

# THE LATEST DIRT Summer 2008

**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VICTORIA COMPOST EDUCATION CENTRE**

## **Going Local: Native Plants in your Garden**

by Marika Smith

There are many reasons to incorporate native plants into your garden; they create a beautiful, natural landscape that requires minimal maintenance and promotes biodiversity, a key element in environmental stability. Native plants have evolved and adapted to the local climate and soils and require less water and fertilizer than showy exotic plants and they also attract birds, butterflies, beneficial insects. Regional rainfall is usually enough for these plants and they can survive weeks of dry weather, reducing the need to water regularly and serving to preserve our water resources. Using native annual and perennial wildflowers which provide continuous bloom will attract an array of pollinators and other wildlife and choosing heirloom varieties of plants and seeds results in a higher production of pollen and nectar.

Conventional nurseries often breed exotics for aesthetics and not for the plant's capabilities of producing precious pollen and nectar. Daffodils, dahlias and many other flowers look pretty but provide no food for our busy pollinators. A wide selection of native trees, shrubs and flowers creates enough diversity to maintain itself with the beneficial insects controlling pest populations and the birds controlling the insect population, imitating the best gardener in the world; nature itself!

### **Key Benefits of Gardening with Native Plants:**

- Reduce maintenance chores such as mowing and watering
- Save on your water bills with water-thrifty native plants;
- Save on your winter heating costs with well-placed trees for windbreaks ;
- Save on summer air conditioning costs using shade from trees ;
- Eliminate the need for harmful chemical fertilizers and herbicides by using native plants ;
- Watch your property values grow as trees mature and your easy-care native garden becomes more highly regarded ;
- Enjoy the beauty of your habitat's attractive wildflowers, butterflies, mosses and birds ;

*Garry Oak Ecosystem by Tim Ennis (NCC)*



The native plants of our region in South Coastal BC are beautiful, easy to grow, and are an integral part of our natural environment – so give it a try!

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### Hours of Operation

Wed. to Sat.  
10 am to 4 pm

Closed on statutory holidays, long weekends and the month of Dec.

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### Board of Directors

Janet Hockin  
Gail Snider  
David Neate  
Natalie Cushing  
Wendy Dunn  
Thomas Maguire  
Madeline Hargrave

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### Newsletter Formatting

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## **New Staff Members!**

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### **The Centre welcomes Marika to the team!**

Marika Smith joined the Compost Education Centre in late March. She has recently returned to her native Victoria after spending the good part of a decade studying and working in London, England. Currently enrolled in the Restoration of Natural Systems Program at The University of Victoria, Marika hopes to focus on urban storm water management, waste reduction, and fisheries rehabilitation. She loves the fun and friendly atmosphere at the centre and the beautiful aesthetics of the gardens. You will most likely find her trying to recycle or reuse everything in sight – so she fits in perfectly at our office!



*Picture taken by J. Warnock*

*Marika listening intently to a customer at the Organic Plant Sale*

## **Changes in Membership Costs and Benefits**

After spending many months discussing our current memberships cost and benefits, and presenting information at the AGM we have decided to implement changes to our membership costs and benefits. At the AGM, a motion was passed to raise the price for the first time in three years to the following:

Individual: \$25

Family: \$35

Student/Senior/Unwaged: \$20

There have also been changes in the membership benefits for people buying new memberships or renewing their annual memberships. Many of the membership benefits remain the same, such as the 10% discount on composting supplies at our Centre, a free newsletter, and the 10% discount on items at various Garden Centres in town. The only change is a reduction to the number of workshops included in the membership from 6 to 2. For additional workshops we have lowered the price from \$13.50 to \$10 for members. We strongly believe in providing low cost, accessible, high-caliber, local training but as our workshops have grown in popularity we are struggling to provide the workshops at such a low cost, and in the case of the membership, free. Again, if you have a current membership (bought prior to June 19th, 2008) we will still honour the 6 free workshops you are entitled to, the changes are only applicable to new and renewed memberships.

## Black Gold Rush Update!



This will be our final Black Gold Rush Update as our Environment Canada EcoAction program draws to a close. During the Black Gold Challenge, which began in October 2006, CRD residents reduced over 800 tons of greenhouse gas emissions by composting in their own backyards! If you'd like to find out your greenhouse gas reductions from composting, the Black Gold Calculator will continue to be available online at [www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold](http://www.compost.bc.ca/blackgold)

Prizes for dedicated composters and composting classrooms were generously provided by the following donors:

Smoking Lily • the Good Planet Company • Oak Bay Bikes • Hemp & Co. • Shift Organic Fashion • North Park Bicycle Shop • Riders Cycle • Share Organics •

### Compost Education Centre Welcomes New Board Members

In April, we held our Annual General Meeting which saw the election of David Neate, Madeline Hargrave, Gail Snider, and Thomas Maguire as new board members along with Wendy Bergner as the new CRD representative with Anke Bergner being assigned to a different organization. We welcomed back Janet Hockin and Natalie Cushing. We are deeply thankful to Katie Joshephson, Anke Bergner, and Beverly Catrall for their service on the board and would like to extend a special thanks to Kathryn Cook who stepped down from the board after 10 years of service. We were proud to provide her with an honorary lifetime membership for her dedication and commitment.

Thank you to Neil Williams, who facilitated the election of the officers for the ninth consecutive year and to the Soap Exchange for donating door prizes.

Our Board of Directors for 2008 is:  
 Janet Hockin – President  
 Gail Snider – Vice-President  
 Natalie Cushing – Secretary  
 David Neate – Treasurer  
 Thomas Maguire – Member at Large  
 Madeline Hargrave – Member at Large  
 Wendy Dunn – Member at Large & CRD Rep

Science Works • Lush • Sage Creek Naturals • Soap Exchange • Silk Road • Bolan Books • Russell Books • Fibre Options • Munro's Books • Recreation Oak Bay • Pearkes Rec. Centre • Saanich Commonwealth Place



**Giving Goes Green!**

• Giving to the Compost Ed. Centre is easy! Save time and paper by offering your donations on-line through CanadaHelps.org. Simply surf over to [www.canadahelps.org](http://www.canadahelps.org) and type in "Compost".  
 • Our name is on the top of the search results. Or, visit our website and click the Canada Helps link.  
 • And of course, donations are still happily accepted at our office.

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS

M. Whitley	C. & J. Simpson	A. Garnett
T. Gaber	B. & J. MacDonald	A. Smith
E. Noel	K. Stevens	Soap Exchange

We gratefully acknowledge the core funding support that we receive from the CRD and the City of Victoria. Additional support is provided by the Fernwood Community Association and through the generosity of our Compost Club Members and the residents of Greater Victoria.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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Date	Topic	Time	Cost
July 12	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
July 9	Organic Gardening	6-9pm	FREE
July 16	Organic Lawn Care	6-9pm	FREE
July 26	Saving Water in the Food Garden	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
Aug 9	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
Sept 6	Composting Basics	10am-12pm	FREE
Sept 6	“Do it Yourself” Garden Technology	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
Sept 12-13	<b>Compost Educator Volunteer Training Program</b>		\$100 (\$85 deposit with \$15 payment)
Sept 20	Seed Saving	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
Sept 27	Native Plants	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)
Oct 4	Composting Basics	10am- 12pm	FREE
Oct 4	Marvellous Mushrooms	2-4pm	\$15 (Members refer to policy)

For more details about these programs and our Full Events Schedule please see: **WWW.COMPOST.BC.CA**

**MUST PRE-REGISTER FOR WORKSHOPS BY CALLING 386-WORM (9676) OR EMAILING [info@compost.bc.ca](mailto:info@compost.bc.ca)**

## Organic Plant Sale !

In May we hosted our 5th annual Organic Plant Sale and it was by far the most successful ever! Over 800 people came to the plant sale on the May 10th to benefit from the locally-grown organic goods from eight different growers. “Part of the overwhelming success this year may have been due to the looming pesticide-ban in many municipalities” says Nadine Brodeur, Executive Director, “but we hope that people move towards organic gardening with or without a pesticide-ban and we want to make it as easy as possible for them to do that!” That is why the Compost Education Centre has continued to carry plants from local growers; Brodeur continues, “The plants have been selling really well, and we still have some terrific plants left such as rare heirloom tomato varieties, artichokes, cayenne, and lavender”. So if you missed the Organic plant Sale, or are interested in picking up a few more plants, come down to the Centre Wednesday to Saturday 10-4pm, because once they’re gone, they’re gone!

## Volunteer Spotlight!

We have been delighted by all of our awesome volunteers this season! New volunteers, Tim Taylor and Nicole Gardner completed their CEP practicum in record time!

Tim has contributed to the site, and his building of worm stands has enabled countless school groups to start composting in their classrooms. Tim has lent his height and computer skills to the functioning of the centre also. Thanks Tim!

Nicole has been a stellar addition to our team. She has helped composting in Victoria by attending the Spring Home Show, phoning members for the AGM, leading the Beaveree and assisting in the office. Nicole’s independence and competence are priceless. Thanks Nicole!

*...continued from page 1*

For a detailed list of native plants and a guide to their placement in your garden as well as the wildlife values they hold visit:  
<http://www.hctf.ca/naturescape/NativePlants.pdf>.

Other Resources:

Visit parks and natural areas in your region to learn more about native plants and their communities.

Become a Garry oak gardener and help save an endangered ecosystem with this free handbook available at:

[http://www.goert.ca/documents/GOERT\\_Gardeners\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.goert.ca/documents/GOERT_Gardeners_Handbook.pdf)

**THE LATEST DIRT** is published quarterly. The deadline for submissions for the Fall issue is September 20th, 2008. Submissions to the newsletter can be sent to the Compost Education Centre. Unless otherwise noted, articles appearing in this newsletter may be reprinted only in other not-for-profit publications, with the credit given to the author (when named) and **THE LATEST DIRT**.

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