

# Dig This!

Fall 2019



The *Resilient Communities Regenerative Landscapes Symposium* report is available on the DIG website – [www.durhamdigs.ca](http://www.durhamdigs.ca)

## It's DIG's Birthday!

Yes, it's the big 1-0! Ten packed years of helping develop, promote, encourage, educate and support urban agriculture projects and those who make them a reality in Durham Region. To think it all began as a result of a trip in an over-sized van.

The trip brought together existing coordinators to tour each other's projects spread across Durham. It ended with the decision to establish a new organization that would support urban agriculture endeavours in the region. DIG was born mid-November 2009 after the dissolution of the former Durham Region Community Garden Network. Every great garden project needs a champion, and who knows better what is needed other than the very people who struggled to start projects when there was little support. Not to mention all those years of experience.



At our beginning in 2009, existing projects were disappearing. Now 10 years later there are 30 plus garden ventures in Durham and more we have not yet met. Each is similar yet unique. Durham projects are found in urban, near urban and even rural areas. All have big dreams for how they can make a difference in their community. They come in all sizes, from two plots, or a raised bed, to a 116-bed enterprise on 5-6 acres. No matter what the size or shape, they have a large impact on the community they serve. They are bringing DIG's vision of "growing food and community" to life.

It has been a privilege to work with all the varied urban agriculture projects in the region and to share our programs with the community. We have enjoyed: mentoring new projects;

offering workshops and seminars; initiating Table Talks; establishing the *You Grow Durham Fund*; leading educational excursions; sharing via the *Annual Garden Projects Tour & Poker Run*; generating research; and presenting events such as our most recent *Resilient Communities Regenerative Landscapes Symposium*.

Thank you to the Region of Durham Health Dept. for planting the seed of the Durham Region Community Garden Network in which we rooted and grew. Thank you also to the Region of Durham Planning and Economic Development Dept. for supporting the day leading to DIG's inception during that tour in the over-sized van.

We hope you and our community members, by your presence, will "Keep on DIG'n" with us and support our events and those of our members and associates over our Anniversary Year, November 2019 – November 2020. Our website, facebook, twitter and Instagram will keep you up-to-date. See [www.durhamdigs.ca](http://www.durhamdigs.ca)

## Agri-Hero

### Nature's Bounty Farm

Not just an apple orchard! Nature's Bounty Farm is definitely a place to visit with your family and friends this fall. Take a self-guided nature walk and immerse yourself in the beauty of this 100 acre farm with rolling hills, orchard and pasture



of grazing sheep. Take on the challenge of the obstacle course and corn maze. Enjoy a picnic on the lawn with Nature's Bounty cider and a sweet from their market.

Nature's Bounty Farm offers a 25 acre pick your own orchard with 20 different varieties of apples ready throughout the apple season. The apple repertoire here includes premium apples such as honey crisp, ambrosia, and golden russet as well as classic apples such as empire, cortland, northern spy among a long list of others. Apples are weighed for cost after you enjoy the picking.

No trip to the farm would be the same, however without the pumpkins which await true fall enthusiasts. Pumpkins of varied shape, size, colour, for every purpose are available here. Nature's Bounty also offers seasonal vegetables and lamb for sale. Don't forget to

ask about *Dinner in the Blossoms* happening in the spring, of course. Nature's Bounty also welcomes school trips.

Owners Cathy McKay and Marvin Stevenson purchased the farm in 1979 with the vision to preserve the beauty and integrity of the land for future generations by fostering meaningful connections between agriculture and the community. They strive to grow the best tasting apples possible and share the joy of the harvest with their community each year. Take the time this fall to visit Nature's Bounty Farm located just west of Port Perry. No Admission. Open 9am- 5pm.

Check out their website to see what is available for picking and picking details, special events, and seasonal activities ~ [naturesbountyfarm.com](http://naturesbountyfarm.com)

## Food Forest Permaculture tour

On August 24, 2019 DIG members travelled to Cobourg where they took part in a Food Forest Permaculture tour, hosted by Keith St. John of the Canadian Permaculture Legacy. Keith's *raison d'être* is food security with a focus on "inviting nature in, and sharing the abundance, focusing on smart systems design". [www.youtube.com/channel/UCfz009f\\_Ysivwz1CzEn4Wdw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfz009f_Ysivwz1CzEn4Wdw)



Participants followed Keith around his 6-acre property, and delighted in learning key elements of permaculture. I took pages and pages of notes, and look forward to putting many of Keith's ideas into practice in my own backyard. Therein lies the magic of what we experienced ~ Keith taught each and every one of us how easy it can be to improve our environment, as evidenced by his take-away message: "Plant a single fruit tree where you have otherwise useless sod grass lawn."

Here are some of the things learned:

- Never have bare soil. Mulch is extremely important, not only for retaining water and suppressing weeds, but in its role in encouraging fungi. Fruit trees grow best in fungal dominant soil
- An abundance of mulch means you need to add nitrogen to your soil.
- Put sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) around fruit trees to repel deer. This plant is an amazing nitrogen fixer, which helps remediate soil and balance the high carbon from mulch. As a bonus, the berries are

**Check the DIG website for photos of the 2019 Garden Tour and Poker Run.**

considered superfood, and are high in Omega 3. Careful though, sea buckthorn can spread!

- Nature puts trees 2-3 feet apart, not 25 feet like in a typical orchard. Don't overwater or overfeed newly planted fruit trees. They need to build resiliency.
- If you leave clover to grow on your lawn, you won't have to worry about rabbits munching from your garden, as clovers are bunnies' preferred food!
- The extremely rare pawpaw, once abundant in Ontario, are finally making a comeback. A shade-loving fruit tree, the fruit tastes like a mix of mango, papaya, and banana.

Thanks to all who joined us on this exciting excursion. Stay tuned for more educational and inspiring events as DIG celebrates its 10-year anniversary.

## Sharing nature's bounty with students

Our summer season's article focused on how to keep the school garden alive during July and August. This time around, I will be sharing my personal journey leading the garden and cooking clubs at my school.

It all began last September, 2018. As I returned to work after a two-year leave of absence, I felt a renewed sense of purpose, having been inspired by students and teachers all around the world, from Australia to Thailand. Kids had been growing veggies, learning about permaculture and taking care of the planet. I wanted to do that at my school too!

First off, gardening takes capital, so I applied to as many grants as I could find. My school, *École Walter E. Harris*, was the proud recipient of both the *Whole Kids Foundation* and the *Farm to Cafeteria Canada* seed grants.

With this infusion of cash, I bought new tools, a bunch of bamboo pots, vegetable seeds, trays, a germination heat mat, a grow light, potting soil, lumber, hand tools, and cooking equipment. Not only was my school going to build raised beds to grow fresh vegetables, we were going to cook them too! Never in my teaching career have I run an extra-curricular

with such passionate and committed students. When it comes to food, kids don't mess around.

So as the doors swung open on September 3rd, 2019, we came full circle. The students took joy in eating freshly grown tomatoes of all colours, shapes and sizes, basil, spinach, cucumbers, yellow zucchinis, onion, basil, and sunflowers. The grade 7s have made salsa, soup, and sauce, all from the bumper tomato crop.



As we look ahead to 2020, and celebrate our school's 50th anniversary, I continue to map new gardening spaces with the students, as we expand the goal of feeding more kids fresh veg. Showing youngsters how to grow and cook their own food will teach them valuable life skills, and demonstrate to them what food security and sustainable living looks like!

Know of a school that is actively growing food? I'd love to hear about it! Please email me at [adrian\\_778@hotmail.com](mailto:adrian_778@hotmail.com)

## GardenTip

### Garlic 101

Rather than risk getting subpar garlic from the grocery store, try growing your own! It's an easy and rewarding crop.

Beyond its intense flavor and culinary uses, "the stinking rose" is also good in the garden as an insect repellent. It has very few problems with diseases that plague other veggies.

Garlic is usually planted in the fall or early winter. Roots develop before the ground freezes, and by early spring they start producing foliage.

Select a sunny spot. Garlic likes fertile, well-drained soil with a pH of 6.5 to 7. If your soil is on the thin, sandy side, add compost plus aged manure or 5-10-10 fertilizer. Lime the soil if you haven't done so recently.

Get cloves from a mail order seed company or a local nursery. Do not use cloves from the grocery store for planting. They may be unsuitable varieties for your area, and most are treated to make their shelf life longer, making them harder to grow.

Select large, healthy cloves, free of disease. The larger the clove, the bigger and healthier the bulb you will get the following summer.

Break apart cloves from the bulb a few days before planting, but keep the papery husk on each individual clove.

Place cloves 2 to 4 inches apart and 2 inches deep, in their upright position (pointy end up).



Mulch if you're expecting a colder, or longer than usual winter. A few inches of straw will do. Remove mulch in the spring after the threat of frost has passed.

With warmer temperatures, shoots will emerge through the ground. Cut off any spring-time flower shoots, as they may decrease bulb size.

Fertilize garlic in the early spring by side dressing with a nitrogen-heavy fertilizer such as blood meal, chicken manure, or a store-bought pelleted fertilizer.

Keep the planting site well weeded. Garlic doesn't do well with competition—it needs all available nutrients!

Water every 3 to 5 days during bulbing (mid-May through June). As mid-June approaches, taper off watering.

The center stalk is called a scape. Cut the scape once it starts to curl. They are exceptional when sliced, sauteed and used in your favorite recipes that call for garlic. Flavour in the scape is often more intense than a garlic bulb.

Harvest when the tops just begin to yellow and fall over.

'Cure' after harvest by hanging garlic bundles in a shaded, ventilated locale for two to three weeks. This allows moisture to escape and prepares the plant for long-term storage.

Garlic stores best in a cold room or cellar, or in a clay garlic keeper. Avoid storing in higher humidity, or in temperature extremes, such

as near a stove or sunlit window sill. Do not refrigerate garlic!

There are many varieties. For Ontario's climate, hard-neck varieties store best. (Soft-neck varieties, although decorative when braided, don't perform as well here.)

#### Rocambole

Italian Purple, French Rocambole, Marino & Alison

Good keeper.

#### Porcelain

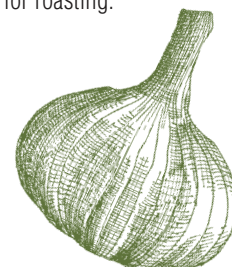
Great Northern, Susan Delafields, Music and Georgia Crystal.

Strong vigorous plant 4-6 large cloves, beautiful large bulb with a fairly thick white wrapper. Easy to peel, large cloves are good for roasting.

Purple stripe

#### Red Russian, Eureka Myrtis

Vivid purple stripes on the bulb wrappers, average 8 cloves per bulb. Strong, complex, rich flavour not overpowering. Excellent for roasting.



## GardenStory

### Happy Birthday Sarah!

Sarah McRae, gardener and board member at Whitby Ajax Garden Project (WAGP), decided to celebrate a landmark birthday in a unique way.

Family and friends were invited to the garden for a Sunday afternoon party. She asked that everyone wear comfortable 'work' clothes because they were going to help build raised gardening beds. One could also contribute toward materials costs. Of course Sarah made sure that there were able-bodied, experienced carpenter types among the invitees.

Everything was beautifully prepped when the party-goers arrived. Instructions were given. Three work teams organized. And work began. The resulting structures are solid, functional and attractive.

After construction, there really was a party. Great food, games, a cake of course, and a rollicking good time.

What a beautiful idea Sarah! Everyone benefits – the party-goers, WAGP, and future gardeners who can't manage an in-ground plot.

By the way, one of the regular plots had been cleared and levelled in advance of the party date. It was divided, making for three 4'x8' beds, with 3' space in between.



## GardenTip

### Scrubbing carrots



If you have a bumper-crop of carrots, here's a time-saving method for cleaning and prepping for eating. Throw them in your top-loading washing machine. It sounds silly, but it works wonderfully. (This writer has done it many times.) The more carrots, the better.

Say, at least one third of a pail, but not more than a pailful.

Remove the stringy ends along with the green tops and put them in the compost. Slosh the carrots around briefly in the laundry tub to remove loose dirt.

Toss them into the washing machine and give them a cold water wash. No soap or softener please. The veggies will come out nicely cleaned. Really!

There may be a few carrot bits clinging to the inside of the washing drum. So give it a good wipe with a paper towel before doing regular laundry.

Caution – be careful with whom you share this tip. Although the method works, um... even your best friend may gift you with a foil pie plate hat and chin strap.

**To plant a garden is... to believe in summer, to have faith in tomorrow, to have hope in the future.**



## Carrot pepper salsa



6 cups tomatoes

3 cups carrots

½ cup onion

½ cup jalapeno pepper

1½ cups cider vinegar

1¼ cups lightly packed brown sugar

1½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon black pepper

¼ cup cilantro

Peel, core and coarsely chop tomatoes. Coarsely grate scrubbed carrots. Finely chop onions and jalapeno peppers. (Leave pepper seeds in if you want more heat.)

Combine all the vegetables in a large saucepan. Add salt, sugar and vinegar. Boil gently uncovered. Stir occasionally. Cook until it thickens, about 1 hour.

Add freshly ground black pepper and chopped cilantro. Cook for another 5 minutes.

Serve as a condiment or a dip. Great as a preserve!

## DigThis!

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Editor Mary Drummond

Contributors Adrian Hogendoorn  
Ruth Latimer

Layout Latimer Graphics

WEBSITE [www.durhamdigis.ca](http://www.durhamdigis.ca)

EMAIL [info@durhamdigis.ca](mailto:info@durhamdigis.ca)

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