

Every drop counts: Water-saving contest results

Article and photos by Nate Moxley

Contest? What contest?

Last year's water-saving contest, running between June and October, was a worthwhile effort for the P-Patch Program. The impetus was to promote innovative approaches to water conservation with the goal of saving both water and money. Results varied from site to site with a variety of factors that affect water consumption, including weather, leaks, garden expansion and participation levels.

The contest encompassed two approaches: water savings and innovative ideas for water conservation. In each category, the top three gardens received a prize. First prize in each category was a \$100 gift certificate to Greenwood Hardware. Second-place gardens got a variety pack of new tools, and third-place winners received a copy of Seattle Tilth's *Maritime Northwest Garden Guide*.

Thanks to all of the sites that participated in the contest. You not only spread water conservation awareness but also reduced the P-Patch Program's water costs.

Contest results

Category 1: Overall water savings

In all, 30 gardens decreased their water consumption as compared to last year. Even though the P-Patch program brought new gardens online during the contest period, we achieved an overall reduction in water use of nearly 20,000 gallons from the year before. This outcome shows that when gardeners take an active role in water conservation, results can be significant.

Garden	Percent decrease from 2010	Gallons of water saved
1. Bradner	67.6	89,012
2. U-Heights	67.1	33,660
3. Queen Pea	65	56,100
4. Beacon Bluff	61	5,984
5. Snoqualmie	60	80,036
6. Good Shepherd	59	45,628
7. U-District	52	39,644
8. Roosevelt	50	6,732
9. Thyme	49	21,692
10. Colman	44	30,668

Total gallons saved: 409,156 = \$2,500.00

Note: These results and year-to-year comparisons do not take into account the water numbers for 23 sites that are on a submeter. We have incomplete consumption data for these sites.

Category 2: Creative ideas for saving water

First place: University Heights took a community approach to saving water. Site leaders made sure that all participants made cistern water their first option, that signage was everywhere and that all kinds of water-saving activities were employed.



University Heights water-saving cisterns and accompanying signage

Second place: Hazel Heights water gurus provided an adequate supply of watering cans and added signage encouraging gardeners to use water from the underground water cistern.



Hazel Heights watering cans and signage

Third place: Picardo gardener Trent Elwing used recycled materials to provide root zone watering for the community raspberry patch. The idea saves water by reducing runoff and thus the overall amount of water needed to maintain the raspberries.



Root zone watering system by Picardo's Trent Elwing

Water-saving contest winners

1. University Heights (winner in both categories)
2. Bradner
3. Queen Pea
4. Hazel Heights
5. Picardo

Composting across borders!

By Graham Golbuff, Seattle Tilth Program Manager, Resource Conservation
<http://www.seattletilth.org>

For the past 25 years, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) and Seattle Tilth have partnered to train Master Composters (now Master Composter/Soil-Builders, or MC/SBs) to serve the City of Seattle in its effort to reduce waste, conserve natural resources and improve urban soils. The P-Patch Program has always been a natural ally of the Master Composters. Undoubtedly, you've been affected by the MC/SB program in some way or another during your time in your community garden. Maybe you went through the program years ago and supported the waste management and organics-cycling efforts of your fellow gardeners. Perhaps the compost coordinator (or "guru," as they're often affectionately referred to) at your P-Patch is a freshly trained MC/SB volunteer.

With over 85 P-Patch sites actively gardening or in development, MC/SBs—of which only approximately 30 are certified each year—are in high demand and not always available to assist with the educational and skill-building pursuits of our city's community gardens. Recently, as part of the Race and Social Justice Initiative coordinated by Seattle's Office for Civil Rights, SPU and Seattle Tilth have been working to increase access to MC/SBs among underserved communities and to increase participation in the program by these populations as well.

The three organizations met in early 2011 and selected an initial pilot project: to offer the MC/SB program in-language to Southeast Asian immigrant and refugee gardeners across the five P-Patch sites within the New Holly neighborhood and in neighboring garden sites in Southeast Seattle.

The project team recruited 20 participants at annual gardener gatherings this spring and through flyers to gardeners in eligible plot sites. In total, five different languages were represented: Chinese,

Mien, Vietnamese, Khmer and Lao.

Participants committed to attend six multi-hour training sessions and to complete a service project for their community. Session topics included organic mulches and fertilizers, cover crops and soil incorporation, and composting yard and food waste. All classes were highly hands-on, and participants practiced their skills at the New Holly Rockery P-Patch Garden and at Seattle Tilth's Rainier Beach Urban Farm & Wetlands. Many training sessions included prizes like gallon-sized Ziploc bags of rich, nutritious food-waste compost, made by the volunteers in a worm bin mere months earlier.

Of course, being a Master Composter/Soil Builder means more than just being an expert on organic recycling; it means sharing your knowledge with your community in practical, tangible ways. Participants could only be certified as MC/SBs after they had completed a service project: "microcomposting" at the Thistle and Ferdinand P-Patches (where gardeners constructed small, active compost piles within their own plots, sourcing materials from their neighbors and sharing the finished compost), food and yard waste composting projects at their homes, and clinics for their family and friends. Two volunteers led an educational campaign on home composting for their Buddhist temple.

At the conclusion of the program, 13 of the 20 participants had completed a service project and all six training sessions, making them eligible for a Master Composter/Soil Builder certificate signed by Mayor McGinn. The certificate was presented by Veronica Sherman-King, Director of Planning and Community Building within the Department of Neighborhoods, at a celebratory graduation ceremony and potluck in mid-August.

The same project team reassembled in October to provide an introductory composting clinic for East African gardeners at the newly redeveloped New Holly Youth and Family P-Patch. Nine



gardeners participated, representing three different languages: Somali, Tigrinya and Oromo. Gardeners constructed the first compost bin and pile at the newly redeveloped garden, using salvaged wood pallets.

Carl Woestwin, with Seattle Public Utilities, says of the project, "We are making serious efforts to reach

underserved audiences, and MC/SB training in languages other than English for P-Patch gardeners is part of this effort. SPU is committed to reaching out to everyone in the community."

Sounds like a recipe for success! Stay tuned for future updates on efforts in composting across borders in Seattle.

DAVID MCDONALD

Escaped plants

Today's garden plants can become tomorrow's invasives

By Sheri Hinshaw, Garden Hotline Educator, Seattle Tilth

The problem with invasive plants

Many plants sold in nurseries can become noxious problem plants in our landscape, and they can even escape into our greenbelts and appear along highways. These problem plants become noxious weeds, which can overwhelm native vegetation. They can reduce crop yields, destroy beneficial native habitat, damage recreational opportunities, clog waterways and diminish land values.

Removing or cutting noxious plants from your property can make a big impact. When removing these difficult plants, it can be worth the time to sift through soil for small roots. A ¼-inch mesh stretched on a wood frame and placed over a wheelbarrow works well.

Common nursery plants that can become invasive

Lamium galeobdolon, or yellow archangel, is a fast-growing perennial groundcover that is very competitive in the forest habitats of western Washington. It is very pretty in pots, but it will take over a garden bed in no time.

Luckily, this plant is fairly easy to pull when the ground is wet; the best time is fall through early spring. It will re-sprout from small root fragments so it can take a few years to completely remove it. The plant should not be composted, but it is fine to place it in your yard waste container.

Aegopodium podagraria 'Variegata', or variegated bishop's weed, is a perennial that spreads by rhizomes and seed. This beautiful groundcover can completely take over a 10' x 10' bed in one year. My attempt to smother it with a thick pile of burlap failed miserably—by March the burlap was lifted an inch off the ground! The only way to remove *Aegopodium* is to dig out the roots. Roots look like little white worms and can be six inches deep. You can help keep it in check by clipping off flower buds.

Buddleia davidii, or butterfly bush, is a shrub introduced from China that has been widely planted as an ornamental. Butterfly bush can now be found commonly along riversides and roads and in cleared forests throughout western Washington.

Butterfly bush spreads by producing abundant amounts of very lightweight, winged seeds that are dispersed by wind and water over many miles. It is also adapted to surviving along riversides. Branches that have been buried or broken off can develop roots.

To remove *Buddleia*, I've had good luck with both of these procedures:

- **Method 1.** Cut the shrub down to two feet or so from the base. Start digging around the trunk with a garden fork or pickaxe (which is more effective than a shovel) and remove loose soil as you go to gradually reveal roots. Cut small roots as you find them, using loppers or a pruning saw. Keep on going down until the root starts to be a bit loose, then see if it has a tap root going straight down. You'll have to get beneath the taproot and lever it out with a crowbar, or cut it off.
- **Method 2.** Cut the shrub down as low and flat as you can. If the shrub was large and the stump that remains is too big, you can rent a stump grinder to chip the stump away from above.



Ray's corner

Article and photo by Ray Schutte

Spring is just around the corner, and I find myself planning for the upcoming season. Last summer in spite of it being one of the coldest on record I still expected to get some decent tomatoes. I planted ten tomato varieties and gathered 221 pounds. Yet I found myself quite disappointed not because of quantity but because of the flavor of my three grafted tomatoes: Brandywine (47 lbs), Costoluto (37 lbs) and San Marzano (40 lbs). All three tasted like store-bought, imported tomatoes in the middle of winter.

One measure of taste is the Brix level, which measures soluble sugars and is used traditionally in the wine, sugar, fruit juice and honey industries. In the case of tomatoes a Brix level of 4 to 5 is poor. This is the range of most commercial tomatoes. At level 6 you begin to get that tomato taste. At levels 8 to 9 you have the bright and concentrated flavor of a good tomato. At level 10 you have a great tomato and at level 12 you have a memorable tomato. The three grafted tomatoes all had Brix levels between 4.5 and 5. My other tomatoes were between 8 and 9. I recently tested a Canadian

organic vine-ripened hothouse tomato and it was at 4.5.

I used a handheld ATC (automatic temperature conversion) Brix refractometer to measure the Brix. It's available at www.QASupplies.com for \$109 and its accuracy is rated at .02 percent. The Brix scale measures soluble sugars by measuring the dispersion of light as it moves through glass into the tomato juice. One degree of Brix is 1 gram of sucrose in 100 grams of solution. The juice must contain no pulp, as that would affect the reading. My thinking when I purchased the "new" grafted tomato stock was how could you go wrong? Grafting, after all, has been around for a long time. It was used by the Chinese before 2000 BC, was commonplace in ancient Greece and, in the mid-1900s, saved the French vineyards. Without grafting, fruit trees such as apples and cherries would never have been domesticated to produce a consistent-tasting fruit.

Grafting is a process where the top part of one plant called the scion is attached to the root system or rootstock of a compatible plant. The idea is that the rootstock interacts with the soil



and provides nourishment, vigor and resistance to disease while the scion provides the fruit. The tissues of the two plants grow together and appear to be one plant although genetically they remain two different plants.

I am not the only gardener to observe the lack of taste in grafted tomatoes. "Neighborhood Notes," a Portland-based group, came to the same conclusion

after growing grafted and ungrafted Brandywines side by side. (http://www.neighborhoodnotes.com?news/2011/the_great_tomato_debate_grafted_or_nongrafted/) Even my green tomatoes ripened off vine have more flavor than the grafted stock. My conclusion is don't bother paying the premium price for grafted tomatoes until they find a rootstock that produces superior flavor.

New year = new gardens, new directions, new heights for P-Patch community gardens

By Laura Raymond, Levy Projects Coordinator

This year the new P-Patch community gardens funded by the Parks and Green Spaces Levy are taking community gardening in new directions and to new heights. Two new projects in particular are taking community gardens where few have gone before: the Beacon Food Forest permaculture P-Patch and a rooftop community garden on a Seattle Center parking garage.

The Beacon Food Forest

On a large sunny slope of SPU-owned property adjacent to the newly renovated Jefferson Park on Beacon Hill, community members are planning an ambitious "food forest." The new garden will include many permaculture-style perennial plantings surrounding a garden of communally managed vegetable plots and individual allotment gardens. The group says, "Our goal is to design, plant and

grow an edible urban forest garden that inspires our community to gather together, grow our own food and rehabilitate our local ecosystem."

A food forest is a permaculture gardening approach that mimics woodland ecosystems with fruit and nut trees, berry shrubs, perennial vegetables and other productive plants. Permaculture is an approach to farming that is based on the relationships in natural systems.

The group completed a community design process with neighborhood matching funds and is now set to start building the garden with funding from the levy. As envisioned, the garden will be a place for learning with classes on permaculture, orchard care, soil health, water and many other topics. It will also be a place to engage with the rich cultural diversity of the neighborhood with plants and people from many cultures.

The Uptown "Gar(age)den"

While gardeners at the Beacon Food Forest seek to sink deep perennial roots, in the Uptown/Lower Queen Anne area neighbors are looking up for space to garden. In the shadow of the Space Needle on the rooftop of the Mercer parking garage, a new P-Patch community garden is about to sprout. The garden will be a

temporary use for several years before the property is redeveloped. Community members with the P-Patch Program and Seattle Center are taking advantage of the opportunity to experiment with cutting-edge urban sustainability and create a place to grow food, flowers and community on the rooftop.

In design meetings community members expressed an eagerness to demonstrate that urban gardens can sprout in the unlikelyst of places and voiced the hope that the garden can be an example that spurs creative urban gardens elsewhere. The garden's opening will coincide with Seattle Center's Next Fifty 50th anniversary celebrations. Many design ideas played off the 1960s-era automotive and space-age themes while looking to the future with 21st century sustainability techniques.

In 2008, when voters approved the Parks and Green Spaces Levy, P-Patch community gardening got a big boost with 2 million dollars dedicated to expanding community gardening opportunities throughout Seattle. As I write this in early 2012, thanks to the levy funding and hard work and creative and generous contributions of many community members, Seattle has 6 brand new gardens and 2 expanded ones, with 12 more community gardens in progress.



Beacon Food Forest design meeting at El Centro de la Raza

Posts from the patch

By Diane Zebert

“CALL to ACT: Monsanto’s Micro-Monster Could Kill Us All.”

The above quote was the subject line of an email that I received this month. Once I read the email, did some further reading and watched some filmed interviews, I decided that I would write this column to introduce you to this issue in case you’ve not heard of it.

The weed killer Roundup™ and Roundup Ready™ (RR) seeds are products developed by Monsanto, a multinational chemical company. Roundup™ is actually a chemical called glyphosate. RR seeds are genetically modified organisms (GMOs)-modified so that the resulting plant able to withstand Roundup. Currently this has been done with soybeans, corn, cotton, sugar beets, canola and alfalfa. This means that Roundup can be sprayed directly on the RR crops and will kill only the weeds and not the crop. It is intended to increase crop yield as weeds are held in check.

Glyphosate works to kill weeds by 1) chelating (tying up) specific nutrients in the soil needed by plants to fight off disease and 2) killing beneficial microorganisms in the soil that help prevent disease situations. The chemical does not kill by direct chemical action but by unbalancing the soil environment so that plant diseases kill the weed. If you pull up a weed you’ve sprayed with Roundup, you will notice that it doesn’t have any roots. The chemical has killed the weed via “root rot.” Okay, why is that so bad? It’s just a weed.

Scientists have found a connection between an increase in diseases in crops and glyphosate even though the GMO seeds are supposed to be resistant. The chelation of nutrients and decrease of beneficial microorganisms in the soil makes the plant deficient in the nutrients, which equals sick, disease-prone plants. Plant diseases that have been controlled for years are making a huge resurgence. Nature, by striving to keep everything in balance, kept diseases at bay. With an unbalanced environment these diseases are unleashed to run amok and new diseases and organisms have begun to emerge.

Here is where this issue gets really scary. Ready?

- The nutrients that plants need to stay healthy are the same ones that animals and humans need. If a plant food is deficient in nutrients, everything that eats that plant will have the same deficiencies. The risk of being susceptible to old/new diseases and microorganisms increases for these individuals.
- Purdue University Emeritus Professor Don Huber presented results of research that claims that Monsanto’s Roundup Ready genetically modified crops contain an organism, previously unknown to science, that can cause infertility and miscarriages in farm animals. The farm animals include horses, cows, goats and poultry. Dr. Huber is a coordinator for the USDA National Plant Disease Recovery System.

The researchers observed the new organism using a 36,000X electron microscope. They know a lot about what the organism is NOT, but as of now don’t know a lot about what it IS. The fact that the organism can create disease in both plants and animals is disturbing as that rarely occurs in nature.
- There has been little research done about the health consequences of glyphosate residue buildup in the soil, plants, animals or humans. Will this compound and its breakdown products create more issues over time? Will it go away? If not, can we get rid of it?

Dr. Huber has a published letter to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack calling for a moratorium on the release of new GMO seeds and stopping the use of glyphosate until more studies can be done. It is critical because Monsanto has gained permission to release GMO alfalfa. Alfalfa is extensively used as food for dairy cows. Think about all the dairy products many of us eat!

In Washington State, there are currently GMO labeling bills being introduced in both the House and Senate. They appear to have broad support between Democratic and Republican politicians and the public on both sides of the Cascades. To support a GMO-free Washington you can add your name to a mailing list at gmofree.washington.info. They send out updates via mailings and have public informational meetings. They have a Facebook page (<http://www.facebook.com/gmofreesattle>), which has lots of articles and videos.

I hope that as soon as you are reading how Roundup (glyphosate) works, you recognize how dangerous a chemical it is. I’d like to see it banned like DDT. Roundup (glyphosate) can always serve us as an example of how important it is to understand how new materials and technologies work before they are commercially released and to do the proper research studies upfront to identify any unexpected consequences.

There is more information and an online petition available at the Food Democracy Now website at the link that follows: http://action.fooddemocracynow.org/sign/dr_hubers_warning/

Best wishes and happy gardening,
Diane

To submit a question or item for “Posts from the patch,” please email p-patch.post@ppatchtrust.org

Garden Operations Meeting

By Mark Huston, Board Member, P-Patch Trust

What is the best way to get things done at YOUR garden?
Come to the Garden Operations Meeting to find out!
Saturday, March 17th, 10 a.m. to noon
Bradner Gardens Park, 29th Avenue South and South Grand Street.

P-Patch 2012 Discount Coupon

This is your P-Patch discount coupon, good for 10% off on purchases of *garden-related* merchandise only at the following participating merchants. Present your coupon *before* the cashier rings up the sale. Happy Gardening!

• City People’s Garden Store 2939 East Madison, 324-0737	• Langley Fine Gardens Selling at W. Seattle & Vashon farmers markets
• City People’s Mercantile, Sand Point 5440 Sand Point Way, 524-1200	• Magnolia Garden Center – P-Patch Plants Only 3213 W Smith, 284-1161
• Emerald City Gardens 4001 Leary Way NW, 789-1314	• Sky Nursery 18528 Aurora Ave N, 546-4851
• Furney’s Nursery 21215 Pacific Hwy S, 878-8761	• Swanson’s Nursery 9701 15th Ave NW, 782-2543
• Greenwood Hardware 7201 Greenwood Ave N, 783-2900	• West Seattle Nursery & Garden Center 5275 California Ave SW, 935-9276
• Indoor Sun Shoppe 180 Canal St, 634-3727	• Urban Earth 1051 N 35th St, 632-1760

P-Patch Program, 700 5th Ave, Ste 1700 PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649, 684-0264

Hey, P-Patchers! Did you know that there are opportunities for free garden classes in Seattle? Several P-Patch Discount Coupon vendors hold special gardening events, including classes at their facilities. Please check their websites for a calendar of events:

City People’s Garden Store	http://citypeoples.com/gardenstore/workshop.html
Sky Nursery	http://www.skynursery.com/doc/gifts_calendar.htm
Swanson’s Nursery	http://www.swansonnursery.com/Seminars.shtml

What do worms want?

By Priscilla Long

This essay was originally published in *The American Scholar* “Science Frictions” blog, <http://theamericanscholar.org/what-do-worms-want/>

It’s an autumn day in Seattle, but not raining, not cold, and I’m out in my tiny back yard holding a bucket of worm dinner for my pet worms. Pet because they are incarcerated in a large perforated-for-air plastic bin. If I don’t feed them, they die. I worry for my worms. It can be too hot for them, too dry, too wet, too cold.

I remove the plastic lid of their plastic home. My worms are red worms, also called manure worms, *Eisenia fetida*. They’re pinkish red, wet looking, long as a finger, narrow as a pencil. They wriggle.

Worms like sex. They are hermaphroditic, each one possessing both male and female genitalia. But they do not fertilize themselves. They copulate, each inseminating the other. During sex, worms can cling together for as long as three hours. In his vivid book on earthworms, *The Formation of Vegetable Mould Through the Action of Worms with Observations of their Habits*, Charles Darwin writes: “Their sexual passion is strong enough to overcome for a time their dread of light.”

Yes. Worms dread light. Their neurons are, in part, photoreceptors. They hate it when I lift their lid. When I remove the black trash bag that covers them, they dive for the dark. Worm dark is the damp dung they make out of garbage—castings.

Worms have no sense of personal space, as far as I can tell. They crawl all over each other, and this is not sexual passion. They must stay damp: a dry worm is a dead worm. This wet business has to do with their origin as marine animals, according to my biology book.

Human garbage is a worm’s gourmet delight. I dump in my bucketload of banana peels, chard ends, onion peels, peach pits, apple cores, potato peels, spinach mush, and old mushrooms. I deny them meat scraps not because they have announced their vegetarian preferences, but because another local species—one I have issues with—loves chicken bones. I am speaking of our bright, persistent, sociable, prolific Norway rat, nemesis of our neighborhood.

About worms, Darwin wanted to know “how far they acted consciously, and how much mental power they displayed.” I want to know what they perceive, what they experience.

Worms breathe through their skins, taking in oxygen, expelling carbon dioxide. Anatomically the worm body is a tube within a tube, and this tube is segmented. My worms are in the phylum annelida—the segmented worms. Call them earthworms. My *E. fetida* are among 9,000 species of annelids.

My worm box does not stink. It smells a lot like soil. Because, yes, worms make soil. Aristotle called them the intestines of the earth. Without worms, there would be no trees, no grass, no corn-on-the-cob. There would be no popcorn. (Correction: except in one case, there were trees, there was grass. In northern North America under the ice sheets of the last ice age, earthworms were wiped out. There was more leaf litter and microbial digestion proceeded more slowly.)

But back to the question. What do worms want? They want darkness. They want dampness. They want dinner. They want sex. That’s what they want.

Priscilla Long is the author of The Writer’s Portable Mentor: A Guide to Art, Craft, and the Writing Life and Where the Sun Never Shines: A History of America’s Bloody Coal Industry. Her essay “Genome Tome,” which appeared in the Summer 2005 issue of The American Scholar, won the National Magazine Award for Feature Writing.

Site Coordinators and other garden leaders are welcome (and encouraged!) to attend. But this meeting is really for ALL gardeners interested in techniques to get things accomplished at your site. It will be a great “behind the scenes” look at how P-Patches operate.

We will discuss work parties, how to obtain and maintain tools, plot utilization, hours tracking, maintenance of garden perimeters, maintenance of common areas, and much, much more!

For information, contact Mark Huston, mark.h@ppatchtrust.org, or Joyce Moty, joyce.m@ppatchtrust.org. See you at Bradner Gardens on March 17th at 10:00 sharp!

2011 Trust donors

The P-Patch Trust is grateful to its Fiscal Year 2011 donors, whose gifts were recorded between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2011. Donors are essential to the Trust: your financial support helps the organization expand and enhance community gardens by acquiring land, preserving and protecting existing community gardens and assisting low-income gardeners. The Trust grows communities one shovel, one seed, one garden at a time.

- Your contributions helped the P-Patch Trust grow garden communities in 2011 by:
- undertaking a joint strategic planning process for the P-Patch Program and the P-Patch Trust, funded by the Trust and the City, to determine how best to support and expand P-Patch community gardening in a time of scarce resources
 - paying for plot rental fees for gardeners who requested financial help
 - providing fiscal agency services for 24 P-Patch gardens
 - supporting Lettuce Link with the distribution of fresh P-Patch-grown produce to food banks and feeding kitchens
 - partnering with the City and the Seattle Housing Authority to provide “market gardens,” a community-supported agriculture program for people with low incomes
 - publishing the *P-Patch Post*

Thank you again for your support.

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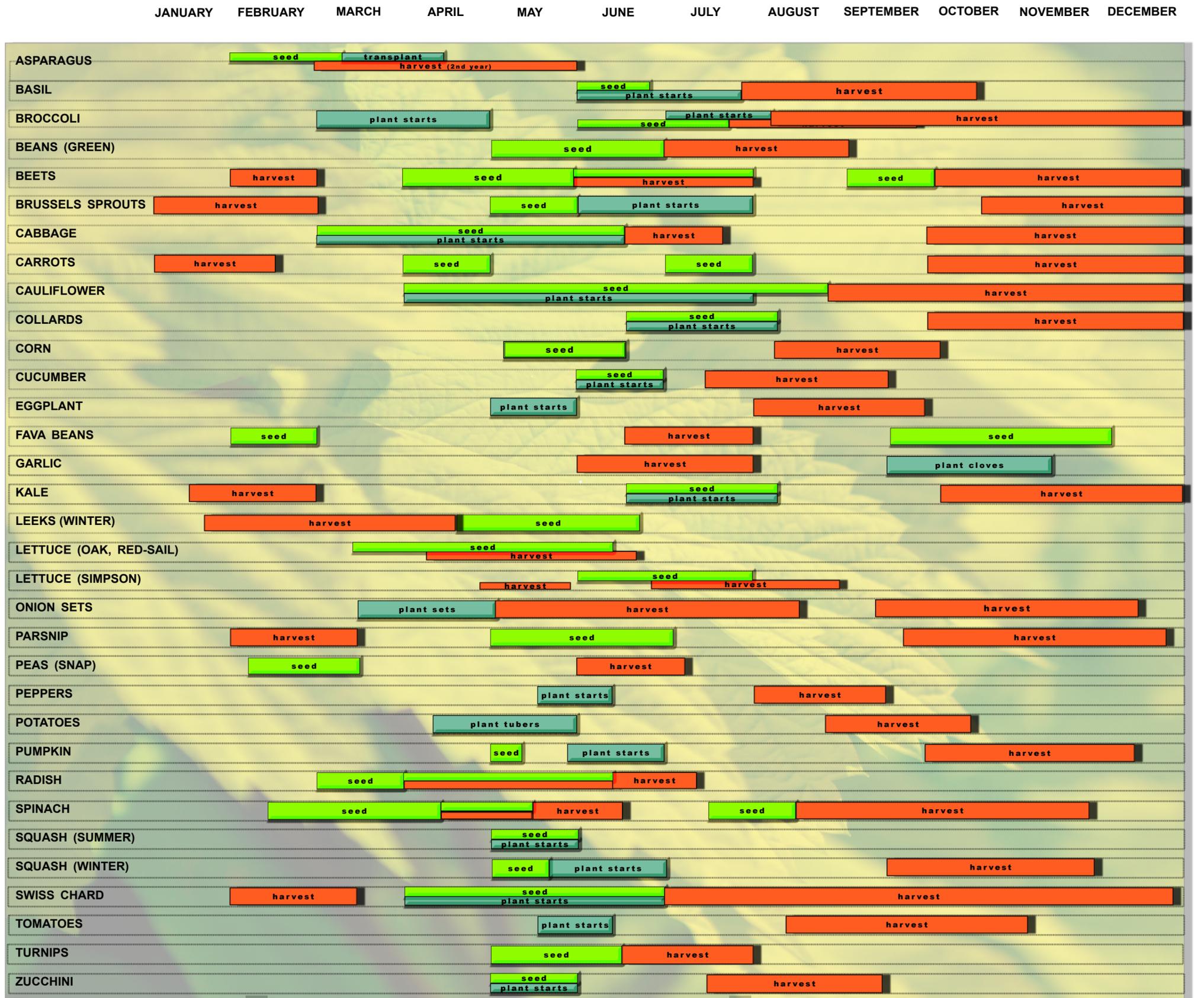
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(continued on page 8)



planting calendar

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(cont'd from page 5)

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Cascade P-Patch in snow, winter 2012 MELINDA BRIANA EPLER

Gardening across the globe to better understand our world

Article and photo by Jennifer Geist

An amazing group of middle school students from McClure Middle School, Seattle Girl's School and Seattle Academy are breaking new ground at the Queen Anne P-Patch! Their great story begins back in early elementary school when they began studying Spanish language and culture with The Language Link LLC, a local business that provides before- and after-school language classes all over the neighborhood and farther.

This is a special group: they have been studying Spanish for about seven years and they are the Language Link's very first cohort of students. Coincidentally, many of them also come from Queen Anne P-Patch families! So when the Language Link announced a family trip to Peru in April 2010 that would involve working with a Peruvian children's garden project called Tierra de Niños...well, a lovely group of families put their hiking boots and gardening gloves in their backpacks and went on an amazing adventure of touring, digging, weeding, singing, eating, planting, hiking and making friends with the gardening kids of Ollantaytambo, Peru. Upon their return, the group remained enthusiastic about gardening and Spanish language learning and wanted to keep it going.

Winter to spring

As gardeners, you all know how it is when you want to grow something. The winter season is a time for cultivating ideas, is it not? The seed from their journey did germinate and when several P-Patch families offered the students the use of their plots, the Global Workshop was born in the spring of 2011 at the Queen Anne P-Patch. Not only did the Language Link teachers and students garden in Spanish, but they deepened their understanding of sustainable practices that have been known to indigenous people for thousands of years.

By following the ANIA Tierra de Niños curriculum, students learned the Incan philosophy of land stewardship: when cultivating the earth, one third of the land should benefit the gods, or nature, one third the community at large, and one third is for yourself. Students carefully planned their plots: what plants will benefit the soil, the animal/insect inhabitants and the air, in other words: nature? And what plants would produce a bounty that could easily be used by the Bethany United Methodist Church's Wednesday Night Dinner? And what's their own personal favorite thing to eat? Students planted *flores*, *zanahorias*, *rabano*, *lechuga*, *cebolla*, *tomates*, *cilantro*, *perejil*, *fraisas*, *calabazas*, *guisantes*, *habichuelas* y más!

The Queen Anne P-Patch thus officially hosts the FIRST Tierra de Niños project in the United States. There are over 70 in Peru, and 20 more throughout South America. In addition, there is one in India, one in Scotland and one in Canada. In an effort to share this resource and network with more young gardeners, the Global Workshop has introduced the project to two more groups in Guatemala. Last spring, the Seattle students began corresponding and sharing photos with their peers around Lake Atitlán, who were also interested in gardening and land stewardship. Students from the Centro de Capacitación/Amigos de Santa Cruz have joined the network and began building a garden on the roof of their community building. And across the lake, the Fotokids de Santiago have been sharing photos of their project planting trees in order to preserve the hillside behind their village that is prone to slides in heavy rain.

Spring to summer to fall

In July the Global Workshop students set out to document their project, in Spanish, and create digital stories to share and inspire others. *Jardín por Jardín* and *Un Jardín*



Global Workshop students standing with their sign "Bienvenidos a Nuestra Tierra de Niños" at Queen Anne P-Patch, spring 2011

Magnifico describe how the students created their gardens, what their thinking was behind their work and how they felt about it. Students have sent these media pieces to their peers in both Peru and Guatemala and have begun corresponding this fall in preparation for yet another global adventure!

Fall to winter

Global Workshop students and their families will again load their backpacks with gloves and tools and head to Guatemala in February to work in the gardens of their new friends on Lake Atitlán who are forming the first Tierra de Niños in Guatemala! It is the hope of the Language Link and all of these pioneering students that this network of global gardeners will continue to grow, to stay in contact by sharing their stories, and in doing so, foster the beautiful notion that all of this land, the water and the air, is part of the same planet. And when they cultivate it, they can have a positive impact by working together, sharing the bounty and preserving the natural balance.

The Global Workshop would especially like to thank the Queen Anne P-Patch for letting our project exist, unfold and grow over this last year. We have had so many lovely interactions with the P-Patch community, and so many great days digging in the dirt there. We will keep you posted on our travels and our expanding network of young gardeners!

Global Workshop <http://thelanguageinkllc.com/>
 Tierra de Niños <http://www.mundodeania.org/>
 Amigos de Santa Cruz <http://www.amigosdesantacruz.org/>
 Fotokids <http://fotokids.org/>

News from the P-Patch office

By Rich Macdonald

Judging by the number of plot applications flying around our office, it must be application season. As some of you are painfully aware, we tried an email application. At the time of writing, it is too early to assess results, but we have received much spirited and constructive feedback. From our end, the applications were very easy to email, but the response is tepid. Perhaps they are getting lost in inboxes. At the gardener end, printing proved problematic for many, and the inability to make online payments was unfortunate. This year we have some funding to develop a web-based database, which should ease the application process and give gardeners and site leaders more tools to manage their gardens. We appreciate the patience of everyone as we tried this experiment.

Changes are stirring in our Department of Neighborhoods. We said a sad goodbye to Veronica Sherman-King, the manager who oversaw our program and the Neighborhood Matching Fund, but we are gratified that she has taken the job of first executive director of the P-Patch Trust. Karen Gordon, longtime Neighborhoods staffer, will add P-Patch and Matching Fund to her existing management portfolio of Historic Preservation and Major Institutions. Karen has a wealth of experience in the city and is a great advocate for her

programs; we look forward to tapping her skills and support. In city budget news, P-Patch staved off proposed cuts to both staffing and operations. This restoration shows the value of this program to the city and the hard work of gardeners and the Trust to make it happen.

Interdepartmentally, food system work is hot. The city hired a food system coordinator, Sharon Lerman, who will work the food system interdepartmental team, attended by P-Patch staff, to weave together the many ways that the city supports the local food system. P-Patch over the last year has been fortunate to participate in another interdepartmental team organized by the Seattle Parks Department. It brings together community partners and Parks programs that have an impact on the food system—think of youth cooking programs or gardens at community centers. Attending this committee has yielded at least one intriguing community garden lead and a commitment to work with Parks staff who organize student service learning projects.

Looming on the 2013 horizon is the P-Patch Program's 40th anniversary. That same year Seattle will host the national conference of the American Community Gardening Association. The P-Patch Trust, P-Patch Program and the School of Landscape Architecture at the University of Washington are deep into planning. Watch for opportunities to help.

Planning activities take a fair amount of our time

during the winter. The joint strategic planning effort with the P-Patch Trust, while not complete yet, has influenced this year's work planning (look forward to news in the next issue). As we add more gardens, staff expect to push more management responsibility to P-Patch gardens that are ready for it. Expect to see your site leaders monitoring plots and resolving conflicts. Some gardens may take on plot assignment and even management of their P-Patch map. Look for more skills development for gardeners and site leaders like last July's Garden Skills Fair, co-sponsored by the P-Patch Trust and P-Patch Program.

Results from the water contest, featured elsewhere in this issue, point to other areas where sites can increase responsibility. More than 30 sites lowered water consumption in 2011. Innovative strategies employed by sites show opportunities for training and gardener involvement. When gardeners regularly check and repair hoses or monitor water meters, usage goes down. Thanks to everyone who participated and to the P-Patch Trust for the contest prizes. We look forward to even bigger results in 2012.

As the new year starts and the seed catalogs pile up, I wish all of our 76 P-Patches and more than 2,300 gardening families an awesome year of community gardening!

From the Editors

With this issue Deb Britt, Sue Letsinger and Susan Levine prepare to step down as the editorial team for the *P-Patch Post*. We are grateful to Julia Bos, Melinda Briana Epler, Tracey Fugami, Judy Hucka, Jim McKendry, Larry Neilson, Christina Wilsdon and Diane Zebert – all who have graciously stepped up to help pull this issue together and assist in the transition. We appreciate their time and skill and look forward to seeing a consolidated editorial team continue to take on this rewarding work. Thanks to all of those who have contributed their time and their stories to the *Post* during our tenure. As outgoing editors, we have enjoyed and been enriched by our experience, and all three of us look forward to contributing in other ways to the abundant work of the P-Patch community.

– Deb Britt, Sue Letsinger and Susan Levine

P-Patch Post

Transitional Editorial Team

p.patch.post@ppatchtrust.org

Deb Britt	Judy Hucka
Sue Letsinger	Jim McKendry
Julia Bos	Larry Neilson
Melinda Briana Epler	Christina Wilsdon
Tracey Fugami	Diane Zebert

The *P-Patch Post* is published three times per year by the P-Patch Trust. Approximately 2400 copies are distributed each issue. Please submit articles or story ideas to the editors at p.patch.post@ppatchtrust.org. The submission deadline for the summer issue is April 15.

P-Patch Trust Mission Statement

P-Patch Trust, a nonprofit organization, works to acquire, build, preserve and protect community gardens in Seattle's neighborhoods. Through advocacy, leadership and partnerships, the Trust expands access to community gardening across economic, racial, ethnic, ability and gender lines; promotes organic gardening and builds community through gardening. We seek to break urban isolation by providing opportunities for people to garden together, learn from each other, develop a sense of neighborhood and create a more livable urban environment.

The *P-Patch Post* is published by the P-Patch Trust. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the P-Patch Trust or the P-Patch Program.

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YES! I want to help the P-Patch Trust acquire and advocate for community gardens, and preserve and protect our existing community gardens.

Here is my contribution as a:

FRIEND: \$25-\$34 (pays the fiscal agency fee for one garden for one month)
GARDEN HELPER: \$35-\$49 (pays the plot rental fee for one low-income gardener)
SUPPORTER: \$50-\$99 (pays one year of liability insurance for one garden)
CONTRIBUTOR: \$100-\$249 (funds a Trust tool grant for one garden)
BENEFACTOR: \$250-\$499 (pays a portion of the property taxes on the Trust's gardens)
PATRON: \$500-\$999 (pays a significant percentage of the annual support for Lettuce Link)
GARDENING ANGEL: \$1000 or more (pays for printing one edition of the P-Patch Post)

You may be able to multiply your contribution through your employer's matching gift program. Please check with your Human Resources Department for information and the necessary form. Adobe, Amgen, Bank of America, Boeing, Microsoft, Starbucks and Chase Bank are among the major local employers that match contributions to non-profit organizations.

An acknowledgement of your contribution will be mailed to you.

Thank you! For more information contact us at p.patch.trust@ppatchtrust.org or call 425.329.1601

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The P-Patch waitlist

Facts from 2011

By Rich Macdonald

One of the first questions the P-Patch staff answers in many conversations about the program is: “How long is the waitlist?” Indeed, most gardeners have spent some time on a waitlist. As a measure of the program’s success, we sometimes point to it with pride, while in the same breath trying to diminish its importance.

At the end of 2011, as part of the joint strategic planning process for the P-Patch Program and the P-Patch Trust, staff analyzed waitlist statistics and produced a report, summarized for this article and available in full by emailing rich.macdonald@seattle.gov.

What is the P-Patch waitlist, and how long is the wait?

The waitlist is a tool for plot assignment. Yet, though we talk about “the waitlist,” there is not just *one* waitlist, but many. Each P-Patch has its own list, and applicants can sign up for two. Waitlists vary in length and wait time for a variety of reasons: P-Patches in less dense areas of the city, and in neighborhoods where populations may have limited access to technology or have limited English skills, have shorter waitlists.

Length of time on a waitlist can be deceptive. The garden assignment process begins in November and continues until vacant plots are assigned by May. A smaller number of unused plots are reassigned during the gardening season. Because of this seasonality, most applicants wait a minimum of one gardening season before getting a plot. P-Patch-wide, more than 50% of waitlists are less than 1.75 years.

The figures for 2010 and 2011 vary between P-Patches, but seem to show a lessening of wait time.

Average waiting time on P-Patch waitlists 2010-2011

Average Wait Time	In 2010	In 2011
One year or less	11	7
1-2 years	20	18
2-3 years	13	16
3-4 years	6	8

Note: The numbers do not add up to the current 76 P-Patches, because not all P-Patches have waitlists. Gardens without waitlists may be new, expanded, collectives, market gardens, or focused on low-income and immigrant populations; they may use alternate methods, like door-to-door outreach, to recruit gardeners.

Judge a waitlist by its neighborhood

Because each waitlist is for a specific neighborhood garden, in general it’s only after the development of a garden that a waitlist emerges in a particular neighborhood. This is one reason why the numbers of people waiting for plots in gardens has grown even as the program has responded to the growing interest in community gardening with more gardens.

The size of any given P-Patch waitlist will reflect the population density of the surrounding neighborhood. Waitlists are typically larger in densely populated areas of the city, and these dense areas of high demand are also the most challenging areas in which to find available land to develop new gardens. Even so, in Capitol Hill alone, two gardens started in 2011, giving 55 families the opportunity to garden.

For more than 60% of P-Patches, the wait time is less than two gardening seasons.

People on waitlists need not wait to garden

The P-Patch Program encourages and promotes gardening beyond individual plot assignment. The website, the email waitlist registration, and the annual waitlist update provide links to websites such as Urban Garden Share, which connects people with land to those without, and nonprofit gardening or food-focused organizations like Alleycat Acres and Lettuce Link. P-Patch also pursues partnerships (with Seattle Parks’ Community Centers, for example) that can open up gardening opportunities for people on the waitlist.

Strategies to manage and reduce waitlists

The P-Patch community directly addresses demand by building more community gardens. Since 2007, P-Patch has added 11 new sites and 230 new families. By the end of 2012, with help from the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy, the P-Patch Program will have added 15 new gardens and expanded another 5, adding at least 420 new plots and increasing the number of families gardening by 18%.

The P-Patch Program also watches supply in current gardens: reassigning underused plots, reducing plot sizes and adding space where appropriate. Since 2006, existing P-Patches added 78 families and more than 10,000 square feet of gardening space in underutilized areas. An example is Eastlake, where gardeners almost doubled the size of their garden by expanding into an adjacent unused street right-of-way.

Through the application cycle and garden monitoring, staff turned over 565 plots in 2011. Managing the waitlist by updating it each year helps ensure continued interest. The staff also monitors tenure in gardens: at the end of 2011, almost 70% of gardeners have gardened for five years or less.

Ensuring equity and meeting strategic goals

Recognizing the barriers that the waitlist system can present for some individuals and communities, the P-Patch Program has specific measures in place to mitigate potential inequity. The P-Patch Program develops gardens in areas of high diversity with targeted outreach, especially to refugee and immigrant communities. In Northeast, Southeast

Annual waitlist totals 2007-2011

Waitlist totals	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Waitlist pre-purge (compiled in October-November)	1,245	1,719	2,069	2,205	1,844
Waitlist post-purge	777	1,230	1,688	1,523	1,037
Percentage decline (pre- to post-purge)	38%	28%	18%	31%	44%

Note: In October and November of each year, staff contacts each waitlist applicant to update records and ensure continued interest. Those not responding are purged from the waitlist (though they have one year to reinstate.) Between 2007 and 2010, inconsistencies in data collection may account for the differences in numbers.

and Southwest Seattle, P-Patch partners with low-income housing providers to make gardening available to residents.

To adapt to the realities of demand for P-Patches, and with an understanding of what makes a good community garden, the P-Patch Program has adopted plot-assignment guidelines that focus on keeping community gardens neighborhood-based, encouraging participation by under-represented groups, and retaining the spirit of giving back.

P-Patch offers priority in plot assignment for those individuals or groups who meet one of four strategic goals: that a P-Patch reflects the diversity of its surrounding neighborhood, that food is grown for donation, that a P-Patch has an adequate number of gardeners who live in the surrounding neighborhood, and that the P-Patch will assist populations underserved by the program. Underserved populations include African-Americans, Latinos, recent immigrants and refugees from Africa, children and youth groups up to age 24, those with ADA needs, and groups that serve seniors.

Increasing supply and meeting strategic goals for plot assignment

Measure	Number
Number of new families gardening in new P-Patches since 2006 (10% increase)	230
Projected number of new families in new P-Patches by 2014 (18% increase)	420
Number of families added since 2006 by expansion or subdivision of existing garden space	78
Number of plot holders turned over in 2011 (24% of all plot holders)	565
Number of families and groups assigned plots in 2011 who meet strategic goals	25
Number of P-Patches that primarily serve low-income and immigrant populations	20

Selected site news

By Rich Macdonald

So much happens in our 76 gardens, and in the office we hear only a tiny fraction. Here is a sample of some interesting items that crossed my desk:

In late 2011, P-Patch gardeners were entertained by a West Seattle Funblog spoof: an inspired posting about a police raid on weedy gardeners. Read about it here: <http://www.westseattlefunblog.com/local/police-raid-seattle-p-patches-in-massive-sting-operation>

The 38 P-Patch giving gardens have a new resource. **Interbay** gardeners Deb Rock and Jude Berman are working with a web designer to help gardeners and volunteers connect with their local giving garden.

Thanks to the initiative and vision of **Colman Park** P-Patchers, renovation of the garden’s tool shed—a Neighborhood Matching Fund project—is nearing completion. The shed, which doubles as a P-Patch-wide tool library, will have two doors, segregating Colman’s tools from program activities.

Picardo Farm P-Patch, the oldest and largest in terms of families gardening, had its last fall rototilling. Last year gardeners received a Neighborhood Matching Fund award to convert the plowed south 1.5 acres of the P-Patch into year-round gardening and to build other improvements, including a children’s garden (watch out Magnuson and Bradner), giving garden beds, and bamboo and mushroom gardens.

A number of P-Patches, including **Queen Pea**, **Picardo** and the new **Kirke Park**, will be participating in the grant-

funded orchard training sponsored by City Fruit. Good luck to these gardens; orchard management is rewarding and hard.

In addition to new P-Patches funded by the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy described elsewhere in this issue, P-Patch is welcoming other new gardens. The sustainability coordinator at **North Seattle Community College**, Christian Rusby, who is also a very patient activist, obtained approval in late 2011 to start a P-Patch community garden at the school. The P-Patch Trust had a donation of landscape design services that will help students and the community plan the site. The group hopes to submit a Neighborhood Matching Fund development proposal in the spring.

The P-Patch Program will be working with Seattle Parks and Seattle Housing Authority in the winter of 2012 to turn **Horiuchi Park** on First Hill into a P-Patch. This site will serve First Hill and Yesler Terrace and provide space to gardeners who may lose plots during the Yesler Terrace redevelopment.

In late fall, the number of P-Patch community gardens grew to 76 with the addition of Greenwood Park, where committed gardeners have been working for years to develop a beautiful community garden in the park. When the levy-funded project **Barton Street** assigns plots in mid-January, P-Patch will have 77 gardens. Check out both Barton and Greenwood Park for interesting garden framing construction.

Finally, **Lake City Housing**, a Seattle Housing Authority mixed-income site focused on families, will open this fall with approximately 25 plots. Priority will go to residents of the housing complex.

Barton Street community garden and P-Patch

A melting pot of skills and talents

By Jacqueline Koch

In May 2011, after a year of planning, a team of volunteers broke ground on a new, and very welcome, community garden and P-Patch at the southernmost edge of West Seattle. Years before, neighbors had spotted the vacant lot on the corner of Barton Ave. SW and 34th Ave. SW, and in 2010 it was purchased by the city of Seattle with funding from the Parks and Green Spaces Levy.

This past December, under ash-gray skies and in bitter, cold temperatures, the P-Patch volunteers had organized a last-minute work party to meet a key deadline: a large gravel delivery that would finish the garden paths. In an attempt to keep warm, the volunteers kept moving, making a final effort to get all the paths graded. Pick-axes were flying, shovels punched the ground, and wheelbarrows shuttled dirt from path to pile. As if on cue, a man in a white pickup pulled up to the side of the lot and jumped out. “I’ve been driving by here for months, wondering what’s going on here!” he exclaimed. “Do you need a stone mason?”

“Who *doesn’t* need a stone mason?” laughed Kate Farley, construction manager. “That’s something I dream about at night.” If this project has taught her anything, it’s that her neighbors have a wealth of diverse talents—and that they are happy to share them. Putting that varied skill-set to use has brought the Barton Street Community Garden and P-Patch to life.

There have been many magical moments when strangers have offered a hand, expertise or a can-do attitude to help transform this empty and sometimes trouble-prone lot into a beautiful educational community garden.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BARTON STREET COMMUNITY GARDEN AND P-PATCH

Imagine an orchard

New book on coastal fruit trees offers basics, plus inspiration

Article and photo by Bill Thornness

An orchard is one of the perennial joys of a garden. As you chart the course of the seasons through the life of a fruit tree—early flowering buds that hold so much promise, swelling fruit, glorious harvest and even the bare bones of the spur-laden branches in winter—you can learn much about the abundance of nature.

The new book *From Tree to Table: Growing Backyard Fruit Trees in the Pacific Maritime Climate* helps you get started on your own orchard—or learn how to tend those fruit trees in the corner of the P-Patch. The book, written by Bay Area gardeners Barbara Edwards and Mary Olivella and published by Seattle’s Skipstone Books (disclosure: also my publisher), is equal parts maintenance and care guide, shopping list and kitchen companion.

You’ll learn how to choose the site for your tree, evaluate the soil, and get your new tree into the ground. But layered onto this basic advice are more sophisticated tips. They tell you which types of trees need more “chilling hours” to go dormant and grow vigorously next year. Peach and plum need some chilling hours, but apples and pears need more.

They wisely advise getting a smaller tree than you might think you need, and then pruning it regularly to keep it at a height for easy harvesting. They show and tell about the basic espalier methods. Taking the idea of small trees further, they discuss the technique of planting a number of trees together in one large hole, less than two feet apart. Imagine a varied grove with fruit-laden branches intertwined—it certainly would be a unique look—and I imagine it would need a lot of pruning.

Watering, fertilizing and battling pests and diseases are all addressed on a basic level, with organic tips such as using compost tea to feed your tree and using nylon “footies” on apples to thwart apple maggots and codling moths. They suggest washing and reusing footies, but I have found the effectiveness of the footie to go down markedly after the first year’s use—the fabric seems weakened and tears or becomes easier for the bugs to get through.

The authors also give a nod to our native mason bees as excellent early-season pollinators, and tell how to build a bee house. With concern over the scarcity of honeybees, and the fact that some fruit trees flower in our climate before it’s warm enough for most bees to be flying, welcoming mason bees into your garden makes good sense.

I appreciated the illustrations and the easy-to-follow instructions about pruning, because this was a practice that I remember being very concerned about when I planted my first fruit tree. Knowing about the basic methods and cuts, and what shapes you can prune the tree into, will help with the important early training of a young tree.

A significant portion of the book is devoted to listing varieties of fruit trees. Chapters

“Picture a group of sweaty women, befuddled by the breakdown of a monster machine we had rented to dig the trenches for the water line—we were tired and frustrated,” Kate recounted. “We tried everything to get the machine running again.” The rental yard had agreed to send over a different machine. It was another learning curve for the team, while the hours ticked by and there were still many trenches to dig. When a man named Al walked in off the street in white shoes and slacks, Kate was nearly sobbing as she explained what was going on.

“Let’s get ‘er done!” said a determined Al, who went home, changed his pants and shoes, and came back to help the team sort out the problem and finish the trenches. Al has been with the P-Patch team ever since. “There is nothing that guy can’t do—building forms, mixing concrete, solving problems. We are so lucky, he has a bottomless bag of tricks and is a real teacher,” says Kate.

“One of the things that is meaningful to me is the ability of the garden to serve as a meeting place for the community,” says Terri Lindow, the project’s outreach chair. A number of collectors have brought items to decorate the new walls: plates, found objects and beautiful stones. Community organizers have mastered the art of fundraising through bake sales and a pumpkin-carving benefit from the garden’s first harvest.

Led by project coordinator Randeef Frost, the leadership team is launching 2012 with plans to haul in topsoil for the beds, build compost bins and design a fence along busy Barton Street. February 2012 will bring Missy Anderson, mason bee farmer and King County Master Gardener, to lead a mason bee workshop (February 11th at 2 pm at the garden site).

A learning process all along—and a learning opportunity for years to come—this hard-won P-Patch promises much more than just great harvests: it’s destined to be the new heart of the neighborhood.

are given over to apple, plum, fig, pear, persimmon, cherry, quince, citrus, and the stone fruits apricot, peach and nectarine. While some of those typically don’t grow well in the Seattle climate, never fear: in each chapter, best varieties are listed by climate zone, so you can see which, if any, are likely to grow here. They consulted with horticultural experts in each region when compiling the list. As you read about each variety, you will learn, among many details, about the tree’s growth habit, and how the fruit tastes and stores.

Interspersed throughout the fruit listings are recipes, gathered by Seattle editor Leslie Miller, that bring the idea of having a fruit tree into focus: Oh, you mean I can use those Brooks prunes in a Moroccan Chicken Tagine with Walla Walla Sweets? Or perhaps I should be true to my heritage and whip up the Cured Herring with Granny Smith Apples, Red Onion and Coriander.

The recipes come from chefs around the region who were inspired by their local produce and offer wonderful opportunities to fully enjoy your fruit, especially if you have a bountiful harvest and get tired of your old standby dishes.

Throughout the book, little extras will keep you entertained and thinking of new endeavors, like growing a pear in a bottle, constructing a pheromone trap for codling moths or making your own cider.

“From Tree to Table” starts with the basics, but it provides enough depth and variety to keep a budding orchardist entertained well past the first harvest.

Bill Thornness, a former Ballard P-Patcher, is the author of Edible Heirlooms: Heritage Vegetables for the Maritime Garden, also from Skipstone Books.



Liberty apples grow within nylon “footies” on Bill Thornness’ tree

Vee gardens

Growing to new heights

By Del Webber

It's early January, and we're basking in 50-degree weather while it's freezing in Florida. This makes me wonder what the weather gods have in store for us this year. 2010 had one of the wettest spring seasons on record in Western Washington and 2011 had one of the coolest summers in recent memory. Do we need to lower the bar for a new "normal" or should we gird ourselves to do battle with the elements? What new tools or new strategies can we use?

It's never been easy here in western Washington with our maritime climate, but I refuse to accept the limitations of an old-school mindset. When I walk around P-Patches and ask established gardeners, "Why don't I see more peppers and eggplants?" the usual reply is "We can't grow those things around here!" Resignation. The weather trends don't bode well for turning that sentiment around.

I've been gardening for 45 years and I make new discoveries each year and at each location I try. The key things we all know: sunlight, air movement, temperature and moisture. Then there are soil conditions to consider and improve. The soil temperature, ability to drain and retain water as well as micronutrients and biota (microbes) that make up the entire soil ecosystem. Finally, each plant has its own picky demands. I love a challenge! This is where art meets science. The risk-taking, dedication, sweat and problem-solving served up with a good dose of humility makes up my gardening experience.

My home and garden are tucked in the woods. This gives me a window from the first week of June to the second week of September as a growing season, with six hours of sunlight each day, maybe a little more or less at times. A few years ago a developer chopped down the trees

to the east of my property. I had mixed feelings about this. I lost my privacy and an ecosystem, but I gained two hours of morning light especially on the roof of my garage!

The torchdown, flat roof of my garage became my laboratory. If I found a way to control all those essential resources that favor healthy plant growth, I could be happy with this new 30x30-foot-square space. Modular container gardens would become the solution. As I designed my new space I decided to add vertical architecture to the modules. I could manage soil temperature, water conservation, companion plantings and bio-diversity and increase yield with high-density plantings. Finally, I designed into each planter a composting system with its own population of earthworms and microbes. Did I say I'm an alpha gardener?

I call this system the "Vee garden." "V" is for vertical and is an homage to the victory gardens after which P-Patch communities are fashioned. I grow lots



STEVE RINGMAN FOR THE SEATTLE TIMES (left); DEL WEBBER (right)

Del Webber in his garden

of peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, cabbages and greens. For proof, check out my photos and my website vee-garden.com.

Also, please look for me at the Northwest Flower and Garden Show in February.

Picardo Farm

A brief history and musings

By Marietta Foubert

Thanks to Mount Mazama for making Crater Lake; because of that geologic event, Seattle's first P-Patch of 1973, now called Picardo Farm, landed many historic layers of volcanic ash, which finally became glacial till.

As Mount Rainier's glaciers receded and the changing natural landscape created Lake Washington, Picardo's peat bog topsoil grew ever deeper to 45 feet.

That peat bog is part of the Willow Creek watershed, and has been used for agriculture since the 1920s when horses plowed the Picardo Farm. In 1997, the City of Seattle mapped it as an earthquake liquefaction zone. Willow Creek is still the south fork of Thornton Creek, which drains into Lake Washington at Matthews Beach.

Today Picardo bees swing to buzzing music for sunflowers, as gardeners nurture beekeeping and honey harvesting.

Gardeners make local food bank history while meditating on Seattle's first composting toilet.

When killdeer sing for water bugs, seasonal plots awaken to grow into yearly gardens.

Creative gardening imaginations share healthy recipes in Picardo's special pavilion for gardener gatherings and exhibitions.

Picardo Farm's iconic red barn provides landmark storage and special care-giving for garden tools.

Northward from the barn begins an orchard buffer supported by a landscaped wall, linking together the barn, pavilion, composting toilet and accessible raised gardens.

The award-winning Master Gardeners' Demonstration Garden helps educate visitors and bring attention to Seattle's nationally recognized program for community gardening.

Marietta Foubert has gardened at Picardo Farm since the early 1980s. Along with Marlene Faulkenbery, she formed a gardeners' board to help create what is now the P-Patch Trust. As a graphic artist intern, she helped the early P-Patch staff create a newsletter archive. She has a long interest in the history of the garden and is still documenting it with photos, commentary and humor.

P-Patch Trust

Message from the board

By Joyce Moty

Greetings to 2012—a year of transition for the P-Patch Trust and hopefully a great gardening season. I am honored to be the newly elected president of the Trust, following a decade of Ray Schutte's visionary leadership that has seen community gardening in Seattle grow significantly in size and popularity.

There are currently 75 gardens across the city. Thanks to funding from the Parks and Green Spaces Levy, that number will increase to 90 P-Patches by 2016. To address this growth of gardens, the Trust, in partnership with the Mayor's Office, hired a consultant in 2011 to develop a strategic plan that will make the program more sustainable. The good news is that we have more gardens to accommodate new gardeners; the bad news is that staffing and services have taken cuts from the city budget, with more on the way in 2012. The strategic plan will provide direction for the Trust to collaborate with P-Patch Program staff to work smarter with less money and keep the program thriving. One change already in progress is the move to online plot renewals in 2012.

Another big change is the hiring of Veronica Sherman-King as the P-Patch Trust's first-ever executive director. Her key roles will be fundraising to sustain this position and developing and building the board and its relationships with other organizations to address

the challenges ahead. Veronica brings significant experience as the former director of Planning and Community Building for the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. She has worked in the field of community development for more than 10 years, handling planning and large-scale neighborhood development efforts. As a leader in the public and nonprofit sectors, she has worked with public agencies, private investors, commissions and elected officials. An Oregon native, she studied at the University of Oregon and received a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the University of Pittsburgh.

2013 will be another big year for the Seattle P-Patch Program, as we will celebrate our 40th anniversary. This milestone coincides with hosting the American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) national conference in August 2013. P-Patch staff and Trust board members are already working with the University of Washington Department of Landscape Architecture to plan the conference. ACGA conferences provide the opportunity to meet and learn from representatives of community gardening from across the nation through workshops, panels and social events. Right now, the planning group needs event planners and fundraisers; if you have those skills and want to help, please contact Rich Macdonald in the P-Patch office.

More volunteers will be sought for a variety of assignments as we grow closer to the date for the conference. Stay tuned if you'd like to be involved!

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