



# Gardening Neighbours

## GARDENERS' CELEBRATION

Cindy MacDonald with David Stott hosted a gardening *show and tell* with a new group of enthusiastic Westshore gardeners in a new, exciting project, *Neighbouring Gardeners*. These new gardeners celebrated the fruits and labour of their first vegetable garden with a brunch of garden delights which included a greens smoothy, fresh salads of greens and slaws, a platter of balsamic beets, dried

apples, sundried tomatoes, corn bread with fresh cayenne peppers, tomato salsa and sauce, apple squares and blackberry oat squares.

The focus of the gathering was to celebrate, and begin preparations for the next season. Tips were shared by



Cindy and David about the seeds and what grows in the Vancouver Island zone and questions were answered about winter planting, composting, and ideas about soil preparation.

Cindy lead the gardening group through her tomato patch to see the various kinds of tomatoes and each person was encouraged to pick a bag of tomatoes to take home and enjoy.

### GARDENING YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD: An Idea Whose Time Has Come? - David Stott

I was asked to write an article on why and how our project started, our hopes and expectations and the results so far.

It all began, like so many things do, with an unexpected opportunity. The Capital Families Western Communities Food Security Initiative

objectives include:

- 1.) Increase awareness of food security issues and the need and potential for greater local food production.
- 2.) Raise support among local sectors of the food system in responding to the challenges and possibilities for greater food security here.
- 3.) Generate a practical, achievable community-based plan to increase sustainable food production here.

Seeing what was possible

with the *Pacifica Oak Park Garden* project in Langford when residents, with some support with materials and advice, were able to create a large community garden for themselves. *Knowing* that over 90% of households on the WestShore weren't growing food for themselves—why not try something not done here before. The idea for the Gardening Neighbours was to offer to help people who wanted to start a

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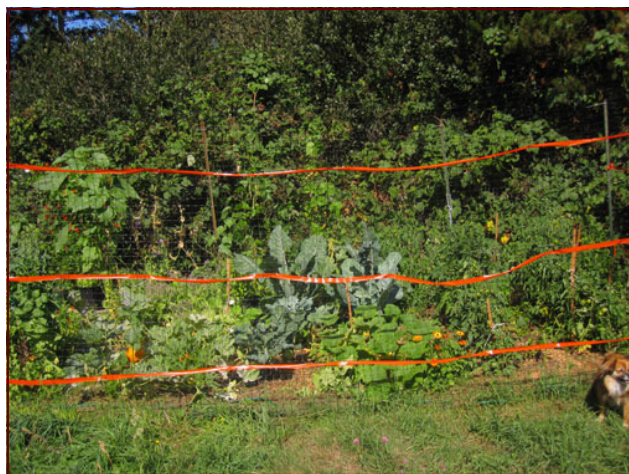
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## Backyard Gardening Blog—Deb Harper

I was a participant in Capital Families Food Security Initiative which helped new gardeners cultivate and harvest their own garden produce. See: [westshoreharvest.ca/grow-contest.htm](http://westshoreharvest.ca/grow-contest.htm)

Throughout the growing season, the coordinators offered workshops, additional plants and tools and ongoing support.



This project hopes to expand next year to include more new gardeners, which is great news because there is such a need in the community for these types of programs.

A great, big thanks to Capital Families, who provided me with top soil, fencing, tools, plants and support to really kick start my new garden, and to my organic garden guru, Elaine Ferguson, who mentored me from start to finish. Check out the blog about my garden: <http://homegrow.ca/?q=node/78>



## Starting a Vegetable Garden

Starting a new garden can be very intimidating. There is lots of information about vegetable gardening to read; however, when it comes to actually getting started it can be a little overwhelming. David Stott,



the initiator of the *Gardening Neighbours* project quickly understood that in order to create sustainability and longevity to neighbourhood edible gardens—a gardening mentor was needed. Someone who

could answer questions knowledgeably, encourage progress, and demonstrate how to's. Here's what the folks in the Gardening Neighbours Project said about their learning experiences and working with Cindy, our gardening mentor.

*I would have never started a garden if I did not have help to get me started.*

*The garden didn't need a lot of work or time, it just grew.*

*I felt excited by the feeling that it (the garden) was going to happen and it did. (sound familiar?)*

*For what we did the growing season was not that great, but we have been able to eat out of the garden.*

*With advice, support, and work I grew many veggies.*



*I think that families with children like mine would benefit greatly from this program.*

*“So helpful to have ideas about determining the most viable location to start garden—facing south, maximizing morning and afternoon sun ... placing beans to provide shade for lettuce ... .”*

# Garden Recipes –Tomatoes—C. MacDonald

## Easy Sun-dried Tomatoes

Cherry tomatoes cut in half or larger tomatoes quartered.

Place tomatoes cut side up on a foil-lined cookie sheet in a 300 degrees F. oven.

*"You do not need to add oil of any kind."*

Bake uncovered for 1 - 1 1/2 hours or until chewy and leathery in texture (little longer for larger tomatoes). Store in the fridge, as is or in oil, or freeze until needed.

## Easy Tomato Sauce

All the split, odd-looking, and extra red tomatoes from the garden. This only works with home grown tomatoes.

Roughly chop up all tomatoes, removing the stem end. No need to peel the tomatoes at all. Simmer on low heat in a good quality pot (not aluminum) for as long as it takes for the sauce to thicken. This is usually 6 - 8 hours. Bottle up sauce and freeze for later use. When using, add whatever you like to taste such as other vegetable, herbs, and spices.

## Roasted Corn, Green Tomato Salsa

These measurements are approximate.

- 1 cup roasted corn
- 1 cup chopped green tomatoes (not too green, slightly yellow is best)
- 1 cup chopped red tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped sweet pepper (any colour)
- 1/2 cup chopped onion

Some finely chopped hot pepper

- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro (optional)

Anything else you like such as mango, pineapple, apple, pear, zucchini, cauliflower - you get the picture.

- Seasoning of your choice to taste
- To roast the corn bake at 400 degrees F or fry at medium heat until the corn kernels are brown.
- Mix everything together and enjoy. Improves somewhat with age. Lasts about a week in the fridge.

You can also freeze what is left then cook it up to make a nice sauce for pasta or Mexican dishes.



*"What could be healthier than a smoothy from the garden..."*

## Garden Smoothy —E. Ferguson

- 500 ml Knutson Pear Juice
- Bunches of lettuce, kale, swiss chard, spinach
- 2 handfuls of berries—frozen or fresh

Pour juice into blender, add greens by the bunch, add berries. Blend and serve.

## Corn Bread—H. Ratcliffe Hood Preheat to 400\*

- 2/3 cup of flour, 1 TBSP baking powder, 1 1/2 cup fine cornmeal
- 1/2 cup grated cheese (cheddar or goat or swiss), 1 TBSP salt
- Diced sundried tomatoes, 1/4 fresh sweet pepper **or** a fresh cayenne pepper
- 2 beaten eggs, 1 1/2 cup milk, 4 TBSP melted butter

Grease lightly a glass pie plate with butter. In a large bowl, add dry goods, cheese, salt, sundried tomatoes, and peppers. Add wet goods—eggs, milk, melted butter and stir well. Pour batter into pie plate.

Garnish with sliced cherry tomatoes. Bake 20 minutes @ 400 degrees.

## Fall Gardening Tips—Cindy MacDonald

### October

**Leaves and more leaves** - Gather up any leaves you have around or can get your hands on. These can be chopped up with the lawnmower or not, then spread on your garden bed to break down over winter. By Spring, these will have all but disappeared, and you will have greatly enriched your soil. Another great soil additive is seaweed. I harvest this at local easy access beaches and place it right on the garden. No need to rinse it as the winter rains wash off any salt.

**Never too much garlic** - Plant your garlic cloves now as they grow overwinter and are usually ready to harvest in June or July. Plant the largest cloves available for nice big bulbs. Plant the individual cloves approximately 6 inches deep and 6 inches apart, pointy end up. Each clove will make a full head of garlic by next summer, perfect for roasting.

**Broad beans (fava beans)** can also be planted now for a Spring crop.

**Continued Tomato Production** - Once the colder and wet weather has set in, usually around 7 degrees daytime temperature or very rainy, tomatoes still on the vine will no longer ripen. Here is a way to continue getting fruit off of the plants. Pull the whole plant out of the ground, cut off the roots, and hang upside down in a coolish place such as the basement or a hall closet. This will allow some of the unripened fruit to ripen. Once the plant turns brown you can harvest any tomatoes that are have started to turn yellowish and ripen them on a window sill. Otherwise, make lots of green tomato salsa and have a fiesta.



### Fall Clean -up Options:

**Option 1 - Some Work** - Clean up and compost everything as it dies off using the compost layering method of approx. a 6 inch layer of brown, then a 6 inch layer of green, then brown, then green, etc.

**Option 2 - No Work** - Leave everything where it lies (except woody twigs) and by Spring it will pretty much will have composted into the ground.

**Option 3 - Little Work** without a messy looking yard. Leave everything where it lies to compost into the ground but as things die off cover them with mulch such as leaves, grass clippings, seaweed, etc.

In case you are worried about harbouring insects or disease, it has been shown that healthy soil, and therefore healthy plants, do not suffer much setback from either of these worries.

### Seed Saving Tips:

As long as the weather is dry, save seed from everything that you liked this year. Use the seed saving chart or a good website as a guide to ensure that your plants were far enough apart to produce true seed.

When wet weather comes you may still have some luck as long as you dry the seed out thoroughly before storing it. Use any container to store your seeds in, old seed packages are good, as are film canisters, pill bottles, and old envelopes. Carefully label the seeds, otherwise next year you will not have a clue what they are.

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new garden by offering the same kind of support with the expectation that people would "pay it forward" by helping others start their gardens next year. Our hope was, and is, that in this way we can not only support individual households get started growing food, but also that we can create the foundation for what could well become garden support networks throughout the Western Communities.

And, you know something, despite the late start, you responded in spades! Our original target of involving 10 households quickly became 16 as you responded so positively to the news. And everyone wants to "pay it forward" by helping others to learn to garden as well. The evaluation forms which Cindy sent you, have been filled out and returned with many positive comments. The workshops we have held thus far have been well attended. And the positive ideas that came out of our September 27th get together, including this newsletter, have been so excellent, that we are increasingly confident about the future of *Gardening Your Neighbourhood*. Personally, Cindy and I are sure the new year will bring more exciting growth and positive developments as we expand from a "pilot project" to a force for new growth on the WestShore.

## Gardening Q & A—Ask our Gardening Mentors

### ***What does it mean to sweet the soil?***

*Most of our soil around here is acidic or sour as we were once a fir and cedar forest. Most plants do not like to grow in acidic soil. Therefore, we must sweeten the soil to make it more basic in order to optimize growing conditions for most plants. The easiest way to accomplish this is to add dolomite lime to the soil at the package direction rates, usually one large handful to square meter. If you make your own compost, this soil is usually PH neutral and ideal for vegetable growing.*

### ***When is a good time to prune apple trees?***

*Prune apple trees in the early part of the year, before the buds start to open, but after the coldest part of winter. Take out any dead wood, crossing branches, and leave a nice open canopy. Also remove and suckers that have grown up from the bottom of the trunk. I am really enjoying my dwarf trees with 3 varieties on one tree. These bear well, and do not use up much space. Mine are in oversized planters and are growing happily.*

### ***What is the climate zone for Vancouver Island?***

*The climate zone for our area is 8/9. This means that we can grow many plants that other parts of Canada cannot simply because it does not get exceptionally cold here for long periods of time. Many local gardens stretch the growing season by using cold frames and greenhouses. This also means that we can grow our own food here year round.*

### ***What seeds are good for a winter gardening in the Westshore area? What vegetables winter over?***

*Seeds and vegetables good for a winter garden are listed in the West Coast Seeds Winter Gardening Guide and Planting Chart which just came out. You can pick up a free copy at **Gardenworks** or **Dig This**, or access the information online through their website: [westcoastseeds.com](http://westcoastseeds.com)*

*Click the link to winter gardening and you are on your way. The guide has information on what to grow, how to grow it and when to start things. You may want to try Endive, Leeks, or Komatsuna. This guide is perfect for any winter gardening tips.*

*If you are interested in learning more about the Capital Families Food Security Initiative—Gardening Neighbours Project,*

*Contact: David Stott [davidestott@gmail.com](mailto:davidestott@gmail.com) 391-4320 Ext. 364*

*Fall Edition of [Gardening Neighbours](#)*

*Contributions by project participants*

*Newsletter by Heather Ratcliffe Hood*