

# Dig This!

Spring 2020

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## We had so much planned for you

The DIG Annual General Meeting, Table Talks, and several workshops have all been postponed due to the current health crisis.

Please check the DIG website, Facebook or other online sites (shown on the last page here) for possible event re-schedule dates.

Until that time when we can all DIG together in our gardens once again, here are some bits of information and suggestions for keeping healthy and happy.

- n This site has the most up-to-date information and resources to keep you and your loved ones safe and prepared.  
[Canada.ca/Coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/Coronavirus)
- n For info on government actions –  
[Liberal.ca](https://Liberal.ca)
- n For local information –  
[www.durham.ca/en/regional-government/programs-and-services-impacted-by-covid-19.aspx#](https://www.durham.ca/en/regional-government/programs-and-services-impacted-by-covid-19.aspx#)
- n For general help and assistance with deliveries, etc. call the Durham Region

Volunteer Care Mangers - COVID19 - response line

1-888-573-0982

- n Feed the Need Durham for those who may need a food bank or wish to donate funds.  
[feedtheneedinurham.ca/](https://feedtheneedinurham.ca/)

### Keep busy

- n Plan your garden plot.
- n Make plant markers. Old paint stir sticks work well.
- n Start some seedlings indoors.



- n Start lettuce, and other cool-weather crops, in containers. These are transplantable to your plot, or simply keep on your porch for quick salads.
- n Make garden trellises from found branches.
- n Explore YouTube videos for garden tips. There's plenty!
- n Learn a new skill. For instance, bake bread in your crock pot.  
[twistedfood.co.uk/woman-shows-how-you-can-make-your-own-bread-in-a-slow-cooker/](https://twistedfood.co.uk/woman-shows-how-you-can-make-your-own-bread-in-a-slow-cooker/)
- n Contact your garden buddies and ask if they're okay or needing help. Talk about the upcoming growing season and renew enthusiasm.
- n Contact your garden board members and ask if there's any help or research that you can do to help them.
- n Find the good. Spread goodwill.

## The perks of maintaining DIG membership

I am quite sure that if you are reading this, you and your community have benefitted in some way from the actions of Durham Integrated Growers for a Sustainable Community (DIG). Whether it was starting a community garden, help in applying for a grant (or even the discovery that there ARE grants available for your project), the receipt of a "You Grow Durham Fund" bursary, connections made with other urban agriculture projects in Durham, etc., DIG has been there when you needed them.

Our organization is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, and to coincide with this special occasion, we have planned more events (10) than ever before. DIG operates because of a dedicated team of Board of Directors who volunteer their time, and

in some cases, money, to promote urban agriculture. Our members also sit on many regional committees, and attend important urban agriculture meetings. Durham Integrated Growers amplifies your voice.

### Your membership fee contributes to so much good.

Did you know that by maintaining your membership, you have access to special resources, available at <http://www.durhamdigs.ca/memberresources?> For example, as members, you can download our compendium called *Field Guide to Common Garden Pests and Diseases*, written by former Professor R. Shah, who specialized in Entomology, Plant Pathology and Integrated Pest Management at Durham College. It is sure to come in handy during the upcoming growing season.

A newly added resource that we are extremely excited to announce is *The Need to Grow – Impact Kit*. As esteemed members, you and your organization will have a year-long subscription to the feature film, *The Need to Grow*, as well as 15 video classes, including such exciting topics as permaculture, bio-char, sprouting, how to compost, how to grow nutrient dense foods, among many others.

We greatly appreciate your support of DIG. To renew your membership, or to make a donation, please visit:

[www.durhamdigs.ca](http://www.durhamdigs.ca)



## Agri-Hero

### Willowtree Farm

At what age is it too young to be a farmer?

What if I told you children as young as 2 years old were getting involved in farming in Durham Region and learning to love to eat their peas and broccoli? Would that bring a smile to your face, or a look of horror and shock? (Hopefully, the former rather than the latter).

Every year since 2016, Willowtree Farm in Port Perry, Ontario, has been teaching children from ages 2 to 8 the ins and outs of farming. According to local parent, Chelsea Phelan-Tran, on a typical morning (or afternoon), children arrive at the farm, and begin their day by singing songs with Julie Anne Gatto-Gibbons, the visionary behind this exceptional program. Next, children collect Willowtree Farm produce to feed the animals (calf, goats, ducks, and rabbits). Afterwards, they dash off to the fields to harvest vegetables or fruit (strawberries, raspberries, broccoli or cauliflower, whatever is in season), which the kids get to bring home. Lastly, it is time for crafts and story time.

This unique program could not be timelier; according to research from the food company,



Genius Gluten Free, there is “a concerning lack of understanding among children when it comes to food [and] ingredients”. In this almost comical study conducted with British children ages 7 to 11, they found that “One in ten have no idea peas are grown in pods and believe ham does not come from pigs. Seven per cent of eight year olds even believe sausage rolls are made by rolling sausages down hills covered in flour.”

Willowtree's program will go a long way towards combatting these misconceptions pertaining to where our food comes from. Youngsters at the farm have the opportunity to be farmers, and see first-hand where grocery store food comes from. The junior farmers actively sow fruit and vegetable seeds, and take care of the plants during the duration of

the camp, watching them grow over the weeks, teaching them responsibility in the process.

To learn more about the Junior Farmers program, visit

[www.willowtreefarm.ca](http://www.willowtreefarm.ca)

and subscribe to their newsletter.



## Seed: The Untold Story

This film was shown at a recent **DIG Table Talk**. If you missed it, you can view online (for a price of course). A beautiful film!



Few things on Earth are as miraculous and vital as seeds. Worshipped and treasured since the dawn of humankind. In the last century, 94% of our seed varieties have disappeared. *SEED: The Untold Story* follows passionate seed keepers protecting our 12,000 year-old food legacy. As biotech chemical companies control the majority of our seeds, farmers, scientists, lawyers, and indigenous seed keepers fight a David and Goliath battle to defend the future of our food. In a harrowing and heartening story, these heroes rekindle a lost connection to our most treasured resource and revive a culture connected to seeds. *SEED* features Vandana Shiva, Dr. Jane Goodall, Andrew Kimbrell, Winona Laduke and Raj Patel.

[www.seedthemovie.com/](http://www.seedthemovie.com/)

## Seedy Saturdays

Seedy Saturdays are not one event, but a series of separate events, which have sprung up across the country, each individually and uniquely organized under the same general themes of encouraging the use of open-pollinated and heritage seeds, enabling a local seed exchange, and educating the public about seed saving and environmentally responsible gardening practices. They usually occur on a Saturday, hence the name, but also occur on Sundays and other days.

Seedy Saturdays are fun, inexpensive events where you can swap and exchange seeds, get exciting varieties that other seed savers are sharing (as well as the stories that come with them), attend workshops and talks, meet vendors and buy seeds from seed companies. Whether you are a first-time or master gardener, seed enthusiast or expert seed saver, there really is something for everyone.

[www.seeds.ca/events/seedy-saturday](http://www.seeds.ca/events/seedy-saturday)

## Combating vandalism and theft – a real challenge

Edited text from the American Community Garden Association

[www.communitygarden.org/resources/bba6e480-82a5-4ccf-870e-52af2038d307](http://www.communitygarden.org/resources/bba6e480-82a5-4ccf-870e-52af2038d307)

You've tilled and you've toiled, now the tomatoes are ripe and the squash is just the perfect size. You and your family are all excited about the harvest. Then, overnight, your vegetables disappear before you have a chance to enjoy them. It's discouraging. At best, you can hope your work benefitted some hungry soul and the food didn't go to waste. It's even worse when crops you've watered faithfully, mulched, debugged and watched over are trashed by thoughtless vandals. That's utterly depressing – food wasted, beauty destroyed, and gardeners left sick at heart. Dealing effectively with vandalism and theft poses a real challenge. The best long-term strategy – developing community friendships – takes time; and, even under the best circumstances, both youthful mischief and spiteful nastiness still happen from time to time.

Keeping this reality check in mind, these tips can help your CG garden minimize problems with vandalism and theft.

### Problem solving tips

- n Encourage the whole community to take ownership of the garden. Share the pride and satisfaction that comes from tending a bright spot in the neighborhood. (Sharing a few luscious ripe tomatoes doesn't hurt, either.)



- n Make friends with people who live nearby. Encourage everyone to keep a watchful eye on the garden. Invite neighborhood kids into the garden with you to see what's growing.
- n Report theft or vandalism to gardeners, police, and the neighbourhood watch. Post signs announcing that police and neighbours are watching the site. At locked, fenced gardens, consider a "friendly" sign inviting participation – it's a lot more positive than unadorned chain-link.
- n Host public event at the garden, especially if it's fenced and usually locked. Design gathering spaces for all ages to encourage community building and social interaction.
- n Cultivate beautiful but unfamiliar plants that are less attractive to looters. Observe what gets taken and replace these varieties with alternatives. Plant odd-colored edibles – yellow tomatoes, strawberries or raspberries are bothered far less than red ("real") ones.
- n Gates, locks and fences (from ornate and artsy to plain chain-link) deter mischief. At some gardens, they work well; at others, especially in out-of-the-way areas, locks may be broken or fences breached.
- n Harvest produce regularly. Have a clear policy about picking without permission. If a gardener makes off with someone else's harvest, warn the culprit they could lose their place in the community garden. That may be all it takes to stop a problem.
- n Grow more than you need. Share the bounty inside and outside the garden.
- n Dust plants with flour or wood ashes. Thieves may avoid plants covered with an unknown substance.
- n Keep the garden well-attended, discouraging no-one-there times.
- n Repair damage quickly. Encourage gardeners to help restore order. Have "graffiti guerillas" clean up scrawls and marks right away.
- n Caring counts. Listen supportively and compassionately to gardeners who have suffered damage, and encourage others to share produce with them.
- n Sow flowers thickly around beds to make vegetables more difficult to get to.

### Worth repeating ~

#### Growing Communities Principles

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

American Community Garden Association

*Gardeners have the best dirt.*

*He who plants a garden plants happiness.*

*The poetry of the earth is never dead.*

*We come from the earth and return to the earth, and in between we garden.*



## GardenTip

### Getting the most from your veggie plot

#### Plant Often

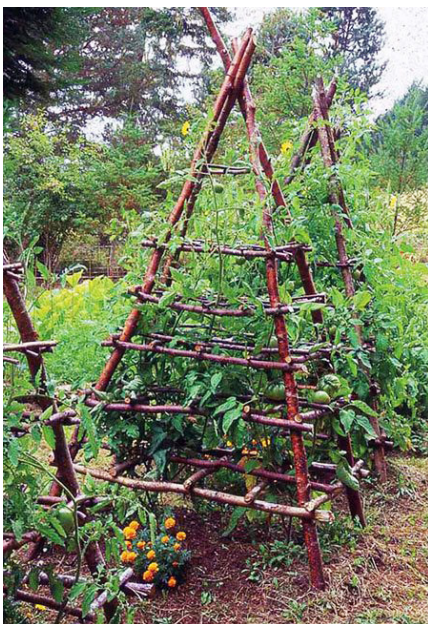
Successive planting is the best way to stretch the harvest over a period of time. One successive planting method is to simultaneously sow seeds and set out started seedlings of the same variety. The transplants will be ready for harvest before the direct-seeded veggies are.

Another successive planting method is to replant at periodic intervals. Sow radishes and spinach once a week; sow beans, beets, carrots, scallions, and salad greens every two weeks; sow cucumbers and summer squash once a month. Since you can't tell in advance just how warm or cool the season will be, keep planting until seeds stop sprouting well.

Successive planting has an additional advantage — it keeps the soil productive and thereby discourages weeds.

#### Use trellises

Trellising veggies whenever possible makes it easier to weed and mulch around the base of plants, as well as giving you more room to plant additional crops. Some vegetables you can successfully trellis are peas and beans (climbing, not bush, varieties), indeterminate tomato varieties, and vining types of cucumber,



<https://lovelygreens.com/30-garden-projects-using-sticks-twigs/>

melon, winter squash, and zucchini. If large melons or squash get heavy and start pulling on the vine, fashion slings from stretchy material, such as worn-out panty-hose.

#### Interplant crops

Interplanting, or combining compatible vegetables in the same row, has several advantages. It lets you extend the harvest by planting fast-growing veggies among slow growers. By the time the slow growers need more room, the fast growers are done and gone.

Another way interplanting extends the harvest is by letting you grow cool-season veggies into the warmer months. Shade created by big-leafed crops like cabbages, tall crops like corn, or trellised crops like beans can improve summer growing conditions for cool weather crops like radishes and lettuce.

#### Row covers ~ Looking ahead into Fall weather

When early sporadic frost strikes, sometimes all your garden needs to keep growing is a night or two of vigilant frost protection. Although they're expensive, floating row covers (such as reemay) are ideal because they let in light and air during the day. Plastic sheeting will work, as will old bed sheets, provided you remove them during sunny days so they don't trap in too-hot air. You'll also have to prop them away from plants, since plastic collects puddles and wet sheets get heavy and can break off plant stems.

One way to keep plastic or bed sheets above plants is to drape them over a portable tunnel frame fashioned from PVC pipe. The frame can do double duty in warm weather: covered with shade cloth instead of sheeting, it can be used to protect tender salad greens from the summer's hot sun.

[www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-season-zmaz94jjzraw](http://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-season-zmaz94jjzraw)

[www.theglobeandmail.com/life/home-and-garden/gardening/seven-fresh-reasons-to-start-digging-in-the-garden-again/article13764871/](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/home-and-garden/gardening/seven-fresh-reasons-to-start-digging-in-the-garden-again/article13764871/)

## Peas Please!



### Super easy green peas recipe

Oil or butter to saute the vegetables

Onion regular or green

Peas fresh or frozen

Water

Mint fresh or dried

Salt & pepper

In a small sauce pan warm up a little bit of oil/butter and add the chopped onion. Saute until translucent.

Add the green peas and a little bit of water and simmer until the peas are soft, but not mushy and the water reduces to half.

Add chopped mint, salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm as a side dish with your favorite entrée.

**“Of all the paths you take in life, make sure a few of them are dirt.”**

- John Muir



## DigThis!

A quarterly publication of Durham Integrated Growers

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