

# Dig This!

Summer 2026



The Gardens Are Growing, The Pests Are Busy, and It's Tour Season!



Discover Durham's Farm and Garden Gems

ON THE ROAD AGAIN...

DIG Annual Garden Project Poker Run/Tour



Growing Food & Community

Saturday July 18, 2026 (rain or shine)

Sign-in 8:30 am  
Finish 3:30 pm



**Featured Stop:** Lavender-Blu (Seagrave) Owner-guided tour with artisan boutique and optional PYO bouquet.

Featured Speakers focus on Food Security in Action from farm to native plants to produce donation.

Tickets: \$35.00 (includes lunch)  
\$20.00 (Tour Only)

**Get your Tickets**

- E-transfer: (preferred) info@durhamdigs.ca
- Online at www.durhamdigs.ca
- Cheque/Cash: contact info@durhamdigs.ca

**Deadline for Tour Tickets with Lunch: July 12, 2026**  
Self-Drive Tour - Carpooling with friends encouraged!

**Prizes for Top 3 Poker Hands**  
First Prize: \$100 Home Hardware Gift Card.  
Proceeds support DIG Special Projects including "You Grow Durham Fund"

## Don't Miss Durham's Garden Adventure of the Summer!

On **Saturday, July 18th, 2026**, Durham Integrated Growers, DIG, will once again be hosting our Annual Garden Project Poker Run/Tour. On this, our 14th year organizing the tour, we turn our sights to the mid-north of our lovely region, as we visit gardens and farms, some off the beaten track.

Our featured stop is **Lavender-Blu** a small eco lavender family farm with artisan gift shop and option to Pick Your Own bouquet. Enjoy a Native plant Experience with expert Sayeh Beheshti at **Care and Share Community Permaculture Garden**. A favourite Saturday stop is **Hy-Hope farm**. Learn about the farm, shop fresh produce and baked goods then savour lunch with live music.. Celebrate accomplishments two of the oldest garden projects in Durham beginning with **Valley Plentiful's** 30 year story of growing together in this over 100 plot Pickering garden. Immerse yourself in the sanctuary at **Whitby Ajax Garden Project**, and hear Melanie Chandler, Community Storehouse Food Bank share the garden's impact on those in need.

Support Local! Grow Community! Learn! Have Fun! And encounter food security in action!

Prizes for the top three poker hands - a one hundred dollar Home Hardware gift card first prize. A detailed itinerary with stop order and location coordinates will be emailed to all registered participants shortly before the tour date. Carpooling is encouraged,

## Growing Stronger Together

### A Look Back at the 2026 AGM



Members gather for D.I.G.'s 2026 Annual General Meeting

In March, Durham Integrated Growers (DIG) hosted its Annual General Meeting, bringing together members from across Durham Region. Attendees received updates on DIG activities and plans for the year ahead.

The evening featured an engaging presentation by Lunar Rhythm Gardens, who shared insights into their unique approach to growing and working in harmony with nature.



Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the event a successful evening!

We hope you'll join us next year for another evening of learning, networking, and celebrating our garden community.

## Garden Spotlights

### Agri-Hero

#### Tindall Farm & Market

Located 15 minutes north of Uxbridge, Tindall Farm and Market is an affordable and unique gem. Operating for over 50 years, and on 300 acres, Tindall emphasizes “grown here” produce and are proud to report that they grow 99% of what they sell ... no small claim!



The main team consists of Ryan Tindall as the grower, and Karyn Tindall as the homemade baker of pies, butter tarts, pastries, and creator of preserves, frozen meals, soups, and chili, and the force behind “Karyn’s Kitchen.” Karyn transforms what Ryan and his team of Mexican migrant workers (“The Amigos”) grows into homemade meals that connect customers directly to the farm by feeding neighbours, cooking for families, and preserving traditional homemade food culture.

To achieve this safely, Tindall

Farm and Market is CanadaGAP food safety certified, with annual independent audits.

Traceability systems such as those employed in the CanadaGAP food safety certification allows farms such as this to identify exactly when a crop was harvested, which field it came from, who handled it, and where it was shipped, important (and indeed mandatory) for customers such as Loblaw, Metro, Walmart, and McCain.

As this edition hits inboxes, Tindall will be thick in strawberry season, although Mother Nature will really be the one to dictate this timing. Hop in the car, go for a drive, and as they say, “grab a basket and hit the patch for some chemical-free strawberries. Messy strawberry faces are encouraged!”



**Tindall grows more than one million heads of cauliflower annually for Ontario food chain.**

A fun fact mentioned on their website is that Tindall Farm grows more than one million heads of cauliflower annually for the Ontario

food chain. As someone who regularly grows this crop, it is a long labour of love, as cauliflower can take 120 days to mature. While certainly versatile, delicious and nutritious, too much heat, cold, drought, or uneven growth can cause tiny heads (“buttoning”), loose heads (“ricing”), or unappealing (and unsaleable) discoloration. That makes producing over a million heads annually especially impressive.



If you need any more reasons to support this amazing farm, Tindall Farm and Market donates 100,000 pounds of produce to local foodbanks annually.

For more information, email [tindallmarket@hotmail.com](mailto:tindallmarket@hotmail.com), call (416) 805-6760 or visit their website <https://www.tindallfarmmarket.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/Tindallfarm>.

The farm store is open mid-June to Christmas and is located at 13669 Durham Regional Road 1, Uxbridge, L9P 1R2.

## 25 Years of Impact

### Growing Community Since 2001

Head down the gravel road and over the creek, and the landscape before you does not betray its age. The garden’s 25-year history isn’t marked in the blossoms of the pear tree or the melody of its birdsong.

Don’t get me wrong, the garden is a place of beauty. Its beds burst with colour and vitality. Butterflies flutter about and toads wait silently for their supper. Rather, its history is reflected in its people and their actions.

In 2001, a group from Celebration!



Presbyterian Church came together to put into practice the healing principles of body, mind, and spirit. They tended a handful of beds next to the gravel road, carrying water from home. Their harvest was donated to those in need.

Impressed with their determination, permission was granted to cross the creek and establish 10 additional garden beds. By 2004, the garden produced 740 pounds of fresh produce for donation, and the public was invited to join through plot rentals.

Since then, our members and community partners have made many



valuable contributions. Crossroads Community Church adopted the project and provided ongoing support. Its Men’s Prayer Group built sturdy sheds to store our tools. The Region of Durham added cisterns, increasing our rainwater collection capacity.

Over the past 25 years, garden members have harvested more than **100,000 pounds surplus of fresh produce for Durham Region food banks.**

We continue to grow food, nurture connections, and build a lasting community. We invite you to visit our garden and see what 25 years of community spirit can accomplish!



## Grandma's Garden Pest Remedies:

### Fact or Folklore?

This past March, DIG held a garden leadership meeting, and several pest-repellant spray recipes were shared by Carrie Edwards of St. John's/Port Whitby and Darlene Dzura of Whitby-Ajax Garden Project (WAGP).

DIG makes no claim that these sprays are effective, as we have not tested them out in our gardens (although plans are in the works to do just that!).

#### MILK SPRAY



**50% Water**

**50% Milk**

*Apply to leaves to help prevent disease such as powdery mildew on zucchini and cucumbers.*

**Why it could work:** the proteins and

compounds in milk appear to create conditions that inhibit fungal growth when exposed to sunlight.

#### CUCUMBER BEETLE SPRAY

- 1 gallon water (3.8L)
- 1 tbsp liquid soap
- 2 tbsp neem oil (optional garlic or cayenne)



This concoction should be sprayed under leaves and around stems in the evening.

**Molasses sprays** are best understood as a soil and plant health amendment rather than a pest control tool. While they may support beneficial microbes and improve plant vigor, they do not reliably repel common garden pests such as rabbits. To do this, experts say strong smells and tastes tend to work better than sweetness. Homemade deterrent sprays can include garlic, cayenne

pepper, strong-smelling soaps (think Irish Springs), mint or aromatic herbs, as well as a small amount of soap

#### MOLASSES SPRAY

- 1 cup molasses (granular molasses is acceptable)
- 3 gallon water
- Fish fertilizer for foliar feeding is an



The molasses spray shared in March at the Leadership meeting.

to help the mixture stick to leaves. This spray should be applied in the evening to leaves once per week and again after rainfall.

According to Darlene, this spray changes the characteristics of leaves so that they are not recognizable to Japanese beetles (also dreaded!).

If you have success with any of these recipes, or have a special home remedy that you have tested, please email us at [info@durhamdigs.ca](mailto:info@durhamdigs.ca).

## Pest Spotlight:

### Eastern Cottontail Rabbits Part 2

Now that winter's icy grip has abated, and the growing season is underway in earnest, it is time to assess damage done by Eastern Cottontail rabbits throughout the winter. You will now see whether your apple (or cherry, or plum, or quince, or serviceberry, etc.) trees are still alive. Did they flower to their full extent in May? Are all of the branches swelling with leaves? How is the trunk? Girdled? Your trees may decline or die because nutrient flow is interrupted, yet partial chewing of the bark can often heal if protected now (see previous edition of our newsletter).

The good news is that rabbits shift their eating preferences to clover, grasses, weeds, etc. The bad news is that they also voraciously munch on young garden crops including beans, lettuce, peas, and tender orchard shoots.



A pair of rabbits in spring can become a small colony by late summer. This is because a single female rabbit can produce several litters per year, each consisting of 3 to 8 kits (babies). Eastern cottontail rabbits can become pregnant again very shortly after giving birth, with their young maturing fast; so fast that a female kit born in spring may be able to breed before winter.

This is yet another reason why gardeners and orchardists keep such a close eye on hedgerows, a

rabbit's preferred hideout. Rabbits rarely travel far from cover such as brush piles, tall grass, and stone walls, which are all among their favorite shelter areas.

If crop and tree damage is not too worrying for you, then we are ready to talk about the benefits that rabbits bring to the garden. Each and every species has a place on planet Earth,



even within our urban and near urban cityscapes. First, and most obviously, rabbits involuntarily feed foxes, hawks, owls, coyotes, snakes, and weasels; their mere presence is a signal that natural cover areas are supporting a diverse ecosystem. These same habitats also benefit songbirds, pollinators, amphibians, and beneficial insects.

Rabbits are gentle soil builders, and somewhat useful weed controllers.

Rabbit pellets break down quickly, add organic matter and nutrients to the soil, and do not "burn" crops. They spend much of the growing season grazing on clover, grasses, broadleaf weeds, and volunteer plants.

As gardeners, we know that spotting nature brings joy to our lives, and gives us a sense of belonging and connection to our world.

Protecting seedlings, lettuce, beans, peas, and newly planted shrubs with small exclusion fences can save a lot of frustration, while still maintaining a sense that the garden is part of a living ecosystem.

## GardenTip

### More Than Dirt: Understanding Living Soil

In the thick of another dry growing season in Durham Region, and indeed across southern and eastern Ontario, growers are starting to see the signs of stress; lower vegetable yields when compared to previous, rain-filled years, stressed plants, and dry, cracking soils.

As many gardeners haul in new soil each growing season, a practice that is both costly and heavy (!), it might be nice to know what your plot actually contains.

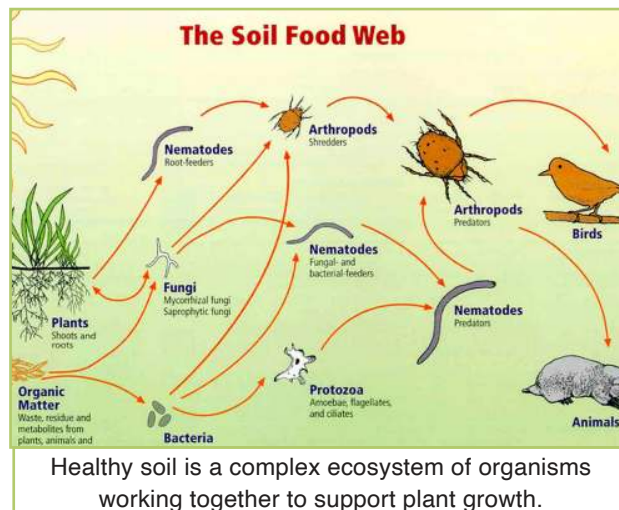
A fun and easy experiment is to dig a shovel-full of soil, count earthworms, smell the soil, look for roots, aggregation (clumps), and fungal strands. This non-scientific approach follows the regenerative approach espoused by Elaine Ingham, Gabe Brown, and Ray Archuleta - all three authors are worth a Google search. Healthy regenerative soils often have a sweet, earthy smell, abundant roots, visible aggregates, and plenty of worm activity.

If an analytical approach is what you seek, turn to the analysis of N-P-K (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium), the big 3 nutrients that plants use. These nutrients can easily be tested with a garden centre soil kit, though results can vary. The "Rapitest" NPK kit sold at garden nurseries, and retailers like Home Depot, will give you a rough idea of whether nutrients are low, medium, or high. The bonus is that these kits also test your soil's pH, as in the range between acidic to neutral to alkaline (or basic). Since the level of nitrogen changes rapidly throughout the season and

is often less useful as a one-time soil test number, many agronomists place much greater emphasis on pH, phosphorus, potassium, and organic matter (as explained in the aforementioned test).

For growers interested in a more detailed analysis, you may wish to explore the "complete fertility analysis of micronutrients test" (including boron, calcium, copper, magnesium, sulfur, and zinc) from A & L Laboratories, London, Ontario.

Boron is especially important for crops like brassicas, beets, and carrots, and along with calcium and zinc, these minerals are involved in flowering, fruit set, and fruit quality.



According to Elaine Ingham, a teaspoon of healthy soil can contain billions of bacteria, yards of fungal threads, thousands of protozoa, and dozens of nematodes. Soil can truly be like an entire hidden universe beneath our feet; when everything is in balance, this bustling community of microscopic organisms feeds plants, builds soil structure, and helps create resilient ecosystems.

For more information, visit A & L Laboratories' website: <https://alcanada.com/>

Stay tuned for our next newsletter edition in Autumn 2026 for how to amend your soil once you've discovered any deficiencies.

## Recipe

### Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp



#### Ingredients:

- 4 Cups Rhubarb cut into 1 inch pieces
- 3 Cups sliced Strawberries
- $\frac{3}{4}$  Cup granulated Sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$  Cup plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour, divided
- 1 Tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 1 Cup quick oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$  Cup brown Sugar packed
- 1 teaspoon Cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$  Teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$  Cup melted Butter

#### Fruit Filling:

Combine Rhubarb and Strawberries in large bowl.

Combine granulated sugar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour, and lemon peel in bowl then sprinkle over the fruit. Pour fruit into 9 x 9" square baking dish and set aside.

#### TOPPING:

Combine oats, brown sugar,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup flour, cinnamon and salt in separate bowl. Mix butter till crumbles then sprinkle over fruit.

Bake at 374 for 45 – 50 minutes until fruit is bubbling and topping is lightly browned.

Serve warm.

## DigThis!

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