

Dig This!

Spring 2018



Table Talk

Nourish Community Hub
16 York St., Cannington
March 21st 6:30-8:30 \$10

Experience an interactive Organic **Chocolate** tasting. Join Dan Ledandan Foods in a workshop on the history, politics and unique gastronomic side of Cacao in all its forms.



DIG Annual General Meeting

Come out and connect with other garden projects in Durham Region at our DIG Annual General Meeting ~

Thursday, March 29, 2018 at 7pm
Salvation Army Oshawa Temple
570 Thornton Rd. North, Oshawa.

Group/Corporate Members, please inform DIG who will be carrying your vote and your first and second alternate prior to the meeting.

The DIG Black Duck Wild Rice Excursion, in September 2017 was a day to remember. Neville White from the St. Andrew's Garden

Project will share highlights from his experience as a participant.

The membership term ends March 31 2018. New annual memberships begin April 1, 2018 and can be renewed at the AGM.

New memberships received by Dec 19, 2017 are eligible to vote. Membership for those who became members for the first time in the time period from January – March 2017 includes the full 2017 membership period. Your prompt membership payment allows DIG to fulfill its work plan targets, for your and the community's benefit.

Keynote Speaker

Lisa Mulder, from Link Greenhouses Bowmanville, will share about Growing Under Glass.



Featured Agri-Hero

Your local BFF ~ BioFresh Farms

Ryan Gale, the founder of Biofresh Farms, started his journey into agriculture not only for a more sustainable future but to maintain his own personal health condition.



After adopting a more whole foods based lifestyle due to a heart condition, he realized through research and industry workshops the need for more farmers and healthier local food options. Having personally and physically felt changes through a healthier lifestyle and nutrient dense foods, a new ambition and inspiration was sparked to create a more sustainable food network for himself and surrounding communities. Over the past few years, the team modelled a peri-urban farm to

produce year-round crops combining various leading technologies such as recirculating bio-digesters, LED's and vertical farm automation. Having brought urban technologies to add more value and efficiency in the field and greenhouse, we will be able to maintain year-round growing and plan to be fully operational by this fall with our public farm gate opening summer 2018. Our online pre-order vegetable boxes will be available coming May. Visit www.Biofreshfarms.com for more information.

Busy on the job

Board member Mary Anne Martin has sent in a proposal to write one of several articles with *Nourishing Communities Research Group* for the *Canadian Food Studies Journal*. Her article would look at the kinds of work and values that exist across DIG, then compare them to traditional ideas about "women's work" to show their importance and value. The article would likely be published in 2019.



GardenTip

Preparing your garden plot

Taking time in spring to build fertility, loosen soil and plan, will set you up for a more productive gardening year.

First, a few weeks before you plant, work in any cover crops. Remove rogue seedlings. You may think you are getting a freebie plant, but the new seedling could also carry over diseases from the previous season. Blanket your plot with at least a half-inch layer of good compost — a full inch would be even better. The compost will provide the soil with a fresh infusion of nutrient-rich organic matter, and improve the soil's ability to handle water and nourish your crops.

Second, cultivate your soil. Pounding rain, gravity and other forces cause soil to become compacted over time, so loosen it before planting. Turn the soil when it's dry and crumbly (never when it's wet and clumpy, or you'll be stuck with big, brick-like clods). Use a "low tillage" technique whenever possible, as this will prevent soil erosion and protect worm habitat. However, for deep-root vegetables like carrots and parsnips, you'll have to dig and turn deeply. Use a broadfork to break up the soil. Finish the job with a rake to even the surface. This will prime your soil for planting by helping it dry out and warm up, and permit roots to penetrate the soil more easily.

Thirdly, apply an organic fertilizer to the degree that matches the needs of the crops you plan to plant. Light feeders with shallow roots, such as lettuce, will be fine with a small amount of organic fertilizer raked into the top few inches of soil. But for widely spaced plants that have big nutrient appetites, such as cabbage, broccoli, tomatoes and peppers, you should enrich individual planting holes with a mixture of compost and organic fertilizer just before you set out seedlings.

Finally, plan the location of plants using **companion planting**. This is the planting of different crops in proximity for pest control, pollination, providing habitat for beneficial creatures, maximizing use of space, and to otherwise increase crop productivity.

GardenTip

Hardening off seedlings and young plants

It takes longer than you think but is worth the trouble! Start the process about two weeks before transplanting outdoors. This will gradually get young plants used to the open air climate and minimize transplanting shock.

Set young plants outside in a shaded, protected area for a few hours a day during the afternoon. Bring them inside before the temps begin dropping in late afternoon; each day adding a bit more time outdoors. After a few days, let them sit in direct sunshine and gradually increase their time in the sun daily. After a couple of weeks the seedlings should be ready to stay outside until transplanted into the garden. Check the forecast for possible risk of frost.

To reduce transplanting stress, pick a cloudy day or late afternoon, direct sun may cause the plants to wilt at first but they should recover within a day or so. If you're putting newspaper or peat pots directly into the ground, ease open the bottoms of the pots to allow the roots to spread and trim back the pot tops to soil level. Then water and tend and enjoy your plants for the season!

GardenTip

Companion planting



There is not enough newsletter space to cover this important, lengthy topic. Instead, here are a few good sites to check out:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_companion_plants

www.westcoastseeds.com/garden-resources/articles-instructions/companion-planting

www.vegetablegardeninglife.com/companion-planting-charts.html

www.sheridannurseries.com/garden_tips/general_gardening/companion_planting

www.almanac.com/content/companion-planting-guide

Workshop ~ a success



On February 4th, Mary Drummond facilitated a **How to Start a Community Garden** workshop at the main branch of Whitby Library. It was attended by individuals who were already participating in, interested in starting, or wanting more information on starting a community garden project. The interactive workshop took participants through benefits of garden projects and asset-based community development to more functional aspects and organizing project leadership group. There were many questions, great conversation, and glowing reviews of the day. Every participant was provided a binder full of information to take home. Several participants stayed afterwards to discuss their own plans and ideas for community gardening and urban farming projects.

Suggestions?

If you have ideas for newsletter articles, please email to the address shown below.



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