

Dig This!

Spring 2022



Here's a small but lovely way to support the Ukraine cause.



For the month of March, 100% sales of West Coast Seeds sunflower seed packets will be donated to the Canadian Red Cross Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal. www.westcoastseeds.com

Sunflower purchase donation also available at Bimble Garden. www.bimblegarden.com

Have you ever heard of REKO?

If you are like me, this is a strange new word. Is it a furniture style from IKEA? Is it a typo for the short form of "reclaimed"? Nope!

REKO is a novel way for farmers to sell, and for customers to buy fresh, local food. The word comes from the Finnish language meaning "fair consumption". It is an economic system designed to cut out the middleman, connecting producers and consumers in a simplified way. REKO producers are at least committed to ethical/ecological production, though many are organic. According to www.aitojamakuja.fi/en/reko-for-producers, "Operations are open and transparent and the producer is obliged to provide information on their products and production".

You may already be a part of a REKO network. They exist in the form of closed Facebook groups, where farmers offer farm fresh products, and group members place orders.

There is a REKO network at our very doorstep, in Bowmanville. Established in 2020. The most recent meetup was March 3rd at 5:45 p.m., and the recurring event is biweekly at the Garnet B. Rickard Rec Complex, Bowmanville.

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/groups/817807485361109 or search Bowmanville Reko Network on Facebook.



Agri-Hero Second Season Farm

If you've been to the Clarington Farmers' Market in the past few years, you may have met Michael Longarini and encountered some of the wonderfully fresh and tasty produce from Second Season Farm. This family farm was started in 2016 by Michael and his wife Jenna. The farm uses no-spray methods to produce a wide range of veggies. Over the years they have grown arugula, carrots, basil, beets, cucumbers, dill, coriander, eggplant, garlic, green onions, kale, lettuce, onions, parsley, bell peppers, radishes, shallots, spinach, summer and winter squash, mini-romaine lettuce, tomatoes, turnips, and winter radishes. They also offer super-fresh and tasty salad mixes! Everything they sell has been grown on the farm. At this point, there are plans to expand operations with a new greenhouse, advanced irrigation systems, and orchards. To help with this expansion, Second Season will

be hiring a local youth through the Canada Summer Jobs program from May to Sept. You can find Second Season produce at the Clarington Farmers' Market, the Bowmanville Reko network (which was started by Michael- see the REKO article above) and, coming soon, online sales. Their farmgate will also be

open on particular days which you can find advertised through their social media. Second Season farm is located on Stephenson Rd. in Newcastle. However, locals might find it better by going just east of the "hole in the wall" on Highway 2.



Coming up ▶

Apple pruning Table Talk recap

On Thursday, February 24th, **The Nourish & Develop Foundation** (TNDF) and **DIG** hosted a virtual Table Talk with Nature's Bounty's general manager, Rob Alexander.

This session focused on how to prune apple trees, a timely event given that late winter is the ideal time to cut back those tired-looking branches. In fact, because trees are dormant at that time, they respond with more vigorous growth when they awaken come springtime. According to Rob, pruning helps limb renewal because by cutting back to a bud, the tree is encouraged to push out new growth and replace old wood.

You can prune by thinning, as shown below left. In this technique a branch is removed at the junction with the next branch. You can also perform a heading cut (below right), which encourages new growth and fruit development. The branch is cut back but not totally removed.

It really is essential to view the video below for proper technique, equipment, assessment, and overall apple tree maintenance. A 4-page fact sheet is also available on our website under Resources.

For more information, see the recording of the Table Talk at www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoAlcHa0wdQ

If you want to learn more about Nature's Bounty, why not check out our Fall 2019 newsletter, where we profiled the farm as our seasonal **Agri-Hero**.

www.durhamdigs.ca/resources



VIRTUAL

Table TALK

A Greener Future
"Plastics in our lakes, reducing waste and why it matters"

APRIL

20

Wednesday
@ 7:00 PM



Join us virtually on Apr 20th where Rochelle will discuss her documentary Shoreline, ways to move towards living zero waste free.

Rochelle founded A Greener Future in 2014 after coordinating a shoreline cleanup in her community and deciding that one cleanup per year just wasn't enough. The experience of picking up garbage eventually led her towards the zero waste movement. She lives a waste-free lifestyle with her husband, Mike, and 5 year old son, Linden.

Rochelle has completed eight years of environmental post secondary education and has held several employment positions related to environmental education at Fleming College, the Riverview Park and Zoo, and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. Rochelle is the 2017 Environment Award recipient for the City of Pickering and the first woman to stand up paddle 430 km across Lake Ontario, raising awareness about plastic pollution.

Shoreline is available to view here
<https://www.agreenerfuture.ca/shoreline>
*In person screening of the Documentary will be possible (upon registration at the **Beaverton Branch of Brock Township Public Library** (401 Simcoe Street, Beaverton, ON L0K 1A0)
Tuesday April 12th 11-12pm, 2-3pm, 6-7pm
provide your desired time slot upon registration.

Register by email: melissa@tndf.ca



The Nourish and Develop
Foundation



DIG
Durham Integrated Growers
FOR A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Choosing the perfect fruit for your home garden

What to consider.

What to avoid.

Growing your own fruit is a rewarding experience. The more research you do, the happier you will be with the result.

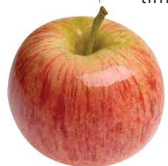
Growing fruit, like any plant, requires an awareness of its needs. What is also important, and may not be obvious at first, is considering your available time, interests and abilities. Getting the most benefit from fruit you grow involves several factors beyond soil, sunshine and temperature. Here are some points to ponder.

1

What do you like to eat? How easy is it to buy this fruit at the grocery store?

Even the simplest fruit requires effort to pick. Make sure that this effort is worth it by choosing something that's costly to purchase, or a variety not seen in your local store. Raspberries are a good example of this being expensive and prone to spoiling. If you enjoy apples, why not try a variety like Strawberry Pippin apple that is not seen outside of farmer's markets?

There's several specialty nurseries that offer less common fruits and even nuts that can be grown at home. The issue with choosing an uncommon variety is, you probably don't know how it tastes. How can you commit to something you've never tried? See if the nursery offers tasting what they grow. Grimo Nut Nursery in Niagara sells nuts from the trees they grow (www.grimonut.com). Silver Creek Nursery, outside of Waterloo, holds an annual fruit tasting open house (www.silvercreeknursery.ca/pages/events). It's also important to check if the variety is uncommon because it's difficult to grow. Alternatively, just because a fruit is common in stores does not mean it is easy to care for. Honeycrisp apples are challenging, even for the pros. Other reasons a fruit is not commercially grown may have to do with its being too delicate to withstand transportation, i.e., its skin or rind is too thin, it spoils too quickly once picked or it does not produce enough fruit



to make it commercially viable. Reasons like these are not a problem for the home grower.

2

How easy is the fruit to pick? Can you reach it without a ladder? Does the plant have spines or thorns? Do you have the patience to spend the time necessary for a useful harvest?

At the Whitby Ajax Garden Project (WAGP), we concentrate on fruit that doesn't need a ladder to pick – grapes, currants, raspberries, blackberries and gooseberries. You can try your hand at fruit picking to see if it suits you. WAGP is always looking for volunteers to help pick fruit, with COVID measures in place of course.

3

Does it require spraying?

WAGP has a really nice apple tree, but without someone willing to volunteer the time and expertise for spraying, the apples are not fit for donation. Some fruit trees, such as cherry and pear, do not require annual spraying.

4

How much pruning does it require?

Of the fruits we grow, grapes and raspberries require the most pruning, done at the end of the growing season. Newly planted fruit trees will require pruning for their first three years, to ensure strong branches and an open growth habit. Once that is done, light pruning is typically all that is needed to remove downward weak branches, waterspouts and damaged wood.

5

How much space do you have? What kind of conditions are available?

Do you have room for two trees? How about two dwarf trees? The production of some fruits such as pears, sweet cherries, plums and apples, require two different varieties to be grown. In this case, the pollen of one variety cannot fertilize its own

flowers; so another compatible variety needs to be cultivated nearby. In the case of sweet cherries however, there are a couple of varieties that are self-fertile, such as Stella.

Do you only have room for one tree? Nearly all peaches, nectarines, sour cherries and apricots are self-fertile and will produce fruit with one tree. Do you have a white flowered crabapple tree nearby? If you do, it can fertilize most apple varieties and your new apple tree will produce fruit.

Does the available planting space have full sun, which is necessary for most fruit? There are some that can tolerate partial shade and still produce fruit – pears, sour cherries, blackberries, raspberries and currants. Do you have space for a planter in full sun conditions? Strawberries, saskatoon berries, blackberries, raspberries and currants will readily grow in containers. Blueberries, because their need for acidic soil makes them a challenge to grow, are well suited to containers. Do you have access to an insulated shed or unheated garage? If so, you'll be able to grow your own figs; growing them outdoors in late spring through to fall and overwintering them indoors keeping them safe from frost.

Getting started

Make a list of possible fruits you'd like to grow. There's a fruit that can be grown in almost any situation. Don't have a lot of sunshine? Try raspberries. Don't want to climb a ladder? Grow dwarf varieties. Don't want to have to spray? Cherries don't require regular spraying. Find all of this intimidating? Try something small at first like strawberries, raspberries or blackberries. The start-up cost will be lower and there's nothing like the taste of your own home-grown fresh fruit to encourage you to try other things.

There's lots to be gained from growing your own fruit. Your nutritional health will benefit from having a handy source. Being outdoors and taking care of your plants will also benefit your mental and physical health. You'll know

Continued on page 4



GardenTip Continued from previous page

Choosing the perfect fruit for your home garden

exactly how your fruit was grown and what chemicals were used (or avoided). You'll also be providing habitat for pollinators, birds and other wildlife, as well as reducing your carbon footprint.

Best wishes on your fruit growing journey. Let us know how it goes! Here's more resources about fruit growing:

Fruit tree nursery near Guelph - Whiffletree Farm & Nursery: Canadian Apple Fruit Trees & Orchard Supply

www.whiffletreefarmandnursery.ca

The 5 Best Fruit Trees | Eising Garden Centre
www.masterclass.com/articles/how-to-choose-fruit-plants-for-your-home-garden#3-tips-for-growing-fruit-in-your-garden

www.omafr.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/fruit_home.htm

Educational website
www.orchardpeople.com

Apple spraying: Home Apple Tree Care & Spray Guide for Beginners - Tuttle Orchards Inc: Indianapolis Apple Orchard, Pumpkin Patch and Farm Store.

www.indianapolisorchard.com

GardenTip



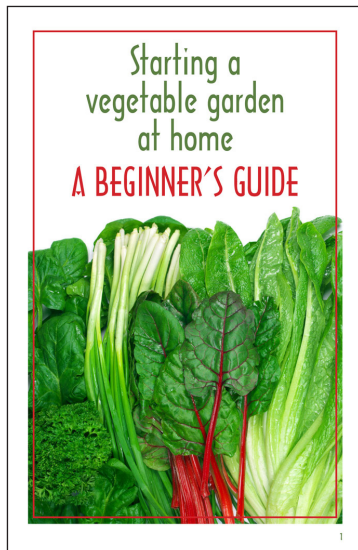
Eager to get seeds in the ground?

To get a jumpstart on the 2022 growing season, here are some plants that you should consider.

Now ~ Based on frost dates in Oshawa, Ontario, you can already begin *directly* sowing radish and spinach seeds! It might seem incredible, but this information comes from a credible source called almanac.com.

Bell peppers and celery have a long growing season. For this reason, they should have already been *started indoors*. If you are behind schedule, don't fret; start them today! The same goes for basil, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, kale, rosemary, sage, thyme and tomatoes, which could have been started as of March 9th! Time to start those seeds now.

March 24 - April 7 ~ Kohlrabi, lettuce, and swiss chard should be sown *inside*. Oregano too.



March 31st ~ *direct* seed your carrots and dill.

April 7 ~ Looking forward a bit, you can start your cantaloupe, cucumbers and sweet potatoes.

April 14th ~ Get those pumpkins, watermelons, and zucchini going.

April 21st ~ Arugula and beets can be *directly* sown outdoors in your prepared bed.

These dates are all fairly important to adhere to. Starting too early can cause leggy seedlings. Starting too late and you may not reap what you have sown.

To learn how to actually get started gardening, or to refresh your memory, why not check out our guide called *Starting a vegetable garden at home: a beginner's guide* (www.durhamdigs.ca/resources).

Stay tuned for our Summer 2022 newsletter for what you can plant in the Autumn to extend your growing season, and enjoy fresh vegetables well into Winter.

Recipe



Mint sauce

Ingredients

1/4 - 1/3 cup loosely packed mint leaves, very finely chopped

1/4 cup boiling water

2 tablespoons white wine or cider vinegar

2 tablespoons sugar

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

For a more English style sauce, use malt vinegar

Directions

Place chopped leaves in a small bowl. Stir in water, vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper until sugar is dissolved. Cover and let steep for 20 minutes, then serve immediately - usually with lamb.

If covered, mint sauce will last for two weeks in the fridge.

“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.”

Margaret Atwood

DigThis!

A quarterly publication of Durham Integrated Growers

Editor Mary Drummond

Contributors Darlene Dzura (WAGP)

Adrian Hogendoorn

Ruth Latimer

Mary Anne Martin

Layout Latimer Graphics

WEBSITE www.durhamdigs.ca

EMAIL info@durhamdigs.ca

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/DurhamDIGs

TWITTER twitter.com/durhamdigs

INSTAGRAM [@durhamdigs](https://www.instagram.com/durhamdigs)

YOUTUBE www.youtube.com/user/DurhamDigs