

Dig This!

Winter 2020



2020 ~ A year of anniversaries!

Check the DIG website for event details



DIG - 10 years

St. Andrew's Community Garden (Ajax) - 10 years

Mary Street Community Garden (Oshawa) - 10 years

Giving the Gift of Growing

As Christmas draws near, we are reminded that the holiday season is all about giving. It is in this spirit that we humbly request donations to DIG's **You Grow Durham Fund**.

Established nearly ten years ago, we began this fund to aid in initial start-up costs for new community gardens right here, close to home. The goal has always been to fund these new ventures, yet also to expand DIG's **You Grow Durham Fund** to be able to kick-start special projects in well-established gardens. Many of these urban agriculture hubs are looking to improve their existing infrastructure, or to expand and serve more people.

Community gardens are sustainable organizations that do not need much money

to run. Modest membership fees and partnerships within the communities cover the everyday costs where a garden operates. They do, however, have unexpected costs, such as when vandalism occurs, if a tool breaks, or if expansion is required, and new sheds, rain barrels, or compost bins are needed, for example.

It is for this reason that our **You Grow Durham Fund** exists, and why we are asking for your generous donations at this time. With the climate change emergency upon us, it is more important than ever to grow food close to home, and to wean ourselves off long distance agriculture. The more resistant to outside factors we can make our municipalities, the more resilient we can be!

For more information, please visit www.durhamdigs.ca/you-grow-durham.

Growing Communities Principles

- Engage and empower those affected by the garden at every stage of planning, building and managing the garden project.
- Build on community strengths and assets.
- Embrace and value human differences and diversity. Promote equity.
- Foster relationships among families, neighbours and members of the larger community.
- Honour ecological systems and biodiversity.
- Foster environmental, community, and personal health and transformation.
- Promote active citizenship and political empowerment.
- Promote continuous community and personal learning by sharing experience and knowledge.
- Integrate community gardens with other community development strategies.
- Design for long-term success and the broadest possible impact.

American Community Garden Association



Agri-Hero



Have you ever had a craving for a local dry, off dry or dessert wine made from delicious nearby fruits? Well look no further than

Archibald's Orchard & Estate Winery!

"A fourth generation family farm located 12 km north of Hwy #401 in Bowmanville, Ontario, this beautiful 40 acre property is an ideal orchard site with a southwesterly slope for good air and soil drainage" (<https://archibaldswinery.com/>).

Archibald's is packed with fun things to do on a cold winter's day. Their Christmas Market Room has local artisan crafts, sweets, preserves and gift baskets for those last minute Christmas presents. You can also tour their winery, and sample favourites such as Canadian Maple Wine and Hard Ginger Cider. For teetotalers, Archibald's has non-alcoholic Wines, Apple Syrup, Apple Cider Vinegar, Wine Jams & "Splash in the Pan" Cooking Wine, Apple Pies, Crisps & Dumplings – something for everyone!

During the autumn season, pop in to pick your own apples (Ida Reds, Red Delicious, McIntosh, Cortland, Empire, Gala and Ambrosia).

Hurry in, because Archibald's closes Christmas Eve at 4 pm, and will not re-

open until Friday, March 6. From that point, they will be open weekends only, Friday to Sunday 10 am to 5 pm.



Winter projects for school gardens ~ Seeds and Sprouts

Our autumn season's article shone a spotlight on what I am doing with students at my school in terms of garden and cooking clubs. This season, as the days grow shorter and the nights grow longer, we will delve into the topic of seeds and sprouts!

Just because the mercury has dipped below freezing, does not mean you have to stop growing food! One of nature's most nutritious

snacks also happens to be one of the easiest to prepare. I am talking about sprouts!

There are many types of sprouts you can grow, including mung, clover, fenugreek, alfalfa, broccoli, and radish, to name a few! They are fast germinating, as long as you keep the water fresh, and the seeds rinsed. If you fail to do this, you will be exposing students to a science experiment in microbiology.

All you need is a wide mouth Mason jar, a strainer, and a cloth to start your sprouting extravaganza. You could get fancy, and purchase a sprouting system from Lee Valley, or DIY your own contraption with a screen,

water holding tray and cover; the sky is the limit. A fun STEM (Science Technology Engineering Math) challenge for your students might be to design and build a sprouter using recycled materials.

On the topic of seeds: now is the time to begin ordering from catalogues so that you are ready for springtime. It is important to buy new seeds every year (in some cases), since nothing is more disappointing to youngsters than planting a seed, and waiting for weeks while nothing happens. You may be off the hook from spending money on seeds if you were organized enough to collect them from your garden. Teaching students the importance of deadheading flowers and saving seeds goes a long way towards instilling a sustainable mindset. Just be sure to store seeds away from heat, light, and moisture. Finally, check out William Dam Seeds (www.damseeds.ca). They have high quality products for nearly every plant species you can imagine!

Know of a school that is actively growing food? I'd love to hear about it! Please email me at adrian_778@hotmail.com

Instructions and supplies

www.westcoastseeds.com/blogs/how-to-grow/grow-sprouts

www.instructables.com/id/Ultimate-Step-by-Step-Sprouting-Guide



Planning your vegetable garden

Winter is the perfect time to plan your garden.

Mapping your garden now will help determine how many seeds and seedlings you need, where they will be planted, and how you can keep the plot producing all through the growing season.

Before you begin, review the list of crops you want to grow, deciding roughly how many plants of each vegetable are needed. Check the seed package, or catalogue, to see how much space each plant takes up.

Make a sketch of the garden plot showing the dimensions. This can be done on a computer program or simply sketched out on graph paper. 'One graph square equals one square foot', is a good method.

Start plotting your garden with the crops you consider essential. For example, tomatoes, peppers, onions, and garlic may be important if you are preserving pasta sauce.

Next, place roaming plants that send out vines – melon, squash etc. These need to be situated so their broad leaves don't cover other plants.

Place remaining plants, paying attention to the following considerations.

Things to consider when planning the garden

Crop Rotation

It is beneficial to rotate plant families from one garden spot to another each growing season. Vegetables that are in the same family use similar nutrients and are vulnerable to the same pests and diseases. Planting different crop families from year to year helps to avoid depleting the soil and prevents crop specific pests and diseases from building up from one season to the next.

There are several approaches to crop rotation and it can be confusing. Here are some examples to consider.

A three year rotation based on 3 plant families, according to their nutrient needs and bio-feedback.

Some plants are *heavy* feeders – tomatoes, broccoli, cabbage, corn, eggplant, beets, lettuce, and other leafy crops.

Some are *light* feeders – garlic, onions, peppers, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, sweet potatoes, Swiss chard, and turnips.

Some are *soil builders* – peas, beans, and cover crops such as clover.

Rotating these three groups of crops makes the best use of nutrients in the soil.

A simple crop rotation would plant *heavy* feeders in a dedicated spot the first year, followed by *light* feeders in the same spot the second year, followed by *soil builders* the third year.

A four year rotation based on 4 plant families, as shown in the chart below.

Alliums and roots – beets, carrots, celery, etc.

Eggplant, peppers, potatoes, tomatillo and tomatoes

Brassicas – broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radish, rutabaga, spinach, and turnip.

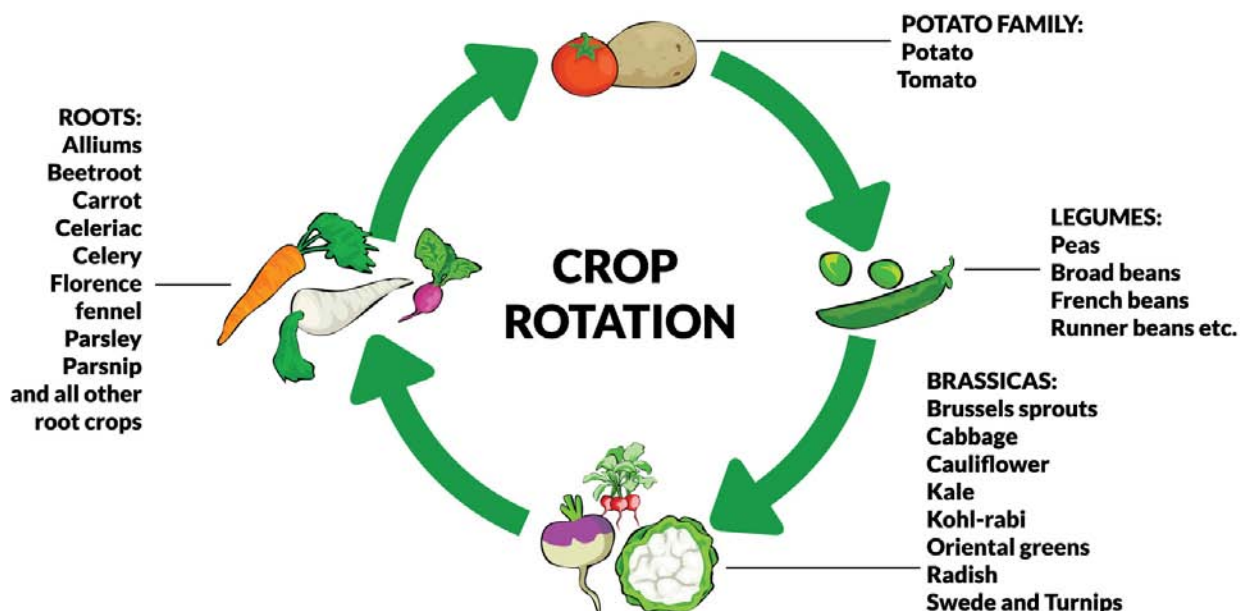
Beans and peas

The plants in each family are grouped together, so they can be easily moved to a different spot the following year. Other vegetables such as lettuce and herbs are worked in where there is room, but don't plant them in the same spots two years in a row.

Growing Vertical

Tall trellised plants such as peas, pole beans, and indeterminate tomatoes should be limited to a spot where they don't shade other plants.

continued on next page



GardenTip

continued from previous page

Succession Planting

Quick growing crops such as spinach, lettuce, and other various greens can be planted in spring. Once the warmer weather arrives, spring greens usually turn bitter and bolt. Remove them and use the space to grow bush beans. Once the bush beans are finished producing, a fall crop of spinach, lettuce, and other cool-season crops can be planted once again.

Companion planting

Even though you will be grouping plants of the same family, a few may not always thrive planted right next to each other. For instance, parsnips may not do well next to carrots. Check out the companion planting guide in the DID newsletter, Spring 2019.

Grow insectary plants

There are a number of well-known flowers that attract beneficial insects (ladybugs, hoverflies etc) that will naturally control pests.

Borage is believed to help almost any plant increase its resistance to disease and pests.

Dahlias may repel nematodes.

Four O'Clock flowers will attract and kill Japanese beetles

Lavender is an excellent pest repellent for fleas and moths.

Marigold is probably the best known for repelling insects. French marigolds repel whiteflies and kill bad nematodes.

Nasturtiums planted near tomatoes and cucumbers can fight off aphids, whiteflies, squash bugs, and cucumber beetles. The flowers, especially the yellow blooming varieties, act as a trap for aphids.

Petunias can repel asparagus beetles, leafhoppers, aphids, tomato hornworms, and others.

Sunflowers might be the largest flower you have in your garden, and what a better beacon to say "come on over" to beneficial pollinators.

Seeds and supplies

Here is a partial list of Canadian seed suppliers. Most will mail you a seed catalogue if you apply online. Catalogues are wonderful sources for growing instructions and gardening tips.

Greta's Organic Gardens

www.seeds-organic.com

Hawthorn Farm

www.hawthornfarm.ca

Hope Seeds

www.hopeseed.com

McKenzie Seeds

www.mckenzieseeds.com

Ontario Seeds Company

www.oscseeds.com

Richters Herbs

www.richters.com

Seed Bank

www.seed-bank.ca

Seeds of diversity

www.seeds.ca

Urban Harvest

www.uharvest.ca

Veseys Seeds

www.veseys.com

West Coast Seeds

www.westcoastseeds.com

W. H. Perron

www.dominion-seed-house.com

William Dam Seeds

www.damseeds.ca

Recipe

Christmas Punch



A refreshing drink for any season, Christmas Punch brings back memories of June strawberries with a tropical sitting-on-the-beach twist. Definitely a recipe worth doubling.

- 1 can pink lemonade, undiluted, thawed or frozen
- 1 can 14 oz/414 ml crushed or pieces, undrained pineapple
- 1 carton/bag 15 oz/.425 kg diced or whole, strawberries, thawed or frozen
- 1 litre Sprite

optional

- 1 cup/250 ml vodka

Combine lemonade, pineapple, strawberries in a blender. If you prefer, you may add more strawberries until the mixture is a deep pink with more strawberry flavour.

If you have thawed the ingredients, chill the mixture. If you have used frozen ingredients simply refrigerate until ready to put the punch together.

Just before serving place fruit mixture into a punch bowl or drink container then add the Sprite and optional vodka. You may add ice to help keep it cool. Enjoy with friends!

GardenART

Are there any artists who are also Beatles fans out there?

Whatever your music preference, get busy during these winter months and make a colourful plaque to adorn your garden and celebrate your musical inspiration.



DigThis!

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