

Down to Earth

Editor's Corner

Molly Davidson, who has been the Editor of *Down to Earth* over the past few years, has had to move on for employment. She has done stellar work on *Down to Earth*, taking on the search of special, relevant articles of interest, creating a Recipe Corner and tracking the ads for our generous sponsors. We thank you Molly and wish you the very best! You deserve it!

Fall Reflections has a report in this issue where we featured our wonderful volunteers and sponsors. The movie *Meeting Place* was most interesting, and meeting Tony and Fran McQuail was fascinating!

Brand new in this issue is a regular organic gardening corner by Rob Danforth, the *DTE Notebook for the Urban Organic Vegetable and Herb Gardener*. This is an outgrowth of the Urban Organic Gardening Seminars – Rob has been an instructor for a number of years and his seminars have been very well received. Please write to him if you have thoughts about his regular feature through editordowntoearth@gmail.com.

I am Acting Editor of *Down to Earth* until a new editor is selected in time for the March issue!

Enjoy looking at your garden photographs, planning your garden for 2017.

Cheers!

Margaret

editordowntoearth@gmail.com

Breaking News!

The *Organic Gardeners' Celebration* is again happening on July 16, 2017 at the Demonstration Garden in the Experimental Farm. Please put that date on your calendar.

ECO FARM DAY COMING IN FEBRUARY 2017

"The 3 Rs of Organic Agriculture: Restorative, Responsible, Resilient"

February 25, 2017 at the Ramada Inn Cornwall

Keynote Address: Mark Shepard of [New Forest Farm](#), author of *Restoration Agriculture: Real-World Permaculture for Farmers*

Other sessions include: Agro-forestry & water management, the Farmersville Community Abattoir, outdoor mushroom cultivation on organic farms, women organic farmers, dealing with perennial weeds, crop planning & records management, small fruit production, and much more!

Plus: Join us on Sunday, February 26 for an all-day intensive session with Mark Shepard, "Restoration Agriculture on YOUR Farm"

Contact / Information

Telephone: (613) 487-2257

Email: ecofarmday@cog.ca

Facebook: [facebook.com/cogosochapter](https://www.facebook.com/cogosochapter)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ecofarmday>

Location: Ramada Inn Cornwall

805 Brookdale Avenue, Cornwall,

Ontario K6J 4P3

Tel: (613) 933-8000

Toll Free: 1-888-900-5762

Email: info@cornwallramada.com

<http://www.cornwallramada.com>

<http://www.cornwallramada.com>

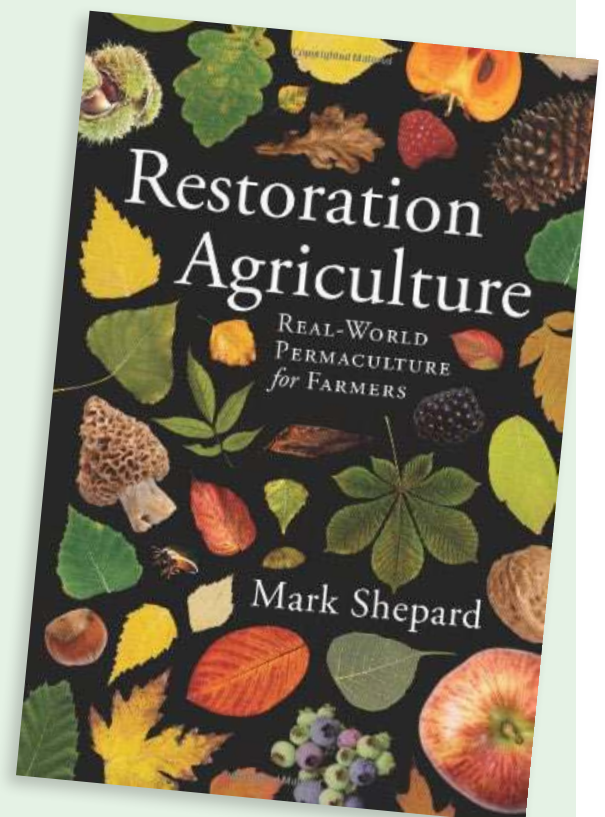
<http://www.cornwallramada.com>

<http://www.cornwallramada.com>

<http://www.cornwallramada.com>

<http://www.cornwallramada.com>

<http://www.cornwallramada.com>



Tribute to our Volunteers and Sponsors

Eco Farm Day 2016 Volunteers

Lloyd Strachan
Alain D'Aoust
Connie Horbas
Gary Weinhold
Rob Wallbridge
Erin Krekoski
Amy Kremen
Tom Manley
Colin Lundy
Doug Scott

COG OSO Garlic Project Volunteers 2016

Barbara Koch
Heidi Boraks
Kayla Kazda
Lloyd Strachan
Monica Chappell

COG Booth Volunteers

Alain D'Aoust
Amanda Gorman
Angela Stuart
Astrid Muschalla
Barbara Koch
Emily McTaggart
Fred McFarland
Gary Weinhold
Greg Lane
Leonard Helferty
Linda MacDonald
Lloyd Strachan
Lorrie Nichols
Marie-Thérèse Voutsinos
Michael Ilgert
Pat Weinhold

Pedro Escudero
Rekha Sharma

Communications Leader

COG OSO has been searching for a Communications Lead Steering Committee Member. If you can help out or know someone with some experience in communication tools, please tell them and tell us!
cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca

Growing Up Organic

GUO ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF VOLUNTEERS

Michelle Richards, teacher at Connaught
Stephen Skoutajan, teacher at Devonshire
David Coyne, teacher at Featherstone
Tom Marcantonio, Master Gardener
Judi Varga-Toth, parent, community member
Sara Reynolds, parent, school volunteer
Monica Chapell, community member, avid gardener, teacher

Coordinator of Volunteers

COG OSO has been searching for a Coordinator of Volunteers. If you would like

more information or if you know someone who might be interested, please share with them and with us!

Down to Earth

Molly Davidson (retiring)
Stephanie Pelot
Megan McLeod
Allison Gibson
Margaret Tourond-Townson

COG OSO E-News

Sara Holzman, Editor
Michael Vilenkin
Elena Vilenkin

Feast Of Fields 2016 by Carefor COG OSO – a partner

Lloyd Strachan
Margaret Tourond-Townson
Gary Weinhold
Dick Coote
Barbara Luise

Urban Organic Spring Gardening Seminars 2016

VOLUNTEERS

David Townson
Margaret Townson
Les Braden
Rachel Moore
Mike Diec
Nina Lennie
Mathilde Papillon
Lisa Able

Britanny Buzzell
Anouk MacKenzie
Andrea Garling

INSTRUCTORS

Rob Danforth
Eveline Lemieux
David Hinck
Telsing Andrews
Pat Lucey
Nicholas Taylor

Organic Demonstration Garden

Jim Davidson
Lloyd Strachan
Braden Gunther
Denise Davidson
Helena Misaka Sawace
Antonio Sawace
Michael Gunther
Rita Paterson
Siang Dai
Telsing Andrews
Les Braden
Andrea Gartley

Website and Social Media

Alissa Campbell
Caitlin Carroll
Debbie Holzman

Senior Organic Gardeners

Jane Cowie, Wellington Towers
Robert Shook, Wellington Towers
Helen Pinkney, Russell Manor

Sarr Sam, Russell Manor
Joseph, OCH, 800 St Laurent
Maureen Donnelly, Odawa Friendship Centre
Lindy Rosko, Hope Living – Shepherds of Good Hope
Nathaniel Parent, Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre
Jean Marc Rousseau, Vanier Community Gardens – Montfort & Lacasse

Finances

Gary Weinhold, Treasurer

2017 Steering Committee

Stephanie Lane
Gary Weinhold
David Townson
Caitlin Carroll
Dick Coote
Lloyd Strachan
Alissa Campbell
Margaret Tourond-Townson

YOUR NAME FOR 2017?

Nominations for the Steering Committee & Expressions of Interest – you could attend a couple of Steering Committee Meetings and then discuss your thoughts before becoming a member.



Innes Road Branch · Orleans

Thank You to Our Generous Sponsors

Canada (New Horizons for
Seniors)

Ontario Trillium Foundation
Community Ottawa Foundation

City Councillor
David Chernushenko

Ottawa-Carleton District
School Board

J.P. Bickell Foundation

TD Friends of the Environment
Foundation

Plant a Seed & See What Grows
Foundation

Just Food
Community Gardening Network

Scotiabank Innes Road

Ritchie Feed & Seed

Malenka Originals

The Cottage Gardener

Sure Print & Graphics

Greta's Organic Gardens

Natural Factors

Little Stream Bakery

Pantry Plus

Rainbow Foods

The Printing House

Pentafolio

Homestead Organics

Debbie Holzman

Foodwork.ca

Tourne-sol Farm

COG OSO Annual Fall Reflections AGM and Information Event - 2016

DICK COOTE

The 2016 COG OSO Fall Reflections took place on Sunday 13th November, at the Hintonburg Community Centre, Wellington Street, Ottawa. The AGM proceeded first, with presentations by Steering Committee members according to their area of responsibility.

In the unavoidable absence of Chair Stephanie Lane, the business meeting was chaired by Alissa Campbell, who welcomed a large turn-out of members, friends and interested new faces. She briefly reviewed COG's mandate and structure, and our charitable status, before presenting our accomplishments in 2016.

Growing Up Organic (GUO): Alissa described the changes that have occurred during the past 12 months in this major activity of the Chapter. It has gone from having two paid part-time staff members and a number of participating schools in Ottawa and in Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County, to almost folding up due to lack of financial support, to a revived program in collaboration with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board:

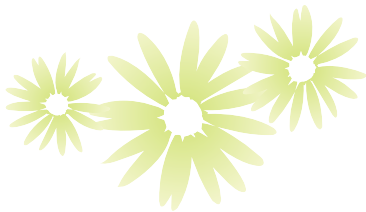
- We wrapped up our pilot in the counties after three years of funding came to a close; there has been substantial increase in the capacity of organizations in SD&G to deliver garden-based programming for kids.
- We succeeded in cementing a one-year pilot partnership with the Ottawa Carleton District School Board to provide a significant amount of funding for GUO to run programming in its schools; this has been the program's lifeline. We are very excited that the OCDSB is the first school board in Canada (to our knowledge!) to directly finance garden-based education.
- We hired a new coordinator, Jen Coorsh!
- There is great interest in the workshops, with teachers often adding more to their schools after receiving one or two. So far we've done over 30 workshops at 8 OCDSB schools.

Senior Organic Gardeners (SOG): Margaret Tourond-Townson described the activities. The organic vegetable and flower raised beds have been hugely successful, with great participation by many very enthusiastic seniors in 8 locations in 2016 – three Ottawa Community Housing locations (800 St. Laurent, Russell Manor and

Wellington Towers), two Vanier Community Gardens, Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre, the Odawa Aboriginal Friendship Centre and Hope Living of the Shepherds of Good Hope in Kanata. In spite of the drought, the gardens have been brilliant and in August we did a Recognition Event to thank Community Foundation Ottawa for their major financial support. The Organic Seed Sales in the spring and our circle of local donors did us proud. We hope to develop our Circle of SOG Friends who donate regularly to SOG locally and allow us to do important things that Foundation Grants do not allow. News flash: SOG has just learned that the Ontario Trillium Foundation has awarded us \$162,700 for 2017-2018 which will be properly announced and recognized throughout 2017-18. This is a major boost to the work of SOG and we are deeply grateful for the support.

Organic Demonstration Garden (at Central Experimental Farm): Both Margaret and Lloyd Strachan praised the volunteers who have kept this garden going, and described the "Gardeners' Celebration" event that was held there in the summer. The celebration was planned as a follow-up opportunity for the Urban Organic Gardening Seminars. It took place on Sunday, July 24 at the Demonstration Garden in the Experimental Farm on a beautiful hot summer day. The Q&A opportunities, Garden Tours, Activities for Children, Garden Photography Tips, Chats about Pollinators together with Strolling Musicians, performance by the Just Voices Choir and sips of organic lemonade made for a beautiful occasion which we are planning again for 2017 during Ottawa's birthday party! Unfortunately, this year's celebration was on the same day as a road race event that impeded access and parking for many who might have otherwise attended – something to be avoided next year!

Urban Organic Gardening Seminars: David Townson reported on the Annual Urban Organic Gardening Seminars held in April – May this past spring, which welcomed just over 60 participants. The topics were wide-ranging but presented an enriched basic level of knowledge and skills for organic gardening in an urban context. A Program Evaluation of the Seminars has been undertaken



thanks to a very competent volunteer, Miek van Gaalan and the results are being put to very good use. We expect the Seminars in 2017 to be of even higher calibre, thanks to the instructors working together with the coordinators to further integrate and apply the lessons learned from the evaluation, and better integrating the Mission of COG into our communities.

Eco-Farm Day (EFD) and Regenerative Orchards Workshop: Gary Weinhold reported on the very successful EFD last February, held as usual at the Cornwall Ramada Inn. There were over 300 participants attending a day of organic farming sessions, and the event was well supported by almost 40 businesses and organizations with displays in the trade show area. The keynote speaker was John Montague, an Ontario farmer and soil specialist. All food and beverages served during the day were organic and locally sourced if available. Being entirely run by volunteers, it produced a profit of over \$5000, which has been allocated to a joint COG OSO and COG-National project to assist farmers who wish to become certified through the transition process. Next year's event is planned for Saturday, February 25.

Steering Committee members who have agreed to continue to serve for the next year are as follows: Stephanie Lane, Alissa Campbell, Lloyd Strachan, Gary Weinhold, Caitlin Carrol, Margaret Tourond-Townson, David Townson, and Dick Coote.

The EFD was followed the next day by a workshop on regenerative orchards. It was presented by Stefan Sobkowiak of Miracle Farm (Quebec). His approach combines permaculture principles with fruit trees and perennial berries and vegetables. About 60 participants attended this all-day event sponsored by EFAO and COG OSO.

Organic Farm Tours: Dick Coote described the four tours that were held in the summer: June 25th Biemond's certified organic dairy farm and Upper Canada Creamery, Iroquois, ON, and Homestead Organics' new facility in Morrisburg. Then on August 14th in the morning we visited Rod Ewing's certified organic farm where he grows soybeans, wheat, rye, peas and oats, and then in the afternoon Justin Reeve's Meadowlark Rise organic and permaculture vegetable farm at Vankleek Hill. All the tours were extremely interesting, but could have been better attended.

Feast of Fields (Carefor): Gary provided a brief overview of the October 5th Feast of Fields event, which is a celebration of local chefs and organic food, held at Ottawa City Hall by Carefor Health and Community Services. For the



Fran and Tony McQuail

first time, this was a joint partnership between COG OSO and Carefor (a charity that specializes in a variety of accessible home care and community support services). COG OSO supported this activity, which followed a similar format to that of previous COG FOF events, but with our involvement being mainly assisting with bringing local organic farmers on board. It was attended by 225 people. Ten chefs, media, and local suppliers participated in the 3-hour event. COG OSO provided volunteers, and also had a table to showcase information on Senior Organic Growers and other COG initiatives. The event was a great success and Carefor is interested in partnering with us again next year to do it again on a larger scale.

COG on the Road (The COG Booth): Lloyd listed a number of events that the COG OSO booth had been taken to, by either himself or by other volunteers. During 2016 the COG OSO booth was present at 20 different events, providing exposure for several thousand attendees to organic educational materials. A total of 18 volunteers helped at the booth at one or more of these events. We need additional volunteers to help transport booth materials and meet the public.

COG OSO Communications: Our quarterly e-newsletter, *Down to Earth*, reaches nearly 2000 people and includes information on our activities as well as special articles of interest to the organic community. Our Editor Molly Davidson's move to Toronto means we are now searching for a new editor. Know someone who could be interested? . . . Let us know please! COG OSO E-News, our monthly update, is also reaching nearly 2000 people on our mailing list and is led by editor Sara Holzman working out of Nunavut. . . Her sustained volunteer support for COG OSO is admirable and allows you all to receive announcements about upcoming events and programs in COG OSO, as well as other sister organizations.

COG OSO Financial Report: Gary briefly summarized our financial situation, referring to incomes and expenditures of our major activities – EcoFarm Day, the associated workshop, UOG Seminars, GUO and SOG. These are the major chapter projects from a financial perspective. Although we have over \$40,000 in the bank some of that is reserved for GUO and Farmer Outreach. SOG will be largely funded by a Trillium grant next year. A small net loss in SOG was covered by the chapter. The chapter also contributed to GUO projects where grants or fees were not sufficient.

Election of Steering Committee for 2107: The existing Steering Committee members who have agreed to continue to serve for the next year are as follows: Stephanie Lane, Alissa Campbell, Lloyd Strachan, Gary Weinhold (Treasurer), Caitlin Carrol, Margaret Tourond-Townson, David Townson, and Dick Coote. As there were no nominations from the floor, the slate of existing members was adopted.

Meeting Place Organic Film: The main event of the afternoon was the screening of the movie "Meeting Place Organic Film". The owners of Meeting



Place Organic Farm, Tony and Fran McQuail, were graciously on hand for the screening. They were both raised in Quaker families in the US, and emigrated to Canada in the early 1970s, buying a 100-acre farm in Huron County, Ontario. They started out as conventional grain farmers, using chemicals and fuel, but quickly became convinced this was not the way to go, either environmentally or economically! They studied organic farming, and over time converted their operation to an integrated organic enterprise with pastured beef, pigs, chicken and goats, and many types of vegetables and fruits, all powered by a team of Belgian draft horses. After first living in the barn, they built themselves an energy-efficient home, where they raised their two daughters. Today they sell their certified organic produce through a CSA, at the farm gate, and at local farmers' markets. And they work with their neighbours to provide lamb, maple syrup and honey for their customers. They also teach courses on Holistic Resource Management. They are members of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) in Southwestern Ontario, which is an informal, member-driven network of farmers that offer internships on their organic and ecological farms. They were founding members of the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO).

The film traces their progress over the years, and explains the evolution of their farming practices and their philosophy. They believe in having the smallest environmental footprint possible by minimizing their purchased inputs, while maximizing the fruits of their labour and ingenuity. They have built a plastic hoop barn in which they grow vegetables which are irrigated from reservoirs, filled from their stream and ponds. They rotate their pastures using electric fences powered by solar panels. They graze their draft horses in the buffer strips that surround the farm, which isolate them from their conventional crop-spraying neighbours. Fran and her daughters make copious quantities of canned fruits and vegetables that provide healthy sustenance throughout the winter. They grow all their own meat, and eggs, and fertilize their crops and pastures with manure generated by their livestock. The farm is now slowly being taken over by their daughter Katrina, who has re-introduced goats to the farm for milk and cheese. She clearly believes in the same things that have sustained her parents, so it is great to see that the next generation is following confidently in their footsteps.

Following the screening of the movie, Tony and Fran responded to the audience for at least 45 minutes, never tiring from the endless stream of questions! They are an extraordinarily inspiring couple – if only there were more like them, what a peaceful, healthy, and sustainable world we could have!

Thanks to David and others for the organic popcorn available while watching the movie!

Gardeners Beware!

The Annual Spring Urban Organic Gardening Seminars will once again be in town from April 18 to May 9, 2017! This program has had a complete rebuild after a Program Evaluation that was most constructive! Thanks to all the instructors who helped with the renewal of the topics to be addressed! In January, you will find the line-up of seminars on our website! Gardeners beware, you may become seriously involved in these seminar topics!

Check them out at: www.cog.ca/ottawa/urban.organic.gardening.seminars/ Questions? seminars.uog.cog.oso@gmail.com

URBAN ORGANIC GARDENING SEMINARS
 APRIL 18 TO MAY 9, 2017

SÉMINAIRES JARDINAGE BIO URBAIN
 18 AVRIL AU 9 MAI 2017

COG
 Canadian Organic Growers
 Cultivons Biologique Canada
 Ottawa - St. Lawrence - Outaouais Chapter
 Section d'Ottawa - Saint-Laurent - Outaouais

Emplacement central
 Nouveaux sujets d'actualités
 Rabais et forfaits disponibles

Information/inscription
 www.cog.ca/ottawa

Central location
 Hot new topics
 Package and discount fees available

Information/Registration
 www.cog.ca/ottawa

Senior Organic Gardeners SPONSOR

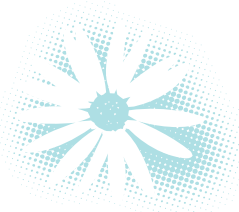
The Cottage Gardener
 Heirloom Seedhouse & Nursery

COG OSO SPONSOR

SURE
 SURE PRINT & GRAPHICS
 Orleans

COG OSO SPONSOR

GRETA'S
 ORGANIC GARDENS



Thanks to Sponsors of Growing Up Organic

JEN COORSH, PROJECT MANAGER, GROWING UP ORGANIC/GRANDIR BIO

Growing Up Organic (GUO) is an exciting garden-based education program that runs through Canadian Organic Growers Ottawa-St. Lawrence-Outaouais chapter. We have a rich history facilitating school garden workshops in Ottawa and surrounding schools. This year we are thrilled to announce our funding from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) to continue our dynamic food literacy program in Ottawa.

Each fall season we offer a suite of workshops, curriculum-linked and tailored to late-summer and fall gardening activities. This year the workshops included harvesting, seed saving and soils and composting.

Our program ran in 8 OCDSB schools with over 30 workshops in total. Many teachers booked one workshop and then followed up by booking all three for multiple classes. This fall we worked with as young as kindergarten classes all the way to grade 9 workshops, establishing new relationships with Ottawa high schools.

Many of our GUO partner schools are already excited to book our spring garden workshops. If you know a parent or a teacher who is interested in our program, contact us at guo-ottawa@cog.ca. Our garden-based workshops are grade-specific and curriculum linked!

This winter GUO is concentrating on teaching the teachers and continuing our program of empowerment through a strategic focus on education. We will be presenting our program at the 2017 Ottawa-Carleton Elementary Teacher's Federation Annual Conference.

Thank you to our sponsors, the OCDSB, Plant-a-Seed Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment and the JP Bickell Foundation for their support.

Thank you Ottawa Schools for a great fall. Growing Up Organic is looking forward to sprouting seeds with our schools again this spring.



Studying soil and learning about microbacteria at Devonshire Public School

Volunteer Openings at COG OSO

COG OSO IS LOOKING FOR A COORDINATOR FOR OUR URBAN ORGANIC GARDEN SEMINAR

This is a volunteer position for a minimum of one year beginning in January. It involves assisting in the organization of the Urban Organic Gardening Seminars. This is an opportunity to make a meaningful and a lasting contribution to our communities in the area of developing awareness, knowledge, skills and commitment for gardeners wanting to start growing their own vegetables, herbs, fruit and edible flowers for food.

Please send a letter of interest and a resume including your education and experience relevant to the role to: seminars.uog.cog.oso@gmail.com

Read more: www.cog.ca/ottawa/urban.organic.gardening/

COG OSO IS CURRENTLY SEEKING A COMMUNICATIONS LEAD VOLUNTEER

Our Lead Communications Volunteer would ideally have experience with a variety of communication tools and be able to offer leadership to our E-News Team, our Website Manager and our Social Media Volunteer as well as all facets of our organization.

Read more at www.cog.ca/ottawa/urban.organic.gardening/ Scroll down please. Questions: cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WITH COG OSO (FOR THE SOG PROGRAM)

The Ottawa – St. Lawrence – Outaouais chapter of Canadian Organic Growers (COG OSO) is seeking a SOG Administrative Coordinator for our Senior Organic Gardeners Program. Please view information here www.cog.ca/ottawa/Get-Involved/Working-with-COG/

FERME COOPÉRATIVE

Tourne SOL

CO-OPERATIVE FARM

Les Cèdres, Québec · Phone (450) 452-4271 · info@fermetournesol.qc.ca

Ritchie

Feed & Seed Inc.

Over 85 Years of Customer Service
1390 Windmill Lane, Ottawa (613) 741-4430
4 other locations in Eastern Ontario

The DTE Notebook for the Urban Organic Vegetable and Herb Gardener

WITH TOB DANFORTH

After many years of urban gardening in all four garden types, in-ground beds, raised beds, box beds, and moveable containers (small yards/patios/decks/roofs/balconies), I find a box bed is well worth the cost and effort if you have the space to dedicate to a box bed garden.



Our box bed: 4' x 6' x 2' in log cabin configuration.

Box beds come in whatever size you choose to build, and the benefits are many:

- Long-lasting bed
- Easily maintained as organic
- No need to test ground soil for contaminants
- Supports dense planting
- Large amount of root room
- Deep soil suitable for plant supports (e.g. spirals/cages/nets)
- Easy access from all sides and a height that saves your back and clothes
- No need to till soil
- Handy to your kitchen
- Fewer diseases, harmful bugs, weeds, and animals (squirrels excepted!)
- Re-useable soil that needs only amending with compost or manure each fall
- Attractive look with cucumber/squash vines over the sides and flowers interplanted.

Winter is an excellent time to plan to build a box bed for the 2017 season. The initial cost in time, labour, and money is fairly high, but well worth it as a box bed will serve you for many years at very little or no cost per year depending on your need for organic seeds, and compost or manure. No additional cost if you save seeds and prepare your own organic compost.

Because this container is for the long term and the bed is not moveable, planning is very important. In the spring, site your bed for maximum sun exposure (6-8 hours of sun). Then check for the following:

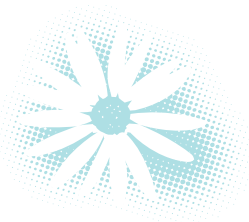
- Any necessary approvals (bylaws, management, residents' association, city easement)
- Box orientation for wind protection, ground gradient, drainage, and people traffic.
- Engineering report on weight bearing if box bed is on a balcony or roof.
- Access to the box for soil delivery, wheelbarrow traffic, water, future composter, and garden tending (Caution – wider than 4 feet poses reaching problems. 4 ft. wide if 360 degree access, but 2 – 2.5 feet wide if access from only one side – i.e. box against a wall or fence)
- Accessibility for wheelchair or walker if necessary. Note: a wheelchair gardener's access is limited to about a 1.5 foot side reach. Telescoping tools are handy, but the gardener must be able to reach the individual plants.



4' x 4' x 2.5'



4' x 16' x 3' (internal supports & slight bow)



NB – Since the box bed will be separate from the ground soil (i.e. no digging), locates for cable/electricity/gas/water/septic system are not essential unless you suspect that access to these underground features will be necessary in the future. Moving a box bed would be a serious challenge!

Next, decide on the size of the box bed. A standard box is usually 4 feet x 8 feet x 2 feet deep. However, I have seen boxes of all widths, lengths, and depths, as well as boxes on stilts but none shallower than 12 inches (30 centimetres). Smallest was 4 x 4 x 3 and largest was 4 x 16 x 3.

The box can be made from any wood except painted, treated, or reconstituted/glued wood. Spruce, Pine, and Fir (SPF) are inexpensive but do not last more than a few years. Eastern white cedar and Hemlock (Brewer Park Community garden uses hemlock) cost a little more and will last the longest (15-20 yrs.). You can also make a 4 x 6 x 2 box out of cement patio stones set on their sides in a wood (DIY) or metal frame (Lee Valley).



A box can be made with boards or with 4"x4" posts either rough cut or dressed (dressed looks better and has fewer splinters and clothing grabbers, but costs a few more \$).

A bed constructed of boards will need corner and side supports (usually metal corners and 2x4's sharpened and driven into the ground) so that the boards do not bow out or separate and leak soil, especially when the bed is watered. These supports should be on the outside of the box to brace the boards and have the wet soil push the boards outward against the supports. If the supports are on the inside, they rob you of garden space, they are annoyingly in the way when you cultivate the soil to remove old roots, the fasteners will eventually pull out of the damp 2x4's, and the wet soil will push the boards out away from the supports so the boards are no longer attached. The next rain or watering will carry soil out between the side boards. Years ago I made that mistake in the interests of good looks. I regretted it for all the reasons mentioned. I still see it today in a number of box beds in Winnipeg and Ottawa.

Our box has 4x4's dressed/planed **posts** of eastern white cedar in a log cabin configuration, 5" galvanized **spikes**, a **gravel** drainage base, **geotextile** to sandwich the gravel, garden **soil** not potting soil (organic if possible but if not, ask about the composition of top soils as not all soils are equal – I used Big Yellow Bag and was very satisfied with the 4-part composition and the performance of the garden soil, but it is not certified organic although the owner in Hamilton/Burlington area assures me he has tried), **compost** (my own) or sheep **manure** (very effective – I use it often at sites where compost is not available), **tarp** (optional but recommended winter box cover to stop water leaching and to keep out snow impurities), and enough rope to tie down the cover.

List of purchases for my 4 x 6 x 2 box bed (pictured)

- Posts – (14) 4x4's x 6 ft. and (7) 4x4's x 8 ft.
- Galvanized 5" spikes at 10 spikes per level: 6 levels x 12 = 72 spikes
- Gravel (medium size) – 10 bags
- Geotextile/landscape fabric – roll

Senior Organic Gardeners SPONSOR

Pantry  **plus**



Pentafolio
DESIGN • VIDEO • WEB
www.pentafolio.com



Support panels + anti-squirrel chicken wire

- Garden Soil – 2 Big Yellow Bags
- Compost (3 in. layer) not needed until the end of the first season
- Tarp at least 10 x 10. NB: the tarp will fall into the bed and make a winter bathtub unless you cover the box under the tarp with slats. I use old metal panels from a canopy.
- Rope (pass the rope through the grommets in the tarp and draw it tight)

I did my home planning in the winter, purchased the components and assembled the box bed in May, and had a very successful gardening season of sweet peppers, hot peppers, tomatoes, onions, beans, and flowers. And the performance continues each year!

Once you have experimented with the box bed, you can consider these next optional steps – add small side pots to the outside of the box for florals to attract pollinators, or to grow invasive plants like mint, and/or purchase hoops & clear plastic to convert your box bed to a temporary greenhouse/poly tunnel/cold frame to lengthen the growing season in both spring & fall.

May the 2017 growing season – whatever your garden choice – give you much to smile about!

Rob Danforth

Side pots – florals for pollinators



Greenhouse/poly tunnel

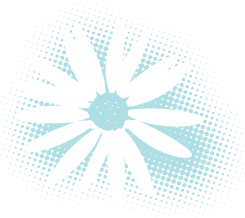
Nov. 2 germination is circled



Winter cover with support panels beneath

Senior Organic
Gardeners
SPONSOR





OFFER A GIFT IN MEMORY

COG OSO's New Legacy Program

Leaving a gift to COG in your will is a tax-smart strategy. It could reduce the taxes your estate would otherwise pay. We will notify the family of your memorial gift by sending a beautiful sympathy card, and you'll receive an income tax receipt for the full amount of your gift.

Find more information on possible gift quantities on our website. Discuss these options with your financial and/or legal advisors as part of your plan to leave a lasting legacy in your will.

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

To register your Gift in your Will please contact:
Executive Director, Canadian Organic Growers
1145 Carling Avenue, Suite 7519, Ottawa ON Canada K1Z 7K4
in favour of COG OSO Chapter
National Charitable Number: 13014 0494 RR0001
office@cog.ca
Tel: 613-216-0741, Toll-free: 1-888-375-7383

Senior Organic Gardeners

Senior Organic Gardeners has had a brilliant growing season in 2016. SOG Manager Adele MacKay led this gardening program at several Ottawa locations including Ottawa Community Housing buildings at 800 St. Laurent, Russell Manor, Wellington Towers; Aboriginal settings: Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre and Odawa Friendship Native Centre; as well as the Hope Living Centre in Kanata.

Funding had been problematic until SOG received a grant from Community Foundation

Ottawa which made possible the 2016 growing season!

A Recognition Event for our major funder, Community Foundation Ottawa, was held in August at OCH Gardens at 800 St. Laurent with seniors from Wabano Aboriginal Health Centre joining us there adding aboriginal drumming to the program and followed by great snacks from Thyme and Again!

It is with sadness that SOG has had to bid adieu to SOG Manager Adele MacKay, who has been with us from 2014 through 2016. She has been the heart and soul of the SOG program for three years, often assisted by her volunteer partner, Michael.

Adele's huge love of all 'her seniors', her passion for gardening and growing have been evident throughout her work with SOG. Adele will be much missed at SOG and all of us at COG OSO express our deep appreciation to Adele!

Adele may continue to be involved as much as she is able in the advancement of Senior Organic Gardeners.

COG OSO SPONSOR

 **debbie holzman**

Take your website on the road...
go mobile



Down to Earth, COG OSO's Quarterly E-Newsletter

Canadian Organic Growers Ottawa St. Lawrence Outaouais Chapter

Editor-in-Chief	(Interim) Margaret Townson
Ads Coordination	Editor
Contributors	Rob Danforth Dick Coote Margaret Townson
Layout	Stephanie Pelot, Pentafolio

Deadline for next *Down to Earth*: **March 1, 2017**. Submit articles to the Editor.

Down to Earth is a non-profit publishing project of Canadian Organic Growers, Ottawa St. Lawrence Outaouais Chapter. Statements, opinions or views taken by the writers and advertisers do not necessarily reflect those of the editor and publisher.

© Copyright 2016 Canadian Organic Growers, Ottawa St. Lawrence Outaouais Chapter. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without permission of COG OSO.

Canadian Organic Growers is a non-profit national charity.

www.cog.ca/Ottawa/ Email: cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca

