

Dig This!

Fall 2023



A busy Summer; a bountiful Fall; lots of planning to do; and cautious good news about the Greenbelt.

DIG's memorable garden tour 2023

1. St. John's Port Whitby CG, south Whitby.

Our tour started in this welcoming oasis which features pollinator beds, Highway of Heroes Tree Tribute, personal touches everywhere and a yummy breakfast.

2. Glen Street CG, south Oshawa.

A first-year garden resurrected by neighbourhood residents from an abandoned pre-pandemic garden. Great enthusiasm there and hope for expansion. Inspiring!

3. Salvation Army CG, Oshawa. One of the first community gardens in the Region. The expanded, revised garden features accessible raised beds, bordered in-ground beds, new shed, fruit trees and many keen growers!

4. Hinterland Growers, south of Port Perry. A sustainable 10 acre farm using a model of ecological, polyculture farming. It features farm store, green house and in-ground growing. It was great to see Mark Loback who DIG first met at our Table Talks.

5. Port Perry Care & Share Permaculture Garden, Port Perry Fairgrounds. A small but mighty garden alive with pollinators and sustainable growth. We were treated to a garden scavenger hunt and no one left without the gift of a plant!

A leisurely lunch under the trees at the fairground.

6. Uxbridge Community Share Garden, outskirts of Uxbridge. We were warmly greeted at our last stop with tastes of various ciders from a nearby cidery.

We drove off into the late afternoon sun after the winners of the best poker hand choose their prizes. Where might the tour wander next year?



Agri-Hero Villa Vida Loca

It began with a fascination for honeybees and grew (fabulously)! Everything at this boutique market in Sunderland is farm fresh, homegrown, handmade, or personally chosen. Villa Vida Loca honey ranges from raw, creamed and



flavoured or herb-infused. As well, there are hive products: bee pollen, pure beeswax and hand-crafted beeswax candles. And much more.

Try the weekend Smoke Shack BBQ. Or, join Chef Alex on the Villa terrace for a themed multi-course meal created from local ingredients. Seating is limited, online booking is available. Check out the food at

the Cauldron events with live music. Other events offered include wild mushroom foraging and glamping in stunning forest settings. (That's *glamorous camping* in case you're not familiar with the term.) Enjoy time away without driving faraway. North Durham trails, wineries and adventures are all within a short distance. Enticed? Check their website for details. www.villavidalocamarket.com

The Greenbelt

Take a moment to celebrate cautiously.

On September 21, Ontario Premier Ford announced the reversal of the Greenbelt land removals admitting "It was a mistake to open the Greenbelt..."

Over 50,000 Ontarians sent emails to their MPPs, thousands made phone calls, additional thousands attended rallies. And we celebrated.

However, advocacy groups are celebrating *cautiously*. Why? There is more to do!

The road leading up to the removal of land from the Greenbelt was opened by other changes to planning, governance and environmental policy.

Environmental Defense Canada September 21, 2023 lists these as areas where Ontarians need to keep working.

- Highway 413 and the Bradford Bypass; both pass through the Greenbelt.
- Striping of key protections from Ontario wetlands
- A series of Minister's Zoning Orders which will benefit many of the same well-connected developers involved in Greenbelt land removals.
- Forced urban boundary expansions designed to promote sprawl and slow development of affordable, walkable neighbourhoods

Other concerns flagged by Biodiversity & Climate Action Niagara following the announcement include:

- Giving developers a break on development charges and passing the costs onto municipal taxpayers.
- Conferring "strong mayor powers" allowing a minority to overrule an elected council.

Bonnie Little (Rouge Duffins Greenspace Alliance) reminds that it is important locally to see the easements and the Central Pickering Development Plan reinstated. This will help secure the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve.

This milestone victory has given advocacy groups and Ontarians the encouragement needed for other victories to come.

Salmons swiftly swim, stroking spontaneously starting September

Coho and Chinook are the species of salmon that have begun their perilous journey upstream to spawn. The spectacular story is well known, as these persistent fish return to mate where they first began their life as an egg.

Coho (a salmon native to the Pacific region, but introduced to Ontario in the mid-20th century) begin to run in late summer, and the fish's body changes as a result. Their head turns dark green in colour, their bodies develop vibrant red and maroon shading, and the male's jaw becomes more hooked.

Once the fish reach their end point in the stream, the female creates a depression by flapping her tail up and down. This hole, called a redd, is dug in the gravel river bed, and once sufficiently deep, the female lays her eggs. The dominant male releases sperm into the nest, and begins defending the area. The female moves to another spot and makes three to five more redds, laying up to 1000 eggs in each nest. After spawning is complete, the Coho

guard the nests until they die, usually within 15 days.

Chinook, also known as King Salmon, a fish prized by anglers, begin their run after Coho. These fish are also stocked in our Great Lakes since they originate in the North Pacific. The largest ever caught in Ontario was 46.4 pounds (21 kg), although a more typical weight is between 7-15 pounds.

But what about our native Atlantic salmon? What happened to them? Sadly, they went

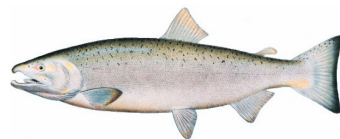
locally extinct about 120 years ago due to human activities (the building of dams, clearing of trees, which increased the water temperature of streams and creeks). It's astonishing when you consider that Lake Ontario once held the world's greatest freshwater population of Atlantic salmon.

Now known as a "ghost fish", the Atlantic salmon arrived in Lake Ontario at the end of the last Ice Age some 12,000 years ago. The ice sheets receded and linked fresh water to the ocean via a patchwork of streams and rivers.

Thanks in part to efforts from our local conservation authorities and programs like the Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program, these fish are slowly rebounding. Atlantic salmon are now spawning in the Credit River, and hopefully one day soon, our very own Duffins Creek.

For more information, please visit www.natureconservancy.ca/en/blog/archive/atlantic-salmon-lake.html

Coho



Chinook



Atlantic



End of gardening season? Not quite. Here are 10 “To Dos” for avid DIGgers.

1. Late seed planting

You can still sow seeds of arugula, lettuce, spinach, and radish, but only if you hurry!

2. Weed

It seems silly to even mention this. If you don't extract those small pesky things now, they will be humongous by Spring and may have extended roots systems that are tough to get rid of. An ounce of prevention,...



3. Create a bird sanctuary

If you've planted flowers along with veggies, leave some (or all) of the stalks with seedheads in place. Birds that spend winter here will be happy for the food source. Perennials like black-eyed Susans, purple coneflower, asters, and liatris are tasty treats for birds to enjoy.

Put up a birdhouse. If you're handy with woodworking tools, there are plenty of free build-your-own birdhouse plans online. Chickadees, bluebirds, and small woodpeckers will use bird nesting boxes in the fall and winter to conserve heat. As well, birdhouses added to your garden now will give homes for early nesters in Spring. That means better insect control when bugs are at their peak.

4. Plant garlic

Quality seed garlic can be purchased from your local farm (see our past Agri-Heroes to find a supplier); from reputable seed suppliers; or from your own harvest, some of which has been preserved for planting now.



Plant mid-October, well ahead of first frost date to let your garlic grow before the ground freezes. This ensures that you have a crop in early July.

Water and mulch (see below) and have patience. The cloves will start putting out roots and sometimes, weather-permitting, will put up little green shoots. Once frost arrives, the plants go dormant. A snow layer, combined with your mulch, will keep the garlic protected. As the ground warms in springtime, cloves will explode with growth. Water lightly and weed. Come Summer, your garlic bulbs will be large and spectacularly spicy.

Check out the Veseys Seeds site for their available varieties:
www.veseys.com/ca/vegetables/garlic

5. Mulch your soil

Mulching prevents weeds from sprouting making your springtime prep easier. It also protects overwintering crops (see garlic above) from temperature extremes and prevents soil nutrients from washing away during heavy rain. It builds soil nutrients and adds texture.

These mulches work well for winter:

Autumn leaves – They decompose fairly quickly making them an ideal mulch. Avoid using leaves from walnut, hickory, butternut and eucalyptus trees, since these can be toxic to some plants. Shred larger, tougher leaves with a lawn mower. Apply a layer of at least 2-3 inches.

Straw – Not hay. Straw is the chaff from hay. Spread thickly for maximum protection.

Wood chips – These break down slowly, but will eventually add great texture to the soil.

If you're worried about wind blowing away feather-weight mulch, top it up with a thin layer of compost.

6. Keep meaningful notes and photos

Hand-written or digital, a garden journal is a great tool for next year's gardening venture. It's a diary of all you've done – what worked, what didn't.

Record dates, and descriptions of:

- Planning
- Soil amendments
- Planting
- Weather-heavy storms, periods of drought, heat or frost
- Watering
- Pests and controls applied
- Harvest quantities or lack of
- Difficulties
- Surprises

7. If you are a donator, consult with your local food bank.

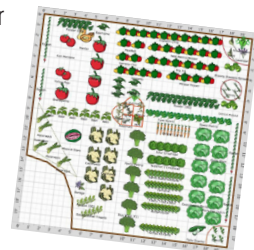
What garden produce does it need most? What past donations have been appreciated and what has been poorly received (maybe kale and

over-sized zucchini)? Tomatoes, onions, garlic, potatoes and herbs, are usually safe bets.

Ask. And plan next year's garden, not only for yourself, but for giving.

8. Plan your plot for next year

Get out the graph paper and make a drawing of your intended garden: one graph square equalling one square foot of garden (or a similar scaling model).



Remember to rotate your crops. That is, don't plant the same type of veggies in the same space as this past year or the year before.

Also consider companion planting. West Coast Seeds has recently published an excellent guide on this subject. Get on their mailing list or check out the website:
www.westcoastseeds.com

9. Build a compost bin

There are many ways to build one.



Mesh fencing – Mesh fencing curved into a circle makes an instant bin. Use a 10 ft. length, 2.5–4 ft. tall. Fasten ends together with zip straps. Place the bin on even ground. When it's time to turn your pile, open or lift the hoop off the ground.

Plastic barrel – Drill several small holes in the sides for aeration. Once partially filled, you can roll the barrel on the ground to tumble contents.

Wooden pallets – Use four pallets the same size and fasten together at two corners using lashing or screws. Next, fasten your “door” on one side with two hinges. Set this pallet slightly higher so it will be easy to open. Fasten the door-opening corner using a hook-and-eye latch.

Lumber – You can custom-build a simple wooden compost bin from scratch. There are several websites with instructions. For a long-lasting wooden bin, raw cedar is the best choice.

Continued on page 4



To Do

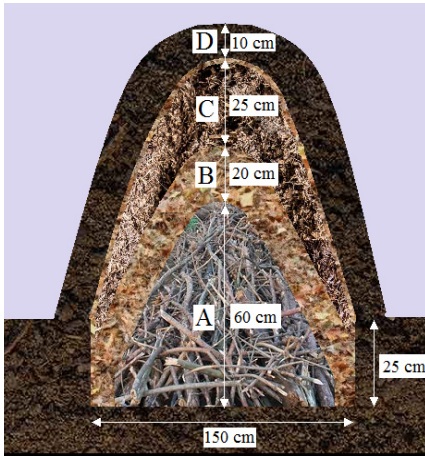
continued from page 3

10. Build a hügelkultur bed

A what?

A hügel bed is a form of raised garden bed built from layered organic matter.

A schematic image of a hügelkultur hill:
A - branches, B - leaves, C - manure/compost
D - soil. (From Wikipedia.org)



This German-originated planting system makes use of all of nature's bits and bods, including rotting logs at the base, fallen branches, leaves, compost and soil, in that order. The permaculture term comes from the word "hill culture" in German. This frugal practice can be used to fill garden beds and planters, or just as a fun experiment to use up garden clippings. The result is a kind of berm where you will be planting on its slopes, and producing abundant crops. (The hill slopes do not have to be as extreme as the picture shows.)

Hügel bed advantages ~

Built-in fertilizer: The gradual decay of the inside organic matter provides a long-term source of nutrients for your plants.

No-till: As the wood decays, it leaves pockets of air for soil aeration.

Sponge-effect: The logs and branches inside a hügel bed effectively store water. In a well-constructed hügel, you may not need to water after the first year.

Food for microbes: The rotting wood provides the foundation for a healthy soil ecosystem that includes beneficial bacteria, fungi, insects, and worms.

Recipe

Cinnamon vanilla biscotti

Borrowed from
<https://owlbbaking.com/cinnamon-vanilla-biscotti/>

Ingredients

For the biscotti

- ½ c unsalted butter (room temp)
- ¾ c granulated sugar
- 3 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 eggs
- 1 ¾ c + 2 Tbps all purpose flour (plus more for shaping the dough)
- ¾ tsp salt
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon

For the glaze

- 1 c powdered sugar
- 3 tsp hot water (more/less to achieve a drizzle consistency)
- dash ground cinnamon

Instructions

For the biscotti

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Prep one cookie tray with parchment.
2. In a medium bowl, combine the butter and sugar. Mix until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla extract and mix until fully incorporated.
3. Add the eggs and mix well for about 1 minute.
4. Add the flour, salt and baking powder. Gently fold in these dry ingredients.
5. Once the dough comes together, add the cinnamon, gently mix. I like to add this at the end to see swirls of the spice throughout the dough.
6. Sprinkle a heavy dusting of flour onto the cookie tray that is lined with parchment. Carefully dump out the bowl onto the tray and gently form the dough into a log. The dough will be slightly sticky and soft, so add more flour as needed to form the shape.

7. Stretch the dough lengthwise until it is as long as the cookie sheet (about 13 inches). Cut in half and place the two sections of dough next to each other. Press each log down so that the dough is about ½ inch thick.
8. Using your hand, gently shape the edges so that they are straight.
9. Bake for about 30 minutes until light golden brown and firm.
10. Once finished baking, allow to cool for 5-10 minutes on the tray.
11. Drop the oven temp to 280°F.
12. Place one log at a time on a cutting board. Using a serrated knife, slice the log into cookies on a diagonal into thick slices. Place the cookies on their sides and place back into the oven for 10 minutes.
13. After the cookies are done baking on the one side, flip them over and bake the other sides for 10 minutes. (I found that baking for even more time, 20min on each side, results in a cookie that is very crisp, if you prefer that then you can bake them for longer).
14. After the last bake, allow to cool on the tray.

For the glaze

In a small bowl, combine the glaze ingredients and mix until thick, but still a smooth-drizzle consistency. Drizzle the glaze over the tops of the biscotti using a fork; or for more control, put the glaze in a sandwich bag with a corner tip cut to make a spout.

DigThis!

A quarterly publication of Durham Integrated Growers

Editor Mary Drummond

Contributors 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 [Instagram- @durhamdigs](https://www.instagram.com/@durhamdigs)

YOUTUBE www.youtube.com/user/DurhamDigs