

Dig This!

Fall 2020



Can any of us remember a stranger growing season?

At the start of the pandemic, the Province declared that community gardens were recreational and therefore not permitted to open. DIG responded by joining an immediate provincewide campaign to reverse this decision. In April, the Province declared community gardens essential services that could open if they adhered to public health regulations. And this is when the real work began – that of ensuring that all gardeners could participate safely. Luckily, DIG was successful in accessing not one, but **two**, grants to help with this.



The first, from TD Parks People, allowed us to maintain a connection with gardeners at this socially disconnected time. With this funding, we kept our tradition of showcasing the amazing work of our local gardens by taking our annual garden tour online. In addition, we set up an online photo contest so that gardeners across the region could all share the best of what they had growing. (Get your beautiful photos in by Oct 31!!)



The second grant, federal money distributed through the Red Cross, allowed us to recognize all the hard work happening on (and in!) the ground to keep gardens rolling this year. We were able to hire three agricultural



feeding their communities. The funds also helped with some of the hygiene supplies needed in the beginning.

The efforts of our gardeners, garden coordinators, Health Department, Federal Government, Red Cross, and TD Parks People have helped to ensure that thousands of people across Durham Region have had safe access to the many benefits of community gardens including healthy, organic produce.



workers for two gardens and to offer monthly honoraria to seven garden coordinators over five months. We also used the money to buy a hard-topped gazebo for one garden and collapsible shelters for three more. These spaces provide shade for gardeners and the produce they collect for



A huge thank you to all Durham community garden coordinators and volunteer leadership for their dedication in getting gardens open and productive in a challenging year.

Agri Hero ~ Hinterland Growers

Looking for something to do amidst the pandemic? Why not take a drive to south Port Perry and visit Hinterland Growers?

Nestled just to the west of Simcoe Street North (Highway 2) on 1740 Scugog Line 4, L9L 1B3, Hinterland Growers offers Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) food baskets for weekly pickup, a farm store with their home-grown products, plus a one-stop shop to purchase products from a variety of local merchants, including soaps, maple syrup, honey, beef, coffee, and hand-knitted items, plus so much more.

Hinterland Growers are a part of a growing movement of small-scale farmers participating in what's called Polyculture Farming. According to Tanja Folnovic, Agronomy Expert

at Agrivi, polycultural food production involves growing multiple crops simultaneously, which greatly benefits the soil environment. This is in stark contrast to factory farm monocultures, which are rapidly eroding our fragile topsoil at such a rate that Scientific American estimates there to be approximately 60 years left of farming, if soil degradation continues unabated.

The Loback family conducts its farming operation at Hinterland Growers "under a bio-intensive market-garden model characterized by double dug raised beds, intensive planting, composting and companion planting", with

minimum tillage, and employing weed and pest management techniques that prevent them from using harmful chemicals.

Growing in this way has been proven to increase local biodiversity, use less water and land, and offers increased yield, which ultimately benefits both the farmers and consumers.

To learn more about our Agri Hero, visit www.hinterlandgrowers.com



Hinterland
growers

Putting the garden to bed and bee-friending pollinators too

Believe it or not, Summer is officially over for 2020! We've been blessed with an unprecedented hot & dry season, yet it is time now to begin preparing our gardens for the cold, dark seasons that are North American Autumn and Winter. With the dwindling populations of native pollinators, we have made a checklist of things to prepare for this changing of seasons which will help keep our insect populations safe.



So this year, why not forego the air of cleanliness for one of habitat creation and preservation?

According to Deborah Landau, a conservation ecologist with the Maryland/D.C. chapter of the Nature Conservancy, leaving structures in place will go a long way in sustaining local insect populations. Such structures include, "standing stalks of dead plants, especially under flower heads, where butterflies seek shelter. It also includes layers of leaf litter that collect to protect larvae, egg masses, hibernating wild bees, dormant spiders and many other beneficial insects."

Interestingly, stems of ornamental grasses and raspberry canes provide homes for increasingly rare cavity-nesting bees, something we can all agree merits protection. We rely on their free services, since 75% of our food crops depend, to some extent on pollination.

The following is a checklist of things you can do to prepare:

- Give your yard at least one last soaking before reeling up the hoses for winter.

- Plant a cover crop and add new perennials including bulbs, trees and shrubs at a time when fall moisture can help establish their root systems.
- Remove ailing plants to help with disease control during the upcoming planting season. (Our wild mallows are suffering from a severe rust infection, and we will be cutting them right to the roots.)
- Don't disturb bare soil where many wild bee species, including bumblebees, overwinter in small nests. This means that you should delay any tilling. (Let earthworms do the work for you!)
- Put off pulling up your summer annuals and chrysanthemums until spring. They'll trap whatever leaves blow by, creating their own enriching mulch while shielding insects.

(From <https://tinyurl.com/yy2p58m9>)

Finally, if you are concerned about what your neighbours might think about your "untidy" yard, consider only cleaning your front garden beds. In the end, every little bit of habitat creation helps!

To learn more about the importance of pollinators, visit – tinyurl.com/y5c2bv83

GardenStory

On the move ~ Bowmanville Allotment Gardens

Putting the garden to bed at the end of the season is always a sad occasion - we love being in the garden! This year, we at Bowmanville Allotments are full of mixed emotion. Not only are we putting our garden to bed, we are saying farewell after nine fulfilling years at our site. It is hard to say goodbye. On the other hand we are full of expectation for the season yet to come as we move to our new site.

All summer we have been busy with two sites - keeping our "old reliable" going and getting our new plots ready for planting in the spring. It's been a lot of work! Thank goodness we are just 500 yards north of our former site and could still utilize the tool shed and port-a-potty.

Our new location has 47 plots, and we still have some vacant plots for others locally, who wish to grow their own food. (We will do a newspaper article about their availability.) The new plots are 20' x 20' and are laid out in three



Work at new site – some of the gardeners digging in and putting the rototiller to good use, others surveying their new plots.

neat rows, with a row of 10' x 20' plots on the south side. We will continue the tradition of putting one plot to work for the food bank.

Our last work day will be Saturday of the Thanksgiving weekend with a pizza lunch. We have to move the last of our service items over to the new site - compost bins, water barrels,

and the pallets to set the barrels on. The tool shed went over last weekend.

The garden is located south of the Bowmanville Cemetery on Haines Street (formerly Cemetery Road) just east of the old zoo. After the pandemic has cleared, we will welcome visitors.

GardenStory

Wood chips hot spots!

If your garden uses wood chips along paths or for compost ingredients, be careful.

In late August, at the **Whitby Ajax Garden Project (WAGP)**, we noticed some smoke coming from the mountain of wood chips that had been delivered a day earlier. We started raking and shovelling and found several hot spots in the pile. Not knowing just how to manage this, we called the Fire Department. The truck arrived quickly. The

Captain explained that he had seen this before, doubted that the pile would ever burst into flame, but that it was nevertheless possible. He did not recommend dousing with water because that would speed up decomposition and thereby create more heat and smoldering. He instructed us to level the pile and create several smaller piles so that the heat could not build up so much. A WAGP board member was contacted who sent out an SOS to gardeners to come and help shovel and move the mountain (so to speak). Several members arrived and we all pitched in. Crisis averted.



Kudos and much thanks to the Whitby Fire Department. Thanks as well to our stellar gardeners.

During the busyness, a sign at the wood chip pile was set aside; unknowingly moved, ... to an awkward spot. (Yes, that is the garden port-a-potty.)

GardenTip

DIG'N for garden-related answers?

Did you know that DIG Board members Adrian and Brandon post original content to our YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/DurhamDigs>)? Do you have gardening-related questions you just can't seem to find answers to?

Brandon, a graduate of Durham College's Horticulture Technician program, can answer them by way of short YouTube videos! Just put your question in the comments section of any of our YouTube videos. As a resident of Durham Region, Brandon has a knowledge of best practices for gardens of any size, from windowsill, patio, backyard, boulevard, and everything in between.

Recently, Brandon, a builder by trade, made a DIY (do it yourself) video on how to make a "garlic dibber", an easily made contraption to help with uniform garlic planting. As the time to get those delicious bulbs in the ground approaches, why not check out his video, and give it a "like"?



We've also uploaded our Magical Mystical Virtual Garden Tour, a series of sleek videos we made on August 1st, as we toured some of the best community gardens Durham Region has on offer.

Stay tuned for more videos, such as the how-to's of planting Fall garlic, how to prepare your garden for fall, and so much more! We greatly appreciate your support of DIG. To renew your membership, or to make a donation, please visit –

durhamdigs.ca



GardenART

Simple Mason Bee House to help save pollinators

In addition to the wonderful pollinator write up on page 2, here is another, artsy, way to help.



Materials

- empty tin can, label removed and washed.
- paint
- rolls of heavy scrap paper, hollow bamboo stalks, or hollow reeds
- nail and hammer
- twine for hanging the house

Instructions

Paint the outside of the can – (get artsy!)

Using a thick nail and hammer a hole in the bottom of the can near the edge. Thread the twine through the hole and knot the end to stabilize the loop.

Cut your paper rolls/bamboo/reeds to fit inside the length of the can.

Fill the can with your hollow structures, packing as snugly as possible without crushing them.

Hang your mason bee house wherever you want your bees to hang out.

Recipe

Roasted Delicata



Delicata – a "winter" squash with thin skin so, well, delicate, that it will melt in your mouth.

Just cut a delicata in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Then brush with olive oil and place cut side down—or slice into inch-thick half moons and toss with olive oil—and roast in a 450°F oven until soft, about 30 minutes. Or try the easy recipe below.

To find a riper (that is, sweeter) delicata, look for orange, not greenish, stripes on the pale yellow skin.

- 2 washed, seeded squash, cut into half moons
 - 1 thinly sliced red onion
 - 2 tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
 - 4 tbs. pumpkin seeds
1. Preheat the oven to 450°F. Toss the squash with the red onion and oil.
 2. Roast on a rimmed sheet pan for 30 minutes.
 3. Top with the pumpkin seeds.

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Editor Mary Drummond

Contributors Adrian Hogendoorn

Ruth Latimer

Sher Leetooze, co-ordinator BAGarden

Mary Anne Martin

Layout Latimer Graphics

WEBSITE www.durhamdigs.ca

EMAIL info@durhamdigs.ca

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/DurhamDIGs

TWITTER twitter.com/durhamdigs

INSTAGRAM Instagram- @durhamdigs