



Down to Earth

Editor's Corner

Welcome to our summer edition of *Down to Earth*. I look forward to sharing with you the fabulous articles that follow.

We have news and photos about our Eco Farm Day, the Urban Organic Gardening seminars, the Organic Demonstration Garden and the Senior Organic Gardeners.

The InnovSeries is back with Telsing Andrews who delights us with her perennial edibles. We can't wait for upcoming events such as the Organic Gardeners' Celebration. Try not to drool as you read Diana's piece on Chasing Aromas Across Cultures. Lastly, chef Mark MacInnis shares with us two of his favourite recipes.

Enjoy this edition and the upcoming season. Wishing you a bountiful harvest, meals shared with loved ones, and the joy that summer brings!

Andrea Gartley

editordowntoearth@gmail.com

Eco Farm Day 2017

This event was a success with over 40 exhibitors and sponsors, 300 people at the lunch Saturday, and over 300 people registered for both Saturday and Sunday workshops. For more information: <http://cog.ca/ottawa/eco-farm-day/>

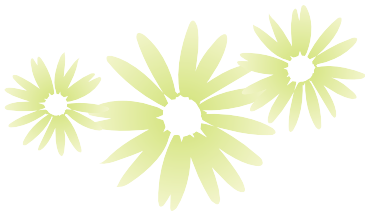
Photos credits: **Barbara L Koch Photography**



Keynote speaker Mark L. Shepard gave an outstanding presentation on Working Together Towards Restorative Agriculture, both informative and entertaining!



All ages were represented in their quest to get a good seat for another of Mark Shepard's presentations.



The renowned and much anticipated treat to the day — the all organic lunch! Everything from the day's drinks, snacks, delicious salads to the main courses, was organic and obtained locally, where possible, to support the organic movement.



Left, COG volunteer Wentsi Yeung, herself an organic Kombucha producer, visits with Josh Biemond and Jen Biemond of Upper Canada Creamery, a popular booth stop for free samples of their delicious organic yogurt and frozen treats.



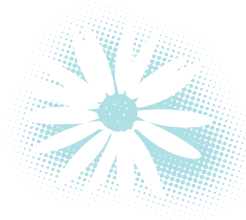
Tom Manley, owner of Homestead Organics, does double duty as President of the Organic Council of Ontario at their booth.



Roger Samson, executive director of Resource Efficient Agricultural Production (REAP) - Canada, gives a presentation on growing switchgrass for the organic market.



A popular vendor's booth with many organic offerings, Homestead Organics has been a champion and major sponsor of Eco Farm Day for many years.



The InnovSeries: How Our Organic Food System Is Changing

Organic growing and eating is undergoing a revolution. This InnovSeries shines a light on the organic food innovations and innovators in the Ottawa - St. Lawrence - Outaouais region. Our second piece looks at creative genius of Aster Lane Edibles.

Do you have a story about innovation to share – or know of someone who does? If yes, we want to hear from you! We are particularly interested in hearing from certified organic farmers, but if you are a producer using organic methods, or a food processor, distributor or eater of organic food we want to hear from you too. Send your story idea or suggestions to the DTE editor: editordowntoearth@gmail.com



Aster Lane Edibles — Not Just Perennial Edibles

BY TELSING ANDREWS

My love of growing food crops came from cooking when I lived in England. I used to go to the grocery store on my bike past hedges of rosemary and shrub sized red fennel to pick up small plastic packages of the same. So I decided to start a few herbs. Something inside of me clicked and a few seeds turned into a few gardens that eventually became creating my own crop varieties.

WHAT IS ASTER LANE EDIBLES

Aster Lane Edibles is a small seed house that grows and develops all of its own seed. I have demonstration gardens including the ornamental edible garden, an orchard based forest garden, a small chef's garden and a more conventional row crop field. I work with number of organizations both formally and informally including doing edible landscape design and consultation for Amano Group, plant breeding coordination for Deep Roots and various talks, seminars and workshops for places like Just Food or Horticultural societies. As experimenting and developing both crops and cropping

systems is one of my primary focuses, I also work with an globally dispersed group of OSSl (Open Source Seed Initiative), mostly non affiliated plant breeders.

FROM COMMONPLACE TO EXOTIC

My year is filled with food whether that is writing about food, doing workshops, stewarding the Earth that provides for the complex web of life that we are within, planting, harvesting and preparing food. I grow a vast array of crops from the familiar beans and zucchini to the less well known Yacon and Apios, from annuals like mustard to perennials like Hablitzia, to the well adapted like beets and corn to those that are marginal like Oca and Peanut.

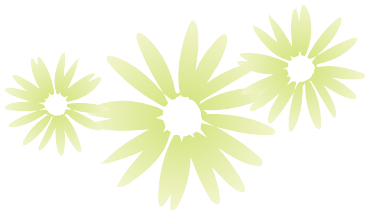
The plants and I dance together in an attempt to create nutritious, low input, aesthetically and ecological appealing varieties. My projects include red leafed rhubarb, Icicle pea, better skirret and true seed grown, short season sweet potato.

FORGOTTEN PERENNIAL EDIBLES

Perhaps I'm most well known for supplying hard to find perennial edibles for use in edible landscaping and permaculture systems. Often relegated to the forgotten, perennial edibles, like the cole crop sea-kale and the celery herb lovage, have a lot of value both in the landscape and kitchen. I have often been confronted with the question of why they are less well known and grown.

Perhaps one reason is that conventional agriculture tends toward high yields in an annually cultivated row crop setting. Being in one place, like asparagus, means that part of the field would not be rotated or tilled or available for other crops. And some perennials are lower yielding but some have the potential for high yields such as walking onion and Patience dock. I have intentionally planted a selection in rows to see how they would preform in a system that needs to be highly work efficient.

Being less well known and grown presents another issue in that they have fallen from the



public's consciousness of what are recognizable vegetables as our palettes have become narrowed. However, these edible perennials are not completely forgotten (and still are actively grown and harvested by some). There are references to seakale grown in a well-known Ottawa grower's garden book from the 80s and I have more than once had people looking for lovage to make a special dish from their childhood. Many have a familiar appearance and/or flavor that would make them easier to market.

A SPECIAL ROLE FOR PERENNIALS IN THE GARDEN

With the surge of interest in food growing in general and permaculture inspired perennial type gardens specifically, along with the publication of a few recent books on the subject, interest in these plants has grown significantly. In fact, I rarely have to advertise my seeds as special plant seekers find me. Perennials have a lot of things going for them though they do not make up my entire cropping system. They are the ultimate hunger gap foods as they are often up very early in the spring like the shade tolerant, climbing spinach *Hablitizia* that grows at the base of my mature apples or lemon tasting garden sorrel that is adaptable to both full sun or deciduous shade. Hardy tuberous crops, like Jerusalem artichoke, will store well overwinter and be accessible first thing in the spring. There are perennial edibles that can be harvested throughout the year, and those that will send out a second flush of green growth as the weather cools in the fall, even after the pumpkins have been nipped by frost.



Established, well grown plants are also more tolerant of adversity. Drought in spring does not prevent Good King Henry from growing to produce edible chenopod florets and eventually pseudocereal seeds. Horseradish and Colewort shake off flea beetle with more ease than annually cropped Brassicas.

EDIMENTALS

Some perennials also blend well with the landscape and landscaping. Many bellflowers and mallows do double duty as edibles and ornamentals. In fact, Stephen Barstow (author of *Around the World in 80 Plants*) coined the term edimental. Forms with interesting colour and flowers such as Gold Leaf anise hyssop or Red mitsuba are as attractive as any ornamental. This means that they can easily blend in with existing ornamental beds or be used to create an entire garden that is secretly a food plot.

No one is going to accuse you of having a farm in your front yard (not that I have an objection to that) with these perennials. Instead you will more likely hear about your pretty flowers.

SHADE AND DROUGHT RESISTANT

They also grow in a wide range of habitats unlike the more narrow requirements of typical, annually cropped vegetables. Tomatoes may like warmth and broccoli may head best in cool weather but most of our vegetables have been selected for 'full' sun, well-drained mid-range pH soil. The truth is that there are 1000s of edibles that fill almost any niche that can grow a plant from bog to dessert to shade. The latter is probably one of my most popular categories as it is a common concern for urban growers. Many woodland edibles like *Hosta* thrive in exactly the conditions that prevent their peppers from ripening. It is such a common question that I have added a Shade Grower's appendix to my book *Grow your Edible Oasis*.

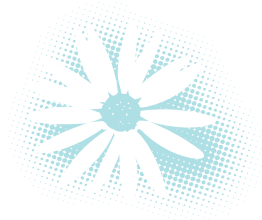
They can be attractive nectar sources for beneficials too such as the large umbels of anise flavoured sweet cicely to the full season of bloom that the *Allium* family provides.

Having low input, low care crops that enhance the diversity of a landscape, fit into low till settings and provide habitat for a range of creatures, fits into my organic framework. It informs many of the seminars that I have been lucky to give for COG-OSO and has given direction to our demonstration garden at the Central Experimental Farm. Learning how to work best with natural systems brings me to another aspect of my work and that is plant breeding.

BREEDING, SAVING AND SELLING SEED

Though I do grow out perennial ancestors of now annual and biennial crops such as *Oeprei* (ancient) leek and sea beet for backcrossing, I do not exclusively favour the perennial. My cross between *St. Victors* and *Oeprei* is a lovely mid-sized leek that will reappear year after year but there may be a reason in the future that I will choose to nudge it to a biennial should that make most sense for the cropping system I am focusing on.

I am a small seed company that only sells the seed I grow and collect (very occasionally I do sell seed supplied by a local nearby grower but this is always well marked). As every act of seed saving is an act of selection, I try to find plants that are best suited to common cultivation techniques (or to less common uses), that are pest and disease resistant, tasty and are well adapted to our area. I also encourage people to do the same. In the middle of the growing season, when many edible perennials are in reproductive growth



– flowering and/or setting seed – I focus on my other crops like potatoes, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and so forth. But as my engagement with the Earth is a creative process filled with wonder and curiosity, I also breed and develop these more common annually cropped vegetables as well. Food security is important to me so I am looking for nutritiously dense, calorie crops such as deeply

coloured carrots and heavy setting yet small and easy to soak dry beans.

I am actively increasing and working on many of these selections, including those that are intentionally diverse rather than restricted, in order to provide them through my seed shop. I hope not only to be able to provide useful crops but also a starting place for people to learn more about how

we interact with the natural world through writings and resources and most of all, I encourage people to stop and observe the amazing world that we could not exist without.

Check out Telsing's Aster Lane Edibles at www.aster-laneedibles.ca/

Senior Organic Gardeners - Summer 2017

With the exciting news of Senior Organic Gardeners (SOG) receiving Trillium grant funding for 2017 -2018, the program has been off to a good start, forming partnerships, and starting with designs of gardens for the new growing season. With Adèle McKay as returning Program Manager, SOG began the program at Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, in February 2017, as a continuation of last year's very successful program. We have set up indoor micro-gardens for the seniors' circle, beginning with sowing of seeds of many varieties, and transplanting of tiny seedlings into pots. This activity is very much enjoyed by all. We also had an interactive plant medicine session, with Joseph Pitawanakwat, who taught about healing with indigenous plants.

We are also hoping to partner with the Tungasuvvingat Inuit Centre; we are awaiting word about the suitability of our program at this Centre.

As the program takes on a multicultural theme this year, we are also expanding to Clementine Towers, Ottawa Community Housing (OCH), where we have established an interactive seniors' gardening committee. This committee has Chinese, Arabic, and Farsi seniors participating. SOG has also commenced the program with 300 Lacasse, OCH, where the seniors' gardening committee has been busy with designs of gardens.

SOG will also be reaching out to the South Nepean Muslim Centre (SNMC), and setting up raised garden boxes for the seniors at this Centre. There is much enthusiasm around this new location.

SOG will be partnering with the Diverse Seniors Support Services of the Jewish Family Services Centre; The SNMC; Just Food; and the Nepean, Rideau & Osgoode Community Resource Centre.

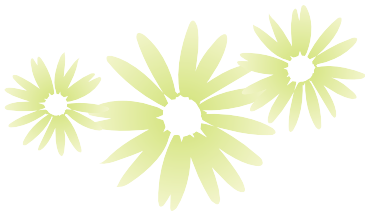
We will also be starting our program with the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO), which will involve seniors from diverse multicultural groups.

We will tailor our organic horticulture program to suit their needs.

Margaret Tourond-Townson, SOG's Lead Volunteer continues to be actively involved in all of our program's exciting new ventures for 2017.



Indoor micro-gardens at 300 Lacasse Ave.



Demonstration Garden - Summer 2017

The Demonstration Garden was a water-soaked challenge in early May. Those few days when weather permitted, we dedicated time to weeding and turning the compost bin. The fear of soil compaction meant that we exercised caution in our gardening endeavours.

From what we learned during those cold rainy/snowy days is that one has to be flexible in their plans and take some risks in planting - a little bit earlier or later and maybe try plants that are a bit out of the usual zone for Ottawa.

Shopping days are key when it is too wet to work outside. One nursery visited the first week of May seemed to be doing well in their racks of potted plants, they reported there was little winter damage, and certainly everything was very green. Another visit, this time to a hardware store,



yielded some tubing to be used in mounting a protective meshing to keep out rodents. We used the meshing last year with some success, but this year's look will be more pleasing.

Our Demo Garden propagation efforts have worked out. There are signs of buds on golden currants, rose bushes, Russian sage and southernwood. In addition, there is sprouting of various onions, strawberries, golden alyssum, globe thistle and geraniums.

Questions we ask ourselves: Maybe we should do more to help our pollinators? Maybe we will have new diseases and pests? Maybe we will have to adjust to a very high variability in temperature and precipitation. We will just have to adapt and see what we can pass on to our visitors and see

what we can learn from them too. We especially look forward to guests coming for Canada's 150th. With this inclement weather, our creativity will be put to the test and the results will be there for all to see.

With summer here, we will catch up and be ready for our COG Demonstration Garden Tour, on Sunday, July 16th from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM. The Organic Demonstration Garden is in the Experimental Farm, off Prince of Wales Drive. Hope to see you there!

<http://cog.ca/ottawa/organic-demonstration-garden/>

For more information, please contact: Jim Davidson, Demonstration Garden Coordinator, email: dr241@ncf.ca

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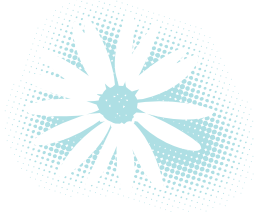
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Chasing Aromas Across Cultures

Organics Always Taste Better

Preparing food is the most soul-nourishing process I've ever been involved in. There's nothing in the world like that very first taste of a meal you've been planning for days. You've dreamt up your recipe. At the farmer's market, you stopped at all stalls, flared your nostrils at the scent of fresh organics, ran your fingers over their skin testing for firmness, tapped to hear that resonating sound of the ripe fruit. It all comes together in this incredible rhapsody of flavour, colour, and scent.

Organic produce has this incredible gift of satisfying all senses, even before the food touches your taste buds, and it is this ultimate aroma that I've been chasing for years, on a few continents, in several countries.

GROWING ORGANIC TASTEBUDS

I grew up in Transylvania, Romania, a place where you know it's strawberry season because you can smell them three blocks down from the market. When it's time to pickle, if you chatted up the farmers through spring, they'll let you know when they bring in the crunchy gherkins. And if you traded enough stories, shook their hard worked hands before you pay for your purchase, they always throw in a rich bunch of fragrant dill, maybe some of that very potent Transylvanian garlic.

These are the realities I've grown up with back in the old country, where my grandparents taught me about the incomparable flavour of natural products, before I even knew they were called "organics". They grew all their vegetables in abundant gardens around the house and we picked together seasonal fruit from our lush orchards bordering thick forests of the Carpathians.

This time in Transylvania trained my tastebuds for the aroma of organics, sharpened my nose for robust scents of fresh herbs, and taught me how truly nourishing food comes to life with produce grown with care, love, and knowledge of ancestral rhythms of harvest.

In Europe, my formative years brought me to a conclusion: the success of a gourmet meal starts on the fields of organic farms, takes off when a chef picks out best ingredients, blooms to completion in a kitchen that respects the nature and properties of prime materials.

NEW WORLD AROMAS

When I left the Old World behind, more than a decade ago, to find a home in Canada, food and eating became confusing. The rituals around food prepping and meals followed different patterns. Familiar fruits and vegetables sold in immense grocery stores looked flawless, but the aroma I was chasing was hard to find. Long years of trial and error followed. I was exploring a new palette of flavours, but from confusion an immense gratitude grew: the culinary world cracked open for me in a multitude of possibilities streaming from a diverse cultural tapestry specific to Canada.

Food taps into the very essence of life, and for me, life suddenly got a whole lot broader and infinitely more fascinating. I wanted to know more about the science behind nutrition, so I joined the Canadian

School of Natural Nutrition where what I intuitively knew about organic food, it's enhanced nourishing and healing properties, was confirmed through my studies.

To supplement all this theoretical learning, I felt the deep need to connect with food at a very practical level. I love taking cooking classes in all new cultures I visit. It feels like I'm accessing years of ancestral wisdom by soaking up flavours organized in meticulous and specific ways.

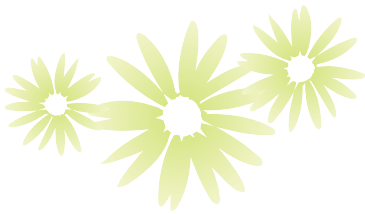
Over time, so much valuable knowledge was passed to me from vibrant chefs and passionate teachers, yet the most I've absorbed was from organic farmers in Bali, where I found myself at the beginning of last year. Before the cooking class began, we were taken for a walk through surrounding rice fields, where we filled our baskets with succulent greens, tapioca root dug out freshly, spiced radishes and



Family tradition: tasting sour grapes for pickling at our vineyard in Transylvania, Romania



Traditional Romanian polenta stuffed with herbs and mushrooms



edible flowers. I mirrored the farmers, reverently thanking the earth before harvesting fresh organics, asking for all that miraculous vitality to pour into our bodies when enjoying all the recipes we were taught to prepare.

In Jamaica, the jovial nature of my Teacher Chefs infused my cooking with the spices and local flavours that bring in the sun on a rainy day, a much needed aroma to bring in the kitchen through Canadian winters.

Coming back to Canada after all these culinary explorations in the organic realms of different cultures, I knew I wanted to continue feeling that true testimony of life which was so obvious in my body when I cooked with organic fruits and vegetables. It took me a while until I found my place in the restaurant landscape of Ottawa, but it all miraculously fell into place.



For the past 8 months I have been working at a vegan restaurant in Canada's capital called Rawlicious, which aims to work predominantly with fresh organics. Here, we prepare everything from scratch, all dishes are raw, and everything is thought out to satisfying the cravings of the mind and of the body. Here is where my true apprenticeship is unfolding. I am

hoping to become a raw vegan chef that employs organics to create abundant, healthy and satisfying meals.

When I become a Natural Nutritionist, I want to be the kind that shows clients how to make food from nourishing produce, share meals with a sense of ceremony and community.

This constant chase of organic aromas through several cultures brought so much abundance in my life. When I am in the kitchen, elbow deep in organics, I feel rooted, calm, with an exquisite sense of purpose that gives my life so much texture.

Diana Buxban, dianabux@gmail.com
Aspiring Natural Nutritionist and Vegan Chef in Training
<https://www.instagram.com/dianabuxban/>

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Please visit our website for more information www.cog.ca/ottawa/legacies/

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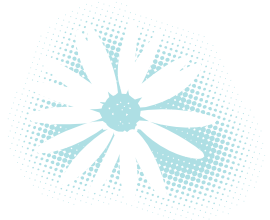
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Please note that a tax receipt cannot be provided for the \$25 membership

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Mouth-watering recipes from a local chef

Mark MacInnis has been working in the food industry for over 15 years, graduating from the Culinary Arts Program at the Culinary Institute of Canada in 2001. He has worked his way across the country gaining experience with vegan foods, baking, catering, wellness retreat cuisine and restaurants. He currently prepares weekly take home meals for clients amongst other projects. For more information, please contact: macinnis.mark@gmail.com

WALNUT LENTIL LOAF

Chef Mark MacInnis

Yield 1 loaf

1 c	dried French Lentils
2	garlic cloves, minced
½ medium	onion, small dice
1 medium	carrot, small dice
1 stalk	celery, small dice
1 Tbsp	fresh rosemary leaves
¼ c chopped	fresh flat-leafed parsley leaves
2	Bay leaves
¼ c	Branston pickle
½ c	panko crumbs
1½ c	walnuts, toasted and chopped
2	eggs
¼ c + 2 Tbsp	Olive oil
2 c	water
1 Tbsp	salt

Topping

1 Tbsp	Branston pickle
1 Tbsp	Dijon
1 Tbsp	olive oil
1 Tbsp	brown sugar
1 Tbsp	water

Directions

1. Heat a medium sized pot over medium heat, add olive oil and onions, carrots and celery and gently sauté until aromatic but not browning, add garlic and cook another 10 seconds. Add lentils, bay, rosemary, water and salt.

Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover and let cook 20-30 min until tender but still keep their shape. Set aside to cool.

2. When cooled, gently mix with remaining ingredients careful not to mash the lentils too much. Gently press into an oiled loaf pan.
3. In a blender, blend topping ingredients together until they are smooth. Spread evenly over the loaf.
4. Bake for 30-40 min at 350F.
5. Remove and serve.

POTATO LATKES

Chef Mark MacInnis

Yield: approx 24

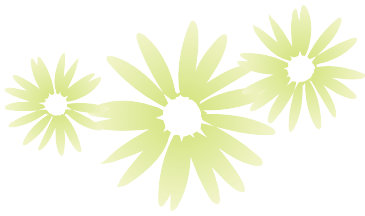
4	russet potatoes
1	onion
2	Eggs
½ cup	Corn starch
1 tsp	sea salt
canola oil, for frying	

Directions

1. Peel potatoes and onion and grate on a box grater or in a food processor with the grater attachment.
2. Lay the grated potato and onion out on a towel or cheesecloth, roll it up and squeeze as much liquid out of them as you can.
3. Crack the eggs into a mixing bowl large enough for all of the ingredients, and whisk.
4. Add the grated potato and onion, cornstarch, and sea salt.
5. Mix well with your hands.
6. Divide into 24 even patties and set aside.
7. Heat about ¼ inch of oil in a heavy bottom frying pan over medium heat, when the oil is hot add about 6 latkes at a time and cook about 2-3 min per side until nice and golden, remove them from the pan and let rest on a cooling rack while you finish cooking the remaining latkes in batches of 6.

Serve hot.





Urban Organic Gardening Seminars 2017

The seminars took place on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from April 18 to May 9 at Ottawa City Hall. A wide range of topics was offered, for example: building healthy soil and composting, organic management of pests and diseases, and practical workshops on garden planning.

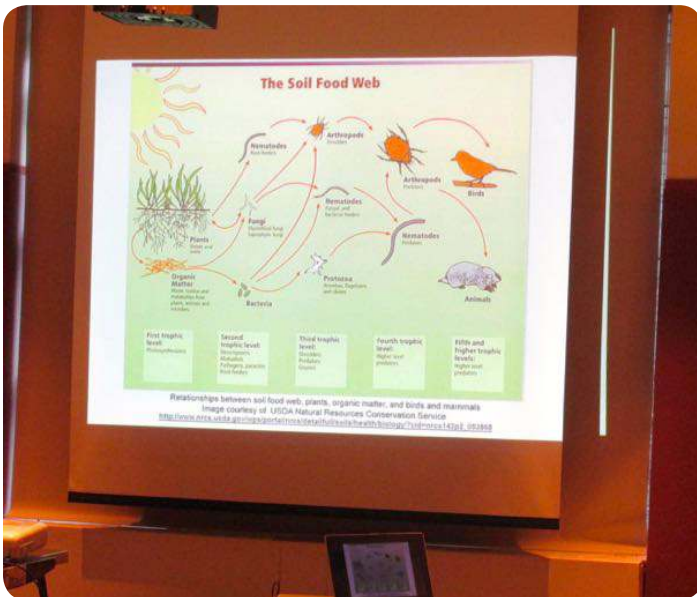
Special speaker Mary Reid promoted the value of organic gardening and challenged participants to share their knowledge and experiences with as many interested community members as possible.

Participants who attended all seven seminars received certificates from the COG OSO Urban Organic Gardening Seminars 2017.

The Program Evaluation of the seminars in 2016 offered a number of recommendations, which are being implemented in a multi-year plan.

An important recommendation was to find a volunteer assistant coordinator who would take over the organization of the seminars in 2018. Joanne Cairns comes to COG OSO with glowing references and strong credentials. She has been working on the seminars since January and is preparing work for the 2018 seminars.

The Urban Organic Gardening Seminars have a powerful team of instructors who deliver the seminars effectively and with a passion for gardening.

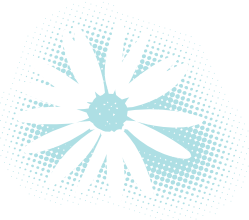


They are: Telsing Andrews, Rob Danforth, David Hinks and Pat Lucey. We extend kudos to them for encouraging organic backyard gardening in our city.

All the participants in the Urban Organic Gardening Seminars are invited to the Organic Gardeners' Celebration held on July 16 at the Demonstration Garden, in the Central Experimental Farm. There, they can find answers to their questions from experienced organic gardeners. Join us!

<http://cog.ca/ottawa/organic-demonstration-garden/>





Come one! Come all!

Welcome – Bienvenue!

Organic Gardeners' Celebration 2017!

Sunday, July 16, 1:00-4:00 pm

Tours of the Organic Demo Garden

At the Experimental Farm beside the

Canada Agriculture Museum

Activities for kids

Chats with Organic Gardeners

PHOTOGRAPH OPPORTUNITIES

Music & Organic Lemonade



www.cog.ca/ottawa/organic-gardeners-celebration/

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