

February 2008

Natural Matters



Exploring Naturally Beautiful Backyards

Volume 2, Issue 2

So Much Compost, So Little Time

We have all been asked the question what can and can not be put in the compost pile and our answers vary but take us all down a similar road discussing the value of greens to browns in equal proportion by volume and the list usually looks, for the most-part, like this:

GREENS

kitchen scraps
farm animal manure
grass clippings
coffee grounds

BROWNS

dried leaves
straw
shredded paper
chipped branches

Every once in a while we get a composting question that we have to stop and consider. Some of them are listed below:

LINT— It is the recommendation of the Master Composter Recycler Program not to compost lint unless you are sure that it consists of 100% natural fibers.

DRYER SHEETS— are NOT compostable and contain dubious amounts of chemicals. Look for a dryer ball at: www.nellieslaundry.com/Productinfo.html for an alternative to the traditional dryer sheet.

FEATHERS—feathers are similar to human hair in that they can consist of up to 10 times the amount of nitrogen than farm animal manure. The center quill takes time to break down, but the addition of feathers the compost pile is a good green option.

PET & HUMAN HAIR—both pet and human hair can be composted. Pet hair decomposes faster than human hair because of the structure of the follicle.

EGG CARTONS—can not be recycled curbside but can be used in the compost pile after you have asked your neighborhood egg lady if she needs them. They are a good brown, provide bulk, can be shredded, put in a lasagna bed, or used as a suppression layer themselves.

Inside this issue:

<i>'08 Volunteer Training</i>	2
<i>Volunteer Meetings</i>	2
<i>The World According to Kris Alexander</i>	3
<i>From the Coordinator</i>	4
<i>Contact Information</i>	4
<i>Volunteer Hours Sheet</i>	5
<i>Volunteer Opportunities</i>	6-7

February Volunteer Meeting

Regular volunteer meetings will be held at 6:30pm. During volunteer training volunteer meetings will be held 6 to 9pm at the Clark County 78th Street Operations Center. You are invited to attend the entire evening or just a portion. Speaker times will be posted for each meeting.

Volunteer Meeting February 21, 6 to 9pm

6:15 to 7:15 Native Bees with Sherian Wright

7:30 to 8:30 IPM and Beneficial Insects with Sally Fisher

Bring a snack to share!

Volunteer Training

Volunteer Meetings

Following are the 2008 Training dates and topics. The training will be held once again at the Clark County 78th Street Operations Center, 4700 NE 78th Street. Please, know that you are invited to all the training sessions. We would love to see you!

February 14 — Urban Wildlife

Speaker: Diane Adkin, Wildlife Sanctuary Specialist

Speaker: Debbie Kapral, owner BYBS

February 21 — Beneficial Insects and IPM

Speaker: Sally Fisher, Clark County

Speaker: Sherian Wright, Bee Wrangler

Speaker: NBB Staff

February 28 — Water Sys., Rainbarrels & Gardens

Speaker: Bev Walker, Water Resource Ed. Center

Speaker: Clark County/WSU Watershed Stewards

March 6 — Household Hazardous Waste, Recycling, and Green Cleaning

Speaker: Jim Mansfield, Clark County

Speaker: Sarah Wilkinson, Waste Connections

Speaker: Clark County/WSU Watershed Stewards

March 13 — Ecolawns/Lawn Alternatives, Smart Watering, and Grasscycling

Speaker: Glenn Lebsack

Speaker: Roy Lebsack

Speaker: NBB Staff

March 20 — Organic Vegetable Gardening, Lasagna Gardening, Volunteerism

Speaker: NBB Staff and Americorps Member

Speaker: Ann Lawrence, Storytree Farm

March 27 — Presentations and Graduation Party

Thursday, February 21, 6 to 9pm

Join the 2008 trainees at Clark County 78th Street Operation Center, 4700 NE 78th Street for Beneficial Insects, Mason Bees, and Integrated Pest Management. I hope to see you all during this meeting as we will be discussing information that has not been provided at previous trainings. Please, bring a snack to share.

Thursday, March 20, 6 to 9pm

Join the 2008 trainees at Clark County 78th Street Operations Center, 4700 NE 78th Street for Organic Vegetable Gardening, Lasagna Gardening, and Volunteerism. This will be a great class and I hope to see everyone there. Please, bring a snack to share.

Thursday, April 17, 6:30 to 8:30pm

Join us in viewing Garbage! The Revolution Starts at Home. Location will be announced in the March newsletter. Bring a snack to share. Kris will bring her famous popcorn!



Volunteer Wants, Needs, and Desires

Veteran Volunteer Kathy Winters is collecting “Boxtops for Education.” You can bring them to the volunteer meeting or drop them off at training. You can also contact Kathy at: k.winters@q.com.

Contact veteran, Darla Smith if you are interested in participating in the Junk to Funk project! We will need designers, sewers, material collectors, and models for the trashion show in October! happywildcat@gmail.com.

Lasagna Anyone?

The World According to Kris Alexander, Americorps Member

Mmmm...lasagna. Who doesn't love it? All those layers, the variety of ingredients, the versatility, the beauty, the greens and browns, the worms, the microorganisms. What kind of lasagna is this? Lasagna gardening of course!

For those few of you who have managed to avoid me on my soapbox preaching the good news of lasagna gardening, this is not growing a casserole in the garden, nor is it growing the ingredients for mama's secret recipe. This lasagna is a recipe for making garden beds right on top of an existing surface, whether sod, weeds, compacted soil, poor soil, good soil, even cement. The result is improved soil, healthy soil which grows healthy plants less susceptible to pests and pathogens. A lasagna garden saves time, energy and money, while eliminating the need for pesticides, herbicides and artificial fertilizers.

Lasagna gardening is an earth-friendly method which promotes good stewardship of the resources available. Eliminating the use of toxic chemicals protects the food supply for humans as well as within the natural food chain. Building beds on the existing surfaces maintains soil structure, reduces erosion and preserves wildlife habitat for myriad mini-beasts living in the soil.

A wide variety of needs and personal circumstances are met by the principles and practices of lasagna gardening. The savings in time, energy and work appeal to busy people, while the elimination of digging and tilling benefit those with an aversion to power tools as well to those with physical limitations. The simplicity of the method makes it appropriate for beginning gardeners as well as those with years of experience.

The basics of a lasagna garden consist of a weed barrier, a "chunky" layer to facilitate aeration and drainage, and alternating layers of "green" and "brown" organic material. If this sounds a lot like building a compost pile, that's because lasagna gardening is another term for sheet composting, composting in broad layers rather than in a bin or pile.

Putting the "compost pile" right in the garden eliminates the need to move materials to a composting site, just to move them back again, as a mulch of finished compost. Because decomposition takes time, this is an excellent way to "put the garden to bed" in fall and plant it the next spring, or early summer. By that time, the organic materials will have smothered the roots of plants previously growing on the site, and decomposed sufficiently.

In lieu of advance planning, a lasagna bed can be constructed, covered with black plastic and left to "cook" for six weeks or so. In this way, a bed prepared now can be planted as early as April. For an even quicker bed (instant lasagna?) small plants can be tucked directly into the organic layers of the lasagna or seeds sown in a layer of topsoil or sifted compost spread on the top of the bed.

Persistence is what makes the impossible possible, the possible likely, and the likely definite.
Robert Half

From the Coordinator . . .

I made it four months without a garden.

Four long months.

I survived seed catalogs filling my mailbox, sunny days with no allowed yard work, plants in the wrong place pleading to be moved, bare root trees begging to be bought, and the cold winter's thought of no real food growing through the summer and filling my pantry for next winter hanging over my head.

Four long months, and then he relented.

And now the paths are marked, the beds are outlined, the potting bench under construction, the espaliered fruit trees planted, the marion- and raspberries on their way from the grandparents, strawberries on-site from my grandfather and the prospect of summer food filling my mind in my small 2,200 sq. ft. vegetable garden.

The transition has been a challenge from a 5,000 sq. ft. garden, orchard, and a two-acre field for food to an eighth of this urban lot of ours. I like challenges though. And the rewards are so much greater than any heartache when it comes to homegrown food through the season and tomato basil soup in the cupboard next February.

I am tending to two new gardens right now, one at home and one in NBB with the new volunteer core. I am excited about the passion that is apparent during this training and impressed by the veteran volunteers spending time at the training nights with the rookies. Outreach events are nearly filled for the first half of the year, a bushel basket of community contacts supporting the future of the NBB Program.

The greatest delight the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me and I to them. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Comments, questions, insights, brainstorms,
anything at all . . .

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The Naturally
Beautiful Backyards
Program is a
partnership of:

Clark County
Public Works/ Solid Waste

Columbia Springs
Environmental Education Center

Clark County
Master Composter/Recyclers

WSU Extension Master Gardeners

Clark County
Endangered Species Act Program



For an alternative format, contact the Clark County ADA Compliance Office.
V (360) 397-2025; TTY (360) 397-2445; E-mail ADA@clark.wa.gov

Volunteer Opportunities

January through July 2008

January 31, 9:30am to 2:30pm

“Focus the Nation” event at Clark Community College

Two volunteers needed to table this event that can speak about natural gardening with a focus on decreasing “your carbon footprint.” Information will be supplied. Time includes set up and breakdown.

Thank you Glen and Roy Lebsack, 72 contacts at this event!

Thursdays, January 24 through March 2, 6:00 to 9:00pm

Volunteer Training @ 78th Street Operations Center

Training nights are filled, thank you!

Saturday, April 12, Urban Chickens Lecture, 10am to Noon

Pioneer Feed, Ridgefield

Event is filled, thank you!

Saturday, April 19, Clark County Living Local Fair, 9:00am to 3:00pm

Marshall Center

There will be several volunteer opportunities for this event as NBB is one of the primary organizers. Keep your eyes open for volunteer openings.

Saturday, April 19, “Growing the Food You Want in the Space You Have” Lecture at Clark County Living Local Fair, time TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

Saturday, April 19, “Recycled Garden Art for Kids” Lecture at Clark County Living Local Fair, time TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

Saturday, April 12/19, “Green Cleaning for Kids” Lecture at Clark County Living Local Fair, time TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

Thursday April 17, HP Earth Day Event, 10:00am to 2:30pm , Hewlett Packard

Event is filled, thank you!

Tuesday, April 22, Nautilus Earth Day Event, 10:00am to 2:30pm, Nautilus

Event is filled, thank you!

April 25, 26, and 27, Home and Garden Idea Fair Clark County Fairgrounds

All shifts are filled! Amazing! Thank you!

Saturday, April 26, “Gardening with Native Plants” Lecture, time TBD

Home and Garden Idea Fair Clark County Fairgrounds

Event is filled, thank you!

Saturday, April 26, “Edible Landscaping for Kids”, time TBD

Home and Garden Idea Fair Clark County Fairgrounds

Event is filled, thank you!

Thursday, May 1 and Saturday May 31, Battle Ground Library Display Case

I would appreciate **two** volunteers to design, set-up and take down a display at the Battle Ground Public Library. Materials will be provided.

Saturday, May 10, Camas Mother’s Day Plant Sale, Camas, 9am to 4pm

I would appreciate **two** volunteers for each shift:

Event is filled, thank you!

Sunday, June 15 and Monday, June 30, Three Creeks Library Display Case

I would appreciate **two** volunteers to design, set-up and take down a display at the Battle Ground Public Library. Materials will be provided.

June 28 and 29, Recycled Arts Festival at Esther Short Park

Event is filled, thank you!

Sunday, July 13, Earth-friendly Garden Tour, 10am to 4pm

This is THE EVENT of the NBB season. I would appreciate if **everyone** would volunteer for at least one shift at a host garden. We will be forming garden teams to help host gardeners prepare for the tour. You are more than welcome to work on a garden team!

The following gardens have all garden teams and Tour shifts filled:

Kris Alexander/River HomeLink—Camas

Sandy and Erskine Wood—Vancouver (Columbia River)

Patty and David Page—Vancouver (Felida)

Nancy McQuillan and Richard Hanford—Ridgefield

Bianca Elmer—Amboy

Tuesday, July 22, “Rain Barrels and Raingardens” Workshop, 6:00 to 8:00pm, location TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

Thursday, July 24, “Smart Watering” Lecture, 6:00 to 8:00pm, location TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

Tuesday, July 29, “Backyard Composting” Workshop, 6:00 to 8:00pm, location TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

Thursday, July 31, “Attracting Beneficial Insects” Lecture, 6:00 to 8:00pm, location TBD

Event is filled, thank you!

There will be additional outreach opportunities that will be posted as they arise.