



Natural Matters

Cultivating Naturally Beautiful Backyards

October 2008

Thinking Green - Kenneth O'Brien, M.S.



The arrival of autumn is like the arrival of an old friend that you haven't seen for awhile. Autumn may surprise us softly with her arrival, like when we awaken in the night to the sounds of geese singing their rhythmic songs as they make their way south in long sky-caravan processions, awakening within us memories of autumns past. Autumn's surprise is a sweet surprise, like opening the door to a house filled with the aroma of a baking pie. Suddenly, it's tea time again, time to slow down, consider all that we've been through recently, how fortunate we've been to have what we have, and consider what needs to be done next. It's a time to preserve the harvest and make plans for gatherings and celebrations. Dehydrating those extra apples and cherry tomatoes for the sauces of spring, and canning peaches, pears, and pickles to enjoy throughout the coming months.

The return of "scattered showers" liberates aromas from the landscape that have been slowly baking all summer. With the addition of water to the recipe, the earthy smells of fungus become common again, and we may be reminded of how miraculous the mechanisms of life seem to be as they unfold their interactive ballet of activity, accompanied by a symphony orchestra of sounds and smells. The original garden shows us how it is done, if we care to observe it. The fruits and their seeds are abundantly produced and shared, with some eaten, some stored away to eat later, and some put back into the soil to sprout and grow again. Nutrients are recycled, and an insulating layer of debris is laid like a blanket over the ground in preparation for the deep freezes of winter.

The constant feeding and activity of the soil is of particular interest for those interested in learning the ways of the original garden. What is added to the soil? We can quickly see that leaves, green herbaceous debris and woody brown debris are being laid on the ground. The water being added is also easy to notice. If there's a fire in the area, some potassium-rich ash is added. If we look closely, we might notice that some animals have left a contribution or two as well. There are also many other small but significant

(continued on page 2)

Inside this issue:

Thinking Green	1
Upcoming Meetings and Workshops	2
Contact Information	2
Volunteer Opportunities and News	3

Just say NO to toxic chemicals



in our
groundwater,
creeks,
and rivers!

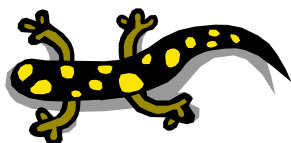
Upcoming Meetings and Workshops

**October
Volunteer Meeting
Thursday, 10/16
6:30 PM to 8:00 PM**

**Location: Fire Station #87
12603 NE 72nd Ave.,
Vancouver WA**

6:30-7:00

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities; Check-in on recording of completed hours



7:00-8:00

Enrichment Presentation:

Amphibians and Gardens

Katie Holzer - Multnomah County
Amphibian Researcher

NBB Workshop:

Beneficial Bats

Thursday Oct. 23rd
6:00 to 8:00 PM

A free workshop on Bats, presented by the Naturally Beautiful Backyards program, will be offered by Clark County Waste Reduction Specialist Sally Fisher and USFW Biologist Donna Allard at Columbia Springs.

The workshop will take place in the Swift Classroom of Columbia Springs, located at 12208 SE Evergreen Hwy, Vancouver.

Pre-registration is requested. For more information about the workshop please contact 360.891.1992 or email: nbb@columbiasprings.org.



Call for 2008 NBB PHOTOS! - Please share with us your photos of events so we can include them in presentations and reports. ~ Thanks!

(continued from front page)

contributions. Free nitrogen (the form available to plants) is added from diverse sources including falling leaves, the bacteria in root nodules of alder trees and plants in the fabaceae family, the remains of salmon and other anadromous fish that have been distributed by birds and mammals, and lightning strikes.

In many forests of the northern hemisphere, a significant amount of nitrogen is also added by lichens that fall to the ground. Specifically, the cyanobacterium called Nostock, a part of the leafy jade-green Lobaria oregano lichen (also called lungwort lichen), contributes an estimated 15/ lbs per acre of usable nitrogen to forest soils each year. This lichen dies off in the presence of the pollutant sulfur dioxide, produced in large quantities by coal-fired power plants. This nitrogen source is thought to be instrumental in the growth of the northwest's giant trees.

(continued on page 3)

A study by the University of Washington shows that children eating organic fruits and vegetables have concentrations of pesticide metabolites (the breakdown products of pesticides in urine) six times lower than children eating conventionally grown produce.

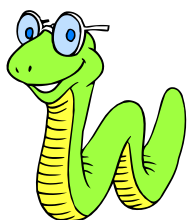


Naturally Beautiful Backyards is a program of Columbia Springs. It is offered in partnership with Clark County Solid Waste Program and is a cooperative effort of Battle Ground, Camas, Clark County, Columbia Springs, La Center, Ridgefield, Vancouver, Washougal, and Yacolt.

Contact me anytime with comments, questions, or suggestions:

Kenneth O'Brien
Columbia Springs
12602 SE Evergreen HWY,
Vancouver, WA 98683
(360) 882-4567
nbb@columbiasprings.org

Volunteer Opportunities



New Opportunities!

We have opportunities for a couple of volunteers to help out with teaching about worms and decomposition to local elementary students at Columbia Springs. Times include Oct. 21st from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM, and Oct. 24th from 9:00 to 11:45 AM.

An opportunity to shadow someone else teaching the lesson will take place beforehand, on the 16th or 17th from 9:00 to 11:45.

Please contact Coral Conant, On-site Education Coordinator Columbia Springs office: 360-882-6610 vm: 360-604-1001 ext. 9085 cconant@columbiasprings.org



Kudos to Volunteer Elizabeth Koch for jumping in to teach several of these decomposition lessons!

America Recycles Day

Clark County

"Do it Yourself" Fair

(formerly the "Fix-it" Fair)

November 15

10:00 AM—3:00 PM

1 Volunteer needed to give a half-hour presentation on Naturally Beautiful Backyards. This is a great opportunity to gain experience with public speaking in a casual setting.



Also:

We have opportunities for one more volunteer to help out with setting up an NBB table at the **Beneficial Bats workshop** on **Oct. 23rd**. That will take place at the Swift Classroom at Columbia Springs from **6:00-8:00** (note the time has changed since it was posted last).

(continued from page 2)

In addition to these soil ingredients, billions of fungus spores drift through the air and scatter into the soil and overlying organic litter. With the addition of moisture, the fungus grows out of these spores in the soil and begins extending miles of mycorrhizal hyphae throughout the soil, breaking down organic matter while opening up spaces between soil particles and facilitating the transport of water and minerals to plants. They are thought to also act as an energy "banking system", taking deposits of surplus sugars from the roots of large trees and loaning them out to the roots of plants trying to get a start under the shade of the giants.



While most of the mycorrhizal fungi provide nutrients to the garden of forest plants and to other soil organisms, there is even one that attracts and consumes nematodes. The role of fungus in healthy soils is only beginning to be researched and appreciated fully. Soon we'll learn more about the particular fungi that can be added to your garden soil to help your plants work more cooperatively as well. In the meantime you can rest assured, each time you take a deep breath of our aromatic autumnal air, that everything necessary is already being looked after in the original garden of nature.

Is it that way in your garden, too?

"Dirt made my lunch."

- The Banana Slug String Band