



Nepean Allotment GARDEN ASSOCIATION

MEMBERS' BULLETIN - SPRING 1998

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to all members, new and returning, of the Nepean Allotment Garden Association for 1998. We look forward to a truly fruitful gardening season.

I want to extend my appreciation to Denis St. Jean, who kindly and willingly volunteered to edit the Members Bulletin this year. I hope you enjoy the information in this issue, and welcome you to contact Denis if you have suggestions for the Fall Bulletin.

I was pleased to see a good turnout at the Annual General Meeting on March 24th at the Sportsplex. For those who couldn't attend, the Financial Report and Budget were approved, and all officers and directors who served in 1997 were re-elected. The members at the meeting gave the directors approval to purchase a rototiller to be rented out to members under the supervision of one of the Directors (see article in this issue).

Mary St-Jean, our Registrar, reported that plot renewals and requests from new members were being received at a good rate, so all plots should again be rented, including some half-sized annual plots being made available for the first time.

To repeat part of my remarks at the Annual Meeting, I want to stress that this Association belongs to all of us who are its members. If at any time you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any of the Directors. At the same time, if we all co-operate and do our part to keep the plots and surrounding pathways neat, tidy, and well-cared for, the gardening experience will be all the more enjoyable for everyone, and no one will have a burdensome workload.

Best wishes for happy gardening in 1998.

Ron Black

"The Book of Life begins with a man and a woman in a garden"

Oscar Wilde.

PLANT SWAP

If you find that you have too many of one type of plant and not enough of another this Spring, take advantage of the Great NAGA Plant Swap! Our treasurer, Barbara Hale, is again organizing this popular event, to be held next to the lockers, Saturday May 23, starting at 9:00 a.m. Many gardeners discovered new (to them) strains of vegetables at last year's swap, or simply achieved better crop balance.

The swap is also a good way to meet other members and trade yarns about mammoth tomatoes. To take part, just bring your extra plants, then take a look at those that others have brought. You may find something you like. Even if you don't, you will at least know that your surplus won't go to waste. But make sure you get there early if you want a good choice. And please label your plants.

If you wish more information, call Barbara, evenings, at 225-7585.

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ASSOCIATION PURCHASES ROTOTILLER

After some discussion at our general meeting, the decision was taken to purchase a rototiller to provide some assistance to members who may find it difficult to prepare their gardens this year.

For a nominal fee of \$10, we will either till your garden for you, or you can do it yourself. A word of caution, however: If you have never used a mechanical tiller, it would be prudent to let us do it. Call Ian Reid or Bill Nye to make arrangements. You will find their phone numbers listed in the Board of Directors box on the last page.

NEW OPTION: HALF-SIZED PLOTS

Some gardeners have found that full-sized annual plots are too big for their purposes. To accommodate those of you who have requested it, we have divided a certain number of plots in two and have made them available this year. The cost is half that of a regular garden.

Not all gardens can be sectioned in this way. Since both sections must be accessible, only plots along the edges can be converted - when they become available. This only applies to annual plots, since perennial gardens are already half size. We will remind you of this new option in our Fall bulletin. If you would like to apply for one next season, we suggest that you mark your calendar.

COMMUNITIES IN BLOOM

Nepean has entered the prestigious 1998 "Communities in Bloom" competition, and we are encouraged to get involved and help bring home the prize. The aim of Communities in Bloom is to foster pride in and encourage appreciation of the important role which the natural environment plays in helping create a great city.

In July or August, the Communities in Bloom jury will come to Nepean to judge our efforts. Some of the categories in which our Association could compete are heritage conservation, tidiness effort, environmental effort and community involvement.

The City of Nepean is eager to have us take an active part. Now is your chance to lend wings to our participation.

A co-ordinator is needed to liaise with Community in Bloom organizers, and to coach other gardeners. If you're interested, or would like more information, please call Ron Black at 820-3689. Please don't hesitate. Our Association needs you!

SHARE THE BOUNTY

Most of us, at one time or another during the season, find that some of our plants are producing a better yield than we had anticipated. The various soup kitchens in the area will be grateful to receive your surplus. Just give them a call. One of these is run by the Shepherds of Good Hope, who prepare meals for hundreds of souls each day.

You can deliver your vegetables any time except during lunch, when it's too busy, at 233 Murray Street (there is parking), or the Shepherds will pick them up. **Phone 789-8210 and ask for Liz Gauthier.**

WE NEED HELP!

Did you know that the land on which we garden is officially designated as a park by the City of Nepean? We are fortunate to be able to use it for our hobby.

Part of our responsibilities in using this land is to maintain it; to keep it neat and tidy. As at this writing, a small group of volunteers has been mowing the grass, painting and installing the plot markers, keeping the equipment in good order, and generally cleaning up around the gardens. And, beginning this year, these volunteers will be rototilling as well.

Our maintenance director, Ian Reid, is always on the lookout for more people to help out with necessary chores. If you would like to do your part to keep our park attractive, call Ian.

Please note: this invitation is extended to women and men!

THE NAGA QUIZ

1. In what year was our Association, in its present form, established? (a) 1990; (b) 1991; (c) 1992
2. On average, what is our annual water bill? (a) \$300; (b) \$500; (c) \$700+
3. How long does it take to mow the grass around the gardens? (a) 30 minutes; (b) two hours; (c) three hours.

Answers on the last page.

THE VIEW FROM PLOT NUMBER LUCKY 13

By Brian MacLeod

Two years ago I accidentally broke off the tip of a Roma tomato while hardening it off, and expected it to be less productive. That year the "pruned" plant yielded 2-3 times as much as my other plant! Why? Because it had formed four main leaders, all of which bore good crops. I repeated the experiment last year and placed the "pruned" tomato in the same bed as the Romas to discount location as a factor. Again, the pruned Roma was a top producer yielding 2-3 times more than my other plants.

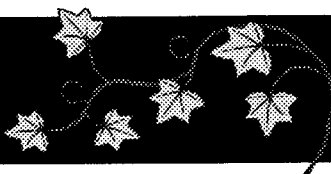
The only drawback to this method is a later harvest of the tomatoes, about two to three weeks behind; although, even with last year's late Spring all my Romas had ripened by early September. This year I plan to prune half of my Romas. If the past years are a good indication, I should get more tomatoes, spread over a longer period. I have not yet tried this technique on other types of tomatoes, although I expect it should work on all determinate tomatoes.

Egg shells: Dry your egg shells in the oven (I typically put them in for 30 minutes after cooking something and turning the oven off). The dried shells can then be crushed with a rolling pin or put in a food blender/processor for a few seconds. The resultant powder is ideal for preventing blossom end rot in tomatoes (just add a few teaspoons when you plant your tomatoes). It is also a good substitute for diatomaceous earth that doesn't have to be reapplied after every heavy rain.

Straw mulch: A heavy straw, or hay, mulch will keep potato bugs away. Using this method, I have found only one Colorado Potato Beetle on my crop the past few years. Typically, I put the mulch on after the plants have been hilled.

Soaking seeds: I find this indispensable, especially in the hard, dry clay of the allotment gardens. For example, by soaking corn seeds for two days, I get almost 100% germination, and the corn is up in a little over a week, versus two-plus weeks and spotty germination when simply sticking them into the ground.

As a rule of thumb, slower germinating seeds like corn, turnips, and beets are soaked overnight, while quicker ones like beans and peas are soaked for an hour prior to planting.



SAFETY FIRST

A major hazard to those who mow the grass is the debris left along the perimeter of some gardens. It is especially dangerous when the grass obscures the debris. PLEASE don't toss rocks, clods, piles of weeds, and other dross onto the edge of your garden. There are sites and receptacles for these. Discarded hand tools can also be hazardous.

HOGGING THE FOOD

Every year, a few gardens are visited by that pesky, myopic critter, the ground hog. Although we are all lovers of nature, it isn't fun to have to share our crops with "someone" who hasn't even paid a rental fee. Try making it unpleasant for him to stay (see "Helpful Hints"). If he still doesn't move, get in touch with the maintenance director.

HELPFUL HINTS

- Water the compost in your bin during dry spells in the summer, says Gus Wegelin. It will help speed up decomposition.
- Sweet corn is wind pollinated. To give its pollen a better chance to do its job, set the corn in a block, rather than a straight row.
- Cover ripening raspberries and strawberries with mesh netting, to keep winged thieves away.
- To repel ground hogs, try scattering dog hair, blood meal, and talcum powder around your plants.
- Raccoons, who are particularly fond of corn, are more difficult to deal with. Sometimes shoes or clothing containing human perspiration left around your corn patch will work - for a while. Alternatively, plastic streamers, noisy windmills or a scarecrow may be effective.
- Instead of planting all your radish and lettuce seeds at once, sow short rows of them every two weeks. You will extend your harvesting time.

LOCATING YOUR PLOT

Here is a simple way of determining the location of your garden plot. Face the stake bearing the number you have been allocated. The bottom edge of your garden always runs to the right of the numbered stake.



THE NAGA QUIZ ANSWERS

1. (b) 1991 marked the first year that our association was entirely run by volunteers. The City of Nepean had maintained the gardens for a number of years before then, but announced in 1990 that it was discontinuing the program due to rising costs.
2. (c) The average seasonal cost is over \$750. Our highest bill occurred in 1992, when we paid RMOC \$992.10.
3. (c) It takes about three hours of criss-crossing around the gardens to complete this job.

Our next issue is in early October.

*Have you any ideas?
Please submit them to
Denis St. Jean by September 1st.*

NEPEAN ALLOTMENT GARDEN ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS 1998 - '99

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