

NEWSLETTER # 2 – August 2012

ROTARY SUNRISE GARDEN AT ST MARKS



RAIN AT LAST!

The June issue of the newsletter started with this heading. Little did we know that the early June rain would be minimal and we were facing a very dry June and July.

Despite frequent hand watering, the dry weather certainly took its toll on the garden. Some things clearly suffered. Getting watering frequency right has not proved to be easy.

Mulching of some beds with straw has certainly proved beneficial. Some plants, bulb onions for example, clearly did not get enough moisture while some tomato plants suffered from "blossom end rot" which is a symptom of watering issues.

As I write this, we have had some good soaking rains in the past few days; let's hope for some more – but not during the Cactus Festival Days.

HARVEST TIME

We are now enjoying weekly harvests of vegetables – both for personal use and for the Dundas Food Bank.

In the highly productive class we've seen cucumbers, summer squash (spaceships as Jim calls them!) green onions, cabbages and lettuce.

Less productive but good so far have been potatoes, cauliflowers, broccoli, potatoes and Swiss chard.

We have had smaller crops of tomatoes, carrots, beans, beets, herbs, peppers and zucchini.

Thanks to Jim McDonald who helped with harvest and delivery to the Food Bank over the past few weeks.

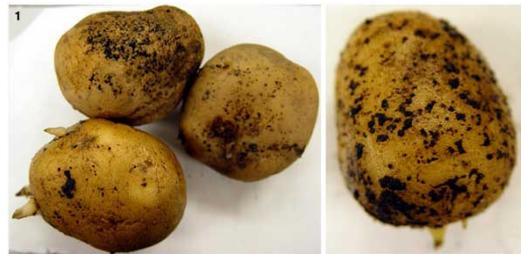
PEST CONTROL

Starting from big to small, we have not seen too much evidence of deer doing damage to the garden, even if their droppings are evident. The netting (awkward though it is, more of that later) seems to work reasonable well.

Rabbits have found us and beans and beet tops seem to have suffered.

The most difficult pests so far have been the Colorado potato beetle and the squash bug.

Colorado Beetle: Through much hand picking, the potato beetles worst ravages were controlled and some nice new potatoes were harvested. But in another bed, the potatoes had a form of skin canker which my internet research identifies as black scurf – it is cosmetic and does not affect yield.



If you want to be put off potato growing for life, there is a list of potato diseases at <http://www.potatodiseases.org/>

The other difficult pest has been the **squash bug**, which has damaged the zucchini crop. Once they got established they were very difficult to remove. We spent a lot of time removing eggs and squashing bugs but were never completely successful in eliminating them. A tip from one of our gardeners is to **"always quickly remove any diseased leaves and plants and do not dispose of them in the compost pile"**.



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SUCCESSION PLANTING

Succession planting is the planting of second crops in the same bed in the same season. Some of this has been done already – for example we have harvested radishes and then bunching onions from the same bed (E3). We are now planning a third planting in this bed.

As we select items for succession we have to look at the time to grow and oncoming shorter days, and lower temperatures. We also should follow crop rotation methods and not plant the same family twice. This avoids encouraging pests and draining the soil of specific nutrients.

Just planted in succession are more lettuce (H3 – under white row cover) and carrots (G3 under hessian). We may be optimistic, but think it worth a try. We plan to use further season extension techniques on these beds by covering with polythene tunnels as the possibility of frost approaches.

FEEDBACK, LEARNINGS, IDEAS

We would like to hear feedback so that we can improve the operation of the garden for next year. Send us an email. Some initial thoughts on improvements

- A garden party, a BBQ, using artwork in and around the garden to engage others are all potential activities. Any volunteers to organize?
- The netting works to deter deer but is awkward to manage. We are considering a net around the perimeter of the garden for next year.
- More attention to thinning out and watering will improve yield

NEAT, PRODUCTIVE, VARIETY

In a walk around our garden at this time of year we see some plots which show good expertise (or luck?) in producing a nice variety of productive produce.

Particular congratulations to the gardeners in the following beds

- L2 Valeria Ivaneky
- M2 Diana Perl
- H2 Zoe Green
- G4 Linda Nash

Should we have a proper contest next year with judging on an announced date?

SUMMER IS NOT OVER!

But Fall will be here soon. That's when we start to think about cleaning up the garden, preparing the soil for next season and planting certain crops that over-winter.

Mark Saturday October 20th, 10am -2pm in your calendars as the tentative Fall Cleanup Day. We will also be planting garlic and "green manure" at this time.

Rotary Sunrise Garden at St. Mark's

**We are growing vegetables
To feed the Dundas Food Bank
To learn about gardening
To grow our community**

A joint venture between
St. Mark's United Church / Rotary Club of Dundas Valley Sunrise / Dundas in Transition
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