

THE SEEDLING

*The Newsletter of Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden Association
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BARAGA AGM, January 16, 2010

BARAGA's Annual General Meeting was held in the Lions Hall. Business following the usual order, included a good deal of time spent on considering a list of amendments to the Handbook. (The wording of new policies agreed on was mailed to all members with their membership renewal.)

Don Hatch, as president, reviewed several issues at the garden. He noted that a lot of volunteers have put in many of hours of work maintaining the garden and thanked them for it. There will have to be adjustments in the coming year to volunteer tasks to better cover what needs to be done and ensure all who want them get an opportunity to work volunteer hours.

There were several achievements in 2009. The highlight of the year was the well attended picnic. BARAGA's website was established and now includes a wealth of material including the up to date Handbook, pictures of BARAGA activities and past newsletters, all maintained by Jonathan Candy.

As well as the increased use of water

due to a dry summer, there is an increased cost making water a very large and expensive item in the budget. Members are again asked to use water efficiently and wisely to keep this expense as low as possible. Any member noticing a leak in the water system should report it as soon as possible.

There are ongoing issues with waste. Old lumber needs to be replaced with new, safe structures; the old lumber can be disposed of in the bins if cut to four foot lengths. Almost all waste vegetation can be efficiently composted on members plots. Dumping on Burnaby city property is bad practice and unsightly. There is a need for members to pay more attention to the attractiveness of their plots.

Following other reports a proposal to raise the rental fee in 2011 by \$10 was passed. This will increase the overall fee to \$100 before consideration of volunteer hours. Elections held before the conclusion filled all offices with familiar faces (see back page of The Seedling).

With the adoption of Succession Policy it becomes critical for Associate Members to make sure their status is registered so they are able to succeed to a plot if they meet the stipulated criteria and wish to do so.

Other Board Matters

Greenhouses and Sheds: Members are reminded that they must obtain **PRIOR** approval when erecting or changing greenhouses or sheds. There are guidelines for acceptable structures in the handbook. See back page for names and phone numbers to contact.

Volunteer Work: spring is a busy time at BARAGA, there is lots of projects to get in place and clean up to get our garden in order. If you have time to contribute, watch for the signs for work parties, mainly held on Saturday mornings. Signs are posted at both entrances and the office.

Be sure that the volunteer task on which you are engaged has prior approval and be sure to get a signed time slip into Darryl's hands so your volunteer hours are properly reported and not missed.

Rats, Mice, and Voles: many gardeners had problems with pests last year, in particular an explosion of the vole population. Our best defence is natural predators such as coyotes, owls, skunks, etc. Gardeners may trap pests on their plots, but must not use poison. Make sure there is no access underneath sheds and avoid stockpiling old lumber - that is just the places rats and mice love for homes.

Report from the Food Bank Committee

Last spring , 2009, it looked like we would lose the Plant a Row Grow a Row (PARGAR) program (support to the Foodbank) for BARAGA gardeners because the congregation at St Aiden's church could not sustain the heavy volunteer commitment involved in being the depot for gardening contributions.

However, in a nick of time, the undaunted Claude Ledoux secured a new group of volunteers - students, parents and staff at St Thomas Moore Collegiate 7450 12th Avenue Burnaby. A wonderful spring launch party was held at St. Thomas Moore with

numerous gardening luminaries giving educational talks with the usual generous door prizes.

All summer long BARAGA gardeners contributed lovely veggies - the turnips were awesome, as was everything donated. There was a very generous contribution of gorgeous tomatoes for a few weeks! We made deliveries from June 14 through to Thanksgiving weekend. Thanks so much!

However, some of our regular contributors are no longer at BARAGA and, perhaps combined with a late harvest due to the cold spring, we had the lowest amount of donations since we started in 2003. We had 1474 pounds in total.

The manager of the food bank assures

us that our contributions are hugely appreciated and allows them to buy other foods, saving money on their vegetable costs. She also says that the demand was up at least 25% this year and over half of the recipients are children.

Thanks to everyone who shares their harvest and we welcome new contributors as well. Thanks to the generous amount of time the Church members at St Aiden contributed over the years and thanks to our new group at St. Thomas More Collegiate. The pick up from BARAGA is every Sunday morning at 09:30 starting in mid June.

Isobel McDonald, Steve Vegh, Laura Zazzara

The Amazing Cucumber

This information was in The New York Times several months ago as part of their "Spotlight on the Home" series that highlighted creative and fanciful ways to solve common problems.

1. Cucumbers contain most of the vitamins you need every day, just one cucumber contains Vitamin B1, Vitamin B2, Vitamin B3, Vitamin B5, Vitamin B6, Folic Acid, Vitamin C, Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Potassium and Zinc.
2. Feeling tired in the afternoon, put down the caffeinated soda and pick up a cucumber. Cucumbers are a good source of B Vitamins and Carbohydrates that can provide that quick pick-me-up that can last for hours.
3. Tired of your bathroom mirror fogging up after a shower? Try rubbing a cucumber slice along the mirror, it will eliminate the fog and



provide a soothing, spa-like fragrance.

4. Are grubs and slugs ruining your planting beds? Place a few slices in a small pie tin and your garden will be free of pests all season long. The chemicals in the cucumber react with the aluminum to give off a scent undetectable to humans but drive garden pests crazy and make them flee

the area.

5. Looking for a fast and easy way to remove cellulite before going out or to the pool? Try rubbing a slice or two of cucumbers along your problem area for a few minutes, the phytochemicals in the cucumber cause the collagen in your skin to tighten, firming up the outer layer and reducing the visibility of cellulite. Works great on wrinkles too!
6. Want to avoid a hangover or terrible headache? Eat a few cucumber slices before going to bed and wake up refreshed and headache free. Cucumbers contain enough sugar, B vitamins and electrolytes to replenish essential nutrients the body lost, keeping everything in equilibrium, avoiding both a hangover and headache!
7. Looking to fight off that afternoon or evening snacking binge? Cucumbers have been used for centuries and often used by European trappers, traders and explorers for quick meals to thwart off starvation.
8. Have an important meeting or job interview

and you realize that you don't have enough time to polish your shoes? Rub a freshly cut cucumber over the shoe, its chemicals will provide a quick and durable shine that not only looks great but also repels water.

9. Out of WD 40 and need to fix a squeaky hinge? Take a cucumber slice and rub it along the problematic hinge, and voila, the squeak is gone!

10. Stressed out and don't have time for massage, facial or visit to the spa? Cut up an entire cucumber and place it in a boiling pot of water, the chemicals and nutrients from the cucumber will react with the boiling water and be released in the steam, creating a soothing, relaxing aroma that has been shown to reduce stress in new mothers and college students during final exams.

11. Just finish a business lunch and realize you don't have gum or mints? Take a slice of cucumber and press it to the roof of your mouth with your tongue for 30 seconds to eliminate bad breath, the phytochemicals will kill the bacteria in your mouth responsible for causing bad breath.

12. Looking for a 'green' way to clean your faucets, sinks or stainless steel? Take a slice of cucumber and rub it on the surface you want to clean, not only will it remove years of tarnish and bring back the shine, but it won't leave streaks and won't harm your fingers or fingernails while you clean.

13. Using a pen and made a mistake? Take the outside of the cucumber and slowly use it to erase the pen writing, also works great on crayons and markers that the kids have used to decorate the walls!

Pass this along to everybody you know who is looking for better and safer ways to solve life's everyday problems.

Welcoming Annelida (Part 2)

In the December Seedling we tried to sketch in the lives and habits of earthworms. In this article we look at the role of worms in the garden.

Aristotle remarked that worms were nature's plows and the intestines of the earth. As previously noted earthworms (anecic worms or nightcrawlers) burrow deep in the soil creating pathways for air to reach plant roots and water to drain. They bury and ingest the top layer of mulch; in return they leave their enriched castings on the surface. Nightcrawlers when fully present produce up to eighteen tons of castings per acre per year. (The recommended soil amendment with worm castings is four tons per acre.)

Earthworms are responsible - in conjunction with other organisms - for returning a vast amount of natural mulch into fertile soil. When an experimental plot treated with artificial fertilizer was compared to an equal area enriched by worm castings over a year the resulting productivity was the same; in subsequent years, however, the casting enriched plot continued to perform although the other quickly tapered off.

Soils with a full compliment of earthworms hardly need any attention and will be full of living organisms. Farm soils subject to chemical fertilizers require increasing fertilization to continue to be productive and tend to gradually become dead areas. Such soils also tend to fall victim to disease while soils maintained by "natural or traditional" methods do not. This is not hard to understand; chemical fertilizers and pesticides gradually deplete the earthworms and with

their disappearance many other organisms die off including beneficial bacteria.

So there is every reason for the gardener to encourage nightcrawlers. Unfortunately BARAGA land is not ideal. The natural pH is too low and the soggy peat not far below is not conducive to worm burrows. However there are things a gardener can do to increase earthworms:

1. Initially prepare the soil by cultivating deeply; introduce lots of mulch and allow for air spaces.
2. Use lime to bring the pH of the soil close to neutral; that is what a lot of vegetables require anyway.
3. Apply a layer of mulch to the surface. Grass clippings or chopped leaves are ideal. Two inches of mulch applied twice a year is recommended. This will also curtail weed seed germination.
4. Once worms are established cultivate as little as possible; cultivation breaks up worm burrows and the vibrations are very disturbing for worms besides the physical damage a fork, spade or rototiller can do to them. The worms will do the cultivation; just let them get on with it.
5. Nightcrawlers can be introduced when the site is ready, however they are not easy to move; worms just picked up off the ground are suddenly deprived of their homes. The best way seems to be to move them in the blocks of soil that they already inhabit.

Not much of the above applies to red wigglers - the type of worm used in compost piles and worm composting. Red wigglers live above the soil and if introduced to the compost pile break it down into vermicompost - a combination of castings and well-matured compost. Red wigglers are used in vermiculture, a subject far too big for this

article; gardeners who want to produce quantities of castings will do well to read up on the subject in their local library (or the net).

It is possible however to introduce red wigglers into a compost bin and benefit from the high grade compost they produce. The worms can be purchased, or a gift from a friend with a compost bin, or just gathered under leaves or rotting manure. The compost in the bin that will be their new home should already be partially broken down when the worms are introduced; when fresh material is attacked by bacteria it heats much beyond the endurance of worms.

Once the red wigglers have settled in they must be fed on a regular basis. This is a good way to dispose of household waste (vegetable and fruit peelings, coffee grounds, other food waste, etc.); dairy, meat products, spicy foods, green manures, pet feces, etc. should not be used. A pound of worms will consume the same weight of food waste in a day, if conditions are ideal. Observation will show how much can be fed to them. If food waste is to be fed to the worms be sure that the bin is rodent proof.

The author has a green cone (a popular style of compost bin); it is partly buried in the soil and with the exposed part protected by two layers. Red wigglers found their own way in years ago and happily multiply. All I have to do is add suitable food waste, ensure the ground is moist, and periodically remove the resulting vermicompost. A similar system would work well at BARAGA, although the worms would probably have to be introduced.

Much more ambitious bins can be purchased or constructed, but their care requires more attention too.

There are three possible by-products:

vermicompost, castings, and worm tea:

vermicompost can be used as a top dressing and applied like a mulch, or it can be used to enrich a potting soil;

castings are a more concentrated product and can be used as a fertilizer (be aware the castings are likely nitrogen rich and have a high pH);

worm tea can be made from liquid collected under the bin or by adding castings to water - be sure to dilute so there is no root burn.

Gardeners who are very serious about worm bins should take a little care with their sources; there have been scams including pyramid schemes. There are several recommended books available and several helpful websites.

St. Phocas the Gardener

Phocas is the patron saint of gardeners. His legend says he was a great grower of vegetables and he was able to feed many persecuted Christians on the food that he grew.

Eventually his fame brought persecution on him too. Roman soldiers were sent to kill him, but they did not know who to look for. When the soldiers came he fed them as well and promised to identify the person they sought to kill to them next morning. During the night he dug his own grave in his garden. In the morning he told them who he was and persuaded them that they must kill him and bury him in his garden despite their reluctance.

So Phocas became compost in his garden and the patron saint of gardeners, composters and earthworms - and of a host of others.

Growing Carrots

One of the first vegetables that comes to mind is likely to be on every member's diet is the carrot. But the number of successful carrot growers is much smaller. Perhaps that is due to the cheapness of carrots in the marketplace, but it might be due to the carrot rust fly.

Certainly carrots are a vegetable that should be included in everyone's diet. Home grown carrots are succulent and sweet; they are also highly nutritious. Best known is carotene which gives the orange/yellow colour and becomes vitamin A in human digestion. Carrots can quickly fill our requirements for this vitamin, however they also contain beneficial minerals: potassium, calcium and phosphorus.

Carrots can be prepared for the table in a number of ways, though quite delicious if eaten raw. They retain their shape in most cooking, giving the chef a chance to demonstrate his skill with a knife. Because the sugar content is fairly high carrots often appear in deserts, baking, juices and even country wines.

The wild carrot, *Daucus carota*, grows wild across a wide swath of temperate Euro-Asia from Britain to China, something of a weed. The whitish, multi-branched roots do not look much like our vegetable. However it was demonstrated that breeding one from the other could be done in a short three year period. The Romans, among others, grew carrots and introduced them to regions of their empire, but the orange vegetable we know was first produced in the late middle age in Holland.



There are several basic carrot shapes as quick glance in a seed catalogue will confirm. Long and thin (Amsterdam and Nantes) is very popular; the shorter, stouter Chantenay is too; baby carrots or fat round ones are also available.

White or purple carrots can be found for the gardeners who find orange humdrum.

Generally carrots can be sown from late March to late August, the vegetables maturing in about seventy days. Carrots prefer a very light sandy soil, but fluffy peat should also work well, allowing roots to grow straight and long. Seed is essential; unfortunately it is small making spacing problematic and thinning to one inch diameters inevitable. Fertilized soil and a constant supply of moisture helps produce a uniform result.

As biennial plants, carrots last well into a second year. Traditional gardeners stored them in root cellars, but modern gardeners should have little trouble keeping a supply of

carrots over winter.

Finally, how can we avoid avoid the voracious pests that are the carrot rust fly's progeny. Some clues lie in the carrot fly's life cycle. Over winter they are deep in the soil as pupa. They emerge and lay eggs in May preferring damp soil and closeness to carrots, celery, dill and parsnips for the young larvae to feed on. A second generation matures in late July/early August - next year's pests.

There are three ways to defeat the numerous tiny white maggots. Best is a complete row cover over the vulnerable crop, be sure there is no space for a small fly to get in. A second option is to time the crop for late June thus avoiding most of the hungry larvae. Thirdly many gardeners confuse the parent flies by inter-planting carrots with herbs sage, garlic, onions, etc. - crops that distract the flies.

Wasp Problems?

Dick Gould wants to pass on some advice for gardeners who need to limit the activity of wasps. The time to take action is now before the wasps start their colonies. Traps, available at garden centres, should be installed early. That way the wasps trapped will be queens that are eliminated before they start their broods. Wasps trapped later will almost certainly be just workers.

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

Directors for 2010

President: Don Hatch 604-433-8055
604-312-3003

Vice-President: Janet Filippelli 604-432-9379

Secretary: John Florek 604-526-4710

Treasurer: Joyce Wishart 604-412-3890

Directors at Large

Aldo Chervatin 604-439-1503

Liliana Hoogland 604-433-6346

Patricia Kavanagh 604-436-0193

Abdul Majid 604-681-6058

Bella Scholz 604-435-2489

David Tamblin 604-521-4318

Derrill Thompson 604-436-0324

This newsletter was edited by David Tamblin.

Views expressed in this newsletter are not

necessarily those
of BARAGA.

