

COLLEGE OF THE ROCKIES COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE NEWSLETTER

January 2010

Issue # One



Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter, which we will be sending out quarterly. We will use the newsletter to keep the community informed about all the programs, projects and events happening at the College of the Rockies Community Greenhouse. Members of the community will also be able to submit content to the newsletter. If you wish to submit something to the April newsletter, please send it by email to anitasawyer@hotmail.com

While trying to decide on a name for the newsletter, we thought it would be fun to involve the community which resulted in the decision to have a contest. Please read on for further details of the:

NAME THE NEWSLETTER CONTEST

GREENHOUSE PROGRAMS

Winter Harvest Research

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Grow to Share

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Spring Seeding for Gardeners

Children Growing Gardens - Spring 2010

GREENHOUSE PROJECTS

Native Plant & Herb Gardens Greening the Community Greenhouse

UPCOMING GREENHOUSE EVENTS

Sustainable Agriculture Forum - February 27, 2010

Seedy Saturday - March 13, 2010

WORKSHOPS

Seed Saving - February 25, 2010

Supporting Pollinators - March 4, 2010

Composting - March 11, 2010

Lasagna Gardening - March 18, 2010

GREENHOUSE PROGRAMS

WINTER HARVEST RESEARCH

Enter the *unheated* hoop house at The College of the Rockies Community Greenhouse during November and you will not find a garden that is winding down for the season. Instead you will see bed after bed of lush cool season crops, beautiful beets, succulent oak leaf lettuce, plump radishes, tender new kale and abundant arugula!

Welcome to our 'winter garden' which was planted from July to October and is an exploration of fall, winter and spring gardening methods.



A two year research project is being funded by Investment Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia and Columbia Basin Trust. Our goal is to investigate the best crops to grow and best practices and the results are being shared with commercial growers and home gardeners. We hope to promote the creation of a fall/winter/spring vegetable industry for BC's small scale farmers. Consumers enjoy local produce during the summer but during the shoulder months are forced to buy vegetables that have been transported from far away. This results in a loss of quality to say nothing of the environmental impact.



PCSS WORK EXPERIENCE

Students attend the community greenhouse one to three times per week and are involved in learning all aspects of the greenhouse and garden facilities.



In addition, the students plant their own garden plot with a variety of vegetables, which they harvest and take back to the school to use in their foods class, where they are learning the skills of cooking and preserving the vegetables they have grown.

SOILS FOR SENIORS

Seniors from Swan Valley Lodge attend the greenhouse once a week for a two hour period. This is a fun, therapeutic and mutually beneficial time for all involved. The seniors plant all the seeds to grow flowers for the various gardens at Swan Valley Lodge and assist with seeding, transplanting, weeding and watering for the greenhouse.



During the late summer and early fall months they are involved in making greeting cards with flowers they have collected, dried and pressed. The seniors also assist with harvesting, often reminiscing of past times during one of their favourite activities of shelling dry beans.

SCHOOL SNACKS

This program involves the community greenhouse team growing small fruits and vegetables which require no preparation (other than washing) to supply healthy snacks for the children at Erickson Elementary School and Adam Robertson Elementary School.



The snacks include cherry tomatoes, small cucumbers, peas, radishes, hakuri turnips, carrots, blackberries, strawberries and raspberries. Snacks are delivered to each school twice weekly.

GROW TO SHARE

Greenhouse staff and volunteers plant and maintain a large garden with a wide variety of vegetables to provide fresh produce for the Food Bank and the Therapeutic Activation for Seniors Program. This includes but is not limited to tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, lettuce, spinach, swiss chard, beets, carrots, peas, beans, radishes, turnips, potatoes, corn and a variety of culinary herbs. Harvesting and deliveries of produce to both programs occurs twice weekly. In 2009 a total of **879.512 kilograms (1,934.92 pounds)** of produce was donated.



All participants in other greenhouse programs are informed of the GROW TO SHARE program in an effort to increase awareness regarding the needs of their community and to encourage them to become involved in some way.

FAMILIES GROWING GARDENS

Parents enjoy a fun and educational morning out with their pre-school children learning to grow their own food together. The young families will gain knowledge and understanding of good nutrition, the benefits of eating locally grown food, and cost and energy-saving ways to produce food.



Families are provided with 1.5 hours of weekly instruction, child minding and a garden plot if they don't have one at home. Participants will learn garden planning, companion planting, fertilizing, composting, watering, lasagna gardening, harvesting, seed saving and all season gardening.

CHILDREN GROWING GARDENS

New for spring 2010

Children ages 6 to 10 enjoy a fun and educational afternoon at the Community Greenhouse. **Kids love eating vegetables they have grown themselves.** The children will learn the basics of growing food, how to care for plants/gardens and enjoy healthy snacks. They will start a variety of vegetable plants in the greenhouse, learn how to transplant into both larger pots and the garden, learn about composting and how they can easily compost at home and learn about the friends and enemies of garden plants. The children will also be introduced to the concept of helping others in their community by planting vegetables into the garden that are used to help feed the community through both the Food Bank and the TAPS programs.

Each child ends the course with a variety of vegetable plants to take home for the family garden.

SPRING SEEDING FOR GARDENERS

Community gardeners rent tables in the greenhouse to start their plants from seeds. Gardeners are provided with soil, plant starting and transplanting pots. This program runs from **March 1st to June 15th** and provides a wonderful opportunity to meet people with similar interests in gardening, to share experiences, learn from one another and simply enjoy the social environment while planting seeds.

This year the program will be run by volunteers, although a greenhouse team member will be on the grounds if needed. All participants will be expected to volunteer their time to assist with the program. There will be a volunteer coordinator who will establish a list of duties and a volunteer schedule for tasks such as daily prep, watering and clean up.



Due to an increase in community interest in this program, a lottery draw will be held to allocate tables for new participants wanting to join the program this year. A wait list is being kept of people who are interested in renting space this year to join this fun program. To submit your name, contact the Community Greenhouse @ 250-428-5332, extension 4114 or send an email to anitasawyer@hotmail.com

GREENHOUSE PROJECTS

NATIVE PLANT AND HERB GARDENS

Thanks to donors and an enthusiastic group of volunteers, a number of herb gardens have been planted using native plants. Native plants were chosen for their natural hardiness, disease resistance, drought tolerance, easy care and to attract pollinators. From an ecological point of view, using native plants returns a wasteland to its natural state providing habitat for wildlife, insects and soil organisms. We wanted to use plants that are multipurpose, thus we chose to use herbs for their ability to provide food, medicine and beauty. Native nut trees and berry bushes have also been added for much needed shade, wind protection and to beautify the grounds. The corner of the garden behind the hot houses is a hot, dry area and is now an excellent example of a xeriscape garden, which requires little or no water once established. The herb gardens will provide teaching tools for the Practical Herbalist program and culinary herbs for our many gardening programs.



Many thanks go out to the Evergreen Foundation and Columbia Basin Trust for funding these gardens. To the volunteers who gave of their time to plant and weed, thank you so much for your efforts, this project could not have happened without you.

GREENING THE COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE

The Community Greenhouse has embarked on a number of green initiatives. Our goal is to become completely fossil fuel free, to use water efficiently, to make conscious purchasing decisions, to send less waste to the landfill and to recycle whenever possible. We intend to teach what we learn and encourage greenhouse users to follow green principles.

Our first green project was to build 8 compost bins and learn to make compost properly. We recently added 8 more bins to contain all the garden waste we collect from the grounds. The college saves compost from student lunches and recycles used paper to our bins. Finished compost will be used to make our own soil mixes and to fertilize the garden beds.

The greenhouse roofs collect huge amounts of rain water which is presently drained into town sewers. Thanks to a donation from the Creston Garden Club, we have been able to purchase an 1,100 gallon water tank. The tank will collect rain water from the two large hot houses and recycle it to the vegetable garden. We will also install rain barrels with drip irrigation hoses at every downspout in the greenhouse complex. This will result in less water going into town sewers and less water needed from the town for our gardens.

Above ground irrigation will be installed in our large vegetable garden this spring which will enable us to use less water and save manpower.

We have been consulting with Rod Schmuland from Kootenay Energy Solutions. We are looking at the various options available for replacing two outdated, inefficient furnaces in the hothouses. We've ordered solar spotlights for the grounds and are exploring methods to build solar fans. This will lower our energy use substantially, lower the cost of running the greenhouses and help the environment.

All of this has been made possible by Columbia Basin Trust which provided funding for the project and the Creston Garden Club for the donation of the water tank. Our appreciation goes out to these groups.

Our mantra has become, 'reduce, reuse and recycle' and to that end the Community Greenhouse hopes to help Creston become a greener place to live.



UPCOMING GREENHOUSE EVENTS

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FORUM – WINTER HARVEST: SALADS FOR ALL SEASONS

Commercial growers and home gardeners will find something of interest on Saturday, February 27 when the College of the Rockies Community Greenhouse sponsors a Sustainable Agriculture Forum. Topics will include subjects such as winter vegetable production, permaculture and solar energy. These exciting workshops are being held to promote local food production both at home and in the commercial facility with the smallest possible environmental impact. You will be introduced to local BC experts in these fields and find out more about the Winter Harvest Research taking place in Creston.

Saturday, February 27 9:00am - 5:00pm - \$20 (includes lunch) / Location: Trinity United Church – 128-10th Ave.

SEEDY SATURDAY

This afternoon event begins with a workshop on the topics of seed saving, storing, cleaning and growing. Following the workshop, a seed exchange/sale will be held where local seed savers will sell and trade seeds which are open pollinated and have become adapted to local conditions.

Saturday, March 13 1:00 - 4:00pm - fee by donation / Location: Creston New Life Christian Church – 1821 Elm St.

WORKSHOPS

SEED SAVING

Saving vegetable seeds is easy and fun. Seed saving preserves genetic diversity and protects old varieties from dying out. Learn how to save your own garden seeds from open pollinated plants; dry, package and store them.

Thursday, February 25 6:30 - 8:30pm - \$20

SUPPORTING POLLINATORS

This class looks at the nature of the relationship between plants, pollinators and humans and the impact of our agricultural and/or gardening practices on this most delicate of balances. You will leave this class with insight on pollinator activity as well as an action plan to create a healthful garden that invites and sustains pollinators.....and yourself. **Thursday, March 4 6:30 - 8:30pm - \$20**

COMPOSTING

Learn how to turn kitchen and garden waste into nutrient rich soil which can be used in potting mixes and as fertilizer in your garden. Not only does composting reduce the amount of waste going to the landfills, it allows you to garden in an environmental friendly manner. **Thursday, March 11 6:30 - 8:30pm - \$20**

LASAGNA GARDENING

Otherwise known as 'sheet mulching' this labor saving method will allow you to create new growing beds and renovate existing beds without digging. Learn how to use simple recycled materials and garden waste to eliminate the back breaking effort usually put into digging out sod and weeds. A tour of our demonstration garden is included. **Thursday, March 18 6:30 - 8:30pm - \$20**

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

For people who wish to volunteer their time, the community greenhouse has ample opportunities. You may like to assist with the flower, herb or vegetable gardens, greenhouses, harvesting, projects and/or programs. If your interests are in the area of working with people, we can always use help with our family and children's programs for assistance with child minding the little ones or helping to teach the school age children to grow and care for plants, ultimately learning to grow their own food.

To volunteer or to get more information, please contact Anita Sawyer at the greenhouse (250-428-5332, ext. 4114) or by email: anitasawyer@hotmail.com

THANK YOU, to all the volunteers of 2009. We greatly appreciate all of you.

NAME THE NEWSLETTER CONTEST

We are looking for a suitable, fun and funky name for our newsletter. Please help us by entering the contest and submitting as many names as you like to anitasawyer@hotmail.com

The contest will run for a period of one month from January 11 - February 10

The winner of the contest will receive a choice of one of the following:

- Free attendance at two workshops
- Free table rental at the greenhouse for spring seeding
- A collection of seeds saved from the greenhouse gardens and a min/max thermometer

COMMUNITY GREENHOUSE COORDINATORS

Karen Powis & Anita Sawyer – 250-428-5332

kpowis@wynndel.ca anitasawyer@hotmail.com

RELATED LINKS

<http://communitygreenhouse.blogspot.com/>

www.kootenaygraincsa.ca

http://www.gardenhoefarms.com/about_us.html

www.crestonfarmfresh.ca

<http://www.energybulletin.net/node/50509>

www.cily.net/deconstructingdinner

<http://vicinsea.blogspot.com/2008/07/seeds-of-shame.html> www.kootenayfood.ca

www.ilovecreston.com/page/valley/natural%20foods/91 www.wildsight.ca