

EcoSource Gardens & Agriculture

ISSUE 07 YEAR 11



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ECOSOURCE

Growing a Green Community

Why Community Food?

Our organic garden and agriculture projects are shared spaces where people of all ages, cultural, religious and spiritual backgrounds can come together to grow food. Through these projects we are working with community partners to increase access to affordable, healthy food and sustainable food growing skills!

Visit a local garden today!

The Garden of the Valley

1274 Mississauga Valley Blvd

Generation Garden

385 Meadows Blvd

Malton Community Garden

3540 Morningstar Drive

Hillside Park Garden

1311 Kelly Road

Iceland Teaching Garden

705 Matheson Blvd. E

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Garden!



*This summer EcoSource is offering a new and exciting environmental education program at the **Malton Community Garden***

Join us every Wednesday afternoon in July and August from 1:45-4:00 pm to learn about environmental issues including the 3 Rs, composting, food, and insects. Through art projects, book readings, and outdoor gardening activities at the Malton Community Garden, participants will explore ways in which we can work individually and collectively to create a healthy and low waste city, community, and world.

- This program is FREE of charge and open to children between the ages of 6-12.
- All children must be accompanied by an adult.
- Participants should bring clothes that are appropriate for gardening and art activities. These include closed-toe shoes, clothing that can get dirty, a hat, sunscreen, and a water bottle.
- Advanced registration is required. Please complete a registration form for EACH individual participant and return to the Malton Library Circulation Desk or to EcoSource.

For more information or to register, please contact Angie Sanchez at EcoSource 905-274-6222 or email communitygardens@ecosource.ca.

Put down some

Healthy Roots

this spring at the Malton Community Garden!



Join us this spring for a **FREE** family after school drop-in program at the Malton Community Garden!

Community members of **all ages** are welcome to drop in and help to plant, cultivate and harvest organic vegetables in the garden.

Come out to learn about healthy eating, how to grow vegetables in the garden or on your balcony, and make fun outdoor arts and crafts in the garden. **A great opportunity for high school volunteer hours!**

Dates and Times

Monday, June 6th 3:30 to 5:00pm

Wednesday, June 8th 3:30 to 5:00pm

Monday, June 13th 3:30 to 5:00pm

Wednesday, June 15th 3:30 to 5:00pm



Location

The Malton Community Garden is located beside the Malton Library and Community Centre at 3540 Morning Star Drive.

What to bring

All program materials and refreshments are **FREE!** Please bring a water bottle, hat, weather appropriate clothing that can get a bit dirty, and wear closed-toe shoes. **Children under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or bring a signed permission form.**

Sign Up!

For more information or to pre-register, please call Angie Sanchez at 905-274-6222 or email communitygardens@ecosource.ca



The Healthy Roots – Growing Together After School Program at the Malton Community Garden in 2011 is generously supported by Loblaws Community Investment After-School Grants and by the Government of Canada's Career Focus Program.

Working with WET SOILS!

You've probably heard over and over again that working wet soil is a bad idea – but why?

Soil is made up of many small particles of different sizes as well as organic matter in the process of decomposition, and AIR / WATER SPACES. These spaces in the soil are essential for healthy soil life – water and air circulate through them allowing your plants' roots space to grow and space for insects and microbes to move through the soil to assist processes of decomposition.

Working wet soil will pack soil particles tightly, leaving less room for water and air to penetrate. Imagine a sponge that is wrung out and unable to spring back into shape. This is what can happen to soil that is COMPACTED when a lot of foot traffic or cultivation happens during wet weather. Light, fluffy garden soils, especially those with a high clay content, can quickly resemble a concrete/brick mixture!

Compacted soil makes it more difficult for plant roots and gardening equipment to move through the soil. Compaction forms tight clumps of soil that become hard as rocks upon drying and are difficult to break up. Compaction can also set off a chain reaction – compacted soils tend to drain more slowly, which then delays our ability to work the soil after the next rainfall.

How do you know when soil is dry enough to work?

A simple method to determine if your soil is "workable" is to take a handful of that soil and squeeze it tightly and then poke that clump with your finger. If that clump then falls apart it is workable. If the clump stays together the soil is too wet. Workable soil should crumble when tapped with a shovel or hoe, rather than slice off (a sign that soil is still too wet).

Is there anything I CAN plant when the soil is wet?

Preparing a seed bed in the fall and covering with straw mulch is a great way to be prepared for early spring planting without sacrificing soil structure. Soil should be cleared of debris, compost added and then a thick covering of mulch laid down to protect from erosion over the winter. In the spring, once the ground has thawed, mulch can be gently removed and seeds planted by hand without disturbing the soil below. Cold hardy plants such as arugula, spinach, peas, beets, green onions and mache are great choices. Building a raised bed frame can also improve drainage and soil structure at garden sites where clay content and spring moisture are consistently difficult to manage. Soil in raised beds drains more quickly and warms in the spring before the rest of your garden. Be sure to choose untreated wood for raised bed construction.

If you really really do have to do any digging in wet soil, remember to treat the soil as gently as possible and avoid walking in garden beds. Your garden will thank you and reward your patience with better harvests!

What can I do if my soil has become compacted?

Once soil is compacted, it can take many years to rebuild a healthy soil structure. Rebuilding requires annual applications of organic matter such as compost, careful cultivation, and the use of cover crops such as alfalfa that can help to break up compaction.

ECFB Focus Group Project

By Ester Wachnick, ENV 400 UTM 2010-2011



Ester sampling soil Feb 2011

For those of you who are considering donating fresh food to the food bank, here are some foods that clients mentioned they would like to see more of:

Fresh in season (May – September):



Green Onions



Bell Peppers



Strawberries



Tomatoes



Watermelon

Winter Crops (for storage)



Carrots



Potatoes



Garlic

Dear Readers,

As my internship at EcoSource is now nearly complete, it makes me anxious to see what will grow out of the gardens and from the programmes. Having assisted with community gardens, workshops, and tending demonstrations plots, I have come away from my internship with a growing admiration and appreciation for organic urban agriculture. There is so much potential for greening our urban space and improving food security through urban gardens!

Touching on food security, EcoSource will be donating its organic garden produce from their new Teaching Garden to the Eden Community Food Bank (ECFB). I feel privileged to have been a part of this inspiring project by taking a lead role in organizing two focus groups for food bank clients in February. Questions were geared towards identifying clients' general connection/interest in food, identifying the types of foods they would like to see offered more at the food bank (which will help EcoSource guide their growing plans), and testing for potential interest in the food growing process.

To give you a sneak peak of the final report, the majority of clients mentioned healthy lifestyles as a connection and thus appreciated the prospect of receiving more fresh food at the food bank. The majority of clients also expressed interest in being engaged in community gardening. A graph showing some of the data is listed below

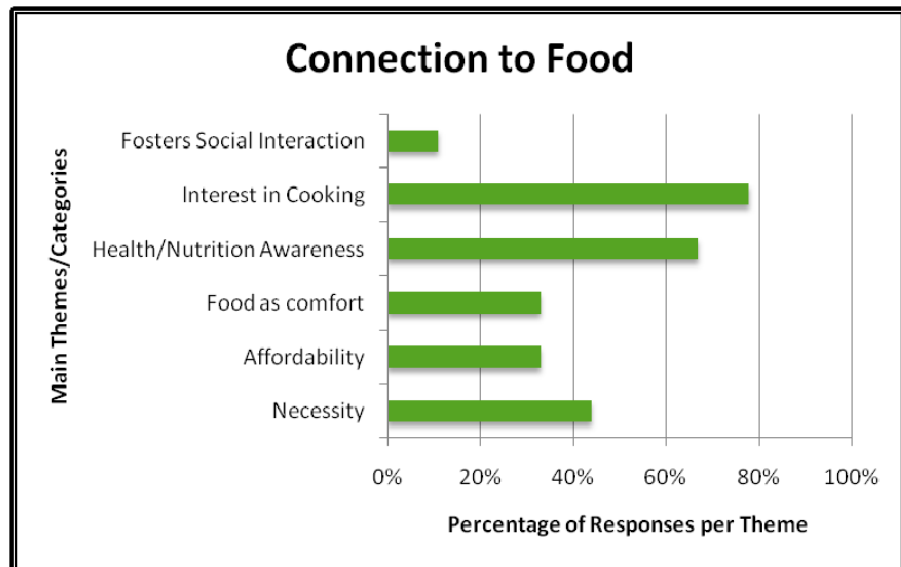


Figure 1: The sum total of all responses does not equal 100%. Instead, each category is calculated out of 100% to reflect the number of people whose response fell in the category out of the total number of participants. Participants often supplied multiple categories in their responses.

Lastly, I would like to thank EcoSource, especially my supervisor Carolyn Bailey, for providing me with the internship opportunity. I plan on volunteering for EcoSource this summer, and I have started to grow plants for my own urban vegetable garden this year!

-Ester

Orchard Soil Sampling

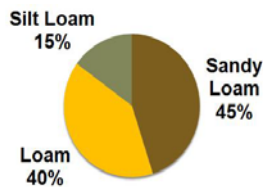
By Angie Sanchez, ENV 400 UTM 2010-2011

During the past 8 months I have had the wonderful opportunity of completing an internship with EcoSource's Mississauga Sustainable Urban Agriculture (MSURA) Project. My experience as an intern has been rewarding and I have learned a tremendous amount about community urban agriculture. From working in the community gardens to conducting a soil assessment of a dwarf apple orchard, I have been able to gain an understanding of the role urban gardens play in building a sense of community and deepening our connection to food and the environment which supports food production.

EcoSource is currently working with the City of Mississauga's Urban Forestry Department to explore the possibility of restoring parts of the historic apple orchards at the Pinchin/Riviere Fruit Farm. As part of this investigation, I conducted a soil assessment of a dwarf apple orchard which has been identified as an area of possible interest.

The purpose of the soil assessment was to provide an evaluation of the site's capacity to support possible opportunities in sustainable urban agriculture and permaculture. Soil samples were collected and analyzed for soil moisture content, organic matter content, soil texture, and pH. These soil properties are important for determining the soil's nutrient and water holding capacities which are essential for plant growth. Here is a brief look at part of the findings:

Texture Class Distribution of the Dwarf Apple Orchard



Texture class is an important soil property to consider when determining the soils agricultural capacity. Soil classified as loam is a well-balanced combination of sand, silt, and clay which is ideal for plant growth. A sandy loam classification is also favoured by farmers due to its water-holding characteristics. Silt loam is also good in terms of water availability for plants.

The findings of my report suggest that the dwarf apple orchard has good conditions for plant growth and could possibly support future opportunities in agriculture. The renovation of existing apple trees also offers an exciting opportunity to preserve a part of the property's history and possibly develop an agroforestry system, which could serve as an educational opportunity for community members. Further soil testing and research into orchard renovation could help determine future uses for the historic Pinchin/Riviere Fruit Farm and its incorporation into the MSURA Project.

It has been a pleasure to intern at EcoSource and contribute to a meaningful program which increases community access to fresh food and provides a unique opportunity to learn about sustainable food production in Mississauga. I would like to thank the community gardeners and everyone at EcoSource for welcoming me into the gardens and office. I would also like to give a special thanks to my internship supervisor, Carolyn Bailey, for all her support and knowledge sharing.

UPDATE! We are excited to welcome Angie back to the EcoSource team for the 2011 growing season as our Senior Intern in Community Food and Agriculture working on the MSURA project and Malton Summer Programs.





Learning about Growing Food!

During the spring of 2011 we've had some great helpers out at our Demonstration Plots and at the Iceland Teaching Garden helping to get things going.

Students from Mr. Miller's Geography and Environmental Studies Class at Turner Fenton S.S. helped to start seedlings in class and did some experimental planting in May at the Iceland Teaching Garden.

Due to the extremely wet weather and heavy clay soil, we haven't been able to do much on site at all!

Mr. Neil's H.E.L.P. Program came out to the Parkway Green Generation Garden to lend a hand and find a new home for our many leeks and onions growing for the Eden Community Food Bank.

Are you interested in classroom or outdoor urban agriculture workshops at your school?

Through the MSURA project we are excited to offer more school based programs beginning in fall 2011.

Contact us for details at urbanag@ecosource.ca or call 905-274-6222.

We need YOUR HELP!

Get involved with a local garden today

2011 marks the first growing season for the MSURA Urban Agriculture Teaching Garden is located adjacent to the Iceland/Hershey Sport Complex. The Iceland Teaching Garden encompasses 20 000 square feet of garden space where we are growing organic vegetables to provide food for clients of the Eden Community Food Bank.

We've been off to a slow start due to the very wet spring we've had, but are ready to get planting... and we need your help! **At the Iceland Teaching Garden, we offer free corporate, community and school group volunteer opportunities.** Getting outside, sharing a great time and contributing to a local food bank is an excellent team building opportunity and provides a great learning environment while creating new connections with neighbours.

What is a gardening event like?

Our volunteer events are tailored to the needs of each individual group as much as possible. Below are some general guidelines:

- Gardening events usually last between 1 to 4 hours.
- Activities are relatively physical and may include planting, cultivating, and harvesting organic vegetables. Special art and building projects such as murals, sign painting, composter building or raised bed-making also possible upon occasion.
- Participants can expect to do light physical work in an outdoor environment and are encouraged to bring weather appropriate clothing as well as close-toed shoes suitable for gardening.
- All safety equipment and gardening tools are provided by EcoSource.
- Participants are encouraged to bring re-usable plates/water bottles and a pot-luck refreshment contribution.

Locations

In 2011, we are accepting volunteers to all of our community garden and urban agriculture sites. Availability depends on the time in the season and our events schedule (see sidebar) and is concentrated at the Iceland and Parkway Green Gardens:

- Iceland Teaching Garden
- Parkway Green
- Hillside Park Garden (Clarkson)
- Malton Community Garden
- Garden of the Valley
- Generation Garden

How can I sign up?

If you are interested in learning more about group or individual volunteer opportunities with the MSURA project, please contact Carolyn Bailey – cbailey@ecosource.ca or call 905-274-6222.

2011 Summer Events at a Glance

Call or email to register!

June 2011

Malton After School Program
(3:30-5pm)
June 6, 8, 13, and 15

July 2011

Malton Summer Library Program
(1:45 – 4pm)
July 6, 13, 20, 27

Hillside Summer Harvest Celebration and Water Conservation Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
July 7

Garden of the Valley Summer Harvest Celebration and Water Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
July 14

Generation Garden Summer Harvest Celebration and Water Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
July 21

Malton Summer Harvest Celebration and Water Workshop
(10 – 11:30)
July 27

August 2011

Malton Summer Library Program
(1:45 – 4pm)
August 3, 10, 17

Hillside Children's Gardening Day and Garden Insect Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
August 4

Garden of the Valley Children's Gardening Day and Garden Insect Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
August 11

Generation Garden Children's Gardening Day and Garden Insect Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
August 18

Malton Children's Gardening Day and Garden Insect Workshop
(10 – 11:30am)
August 24



A special welcome to Kate Raycraft who has joined our team for the 2011 Season!

A message from Kate...

My name is Kate Raycraft. I'm very happy to be part of the food movement as Habitat Garden Educator with EcoSource!

I think everyone should have the opportunity to grow and taste food from a garden they have worked in. I look forward to helping people understand the links between native plants, ecosystems, agriculture and food sustainability. This summer, I also hope to help as many people as possible question the concept of a "weed," and let them taste the delicious and healthy wild edibles found in gardens, such as wood sorrel and pigweed.

My favourite cultivated garden edibles are sugar snap peas, and my favourite garden tool is the Costa Rican hoe. In my spare time, I volunteer as Hub Coordinator for a non-profit community shared agriculture organization called Young Urban Farmers in Toronto (<http://yufcsa.com>). I also break strings on my guitar, and dream about finally having the chance to take a surfing vacation.

Kate can be reached at urbanag@ecosource.ca

EcoSource is an innovative environmental organization that empowers the community to become more environmentally responsible through creative public education.

The Community Gardens and School Learning Gardens Program is led by EcoSource in partnership with the Multicultural Inter-Agency Group of Peel (MIAG) and the City of Mississauga, and is generously funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This program supports EcoSource Elementary Green Schools to design and plant outdoor teaching spaces, and connects communities with neighbourhood spaces to grow fresh organic food.

The Mississauga Sustainable Urban Agriculture (MSURA) Project is led by EcoSource in collaboration with the Eden Community Food Bank, supported by the City of Mississauga and the University of Toronto Mississauga. Together we are working to increase access to fresh healthy food in our community and to connect students and community members with meaningful opportunities to learn about sustainable food and food production in Mississauga. This project is generously supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.



ECOSOURCE
Growing a Green Community

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eden community food bank

