

Down to Earth

IN THIS ISSUE

EDITOR'S CORNER

Page 2

FALL REFLECTIONS

Page 2

ECO FARM DAY

Page 3



*Fleurette and her Square Foot
backyard garden*
Photo: Jenny Throop

COG OSO Garden Tour 2013

A Learning Experience

Over 20 people signed up for the Sunday, June 23rd garden tour. In the morning we visited Fleurette Huneault, whose master gardening skills are evident in her choice and care of plants. Her drought-resistant garden is based on harmony with nature and having the right plants in the right places. She used permaculture practices such as sheet mulching to replace part of her front lawn with flower beds. A Japanese variety of barberry (our local variety is a host of wheat rust) has red leaves and brilliantly coloured berries. Her small backyard is hidden from view but full of surprises, including an extensive hosta collection and a vegetable garden with ground cherry, mint, bokchoi, radish, beans, eggplant, peppers, New Zealand spinach, Thai basil, beets, and Swiss chard.

In the afternoon, we visited the Gloucester Allotment Garden, a historic community garden with approximately 70 plots, an animal-proof external fence, and a new watering system. Fleurette showed us her mulching technique for moisture and weed control. The garden contains black raspberries, Asian pear, Starfire peach, Montmorency cherry, and Redheart plum trees. Garden instructors Georges Ibrahim, Jadallah Chaar, and Jaime Abarintos introduced vegetables that few of us grow or know how to eat. From the Philippines we saw: saluyot – the edible leaves of the jute plant; patola – the loofah scrubbing sponge that may be eaten young as a vegetable; ampalaya, or bitter melon, which contains momordicin for medicinal uses; and upo, or bottle gourd (calabash), which can be eaten young but also left to mature to make water containers or even a bird's nest.

If you are interested in showing your organic garden on a future COG OSO tour, leave a message at: (613) 244-4000 or cog.oso.chapter@cog.ca



*Jadallah Chaar with his watermelon houses at the
Anderson Allotment Garden*
Photo: Jenny Throop

Editor's Corner

I came to COG Ottawa four years ago looking for an opportunity to hone my writing skills and to volunteer my time with an organization whose goals and core values I believe in. In those four years, I was privileged to work with an outstanding group of volunteers who gave time, patience, and a genuine commitment. We even experienced a name change, expanding from a city-centric name to COG Ottawa St. Lawrence Outaouais. The new name reflects an inter-dependence between our rural farmers, backyard gardeners, and everyone in between who believes that locally sourced, natural and chemical-free foods represent a better means of living. The name change also represents a progressive and forward-thinking approach, which is the lifeblood of any volunteer organization functioning in today's crowded world. It has been a pleasure working with everyone involved in COG OSO. While this is my last issue as Editor of *Down to Earth*, I wish everyone all the best in the New Year and beyond.

Sincerely,

Matthew Irving

downtoearthnewsletter@gmail.com

Matt Irving our current Editor of Down to Earth is stepping down after four years of excellent service. Thanks very much Matt for all your time and efforts.

We're pleased you want to continue supporting DTE with articles from time to time!



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Fall Reflections

Thank you to everyone who participated in Fall Reflections 2013. This year's event was held at the newly renovated hall rented from Unitarian Fellowship at the Heartwood House complex in Vanier.

FOOD, AUCTION, AND VISITING. Doors opened at 2:00 p.m. and guests were treated to complimentary coffee donated by Bridgehead. Healthy snacks were prepared by Chef Kent and his students at Longfields Davidson Heights Secondary School – a [Growing Up Organic](#) partner school.

There was a silent auction fundraiser, for which all items were generously donated to support COG OSO programs – including a “wind resistant” pottery garden vase. Guests also browsed our used book sale and visited with our program leaders for Growing Up Organic and [Senior Organic Gardeners](#).

ILLUSTRATED ANNUAL REPORT. At 2:30, our outgoing chairperson, Susan Preston, gave a photographic tour of COG OSO's events and program activities from over the past year. The Steering Committee for 2014 was introduced, with five new members and many returning members. A full report will be posted shortly.

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS FOR 2013. This year we were thrilled to honour three wonderful people with COG OSO's Outstanding Volunteer Award: Tom Manley, George Bushell, and Gillian Boyd.

EXPERT PANEL DISCUSSION. The featured event this year was an expert panel discussion that asked the questions: Why Local? Why Organic? Robin Turner, certified organic farmer at [Roots & Shoots Farm](#), made the case for “certified organic,” and Paul Slomp of [Grazing Days Beef Farm](#) made the case for “local.” Some of the most important differences between “local” and “organic” were identified, and many of the issues of concern were discussed. Lia Walsh, Chair of [Fair Trade Ottawa](#), addressed the issue of ethical sourcing internationally, particularly as so much of the food and other products we rely on come from all around the world. Moderator Sheila Petzold, Director of Communications at [USC Canada](#), led a discussion among panelists and the audience.

WHAT IS FALL REFLECTIONS ALL ABOUT? While the Canadian Organic Growers national charitable organization is required to convene a formal Annual General Meeting (AGM) each year, its local/regional chapters are not required to do so. But the idea of reflecting on the achievements of each year as the new year approaches is a positive one, and a great reason for hosting a special gathering. Fall Reflections is an opportunity for us to look back to the year completed, thank all of our amazing volunteers for their involvement, and look forward to the coming year.



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Eco Farm Day returns to Cornwall February 22, 2014

SIMON NEUFELD, CHAIR, ECO FARM DAY PLANNING COMMITTEE

ECO FARM DAY, one of eastern Ontario's premier farm conferences, is returning to Cornwall on February 22, 2014. Organic, transitional, and conventional farmers of field crops, livestock, and market gardens rely on Eco Farm Day for training, information, and commerce opportunities. Over 350 people come back every year for the social event, the networking, the positive atmosphere, and the great food.

This year's conference is about getting to the roots of successful organic farming. The organic industry in Canada is one of the most dynamic sectors in the food industry, with annual retail sales of organic food reaching almost \$3 billion in 2012. Organic farmers in Canada need to focus on the successful techniques and tools necessary to meet this growing demand.

Our program will include in-depth workshops and sessions geared towards successful production, storage, marketing, and stewardship of the land and animals we work with. We are pleased to be working with other regional organizations, such as Organic Meadow and the University of Guelph's Alfred Campus, which are sponsoring portions of the Eco Farm Day conference program. They will be bringing experts in the fields of livestock production, field crops, and market growing into dialogue with experienced farmers and the audience.

Other invited speakers include Jean-Martin Fortier on market gardening by the foot, Ken Taylor on perennial crops for field croppers, and Peter Kevan on the importance of pollinators in organic agriculture, with more speakers in the works. Sessions will be interactive, and we're throwing the doors wide open for you to share your experience and ideas. Eco Farm Day is going to be your best opportunity all year to learn from the experiences of other farmers in the region.

Eco Farm Day also includes a trade show with over 30 exhibitors representing organic associations, farm inputs, buyers, implements, seed, and more.

For more information about registration, location, accommodation, and the most up-to-date program details, visit the Eco Farm Day website at www.ecofarmday.ca, email ecofarmday@cog.ca, or call (613) 244-4000 ext. 4.

Neonicotinoids threaten the future of Ontario bee colonies

The use of neonicotinoids has become commonplace across Ontario and throughout North America. These powerful insecticides have severely damaged honey bee colonies and have begun to threaten the livelihood of bee keepers. A powerful and wonderfully produced video from the Ontario Beekeepers Association is now available about the impact of neonicotinoids on a third-generation beekeeping family. Please watch the video at the link below to learn more about this important issue affecting pollinator health.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sa6Jul0CDc0&feature=youtu.be>

Two volunteers needed at COG OSO!

- Coordinator of Volunteers
- Promotion Team Leader to promote our educational and fundraising events

For more details, please check our website: www.cog.ca/ottawa/volunteers or the Volunteer Ottawa website: www.volunteerottawa.ca/volunteer/communityorganizations

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Deadline for next *Down to Earth*:
March 1, 2014

Submit all articles to Editor.

Advertising: Advertisements are accepted in accordance with the current advertising policy, which is revised periodically.

Please request the most recent version as needed.

Organic growers with produce for sale can be added to the Organic Food Directory for a small fee.

COG OSO does not necessarily endorse products and services advertised in *Down to Earth* and assumes no liability resulting from their use.

Please contact the Editor for further information.

Advertising deadline: **March 1, 2014**

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