

Dig This!

Fall 2025



Falling for Gardens and Goodies



Touring Durham, One Garden at a Time

On July 19, 2025, DIG members participated in a fast-paced tour of wonderful growing projects in east Durham Region. We enjoyed a day of connecting with each other, sharing stories, shopping local, admiring garden plots, and (hopefully) learning something new!

The tour began at The Bowmanville Allotment Community Garden, where, after sign-in, participants had a light breakfast, watched a coyote stroll by, and meandered through mulched pathways, admiring the splendor and hard work that goes into keeping up a plot.

Next, we headed north to Archibald's Winery (see the Winter 2020 newsletter as they were our Agri Hero!). The sun started shining as we attentively listened to how the apple orchards grew over time, including the different varieties waxing and waning in popularity. The questions kept coming, and Mr. Archibald took them in stride. Participants enjoyed a sample of fruit wine and queued to buy bottles of cider and the like.

3 Bees Buzz was our next stop, situated down a long gravel road, in an idyllic and peaceful location, perfect for apiculture. We split into groups as half of us headed inside to the shop, formerly a barn. For sale was delicious wildflower honey, including one made



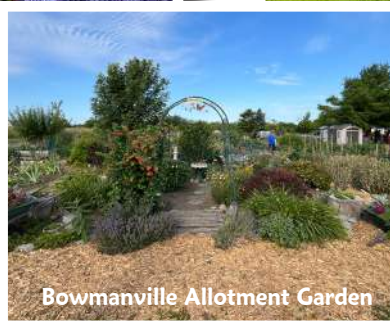
3 Bees Buzz



The Feild Community Garden



AIDS Committee Durham Garden



Bowmanville Allotment Garden



Archibald's Winery



Faith United Church Garden and Trails



2025 DIG Tour Group

of sunflower nectar—nutty and rich. Outside, the other half of the group learned more about beekeeping, sheltered from the hot sun.

As time passed, we moved on to Faith United Church Gardens & Trails and the AIDS Committee of Durham Community Garden in Courtrice.

We admired the work that goes into tending a garden, donating the entirety of the food to local individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Next, we walked a short distance through the trail system volunteers keep well manicured, before stopping

for lunch. After a brief word from the lead gardener, we admired the transformation and effort that went into creating such a beautiful and peaceful space, essentially from scratch.

Our final stop for the day was at The Field Community Garden in Oshawa (next to the Canadian Tank Museum / Ontario Regiment Museum). As the sun sweltered, we explored the

sprawling fruit and veg landscape. Here, winners of the poker run were announced and prizes collected. The day concluded successfully, and plans are already underway for next year's annual garden tour & poker run, tentatively in North Durham. See you then!

Agri-Hero Kiss My Bees

Meet JoAnn Poirier - Beekeeper, Mentor, and Guardian of the Hives! Along with husband



Chuck, JoAnn has had the privilege of caring for honeybees for many years in the Hamlet of Mitchell Corners, Clarington.

What drew this couple to beekeeping? The story begins the day they bought their house. The first acre of their property had an apple orchard, and in that very first spring JoAnn was saddened to notice that not a single bee was buzzing among the blossoms. It was clear to JoAnn what needed to be done ... acquire bees! No big deal!

So, JoAnn signed up for a weekend beekeeping workshop and brought home her first two hives.

Those early years were full of trial and error, but eventually she found her rhythm. An endeavour this important succeeded with hard work, determination, along with the help of her mentor, Reg Hicks. Reg, now

in his 90s and still managing more than 100 hives, generously shared his wisdom with JoAnn. When she reached her fifth year of beekeeping, Reg looked at JoAnn and said, "Well, I guess you're a beekeeper now." That moment is one that JoAnn will always cherish.

Beekeeping is far more than simply tending hives. Over the years, JoAnn and Chuck learned to manage pests and diseases, rear queens, prevent swarms, identify plants, and even pick up woodworking skills to keep equipment costs down. They've become marketers, educators, and caretakers; self-described "jack-of-all-trades."

According to Mrs. Poirier, "nothing compares to the quiet joy of sitting beside the hives and watching the bees bring in pollen and nectar. Their steady hum is like medicine for the soul.

Working a hive has a way of slowing the world down and filling it with calm - it's unlike anything else."



Their passion for beekeeping is rooted in a deep concern for the fragility of honeybee populations worldwide. Through Kiss My Bees Honey, they hope to share knowledge, inspire curiosity, and encourage others to appreciate these remarkable creatures.

JoAnn and Chuck are proud members of the Durham Regional Beekeepers Association, as well as registered members of the Ontario Beekeepers Association.

Located at 15 Firner Street, Mitchell Corners, LOB 1J0, they sell their pure, raw, unpasteurized honey at their front door in addition to the Whitby Farmers Market. You can pre-order honey or drop by without notice.

If you have any questions, call them at 905-728-9419, email kissmybeeshoney@gmail.com or

visit their website
<https://www.kissmybeeshoney.com/>



Kiss my bees
Honey

Garden Tip

DON'T LET BEETLES RUIN YOUR GARDEN

Have you ever noticed obnoxious little holes in your arugula plants? Chewed up cucumber or squash flowers? Asparagus fronds stripped of their leaves? If so, you've got pest beetles living in your garden, ruining your crops, and generally making a mess of things!

Where Beetles Hide



Hard-shelled beetles have tough outer layers made of chitin, and this allows them to overwinter successfully in our gardens. Cabbage root maggot adults, certain cutworms, and the above mentioned beetles will seek shelter in leaf litter during the colder months, and a thick, undisturbed layer of debris near your vegetable beds could give them cozy real estate.

Compost First

Don't add raw leaves directly to garden beds, compost them in one of those black bins, or something similar. Composting kills most pest eggs and larvae and turns the leaves into rich humus. If you add leaves to the bin now, it should all be ready to work in the ground come springtime!



Leaf Gold Magic



"Leaf mold is like gold for the garden."

Pile leaves in a separate corner and let them decompose over a year. Use the finished leaf mold product as a soil amendment without giving pesky pests winter homes next to your fragile spring seedlings.

Bottle a Little Sunshine

Homegrown Gifts from Your Garden

With the holidays around the corner (sigh... where did the summer go?), we thought it would be fitting to share some ideas of homegrown gifts from the garden!

Traditionally, many homesteaders used the bounty of the season to create delicious and shelf-stable preserves, which lend themselves to make perfect gifts for Christmastime, but we've reached deep with some less obvious ways to get festive, and kick-start your gift giving plans and preparations.

Herb & Tea Blend Bundles

Herbs are still vigorously growing at time of writing (mid-September). Pick a small bundle of lavender, basil, thyme, oregano, or sage, and tie them together with ribbons. Alternatively, you can pull the leaves off of the stems and put them in decorated mason jars with handwritten labels.

A blend of different herbs packaged together as loose leaf tea is an easy and healthy gift for the holidays too! Mix Chamomile, Lemon balm, Spearmint, and Calendula petals - we call it **Snowy Day Soothe**. A blend of Eastern White Pine needles, Spearmint, Sage, and a few Juniper berries could be called **Evergreen Glow**.



Finally, try a Durham Nights blend for winding down by including Anise hyssop, Lavender, Catnip, and Chamomile. Put the three different blends in small mason jars inside a basket or wooden box and include a handwritten "brewing guide" and a tiny wooden scoop.

Herb Infused Dressings, Oils & Syrups

Another creative way to use your herbs in a holiday gift would be to make a salad dressing or sauce. Most people are familiar with pesto if you're growing basil, but you can get even more inventive.

Try a mint chutney for curries and roasted veggies (see recipe) or infuse olive oil with rosemary or thyme for a simple, elegant gift, or whip up a thyme and lemon vinaigrette for winter salads. For something sweet, lavender and honey syrup is a showstopper drizzled over desserts or stirred into tea.



Autumn Apples

Preserving the Autumn bounty of apples into future gifts is a cheap but also elegant gift. Applesauce is cozy, nostalgic, and versatile and can be made sweet and spiced using cinnamon, nutmeg, clove, and a touch of maple syrup, or ginger-infused to add warmth and a subtle zing. The sauce can be hot packed into sterilized jars and hot-water bathed to be made shelf-stable, with fabric tops or ribbon, and a handwritten label "Stir, spread, or spoon for Christmas in a jar".



Dried apple rings also make a nice gift and look gorgeous strung on twine for garlands, or tucked into jars.

After slicing, the apple rings should be soaked in lemon water (1 cup water + 1 tsp lemon juice) to prevent browning, then dried in a dehydrator or oven (around 135–140°F / 57–60°C) until pliable or crisp. To elevate this idea, dust with cinnamon-sugar, ginger or cardamom sprinkled on before drying.

To package, the apple rings can be placed in small cellophane bags tied with twine, or continue the mason jars theme and layer them with the dried rings.

Dried apple rings stay good for 3 to 6 months, well past Christmas.



Quick Gift Ideas

Herbal Bath Soak

Mix dried lavender, chamomile, and rose petals with Epsom salts. Package in a small glass jar or muslin bag, add a handwritten "Relax & Refresh" label, and tie with twine or ribbon.



Festive Citrus Garland

Dehydrate orange or lemon slices and string them with cinnamon sticks and star anise for a fragrant, colorful holiday garland. Perfect for decorating the tree or gifting in a little box tied with ribbon.



Celebrations

Dinner In The Dahlias

A Celebration of Food, Flowers, and Friendship



On Saturday August 30, St John's Port Whitby Community Garden celebrated their Dinner in the Dahlias Potluck, coming together to rejoice in fellowship and homemade food, cooked with love for each other.

The fabulous Lilly Del Vecchio created a Greek themed dinner party that somehow was even more fabulous than last year's. One of our newest members brought a wireless sound system, which made the party even better this year.

This annual event is a highlight of our season after diligently working together to reduce food scarcity in our community. Each person brings their special gifts, and as a coordinator it is my honor to organize everyone's talents and thoughtfulness together. I'm so proud of my garden that has turned strangers into family and friends.

Recipe

Shelf Stable - Mint Chutney Paste

Ingredients (makes 1 cup)

- ½ cup dried mint (or oven-wilted fresh)
- ¼ cup dried cilantro
- 2–3 tbsp light oil
- ½ tsp each garlic & ginger powder
- 1–2 tsp chili flakes
- 2–3 tbsp lemon/lime juice
- ½ tsp salt

Steps

1. Wilt fresh herbs in a low oven (140–150°F / 60°C, 10–15 min) to remove moisture.
2. Blend herbs, spices, salt, acid, and vinegar into a coarse paste.
3. Stir in oil until smooth.
4. Spoon into sterilized jars, seal, and store in a cool, dark place.

Storage: Keeps 2–3 months sealed; refrigerate after opening and use within 2–3 weeks.



Tip: Tie a mint sprig or chili to the lid for a gift-ready touch.

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