

# Dig This!

Winter 2021



Winter blahs got you down?  
Missing the feeling of dirt in your hands and the sun on your face?



Why not take a virtual trip to Durham Region's beautiful community gardens at the height of summer 2020? Last August 1st, we spent the day (and countless hours afterwards editing) touring our neighborhood and interviewing hard-working gardeners. Every garden is magical; everyone has a story to tell. Get inspired at – [www.youtube.com/user/DurhamDigs/playlists](http://www.youtube.com/user/DurhamDigs/playlists)

We would also like to share with you the results of our **What's your story, Morning Glory photo contest**. Check out our fabulous winning photos from each of the 4 categories. Thank you to all participants!



Pollinator Pals – Title: Pumpkin Pals  
Rooting for Root Vegetables – Title: This unseen hero in the backyard  
A Splash of Colour – Title: Purple!  
Climbing the Walls, and Trellises – Title: Reaching for the sky!

## Agri-Hero



Established in 2018 in the hamlet of Ashburn, Ontario, Gareth Hudson is bringing the idea of no-dig soulful fruit & vegetable market gardening to a whole new level.

'Bimble'. What a strange word. For a while now, I have followed Gareth's gardening exploits on Twitter, and have wondered what this name meant. Clearly, it was a passing thought, as I never chose to 'Google it'. While conducting research for this article, I discovered the term's significance; "Bimble is a name, from the jargon language of Royal Marines Commandos, meaning ~ 'to move at a leisurely pace'" (<https://bimblegarden.com/about/>)

Judging by his product brochure, it is hard to imagine this market garden as anything other than a busy place, especially at the height of summer.

Accordingly, this season's Agri-Hero practices a form of agriculture that holds the Earth and all of its natural systems in high regard. Bimble's lack of tillage benefits the soil due to the absence of mechanical disturbances, leading to a flourishing and biodiverse environment. Healthy soil, healthy plants!

The use of non-GMO (genetically modified organism) heritage seeds and locally/ethically sourced products ensures top quality food, both in terms of nutrition and appearance. To see for yourself, and for your copy of a product brochure featuring traditional English beetroot, pickles, marmalades, jams, soups and so much more, email –

[hello@bimblegarden.com](mailto:hello@bimblegarden.com)

## Greenwood Mushroom Farm: a spotlight on soil, compost & fungi

Located in Ashburn, in North Whitby, Greenwood Mushroom Farm may not be known to you by name, but chances are, you have eaten their product, as they are one of Ontario's largest mushroom producers. This grower is responsible for the Windmill Farms brand so ubiquitous on grocery store shelves.

Recently, in 2014, with the help from the Ontario government, Greenwood upgraded their composting facility, which is integral in growing high quality and nutritious mushrooms, with the goal of eliminating (or

at least significantly decreasing) odour. The farm sought scrubbing and biofilter emissions technology from Belgium. According to Clay Taylor, company President & CEO, composting is now done inside a negative pressure building, meaning ammonia produced is forced through air filtration before being exhausted to the outside.

Community garden coordinators might consider contacting Greenwood at (905) 655-3373 to see if they will donate some of their rich, spent compost.

Why use mushroom compost? Well, the substrate is a natural source of fertilizer, helps the soil retain water, and adds organic matter back into the soil. In addition, while most of the mushroom spawn is exhausted, there are still trace amounts present. Given the right conditions, you might discover some fruiting bodies pop up! According to Ohio State University Assistant Professor James J. Hoorman, "fungi benefit most plants by suppressing plant root diseases and [they] promote healthier plants by attacking plant pathogens with fungal enzymes" (<https://tinyurl.com/y3zv6m26>).

After all, healthy soil is alive, a wonderful world of bacteria, fungi, nematodes, worms - there are more living organisms in a tablespoon of soil than there are people on Earth, and everything growing in it becomes healthier too!

Further reading:  
<https://tinyurl.com/y2dsz69c>  
<https://www.durhamdigs.ca/>



## Gardening in Schools

### The rules are clear; you can't build on wetlands in Ontario... until now

#### A student perspective

With the recent hot button issue of developing the Duffin's Creek Wetland in Pickering in the limelight, students from **Walter E. Harris Public School** decided to conduct research on the issue, and to discover why and how wetlands factor into the topic of food security. Below is an edited version of the work the grade 7 students put together.

As much as 90% of our wetlands have disappeared, which begs the question; why aren't we protecting the ones that remain?

If wetlands help clean our water, take in extra water to keep places from flooding, use the excess to protect us from drought, and are a habitat to many animals, including: snakes, turtles, salamanders, crayfish, beavers, and countless species of birds (<https://tinyurl.com/y27hjppp>), then what business do we have in developing them? According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "Wetlands can be thought of as biological supermarkets", providing great volumes of food that attract many animal species.

Therein lies the crux of it; wetlands promote biodiversity. Therefore, the more wetlands we protect from development, especially the ones adjacent to urban, suburban, and food-producing regions, the more beneficial insects, pest-eating birds, bats, dragonflies, and frogs we will have at our disposal on our farms and in our gardens.

Furthermore, when you burn fossil fuels, carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere, which profoundly contributes to the greenhouse effect, leading to climate change (<https://tinyurl.com/y4jgfl94>). Wetlands, however, are able to store carbon within the soil and plants living there, instead of releasing it to the atmosphere. Thus, wetlands help to moderate global climate conditions, on top of the countless other "free" services already mentioned.

It may be too late to save the 57 acre tract south of the 401 at Bayly Street and Squires Beach Road in Pickering (adjacent to the new Pickering Casino), but as urban sprawl

continues to intensify, more of our Greenbelt will be at risk.

Further Reading:  
<https://tinyurl.com/r1h19js>  
<https://tinyurl.com/y27hjppp>  
<https://imo.ajax.ca/mzo>  
<https://www.durhamregion.com/news-story/10236780-new-pickering-development-will-destroy-wetlands/>





## Looking ahead

BTW –

Ryan Gale - the presenter at this Table Talk - was our Agri-Hero in a previous issue.

Kudos to you Ryan!

See page 4 for looking ahead to a Writing Contest.

**VIRTUAL**

# Table TALK

## Innovations in Food Growing: Vertical Farming

**JANUARY 27** Wednesday @ 7:00 PM

Join us on Zoom to learn about Biofresh Farms from the founder himself, Ryan Gale.

This innovative farm was created to provide accessibility to affordable, nutrient-dense farm fresh foods, that are grown without the use of harmful chemicals. It incorporates urban farming techniques and automation to grow high quality, year-round produce that allows them to build and maintain a biodynamic ecosystem throughout the farm.

Topics for discussion will include regenerative agriculture, hydroponics, microgreens, organic certification, and more! You'll also have an opportunity to ask any questions during the Q&A.

Register at [info@durhamdigs.ca](mailto:info@durhamdigs.ca)

Zoom Link: <https://trentu.zoom.us/j/98089476320?pwd=bGFKVFpOSjhoOawdH&wp3RnA3VzFZdz09>

Meeting ID: 980 8947 6320  
Password: 441470

**Featured speaker:**  
Ryan Gale, founder of Biofresh Farms

Date: Wednesday January 27 2021  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Cost: FREE

**Contact Us:**  
[info@durhamdigs.ca](mailto:info@durhamdigs.ca)  
or Mary at 905 666 1497

## Youth Roots Durham online event



Are you a Youth between the ages of 16-24 and have questions about Food Security or Climate Change? Perhaps wondering how to get started in the field? Come to our Youth Summit! **Youth Roots Durham** is a team committed to creating an event for young people, by young people, who want to get involved and make change in the Durham Region. Our whole event will run **from Sunday January 17th to Thursday January 20th**. It will include a speaker panel, workshops and time to network with local experts. If you have any questions you can reach us at: [youthrootsdurham@gmail.com](mailto:youthrootsdurham@gmail.com) or follow our instagram: [youth\\_roots\\_durham](https://www.instagram.com/youth_roots_durham).

Hope to see you there!

## Calling all prospective Pulitzer writers!

We want to offer you the opportunity to win a fabulous \$100 gift card to a local garden nursery, as well as a spot in our coveted spring newsletter. Our newest contest... category is writing.

We are asking that you write about what your garden meant to you in 2020. If possible, send us a photograph of you in your garden. This

Dear community garden friends,

This winter will be a good time to rest, and reflect on what's important, as we make plans for the spring. The difficulties faced, have certainly taken a toll. We all long for soulful fulfilment. I'm thankful to share the love and satisfaction of gardening with all of you. It connects and eases feelings of isolation.

So many times our gardens have given us hope, inspired us, grounded us, reassured us, distracted us, removing a sense of desperation. Our gardens have bestowed healing energy, provided nourishment to sustain us, and have given a sense of purpose to overcome feelings of loss and confusion. Gardening and growing food together is so important for our future and health.

It has also been uplifting to support food banks and reducing food scarcity. The gardening experience reminds us of what's truly important: each other. People. Relationships.

Via our garden community we shared recipes, photos, magical garden tour videos, resources, tricks and suggestions, social time, food bank donations, seedlings and seeds, favourite plants, received grants, built new gazebos, fed the birds, delighted in wildlife returning to the land, made a real impact by managing our Highway of Heros forest, and began restoring a bee berm. Our gardens were a great escape from unfortunate realities. They helped us heal together.

Thank you for contributing to the solace. The benefits and enrichment was felt Durham-wide and appreciated by many.

contest will be judged by a panel designated by the DIG board of directors. One submission per person, a limit of 1000 words, your name, an email address, and a phone number must be included.

Here is an example essay by Carrie Edwards DIG Board member and St John's Port Whitby Community Garden Coordinator.

## GardenStory/Tip

### Power to the pollinators!

Sometimes the simplest solutions can have the greatest impact. The **Pollinator Project** at the **Whitby Ajax Garden Project** is a perfect example. (It is managed by one of our enthusiastic gardeners - Carolyn Roe.)

We're viewing our Community Garden and others, as ideal sanctuaries for thousands of life-giving pollinators of all kinds. To create an irresistible oasis for our pollinating



friends, we're providing seeds to our members that have been harvested from 15+ different generous flowers and plants – all shapes, sizes, and colours. We're encouraging everyone to plant these lovelies profusely in their community plots, at home, and on balconies, alongside their veggies. There can never be too many pollinator-attracting plants as far as we're concerned.

It is our vision that this simple project will sprout wings, and be adapted to public and private spaces far and wide, honoring, celebrating, and nurturing these indispensable creatures essential to life and beauty.

## Recipe



### Chocolate truffles

Note: This has been adapted from a larger recipe. So some of

the measurements below may seem a little odd,... but accurate.

Yields 20-24 candies. Double or triple the recipe, depending on your chocolate cravings or the number of treat gifts you have in mind.

#### Use a stick blender for best results.

1/2 cup plus 2 tsps. butter  
1/2 cup plus 2 tsps. cocoa powder  
300 ml can sweetened condensed milk (not evaporated milk)  
3/4 tblsp. vanilla (a bit more than 2 tsps.)  
Cocoa / icing sugar / finely chopped nuts



Melt butter in a heavy saucepan over low heat.

Add cocoa and stir until smooth.

Add milk and stir to trace\*.

Remove from heat and stir in vanilla.

Cover and refrigerate 3-4 hours or until firm.

Shape into 1 1/4 inch balls.

Roll in cocoa or icing sugar or nuts.

Store covered in the fridge.

\*Stir to trace = Hold your stick blender (or spoon if you're doing it that way) a few inches above your mixture and move it back and forth. If the dripping leaves little lines that sit on top of the mixture, and don't sink in, that's 'trace'.

## DigThis!

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