



From the Ground Up

THE FLOYD BENNETT GARDENS ASSOCIATION

Volume 16 Issue 4

The Newsletter That Helps You Grow

Winter 2011-12

Time to Renew Your Garden Plot

In early December you should have received a renewal application packet. It contained a cover letter, a garden application, a copy of the Rules and Regulations, your community service form, a tilling request form and a Children's Garden application. In mid-December the application was re-sent with minor corrections (labels were missing for name and address on the first two lines). Please use the corrected form when sending in your application. It is very important to fill out the packet correctly. Renewal applications that are missing information will be returned to the gardener.

Remember the deadline. All applications must be completed and received by January 31, 2012. After that there is a 2-week grace period during which any late applications will still be accepted. However, applications that are received between February 1-15 will incur a \$20 late fee per plot, which means that if you have two plots, you will have to pay an additional \$40.

If there is an unavoidable delay in sending in your renewal application, please contact Clara (corresponding secretary) or Bob (vice president) and let them know the situation. Any plot that does not have a completed application in by February 15 will be reassigned.

Be sure that, in addition to giving us your personal information and signature on the front of the application, you fill out the community service form on the other side - it *must* be filled out and included with your application. If you want your garden tilled fill out the Tilling Request Form. We start tilling on a first come, first served basis in April, depending on the weather; we cannot till if the ground is frozen or muddy. In order to be tilled your garden must be cleared of all wood, rocks, tall weeds, etc. You will get a phone call to let you know when we will be tilling your plot. You will need to unlock your plot so we can get in to till. Tilling fees are \$20 per plot. (All forms are available at www.fbga.net.) ♦

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The Ryan Visitor Center, originally scheduled to re-open in Fall 2011, will reopen in May. Details in the Spring 2012 issue.

Floyd Bennett Gardens Association Newsletter

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Our Policy: All submissions to the newsletter may be edited for grammar, spelling and length. We reserve the right to reject entries.

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New Composting Program

Carl Arendt, Maintenance & Operations

Maintenance and Operations will be starting a new compost/mulch program early in the spring of 2012. Due to the limited amount of compost made at FBGA we will be offering grass clippings as an organic material that can be used as mulch or added to your compost. We will be gathering the grass clippings from mowing the community areas of our gardens. We can certify that these grass clippings are 100% organic as we do not use any chemicals on the grass at FBGA. Grass clippings contain about 4 percent nitrogen, 1 percent phosphorus and 2 percent potassium. While decomposing, the grass clippings will add nutrients to your soil. They also serve indirectly as a food source for the beneficial bacteria in the soil, which are doing many things to help our plants.

We will be asking gardeners to collect these clippings as part of their community service; this will involve mowing with a push mower that has a collection bag attached. Each week the grass clippings will be collected from a different area of the garden so that our grassy areas get the benefit of the clippings also. The amount of clippings that will be available will depend in part on the number of gardeners willing to collect them. Distribution of these clippings will go first to the gardeners collecting them and then if there is anything left it will be made available to the rest of the garden community. Anyone interested in participating should contact me at the containers. All are welcome to take part in this program and will be trained by M&O in the use of the mowers. ♦

You are the News

From the Ground Up is for and about members of FBGA. If there is a story you want to tell, write an article or talk to one of our reporters. Tell us what's so wonderful about that plant you love to grow; impart your knowledge and techniques; send a photo to share a garden moment that you experienced but the rest of us may have missed. Community service hours can be earned for material we use in the newsletter. Please email fbgaeditor@gmail.com or contact one of FBGA's officers or committee chairs and tell us your news.

Gardening Roots

Gay Snyder

I was in a quandary. I was new to the Floyd Bennett Gardens Association family and had little experience with gardening. Where do I begin? Read a “how to” book? Jump in, sleeves folded up, pull out the weeds and just plant away? Then it dawned on me: I had to begin at the beginning. I had to get to the roots.

No, not just plant roots. Family roots. So I began to learn about my Jewish agricultural and gardening traditions. Naturally, then, my curiosity turned to my fellow gardeners in this beautiful community of gardeners at FBGA. I wanted to learn about the experiences gardeners from different parts of the world could share with me.



Phil has grown accustomed to Northern Hemisphere crop cycles

I spoke with Phil and Enid of B14 who are also new to the community. Phil grew up in New Zealand and his house was on a standard issue ¼ acre lot, just like all his neighbors had. He recalled that his father had a fabulous garden where he grew silverbeet (Swiss chard in these parts), beets, peas, carrots, corn, round cucumbers, kumara (a sweet potato) and other vegetables. Phil pointed out that since New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere, it took him some time to adjust to the different schedule here in the north – for instance, that in late August or early September, when we’re thinking about our gardens winding down for the season, down under there are daffodils and other plants bringing on the spring.

Peggy of plot B7 was happy to share her experiences with me. Peggy grew up in the Jamaican countryside. She explained that people there did not plant in neat rows; instead, there was

little uniformity or order in the garden layout and gardeners commonly planted different crops together. She demonstrated this in her own successful plot, showing me her crops of cabbage, basil and collard greens all intermingled.



Peggy showing her planting arrangement

Roseman in G44U is originally from the West Indies and he spoke of his mother’s love of gardening. Roseman explained that in the “old country” people would commonly plant wherever they could find appropriate space – the roadside, for instance. How fitting that he should garden here in an area carved out of what used to be an airport. ➡



John and Javier hard at work, wishing they could grow mangoes

Doris, John and Javier, more gardeners new to FBGA this year, were working hard at G34. They hail from Puerto Rico where many crops are grown that they will just never be able to grow here like sugar cane, coffee, mango, pineapple and guava. They said that instead they will grow other crops familiar to them such as cilantro, tomatoes, onions, anise, eggplant, pumpkin, basil and tamarind.

In my efforts to be successful in my own garden, I learned that my fellow gardeners are people from varied walks of life with different experiences and gardening knowledge to share and that all our gardens grow from the deep, strong roots that people have. ♦

Peppermint

Dr. William Palumbo, DCN, MS, RD, CDN, LNHA

While peppermint leaves are available throughout the year, they are especially good in warm weather when they can give a burst of cool flavor to a summery salad or beverage. Peppermint has greenish-purple lance-shaped leaves while the rounder leaves of spearmint are more of a grayish green color. The taste of both peppermint and spearmint bear a flavor that can be described as a cross between pepper and chlorophyll, the peppermint being a bit stronger and spearmint a little more cool and subtle.

Peppermint has a high nutrient density and is low in calories. It is an excellent source of manganese, vitamin C and vitamin A. It is also considered a very good source of dietary fiber, omega-3 fatty acids, folate, iron and vitamin B2.

To store fresh mint leaves, carefully wrap them in a damp paper towel and place inside of a loosely closed plastic bag. Store in the refrigerator, where it should keep fresh for several days. Dried mint should be kept in a tightly sealed glass container in a cool, dark and dry place, where it will keep fresh for about nine to twelve months.

Editor's note: Peppermint and spearmint, as wonderful as they are, should be carefully considered before being added to your garden. Once you have brought either of them in it is quite difficult to get them to agree to leave should you (or your neighbors) tire of their presence. Anyone who has some in their garden probably already knows it can be cut down to the ground when it gets inconvenient and it will grow right back for you to have when you want some. When I find myself with too much peppermint, I give it to friends for their rabbits – they absolutely love it. If you would like some peppermint or would like to share some of yours with fellow gardeners, email fbgaeditor@gmail.com. ♦

Homemade Garlic Powder

Adriann Musson

Did you grow too much garlic? Are you wondering how to keep it from rotting? Garlic powder is the answer. It's simple to make and tastes so much better than store-bought. The first step is to peel and slice your garlic cloves. Each slice should be about the thickness of a penny. Keeping the thickness as uniform as possible will help to ensure that all the slices take the same amount of time to dry.

Garlic can be dried in a food dehydrator. Lay the slices on the tray in a single layer. It should take about 24 hours to dry; to help it along flip the garlic over half way through. You can also use a 200 degree oven. Make sure you place your garlic on a non-stick surface; parchment paper works well. It will take 6-8 hours to dry the garlic. Check it frequently and flip it after about 3-4 hours. You can also dry your garlic in the air. Lay the slices on a non-stick surface in a single layer and cover with cheese cloth. It will take the garlic about 2 weeks to completely dry. Make sure to turn the slices every few days.

Once your garlic is dry, use a coffee grinder to make the powder. Leave the powder exposed to the air for 24 hours to evaporate any remaining moisture. When thoroughly dry, put in a glass container and enjoy. ♦

Spring Meeting

Sunday, March 25th 1-4pm

Location: Aviator Sports

**Receive your permit, meet
fellow gardeners, join a
committee, get seasonal info.**

Book Reviews

Ayala Jonas



***The Resilient Gardener: Food Production and Self-Reliance in Uncertain Times* by Carol Deppe**

This book is not a casual read! I cannot say I read every word or that I found everything that I did read relevant to gardening at FBGA. However, the book includes some wonderful new approaches to getting the most out of any garden while minimizing the work involved.

The author has a PhD in biology from Harvard and has spent much of the last 30 years gardening in the Pacific Northwest. She has developed seed saving and plant breeding techniques particularly suited to organic gardening, all the while getting older and finding garden work harder to do. The effects of climate change and difficult economic times are more reasons she sees for building resilience into our gardening plans. In excruciating detail Dr. Deppe explains her gardening theories and adaptations. She uses four crops as total nutrition - potatoes, corn (for gluten-free flour and meal), beans and squash - plus duck eggs. Much of the information would be hard for us, as community gardeners, to use, like keeping squash from hybridizing by planting a half mile away from similar squash, growing chickpeas in our limited space or, literally, a ton of potatoes and storing them in the house.

So why do I heartily recommend you read this book? Because I learned a lot about adapting tools and growing techniques to an aging body (think longer handles on your tools) and changing weather (planting more seed at different depths to improve the chances of germination). Recipes and do-it-yourself tricks for easier gardening and better results lighten up the reading a bit. (Table of contents and Chapter 1 at www.caroldeppe.com)

***Making It: Radical Home Ec for a Post Consumer World* by Kelly Coyne and Erick Knutzen.**

What a title...such assumptions. That we are going to reach a post-consumer world. That most people will want or need to recreate some of the things that they currently buy using home grown or repurposed items.

I found this book because a blogger at Garden Rant who had just moved to a city was reading all the books she could find on urban homesteading (what all of us who grow food in the city do!) and amongst all the books on growing maximum produce in a small space was this one.

This book is a collection of instructions for hands-on projects ranging from simple ones, like making a mouthwash from water, baking soda and essential oils in 5 minutes, and moving up to more complex projects such as how to espalier a tree in 4-7 years. There is a wide range of garden projects from setting up drip irrigation to seed saving and building compost bins. It's an eclectic mix and is not meant to be read from cover to cover. Just pick a project, assemble what you need and get dirty.

***The Truth About Garden Remedies: What Works, What Doesn't and Why* by Jeff Gillman**

At least once a week I ask gardeners questions such as: Why is my plant looking so sad? What should I give it to make it better? Sometimes I get an answer; sometimes I get 'I don't know'. If I get an answer I wonder if the person really knew more than me; I think "Where did they learn that?", especially such things as telling me to put beer on my plants! Newer gardeners ask me the same kinds of questions. Sometimes I can give an answer, other times I cannot.

So what if there was a gardener who took a scientific approach? In this book, Gillman has set out to take both standard and weird ideas on what will nurture and protect our plants and put them to the test. He tested fertilizing with buttermilk, beer and sugar, using garlic, hot peppers, tobacco and citrus peels to keep bugs off and playing both Mozart and Led Zeppelin to his plants.

For each possible garden remedy there is a short explanation of why it might work, an experiment or an analysis of someone else's experiment and a conclusion with suggestions. I now know to keep beer for drinking, continue to add lots of eggshells and coffee grounds to my compost and not to bother spraying weeds with vinegar. As for whether my taste in music affects the taste of my tomatoes, I'm still not convinced but I do suggest you read this book rather than just going ahead and using other gardeners' unusual remedies on your plants.

All three titles are available from the Brooklyn Public Library – Ed. ♦

Common Ground

Floyd Bennett Field: Over Time

Karen Orlando

Floyd Bennett Field on Barren Island, this curious and beautiful place where we garden, is a place that has been transformed many times throughout history and has different meanings and memories for its various users today. The field itself was created through the linking of several barrier islands in the 1930's. Barren Island previously housed industries such as fish rendering and waste disposal. Preceding all land uses were the migratory birds on the North American Atlantic Flyway who still make use of the field today.

The airfield's 1400 acres are among some of the largest open space in New York City (it's part of the 13,000 acres of Jamaica Bay's open space), so it is perhaps not surprising that the Floyd Bennett Field Blue Ribbon Panel, commissioned in 2010 to make recommendations on the airfield's future, wishes to turn it into the "crown jewel" of city parks. Among the recommended goals are embracing Floyd Bennett Field's unstructured character and open space and preserving its aviation history in the overall design.

As current FBGA gardeners, we are part of the long legacy of varied land use here at Floyd Bennett Field. We garden in the footsteps of other gardeners and have been doing so for nearly the entire time the airfield has been part of the national park system. Gateway's State of the Park Report mentions that public meetings will begin again in 2012 concerning revisions of the park's General Management Plan. "What should be the core mission of this urban park?" asks Gateway Superintendent Linda Canzanelli in the report. If, as an FBGA gardener, you have opinions or visions for Floyd Bennett Field and Gateway, consider attending and participating in these public meetings to voice them. Whether future changes are beneficial or harmful to FBGA is, to some extent, up to us.

For further reading:

<http://www.nps.gov/gate/parknews/upload/GATE-2011-State-of-the-Park-Report-HQP.pdf>

http://www.rpa.org/pdf/BBF_Report_Final.pdf

Largest Urban Campground?

Gay Snyder

I've lived in Brooklyn most of my life. Growing up here, I knew almost nothing about Floyd Bennett Field. I was about 16 when I first recall visiting this vast, open area of apparent wasteland. I've since learned that it was New York City's first airport and that it's been managed by the National Park Service (NPS) since 1972. Not long ago came Aviator and visits there with my son for various events. About three years ago, I learned about FBGA. I saw photos of idyllic gardens, happy people, flourishing crops and flowers. I applied and this past spring I was assigned a garden.

I come to the garden several times a week. It is truly an escape from the urban madness; a place of open spaces, greenery, nature, peace and quiet. It's an oasis to this day.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar visited New York City on June 13, 2011 to announce several initiatives to "improve access" to the outdoors in the New York City region. He described Floyd Bennett Field as an "unpainted canvas" and said that the five existing campsites would be expanded to ninety campsites within the next two years. Gateway's State of the Park Report says that if things go well the number of campsites could grow "dramatically".

As of early July, about forty campsites were open and ready for occupancy. There are five camping areas: Camps Tamarack and Goldenrod, Wiley Posts A and B, and a section called "Amelia Earhart" for recreational vehicles. The camping brochure states that: "All Vehicles, including trailers, must be kept on designated parking areas. No driving or parking on vegetation. Limit of two (2) vehicles or four (4) motorcycles per campsite reservation. There are no hookups for motor homes". Regarding trash, the brochure states: "Do not leave trash unattended and always leave campsites free of litter... There is no disposal facility for black water."

While NPS has rules and regulations that address some of the concerns I have about the expansion of the camping facilities, I remain skeptical that this initiative will paint the Floyd Bennett Field canvas in a positive way.



What we grew: 36 varieties of tomatoes, 12 garlic, 25 peppers, 8 onions, 6 eggplant, 16 squash, 11 lettuce, 5 spinach, 9 beans, 6 radish, 6 basil, 4 edible flowers and much, much more.



Photos may not be used or copied without the permission of Seed Savers Exchange

These are some of the varieties grown at FBGA last season. From the top left: Melon Charentais, Swiss Chard Five Color Silverbeet, Tomato Speckled Roman, Eggplant Listada di Gandia, Tomato Black from Tula, Okra Red Burgundy. All were given high marks by the gardener(s) who grew them.

Photos courtesy of and seed available from:

Seed Savers Exchange
www.seedsavers.org
 (563) 382-5990

...way back in June

Sylvia Tsingis

I had decided not to plant sweet potatoes this past year because we had had a problem with rodents getting to them before us. Then I came across an overlooked sweet potato at home that had somewhat withered but had several roots. Without any preparation, I plunked it into an empty spot in my onion bed and promptly forgot about it. In October as I started cleaning my beds, I came across the little solitary sweet potato ... it had produced 12 tubers ranging in length from 4 to 8 inches and weighing a total of 10 pounds!

I'm not advocating that gardeners plant their sweet potatoes in this manner but, had I followed normal gardening protocol in the planting and care of these beauties, we probably would not have had the delicious sweet potato casserole we enjoyed at Thanksgiving!



Photo: Sylvia Tsingis

The Gardens in Winter

Admission to Brooklyn Botanic Garden is free every weekday during the winter and from 10 - noon on Saturdays. It's never winter in the conservatory and there are still amazing things to see outside. Look for the paperbush (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*) near the gift shop with its flower buds looking like Christmas ornaments someone forgot to remove.

The Chinese Scholar's Garden at Snug Harbor Cultural Center in Staten Island is a place that doesn't need warm weather to be beautiful. It's like no other garden in the city and will definitely help tide you over to springtime in your own garden.

The Winter Woods in the North Forty Natural Area Saturday, February 25 9-11am Floyd Bennett Field
 The North Forty Natural Area can be a Winter Wonderland. Fallen leaves expose World War II era military bunkers, and lairs of urban wildlife. Search for wintering birds on the freshwater pond and along the shore of Mill Basin. Meet American Littoral Society naturalist, Mickey Maxwell Cohen at the Main Entrance Ranger Station and carpool to the site. 2 miles

Don't forget the FBGA Photo Contest. Pictures taken beginning February 1st are eligible to be entered (no retouching allowed). If you spend time at FBGA during the winter, be sure to bring your camera!

- January 31 - Renewals due
- February 15 - Grace period ends
- February 25 - Workshop: Starting From Seed
- March 4 - Workshop: Planning Your Garden
- March 11 - Workshop: Extending the Growing Season
- March 24 - Workshop: Starting Your Spring Garden
- March 25 - Spring Meeting
- March 31 - Workshop: Sizzling Summer Crops
- April 1 - New season begins!!
- April 21 - Workshop: All About FBGA

Important Dates

Floyd Bennett Gardens Association
 Floyd Bennett Field
 One Ryan Visitor Center
 Brooklyn, NY 11234

See you in the Spring

Garden Angels by Barbara Pearson