their plot. We request the members that have done this already please remove the chips and return the strip to soil. We will then seed with grass as soon as possible. Thanks.

**Fall Cleanup:** the deadline for cleanup and final inspection are November 1st. All areas not actively growing winter crops or not planted with perennials need to be cleared. This is in the gardener's interest - a tidy weed free plot is a good way to get an early start in spring. Mulching your beds with any type of covering can keep your plot almost weed free.

**Compost on your own plot:** by burying your compost about 18 inches deep it will add nutrient to your soil. Do not dump your compost at the edge of BARAGA property or outside on 14<sup>th</sup> Ave. The BARAGA garden is not a dump – please do not make it one.

**Web Site:** as many gardeners will know BARAGA now has its own website. It can be accessed at [www.baraga.ca](http://www.baraga.ca) It contains announcements, newsletters, the BARAGA Handbook and many photo's, among other things. The design and implementation was the work of gardener Jonathan Candy. However we now need a webmaster to maintain the site; if you have the interest, time and expertise please volunteer to Don Hatch (phone 604-433-8055).

**Plot Markers:** some of our plot markers have decayed or are otherwise missing; the board would like suggestions for more permanent plot markers; they must be easy to make and relatively cheap. If you have a good idea how to do this please let us know. We would like to place new markers on two sides of each plot.

**Theft:** we are still experiencing instances of this unpleasant act. The members can help prevent theft by knowing their neighbours and politely challenging strangers. Remember proven theft is grounds for immediate expulsion.

**Safety:** is a concern for all of our members, especially as we grow older. Please keep your pathways free from old lumber, decayed border boards, piles of garden waste and especially garden hoses. Garden hoses should be kept within your plot boundaries where they will not pose a tripping hazard to other members. Please do not leave your hoses connected to a water standpipe where they pose a tripping hazard as well, and do not leave multiple connectors attached to a standpipe as they may cause injury to a person as they pass by.

**Wanted:** six new members for the BARAGA plot inspection team. Duties are to inspect plots at 2:00 p.m. on the first Saturday of each month we do inspections; three weeks afterwards do the re-inspections. Time required is about one hour each time

for approximately 6 hours in total. This volunteer job is as easy as walking around about one third of the site each time. (Good exercise) Phone Don Hatch at 604-433-8055.

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## **100 Mile Shopping**

Many people have come to believe that the most important criteria when buying food is how close to home it was produced. Many readers will be aware of this idea; it has been a topic of local news and radio. The argument is that our food should be produced within one hundred miles of where we live. This would dramatically cut down on transportation cost; it also reduces the amount of carbon dioxide produced; and hence both reduces global warming resulting from increased carbon emissions and air pollution caused by using cheap fossil fuels to bring food from across the world.

Readers will be able to name many foods in their refrigerators or on their pantry shelves that were grown in far away places. Grapes come from Chile (in winter), oranges come from China (and many other foods), spices originate in India or Indonesia, wines from France, Italy, Spain, South Africa and Australia (and other places), rice from Thailand, coffee from Kenya, Brazil, Ecuador (among many others). The list could be endless, but the point is obvious.

While food from exotic places

across the world sounds appealing, there are many down-sides. We have no control over and often very little knowledge of how such food was produced. Some countries have few regulations so there may be residues of toxic sprays; the workers who grow and process the food may be by underpaid (even child) labourers; the supply is usually entirely beyond our control and very much subject to market whims and prices. Finally there is the cost of transportation - no small item in our present age of high priced energy and global warming.



Healthy winter kale growing in a BARAGA allotment

A Vancouver couple, reporters Alisa Smith and J. B. MacKinnon, decided they wanted to get as much of their food as possible within a hundred mile radius of their Vancouver apartment. They recount their experiences and adventures in finding it in a book: *The 100 Mile Diet: a year of local eating* (Random House Canada, 2007).

Two hundred years ago the native

people who lived in this area relied entirely on local plants and animals to supply their complete diet (and other needs). One hundred years ago most people derived much of their food requirements from backyard gardens, even in the city. Food canning and preservation were important aspects of life for a housewife. Since 1945 with each passing decade we have found more and more of our food requirements at supermarkets, who in turn derived their supplies from the world market and transported them to us thanks to low cost fuel.

Smith and MacKinnon present the statistic that the average food item now grows on a farm 1500 miles away. For instance it turns out that it is cheaper to produce “apples, onions, dairy products and sheep’s meat” in New Zealand than it is to grow them on a farm in Britain. New Zealand is about as far from Britain as it is possible to get. The problem is the farming method; according to a study Britain could change its expensive agriculture to strictly organic methods and save 75% of costs.

The point of this article is not to enter a political and economic argument but to remind us of the importance of growing at least some of our food ourselves. While home-owners with backyards can grow much of their own produce, so can allotment gardeners grow their own veggies and fruit. We do not have to get our produce from even a hundred miles away; for many of us it is within a few miles. In a small measure we

are taking back control of the circumstances in which our food is produced. Allotment gardeners can well be said to be fighting climate change and global warming.

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## **Pill bugs/ Sow bugs**



Every allotment is likely to be inhabited by at least some of these little animals. In fact they are all over the world. Such well-known creatures have names in many languages; they often have different names in different localities.

Canadians usually refer to them as sow bugs or pill bugs; they have a collective name “woodlouse” (or woodlice plural).

Woodlice are arthropods, in fact, crustaceans related to shrimp, lobsters, crabs. They live on land but still breathe

through gills which is why they are always to be found in damp or moist areas.

Their bodies are protected by an exoskeleton divided into seven segments. They also have seven pairs of legs. The exoskeleton is shed several times as they grow in size. Three



Sowbug

years is a full lifespan for a woodlouse. They have two prominent antennae, two eyes, and a relatively feeble mouth. The pill bug is easily recognised by its only protection,

rolling into a near perfect ball, hence the name “pill bug” or “rolly-polly”. Sow bugs are very similar but seem to rely on speed to escape harm rather than pilling.

From the gardener’s point of view, woodlice are disadvantaged in having inadequate mouths. So they can only chew on tender or decaying matter; they are omnivores, on the lookout for anything tender. Usually decaying vegetable matter, particularly rotting wood, attracts them, but they can handle newly sprung seedlings with swift, voracious appetites. Fruit which is lying on the ground, perhaps an apple loosened by a pecking bird, or a damaged strawberry, can be quickly invaded, hollowed out by woodlice.



Pillbug

Since they are cold blooded, they must find suitable hiding places to pass the winter. With warming weather they emerge to feed and breed. The females lay eggs; the minute pink babies are carried under the abdomen for up to three months by which

time they are large enough to survive.

Gardeners have mixed reactions to woodlice. Some are quite content to ignore them. Others feel a need to eliminate them. When confined to digesting and breaking down debris the woodlice are doing the gardener a favour, but when they

attack seedlings or tender fruit they are a nuisance. The best protection seems to be the use of diatomaceous earth. Where seeds are directly planted avoid mulching until the seedlings are partly grown; that eliminates the moist hiding spots that encourage woodlice. While there are chemicals that can be used to control woodlice, removing debris, replacing rotting lumber and generally not creating a moist area where these critters can hide, seems to be a sufficient deterrent.

Woodlice have natural enemies including frogs, toads, birds and small mammals. Skunks and racoons seems to like their taste and will tear away rotting wood to get at their prey.

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## Tomato “Red Pear”

This small red tomato hangs in abundant clusters. It is one of several open pollinated



veggies grown in a demonstration plot at VanDusen Garden this summer.

A small demonstration garden featured some of the heirloom varieties that were grown at the turn of the nineteenth century from seeds that could be saved by the gardeners themselves.

## **Inspiring the Gardener's Soul**

by Christian Rumpf

Not too many folks have read gardening books as I have done, and still enjoy doing so immensely. The most recent book was entitled 'Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul' (all 381 pages a true delight, I highly recommend it) and it contained a lot of wonderful phrases that I would like to keep for reading again and again - pure medicine for the soul! I would like to share some of them, so here we go:

- ◆ He who plants a garden plants a lot of happiness.
- ◆ You don't have a garden just for yourself, there is no doubt that you must share!
- ◆ I live in a garden and I sleep in the house!
- ◆ In spring at the end of the day you should smell like dirt!
- ◆ More in the garden grows than what the gardeners sow.
- ◆ Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.
- ◆ A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust.
- ◆ Plants teach us about the human condition, what it means to be fully human. Pets do the same.
- ◆ Always bloom where you are planted!

- ◆ Like people, plants respond to extra attention.
- ◆ Flowers are love's truest friends.
- ◆ The best things that can come out of your garden are gifts for other people.
- ◆ Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day.
- ◆ Anything that grows is always more beautiful than anything which is built.
- ◆ He who plants a tree plants hope! (Reminds me of what Martin Luther said one time: "If all said the world was coming to an end tomorrow, I would still plant this tree today.")
- ◆ Gardening has a magical quality when you are a child - may you never lose that.
- ◆ There is a garden in every childhood, an enchanted place where colours are brighter, the air softer, and the morning more fragrant than ever again.
- ◆ Roses are red, Violets are blue, but they don't get around, like dandelions do.

### **The Seedling: Editorial Policy**

Included in this newsletter are items of business that all BARAGA members need to know about; there are also articles of more general interest. Newsletters increase in interest if there is a widespread input; members who can share information or have a special outlook on gardens, gardening, or any other topic common to BARAGA members are invited to contribute their articles. Also welcome are art work or pictures in the garden. Contact David Tamblin by phone (604-521-4318) or email (d\_tamblin@telus.net). Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of BARAGA.

