

Nyack Community Garden

July 2014

WELCOME BACK TO THE GARDEN

We're already well into the gardening season, but welcome back to all. This year we're all returning gardeners, so obviously we all get great joy and great produce from our planting and harvesting. Let's also work on growing more community within the garden!

OUR RESIDENT BOTANIST – Duncan Bell



Have you ever wondered what was going on in Plot 19 with all those plants in pots connected by hoses? That's Duncan Bell's plot.

Duncan has a PhD in Botany, but, as he says, "basically, I'm a tinkerer." He experiments with new techniques of growing vegetables every year, actually building on ideas he has had from previous experiments, with the ultimate goal of developing a system that is inexpensive, easy to use, produces a good yield, conserves water, and one that doesn't take much space to store in the winter. The current system is self-watering and even shuts itself off when all plants are sufficiently watered. It is solar driven and uses a motorized Archimedes Water Lifter to lift water up to the starting level so subsequently the water can irrigate all of the pots of vegetables in sequence, since they are arranged at descending heights. At the end of the line there is an open tray that, when filled up, turns off the water lifter.

All of the pots (about 30 of them), are lifted off the ground, too, to allow for the least amount of bending over to tend to the plants or to harvest. Duncan reports that it took a couple of months to get the system up and running, but it's working very well by now.

Duncan is very thrifty, and that's part of the challenge. He uses yogurt containers, for instance, to raise the pots (obtained from the Dollar Store), recycling materials whenever he can. He does use fertilizer – Osmocote Pellets – which are slow release, so you can put a lot on at any time and they don't burn the plants, plus they do not cause algae to build up in the

irrigation system. He doesn't use any pesticides.

Another innovation is Duncan's use of indoor/outdoor carpeting to prevent weeds. Water drains right through the carpet and he can sit on it when he's working low to the ground. He can take up the carpeting in the fall, hose it off, and store it for next year.

The yield? This year everything is doing very well, including the new crop of sweet potatoes. Last year he had 125 pounds of tomatoes and donated a third of it to People to People through the garden's Plant a Row for the Hungry program

What satisfaction does Duncan get from all of this tinkering? He seems to love it and he can even say he "eats the fruits of his inventions!"



IMPORTANT DATES

July 24, 2014 - Annual Garden Contest

Categories:

Best Maintained Garden - 1st, 2nd, 3rd place

Best Vegetable and/or Flower Garden - 1st, 2nd, 3rd place

Most Creative Garden - 1st, 2nd, 3rd place

Best All-Around Garden - Grand prize

Thursday July 31st - Milk, Cookies & Stories 6:30 – 7:15 PM

Garden in peace whilst the children enjoy bedtime stories, milk & cookies. Meet by the shed and bring something to sit on!

July 31st. Buzzing Bees and Native Plants 4:00 PM

Location : Nyack Library

For children in grades 1-4. Learn about the importance of bees for pollination, what native plants are and how important they are for pollinators. Each child would be given a native plant to bring home! Presented

by Master Gardener volunteer at the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Ann Ellis.

Space is limited, please register by coming to the Children's Room or by calling 845.358.3370 x228

August 5th Farm-to-Table Cooking Program, Adult Program

7 PM

Location: Nyack Library
Community/Meeting Room
Registration Ends: 8/5/2014 at
12:00 AM

Contact: Belinda Cash
Contact Number: 845-358-3370-
ext. 213

October 23rd. Pot Luck Dinner

Prizes will be awarded for the Annual Garden Contest

October 23rd Seed Exchange

We will be having a seed exchange on the night of the Pot Luck Dinner. Collect seeds. Choose your veggies that have done well and yielded the most. Dry them and place them in individual sealed envelopes. Label with your name and the variety. Bring them to the Pot Luck Dinner.



PLANT A ROW – WHERE DOES IT GO?

The Plant a Row for the Hungry program provides fresh produce to People to People, Rockland's largest food pantry. People to People collected about 10-12,000 pounds last year from community gardens, home gardeners, and farms in the county, including from the Nyack Community Garden. Our garden contributed about 200 lbs last year. Maybe we can up that number this year.

Just to share with you what the need is: there are about 45,000 people in Rockland County who receive SNAP benefits (are on Food Stamps). This was a 200% increase in this number since 2000 and so that the total now represents 14% of the population. 47% of those on

Food Stamps in the County are children. Since 2008 the number of residents of the county who live in poverty in Rockland has risen from 10.4% to 15%. People to People is seeing as many as 70 new families per month come to them for help. While there are over 40 emergency feeding programs in the County, People to People is the only one that is open to all and is open 5 days a week and they serve, on average, 1200 families per month.

As we all know, the cost of food is very high and has been going up. So those who are on Food Stamps, for instance, have a difficult time stretching their Food Stamp allotment to last for a month. So many need to supplement this with help from a food pantry like People to People. Most of what People to People gives to those 1200 families is packaged foods. Indeed, last year they distributed 700,000 pounds of food. What they are trying to do, as much as possible, is to be able to include fresh produce, which will definitely be healthier for the recipients than many of those packaged foods. That's where we come in.

The Share the Bounty/Food Bank Committee will be taking donations to People to People every Tuesday morning at 9:30 AM beginning July 29. Please place your donations in the bin on the floor of the shed as close to that time as possible to ensure maximum freshness. If you are unable to pick your vegetables due to travel, vacation, sickness or time constraints, don't let them go to waste! The committee will do it for you. Please contact Jill Remy at jillremaly217@gmail.com. Last year our garden contributed about 200 pounds of produce worth about \$500. Let's see if we can beat that this year.

FACEBOOK UPDATE

Thanks to Michelle Solomon for creating and maintaining our new Facebook page. Michelle has been posting garden photos and news. If you haven't already visited the page take a look by clicking this link

<https://www.facebook.com/nyackcommunitygarden>

RECIPES

Tomato Treats by Melissa Myers



I have found there are two points in the tomato season where I am overcome with the harvest. The first is at the peak of the season when I've picked enough juicy, ripe fruit to fill my kitchen counter. The second comes at the end of the season when the vines are still full of fruit that, heartbreakingly, have no chance of ripening. I hate leaving all that potential unfulfilled. So I offer two suggestions for those of us

blessed with such garden abundance: stuffed tomatoes and green tomato relish. Stuffed tomatoes are a staple in my family every August. Being Greek, we were never a sauce-making bunch. I easily recall my grandmother roasting a big baking pan filled with her backyard tomatoes for family dinners that we ate at her patio table.

Celine, in last year's film "Before Midnight," helps make meatless stuffed tomatoes for a Greek island feast. But I prefer my grandmother's recipe. She stuffed them with beef, rice and spices. The tomato skins blister and a sweet, acidic juice seeps out in the pan during baking. My grandmother would make sure to spoon some of that juice over each tomato as she served them. It is a traditional and rather simple preparation, and I enhance it with elements of Diane Kochilas' recipe. The sweetness of the tomatoes and the savory meat filling make a wonderful combination. My uncle came up with the idea to freeze them, giving us another chance to remember that taste of late summer when the days are short and dark. Freeze the stuffed tomatoes in small

batches so they are easy to reheat.

My boyfriend, a fan of molecular gastronomy and kitchen scientist Harold McGee, was keen to suggest canning when I found myself swimming in green tomatoes two summers ago. We scoured several older cookbooks before coming across the recipe for Hotel Copley Relish. It calls for a mix of green and ripe tomatoes and bell peppers, all of which I had in numbers.

We used a pressure canner, and I was surprised the process was so easy after I got over the initial intimidation. I even did some other canning by myself.

The relish has a slightly sweet and tangy flavor that makes for a wonderful topping on a slice of sharp cheddar cheese atop a cracker. It also adds zip to tuna salad and grilled bratwurst. And being even a tiny bit self-sustaining gave me great satisfaction.

Stuffed Tomatoes



From Erasmia Polites with enhancement by Diane Kochilas, from "The Food and Wine of Greece," 1990

10 to 12 large, firm, ripe tomatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup finely chopped onion
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup long-grain rice
2 pounds ground beef
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped fresh parsley, packed
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon dried mint
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
Pulp of the tomatoes
Brown sugar
Bread crumbs
Butter

1. Wash the vegetables. Take a very sharp knife and slice off the top of each tomato.
2. With a teaspoon, gently scoop out the pulp of each tomato, being careful not to tear the outer skin. Leave a shell thick enough (about ½ inch) to hold stuffing. Remove seeds, chop pulp, and place, with juices, in a large bowl.
3. Saute the onions in the olive oil until translucent, add the garlic. Add the ground beef, tomato pulp, herbs and spices, and rice. Mix well and remove from heat when the meat is cooked.
4. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place a dab of sugar in the bottom of each tomato. Stuff the tomatoes with the filling. Place in a baking pan. Top with bread crumbs, another dab of sugar and a dab of butter. Add a little water to the pan (about ¼ cup), and bake for 50 minutes to 1 hour, until vegetables are soft and blistery and the rice is cooked. Baste with pan juices during baking, if necessary. Serve warm or cold. (Makes four to six servings.)

Hotel Copley Relish

From “All About Pickling,” Ortho Books, 1975

1 quart green tomatoes, finely chopped
½ cup salt
1 quart ripe tomatoes, finely chopped
5 small yellow onions, chopped
3 red bell peppers, finely chopped
2 green bell peppers, finely chopped
1 ¾ cup distilled white vinegar
1 cup sugar

1. Cover green tomatoes with ½ cup salt. Let stand 12 hours. Drain.
2. Combine with remaining ingredients in a large kettle. Cover and simmer 30 minutes. Pack into hot, sterilized jars. Seal. Process 5 minutes. (Makes 4 to 5 pints.)



COMMITTEE UPDATES

Newsletter Committee- We aim to publish two newsletters this year. We would love to celebrate the diverse range of gardens & gardeners. If you would be willing to pose for a photo on your plot and answer a few questions about why you chose to join the garden please contact Charlotte -917-587-5148.

Shed Committee- A big thank you to the shed committee for their efforts to maintain the shed this year, it looks great.

Path Committee- Path committee meet up. Chat, drink iced coffee and weed the path! July 24, 7:30 AM.

Please, can all committee leaders remember to contact their members to ensure everybody is fulfilling their obligations to the upkeep and running of the garden. A list of each committee and its members is posted on the shed door.

GENERAL REMINDERS

Watering . Remember that using a watering can to water the roots directly conserves water. When you use the hose, please ensure that it is coiled up and off the ground after use.

Dogs are NOT welcome in the garden.

The gate must be locked at all times.

Brown Bags magically appear thanks to the brown bag fairy! They are not the responsibility of any committee at this time. She collects them from Nyack Solid Waste Management at 63 Catherine St. If you would be willing to pick some up, she would be very grateful! Also thank you for remembering to remove your own brown bags and leave them at the curb.

