

Community Gardener's Companion

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DULUTH COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM



The MISSION of the Duluth Community Garden Program is to strengthen the Duluth area community and foster self-sufficiency by providing access for all to food production and preservation resources and promoting sustainable gardening practices.

Reflections

by *Katie Hanson*
Program Coordinator

Here I am writing this article at a cabin in the woods. There's a sprinkling of snow on the ground, a warm fire in the wood-burning stove, and a cup of coffee at my side. This is the time of year when I look forward to the darkness as my ticket to hunker down and hibernate. The pace of life slows down. More time is spent reading, reflecting, assessing the ups and downs of the last year, and making plans for the next. And that's just what we at the Community Garden Program have been doing.

The last year we've found ourselves faced with many challenging obstacles to overcome, as well as numerous instances of inspiration and affirmation. Challenges included a sharp decrease in foundation funding, resulting in a serious cutback of staffing, as well as some cuts in programming. At the same time, we saw a dramatic increase in donations from individual donors. We also saw a growing interest in our program from the community (an ever-expanding waiting list), resulting in a more committed batch of gardeners, which was evident in the increased vitality we saw at almost every one of our community garden sites. The place of community gardening in creating a regionally sustainable food system was affirmed at the first annual Superior Grown Food Summit in November. We saw increased awareness nationwide in the

importance of community gardening and found inspiration and affirmation while attending a weekend workshop at Growing Power in Milwaukee, an organization that's gaining national recognition for their work teaching people to become urban farmers.

What we've learned as an organization from the last year is that the need for what we do is more vital than ever. Much can be done, and is already being done, to increase the sustainability of our organization. We've been working hard to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization and capitalize on those strengths, while minimizing those weaknesses. The theme that keeps arising is community. The success of what we do is dependent on fostering that sense of community at every level. For our gardeners that means providing opportunities to meet one another, identify challenges to achieving the goal of a productive community garden, and working together to find ways to overcome those challenges. As an organization that means creating a structure for ourselves that easily invites community gardeners and volunteers to get involved, widening the pool of perspectives, expertise, and resources we have to draw from, thereby making ourselves a more effective and responsive organization.

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Newsletter Changes

It was decided at the board meeting that we will have 4 newsletters a year:

Sept–Nov

Dec–Feb

Mar–May

June–Aug

Community Gardener's Companion: News of the Duluth Community Garden Program

Program Coordinator:
Katie Hanson

Board of Directors:
Dan Kislinger, president; Sharon Rogers, vice president; Gloria Piche & Nicole Wilde, co-secretaries; Stacy LaVres, Kate Nicoletti, Marian Syrjamaki-Kuchta, Francois Medion, Steve Robinson, Loni Coppin.

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Gardening in Small Spaces

Update by Jane Wester Treakle

As winter approaches, we are enjoying the fruits of our labors from the square-foot garden. We had a good harvest, supplemented with purchases from the farmer's market and a roadside stand.

If you read my last article, you may remember that we (my husband Don and I) garden in a small space in the yard of our rented duplex. We have been using Earth Boxes for three years, and this summer we decided to try "square foot gardening", based on the book by Mel Bartholomew, as well. As I wrote earlier, we had some success, and some things we will do differently next year.

Our tomato crop was wonderful. We planted six plants in our Earth Boxes, and two in the hanging Topsy Turvey system. We will continue to plant them in the Earth Boxes, but the TTs disintegrated when we took them down. The crop of cherry tomatoes from one of them was great, but the other did nothing. We won't use those again. I dehydrated many of the tomatoes and plan to use them in soup, on pizza, etc. We canned the rest, along with those we bought at the farmer's market. We canned several pints of pizza sauce; plain diced tomatoes; and diced tomatoes with garlic, peppers, and onions. We also made several pints of tomato sauce.

Our pepper crop was pretty good. What we didn't eat went into the canned tomatoes, as well as a couple of bags of frozen chopped peppers. Especially good was our crop of jalapeño peppers from only one plant. The carrots and onions are nearly gone already and are keeping well in the garage. The beets were made into pickles; the lettuce and spinach made great summer salads; the green and wax beans, and snow peas are in the freezer.

Our great discovery of the year was a recipe for Sweet Zucchini Relish that we found on

the internet (and modified, of course.) We harvested a great number of zucchini and had many more show up on our doorstep, compliments of a friend. We canned many half-pints of this tasty relish, and sold out all we brought to our church boutique. We made one batch with some of the jalapeño peppers and called it Hot and Sweet, although we could have added even more of a kick.

Being the over achievers we are, we also purchased a bushel of apples from a roadside stand, and were given another bushel from a friend with a great apple tree. We canned many quarts of applesauce and apple pie filling, and many pints of apple butter—a great favorite of our family. Our son-in-law got a bushel from a friend of his, and they asked if we wanted it. We politely declined, but offered to help our daughter can them for their pantry.

Our next purchase was several pounds of pears, which was turned into Spiced Caramel Pear Jam, another family favorite. We sold several at the boutique also.

As I mentioned, I dehydrated tomatoes. I then "invented" dried yellow summer squash chips. I cut them in 1/4 inch slices, placed them on the trays, and sprinkled them with an Italian spice mix, a citrus grill mix, and some with just salt. They are tasty, crunchy and nearly calorie free. Also, many of the apples were dried into rings sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar.

We are somewhat prepared for next year. One of the four-by-four foot raised gardens was 12 inches deep, and one was six inches deep. We dropped the top of the 12 inch down, so we now have three of the

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State of the Community Garden Program Report

by Dan Kislinger

As president of the Duluth Community Garden Program, I want to thank you—our members, donors, gardeners and volunteers—for your continued interest in and support of the program.

We are a broad based community organization composed of 144 active gardening families and many more members, all of whom are committed to urban vegetable gardening.

The organization is in transition...

The Duluth Community Garden Program is an organization built around sustainable food issues. This is the principle guiding the overall structure of the organization. Our task is to shape limited funding and volunteer resources to build a resilient organization around people.

A brief history of the Duluth Community Garden Program

The program has had a strong executive model with active member participation from the beginning. This served us well during the days of bountiful and steady grant funding.

The program has experienced a steady erosion of income, and operated with an executive director at 10 hours a week in more recent years, which is not enough time to make the program work well. The executive director was historically under-funded for at least a decade, until two years ago. The Duluth Community Garden Program received a grant to increase those hours at that time. This turned out to be a one-time event, which had a destabilizing effect for the program and underscored the lack of resilience of the strong executive model.

In contrast, a bottom-up model is developing concurrently within the program.

Three years ago, the land stewardship committee developed a method of connecting with the staff and the gardeners. It involves site coordinators as communication conduits between gardeners and staff. The idea is to solve problems at the site level as much as is practical. This develops a bottom-up flow of communication and community, one site at a time. This is a work in progress, but it becomes stronger each year.

The garden program, as a community organization built around sustainable food issues, will be underscored by two annual events.

The Spring Fling will be an event to get to know your gardening neighbors; develop site work teams; get seeds; have a meal; and get familiar with the expectations in your garden contract—a fertility ritual.

The Fall Equinox Festival will bring closure to the year, recognize people involved in a year well spent, and be a communal harvest meal.

Our new model shall be expanded into organizational structure.

Our recent planning efforts involve the transition from a strong executive director model to a series of working committees and a smaller board.

Working committees are key to involving people at a basic level, giving volunteers a clear mission, and making a program with many moving parts more manageable. There will be six working committees, including an operations committee involved with the garden program office.

Shared meals are a cornerstone of human culture. Sitting down to eat with people, people you love and people who drive you crazy, is one of the ways we organize ourselves.

—Albert Bates



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Regular cannery hours: Tuesdays from 10-1 and Thursdays from 1-4. Staffed by interns.

Equipment checkout: People may check out dehydrators, pressure canners, water bath canners, steam juicers, apple corers, cherry pitters, and more. We have lots of canning jars available.

Needed: Roma Food Strainer; 3' x 4' White Board

Vegetables just right for our climate: Part I

by Joel Rosen

Watch in our next issue for Part II of vegetables for our climate!

How many times have you heard someone say, "Our cold climate is just too challenging for growing vegetables"? Oddly enough, that same climate didn't prove to be too great an obstacle for earlier inhabitants of the Lake Superior region, who in the last century made the area well-known for potatoes, raspberries, cabbage, rutabagas, and for a short time, lettuce. When I encounter this defeatist attitude, I always give the same advice: quit complaining and start planting and cultivating. We live in an area with a climate especially suited to producing a greater variety of high quality fruits and vegetables than most regions of the United States, the Caribbean, or Central America.

OK. You can't grow bananas or oranges or pineapples. Tomatoes and sweet corn and melons are tricky, even in a "good" year. Get over it. Gardeners and farmers in California or Florida can't even come close to competing in quality with a wide range of vegetables that require frost or soil temperatures approaching freezing to bring up the sugar content. Let's look at a few of the families of vegetable which are particularly well-suited for our climate.

Brassicas

Let's start with the brassicas, also known collectively as cole crops. Pity those poor people from warmer climates who have no idea that the sugar content in broccoli stems can come in well ahead of shelf-ripened tomatoes. Or that Brussels sprouts can be a deliciously sweet and nutty treat rather than a bitter leafy green that smells a little less bad than overcooked cabbage. Similarly, other members of this family experience a rise in sugar content as temperatures drop, and light to heavy frosts bring on a dra-

matic change. The key to experiencing the brassicas at their peak is understanding the degree of frost they will tolerate before they succumb to our winter weather—and they all eventually do.

Most vulnerable to freezing and also the most finicky brassica to grow is cauliflower. While there are varieties of cauliflower bred to handle summer heat, none of them perform really well in mid-summer heat unless we have a summer like 2009. On the other hand, temperatures below 25° F will often damage the most exposed portion of the head, leaving a soft, watery spot. That makes cauliflower a September vegetable for most of us. (If you live close to Lake Superior, the first half of October may be the best window, and if you can transplant early enough, July cauliflower can also be quite good.) If you really want to have a steady supply of cauliflower through the growing season, go ahead and transplant seedlings every few weeks from May through July; but why bother when there are other better-adapted brassicas.

Broccoli is a more widely adapted relative. While truly excessive heat doesn't do much good for broccoli, this kind of weather is the exception rather than the rule here. And there are special varieties of broccoli which are bred for summer heat. But broccoli really comes into its own in the fall. Overnight temperatures in the low 20s stimulate a protective, sugar-producing reaction in the plant, and as long as you remember not to cut the stems when the plant is still frozen, this will be the best quality broccoli you'll ever eat. Oh, and be sure not to toss the stems, because this is where the majority of the newly formed sugars are found. (Many people, and I'm among them, like to peel the tougher stems before cooking.)

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...state of the garden program continued from page 3

The committees will build their own volunteer base, develop their own yearly calendar, and advise the board on their budget needs for the year. The board will take this information to help develop an organization wide yearly budget. See "Get Involved. Join a Working Committee." on page 9

Communication within the whole structure is carefully designed.

One of the definitions of sustainability is having alternative ways of meeting a need. Sustainability is gained, but efficiency is reduced. In an environment of fluctuating funding sources, this is an appropriate defensive response, but knowing what everyone is doing becomes a priority.

The working committees will coordinate their schedules and advise the board. They will meet regularly, keep timely minutes, and post those minutes at our Website, available for all to access. All committees will have one go-to person to act as a conduit for communication. The working committees' meeting schedules will be posted for all to review, and the meetings will be open.

There will be brief status reports at every board meeting, and selected committees will offer more detailed quarterly reports to the board.

A smaller more agile board of directors is desired.

A leaner and more agile board will be involved with strategic thinking for the organization, establish the overall budget, and be responsible for fund raising. A desirable bonus would be a potential board member's interest in gardening. The number of board members will be reduced from eleven to a minimum of five, under this newer model.

A thick web of connectivity is our goal.

People seek community. Our new approach recalls the community of sharing, volunteerism, and cooperation historically present until recently. It will take more interaction and maintenance, which is a good thing. It will be more resilient to grant funding ups and downs. But more than anything else, we think that it will be a more meaningful and fun way to operate the program and interact with the people in it.

Make this a call to action.

Get involved as a volunteer in one of the six working committees, or be part of the planning process of a committee. Get to know the program and work up to being a member of the board. There is a lot to learn at all levels. Start at a level of commitment that works for you and jump into the mix. Call me or Loni Coppin, and we will get you connected with the working committee of your choice. See "Get Involved. Join a Working Committee." on page 9

Dan Kislinger
President of the Board
218-724-6482

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Events Committee
218-728-4511

NO EXTRA COST
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EASY WAY TO
DONATE!

The Duluth
Community Garden
Program can earn a
donation every time
you search the Inter-
net or shop online!!!

Follow these easy
directions:

1. Go to
GoodSearch.com or
GoodShop.com.

2. Type "Duluth
Community Garden
Program" in the box
"who do you good-
search for?" or "who
do you goodshop
for?"

3. Click on "Verify",
then start searching or
shopping and they'll
donate a penny (and
even more when you
buy) to the DCGP
each time you use the
site!



The seed is starting to take shape as the site and symbol of freedom in the age of manipulation and monopoly of life. The seed is not big and powerful, but can become alive as a sign of resistance and creativity in the smallest of huts or gardens and the poorest of families. In smallness lies power.

—Vandana Shiva

If you shop online, ever.....

Start your online shopping at GoodShop.com because you can earn cash for the garden program.

My daughter put a co-sleeper on her baby gift registry at Target. So when I went online to check out her wish list, I noticed this kind of baby bed is not available at the local Duluth store. It is only available online. So here was my opportunity to use GoodShop.com. I earned about \$6 for the Duluth Community Garden Program. Here's how.

At the Goodshop.com website, I entered the name "Duluth Community Garden Program" in the box that asked "Who do you support?" From there, I scrolled down to the "Target" store icon and clicked on that logo. There were no coupons for baby furniture, so I clicked through to shop at the Target website. I bought the co-sleeper, and added sheets and pads, too. I entered my card number and shipping address. That's all there was to it.

A \$6 donation showed up on the "amount raised" (a few days later) at the Goodshop.com website. The donations come from the store's advertising budget, so I didn't pay anything extra!

You may know that the garden program has lost grant funding in the past few years, to the extent that we cannot afford to hire an executive director at this time. We need every penny we can find. None of us gardeners are wealthy, but we all shop occasionally, and some of us shop online. Please take the time to investigate this Goodshop.com website and see if you can't make a donation to our program this painless way. There are links to GoodShop.com on our own Website (<http://www.duluthcommunitygarden.org>).

...Reflections continued from page 1

See the article in this issue written by board president Dan Kislinger for more details on structural changes we are putting into place to meet this end. What these changes will mean for gardeners is that we will be making greater efforts to build a stronger sense of community among gardeners. After all, as community gardeners our biggest resource is each other. One way we will do this is by making plot sign-up more of a community-fostering event where gardeners can meet their fellow gardeners, program staff, and members of the board. Board, staff, and committee members will be there to meet with gardeners face-to-face, share with members their role in the organization, and recruit volunteers to get involved. The paperwork which gardeners will be filling out this next year will look a little different, to reflect the work that the Land Stewardship Committee has been doing to develop clearer policies and expectations for gardeners and the Community Garden Program. There will be educational resources and demonstrations taking place. There will be activities for kids and, as always, seeds will be available for sale. The goal of the event is to get as many as possible of our community gardeners together at one time to meet each other, sign up for their plots, and learn more about the Duluth Community Garden Program and how they can get involved. We see this event as the kick-off of an exciting new stage in our thirty-year history. Momentum is building and we need your help!

Thank You All for Contributing to our 2009 Fund Drive Goal!

The Board of Directors of the DCGP would like to thank everyone who contributed to the 2009 Annual Fund. Your donations, coupled with support from local corporations and foundations, as well as increased contributions of time and talent from volunteers, enables the DCGP to continue to meet the needs of our community. The financial support you have provided helps us continue to connect people to community plots, maintain gardening properties, and provide resources to assist people to optimize their garden food production.

Thank You!

2009 Fund Drive Donors

Deborah Adele	Kay Doyle	Sister Mary Christa Kroening	Perkins	Robert Stevens
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Cabbage Kimchee

By Dan Kislinger

(based on recipe from *Wild Fermentation*, by Sandor Ellix Katz, Chelsea Green Publishing Company, White River Junction, Vermont 2003)

Ingredients

Canning or sea salt

1 pound Chinese, Napa, Bok Choi, or Savoy cabbage

one daikon radish

two carrots

two onions

three cloves garlic or more

three hot red chilies or more

three tablespoons fresh grated ginger root

Process

Mix a brine of 4 cups of water with 4 tablespoons of salt. Coarsely chop cabbage, radish, carrot and let them soak in brine in a non-metal bowl covered with a plate. Keep vegetables submerged until soft. This is a few hours to overnight. You can add other vegetable to this brine such as Jerusalem artichokes, snow peas, seaweeds, green beans, pickling cukes, etc.

Chop up and prepare heating spices: ginger, garlic, onion, and chilies. Mix spices into a paste.

Drain off soaking vegetables. Taste for saltiness. You want them to taste salty but not unpleasant. If too salty for your taste, rinse with water.

Mix heating spices and brine-soaked vegetables together in a bowl.

Stuff it all into a wide mouth quart jar in 1/2" lifts. Yes it will fit! Weigh down the vegetables with a smaller jar or a bag filled with water. Make sure that brine water covers the vegetables. Cover jar with cloth. If fluid evaporates, exposing the vegetables, mix a cup of water with a tablespoon of salt and pour over the top to cover them again. Ferment in your kitchen for about a week. Your kitchen should be about 60 degrees F minimum. After a week, taste, and if done to your satisfaction, put a cap on the jar and store in the refrigerator. It will keep for many months.

This is only one of the techniques for making the stuff, and I have used a process similar to making kraut also, but it takes about a month or more to do it that way.

*...vegetables for our climate
continued from page 4*

What's the lower temperature limit for broccoli? Well, it depends on the variety you grow and your soil (and temperatures above freezing in the afternoon to allow harvest), but I have harvested top quality broccoli following nights that fell to 17° F. Somewhere around this point, you may find that when your broccoli thaws in the sun, the stems have become flabby. When this happens, try waiting a few days and if the next couple of nights are not as cold, they usually firm up. Chinese broccoli and broccoli raab mature more quickly and have slenderer stems and smaller sprouting heads when compared with standard broccoli. That makes them suitable for spring transplanting in areas where they can be harvested at least a couple of times before mid-summer weather sets in and it also means they are at their peak in early fall after a couple of light frosts. These specialty broccoli are not quite as frost hardy as standard broccoli. In our garden, they are June and September treats. In a cool summer like 2009, you may be able to continue harvesting the same plants throughout the growing season with little or no loss of quality.

Joel Rosen is a retired market gardener who still grows his own food for his family in Carlton County. He welcomes questions about vegetable and herb gardening.

E-mail: PLFarm@q.com

Phone: 218-389-3306

Announcements

Spring Fling and 2010 Garden Assignment

We really want our gardeners to get to know one another and the Spring Fling is one opportunity to do just that. The 2010 Spring Fling will be held on Saturday, March 20th, from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in the Peace Church Fellowship Hall. Gardeners will sign up for their individual garden plot, buy seeds, meet the coordinator and gardeners from their site, and get an overview of their site's needs. New garden program policies and procedures will be explained, along with the responsibilities and commitments required from gardeners.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 20th, 2010 and look for more information in the spring newsletter.

Duluth Community Garden Cookbook

I have volunteered to put together a Duluth Community Garden Cookbook. Send your recipes, with details regarding helpful tips you have added to "make it your own best recipe," and what ingredients you used from your garden. Send favorite recipes you would love to share, or helpful tips on how to prepare or store your fruits or vegetables. Include any awards you won at a fair or from the garden program (e.g., biggest cabbage), and the year of the award.

Call Ann at 218-728-3729 if you want to talk; otherwise, simply submit your recipe to me via e-mail at jamnlb@gmail.com. That would be great.

Thanks! *Ann Caple*

...gardening in small spaces continued from page 2

four-by-four gardens set for next year. We have planted three varieties of garlic for next year's harvest and hope they do well. Our strawberries will be on their second year, so we are hoping for success with them.

We plan to put some wire fencing along our wooden privacy fence and plant pole beans and peas there, and maybe some cucumbers. We are not planting any Brussels sprouts, but will plant more onions, beets, carrots, as well as several varieties of herbs.

Our great grandson, Skyler, is already looking forward to his portion of the garden. He was thrilled with his few beans, carrots, onions, and spinach that he harvested.

There is a long winter ahead of us, but we are looking forward to next year's version of grandma's and grandpa's backyard garden.

Get Involved! Join a Working Committee

These are exciting times for the Duluth Garden Program and you can play an active part by getting involved with one of the working committees listed below.

1. The Operations Committee helps maintain a smoothly functioning office. Volunteers answer the phone, greet folks in the office, and help with mailings and other office tasks.
2. The Land Stewardship Committee works with the gardeners to manage program land resources. They meet monthly to develop policies and procedures, develop methods to maintain the sites, and organize work bees.
3. The Events Committee provides the social resources to connect people with the program. They organize two main events a year, the Spring Fling and the Harvest Dinner.
4. The Seeds, Plants, Shrubs and Bulbs Committee selects planting materials, organizes sales, takes care of trees and shrubs, and packs seeds and bulbs.
5. The Education Committee does outreach, and organizes classes.
6. The Communications Committee informs gardeners, members, and the public through the newsletter, emails, website, and publicity.

Interested in knowing more? Call Dan at 724-6482 or Loni at 728-4511.

Duluth Community Garden Program

plant•a•lot



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Please notice the membership date on the label. If it is expired, this is your last newsletter. Please contact the garden program office for renewal.

BECOME A GARDEN PROGRAM MEMBER

Not sure when to renew? Check the expiration date on your address label!

Member benefits include:

- Gardening and food preparation education and equipment use
- Four issues per year of Community Gardener's Companion newsletter
- Discount at annual seed sale
- The satisfaction of supporting the Duluth Community Garden Program's work

Memberships:

Affordable \$10 _____ Sustainable \$50 _____ Lifetime \$500 _____

Seedling \$25 _____ Perennial \$100 _____ Other \$ _____

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The Duluth Garden Program is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation