



Long Beach Organic

Spring 2009 Newsletter

On the web: www.longbeachorganic.org

Long Beach Organic (LBO) is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 and dedicated to promoting sustainable organic gardening practices and local food production in an urban environment.

The four community garden spaces currently operated by Long Beach Organic are located throughout the city. Members pay annual dues and participate in regular work days to improve the grounds. All gardening is organic.

LBO's future goals include establishing additional garden spaces around the city, as well as expanding membership, outreach activities and donor opportunities.

To get involved, contact LBO at (562) 438-9000 or info@longbeachorganic.org.

LBO Board of Directors

Aliye Aydin

Julie Bolton

Joe Corso

James de Boer

Spencer Langdon

Darwin Thorpe

Debbie Williamson

A Mutually Beneficial Partnership

It is often said that for-profit businesses will do anything to save money, even at the expense of the environment. But Long Beach Organic's relationship with local tree trimmers demonstrates that it's possible for them to save money while helping the environment — and appease eco-conscious customers at the same time. Currently, California Western Arborists is working with LBO to provide mulch.

Normally, the tree trimming companies haul several tons of green waste to the Norwalk Dump more than 17 miles outside of Long Beach. This green waste comes not only from private residences but also from commercial landscaping waste and city-owned properties.

When the tree trimmers unload the clippings at the garden, they save on gas and on expensive dumping fees, which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars per year. The garden benefits from having a steady source of mulch for composting and weed prevention. A well-managed composting system is hugely beneficial to an organic community garden, and mulch is an essential component in the composting process. And it benefits everyone to keep usable material like



this out of our brimming landfills.

This symbiotic relationship between non-profit and for-profit organizations is one that we are proud to foster at LBO and hope to expand on in the future.

— James de Boer
LBO Board Member

Mark Your Calendar!

Long Beach Organic presents
A Summer Solstice Celebration

Wild Oats Community Garden

June 21, 1 to 6 p.m.



Join us for food, music, garden tours and a cake walk.

Invite your friends!

Look for further details in the summer newsletter.

Spring in Bloom at 1st and Elm

The garden at 1st and Elm was the happy recipient on Valentine's Day of five mosaics done by youth from the neighboring ArtStart program (taught by local artist Robin Bott). ArtStart is part of a larger program called ShortStop, which is run by the Long Beach Bar Foundation.

The program helps to divert youth from becoming a part of the juvenile justice system by teaching them about the system itself, encouraging them to develop good decision-making skills, and giving them a chance to express themselves in a positive manner. The ArtStart portion of the program is held on Saturdays at the 117 Art Gallery, and they offer classes in mosaic murals, jewelry design, and drawing and painting to recent graduates of the ShortStop program.

At the mosaics' unveiling, we had the pleasure of meeting local Long Beach photographer Celeste Mookherjee. Celeste has been taking photos of the garden for quite a while now, and her beautifully intimate photographs of all the plants, animals and insects in our garden can be seen at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/celeste/sets/72157613793920483/>

In keeping with the green theme, the East Village Arts District will play host to the Long Beach Green Festival on Saturday May 9th from 9 am to 10 pm. The festival will combine the weekly Farmer's Market and the monthly ArtWalk with all things green! There will be artists, music, informational booths, and many more fun, green activities. Be sure to stop by the garden as we will be open during the

St. Luke's Gets the LBO Treatment

On a beautiful April morning, volunteers from Wild Oats Garden joined gardeners at Saint Luke's Episcopal Church in downtown Long Beach to weed and plant. Saint Luke's is partnering with Long Beach Organic to help revive and maintain their small garden in the heart of the city.

The relationship began when Rev. Anna Olson came to Saint Luke's last fall, saw the garden had fallen into disuse, and contacted LBO for advice. All it needed was a little TLC. The crew cleared the paths of nutgrass, transplanted a banana tree from Wild Oats Garden, filled a compost bin and cleared a large bed for fruit trees.

Food and Gardening in the News

In April, First Lady Michelle Obama spearheaded the installation of a vegetable garden on the grounds of the White House. The move was part of a growing trend of home gardening in the U.S., as evidenced by a 30-percent increase in seed sales this year over 2008.

Barry Estabrook has been writing a series of articles for Gourmet magazine called "Politics of the Plate." An article in the series published in March uncovered the life of tomato harvesters in Florida, who are living under conditions commensurate with slavery. To read the article, visit <http://www.gourmet.com/magazine/2000s/2009/03/politics-of-the-plate-the-price-of-tomatoes>. To read more articles in Estabrook's series, visit http://www.gourmet.com/profiles/barry_estabrook/search?contributorName=Barry%20Estabrook

Garden press:

festival for walk-throughs. We will also have many plants available if you are interested!

On April 13, the Grunion Gazette published an article about the 1st and Elm garden. To read the article, visit http://gazettes.com/articles/2009/04/13/special_section_archives/doc49e3b50870098347833017.txt

Many of our gardeners have been busy inside and outside of the garden. Big thanks go to Lisa and Kristin, who donated their time and handy work to building new shelves for our shed! Now all the gardeners have cubbies to store their seeds and supplies, as well as much more room to keep our ever-growing supply of tools.

One of our very own gardeners at 1st and Elm, Tom Crowe, who led the equality march down Broadway last November, co-founded Long Beach Equality, a community grass roots organization devoted to equal rights of all. For more details, visit www.LBEquality.org

If you haven't already discovered it, 1st and Elm now has a blog! We keep our readers up to date about garden and community happenings. There is a list of upcoming events, as well as links to all things gardening related and Long Beach related. Make sure to check it out at <http://1standelm.blogspot.com>



The organic garden will be managed by volunteers Angela Luther and Vicki Storberg, with help from the church's caretaker, Hektor Rivas. Membership will be open to neighbors as well as parishoners. LBO will provide education, guidance, and lots of mulch.



Growing Tomatoes Successfully - by Ken Yliniemi

One of the most popular vegetables that we grow in our gardens each year is tomatoes. Gardeners grow these delicious veggies more than any other. Technically, and botanically, they are a fruit — actually a berry — but culinarily we use them as a vegetable for fresh eating, cooking, sauces, drying, canning, freezing, and many other delicious ways to consume and preserve this tempting and delightful produce from our gardens. Understanding the best way to select, plant, care for and successfully harvest tomatoes is the best way to get the most from your tomato patch or single plant in your plot.

Whether you start your own from seed or purchase at the nursery, you should know the basics; first, the two types of tomato plants will be important to know what you need, what you want, and how to grow them.

Determinate: have a predetermined number of stems, leaves, and flowers hardwired into their genetic structure. The development of these plants follows a well-defined pattern. First, there is an initial vegetative stage during which all the stems, most of the leaves, and a few fruits are formed. This is followed by a flush of flowering and final leaf expansion. During the fruit-fill stage, there is no further vegetative growth. As the tomato fruits ripen, the leaves senesce and die. The major advantage of planting determinate plants in a home garden is early harvest.

Indeterminate: continue to grow, limited only by the length of the season. These plants produce stems, leaves and fruit as long as they are alive.

Semi-determinate: as the name implies, these are somewhere in between the two types, although there are not many varieties of these types.

Planting Tomatoes

You will want to be sure you plant your tomatoes at the proper time for optimum growth and best health of the plant. This means keeping in mind the optimum temperatures for tomato growth — 65 to 80F. A temperature below 51F will result in negligible growth, and for extended periods of time, will result in poor fruit set, production and deformed fruits. Conversely, temperatures above 95F for long periods will result in reduced fruit set, and poor fruit color. One should also keep the root temperature at 65 to 75F for optimal growth.

Keeping in mind these temperature ranges, planting should be done only when night and day temperatures are sufficient in the spring. Most times this is not until late April or May in coastal areas of Southern California. Keeping track of soil temperatures is also important; although our soil warms up

sufficiently, keeping it cool in the hot summer with a thick layer of mulch is essential.

Soil, Water and Light

The best soil is a sandy loam that is well drained and has a good deal of compost worked into the soil to provide proper nutrients for best plant growth. Tomatoes also like to be well watered, but will not tolerate any standing water or their roots to be waterlogged for any period of time. If you have a clay or

heavy soil, you should be sure to amend properly for good drainage before planting your tomatoes. Planting in full sun is also important. Tomatoes need a minimum of eight hours of sun per day for proper growth and fruit production. Partial shade will result in plants with lower fruit production and set, and greater vegetative growth and leggy plants.

Feeding

Tomatoes are heavy feeders, but with the addition of compost, composted manure or green manure crops, you

will provide good nutrients for the season of the plant. However, if you need to provide additional fertilizer, organic fish emulsion, or seaweed extract are excellent organic nutrient sources for lush growth.

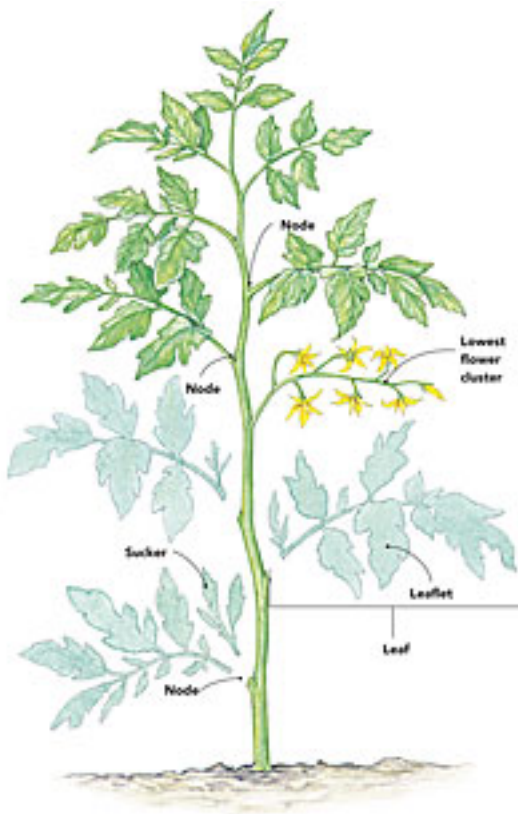
Pruning and Support

To prune or not is the age old question. Generally speaking, we make a larger issue out of this than needed. Most determinate-type tomatoes do not need much for pruning, and indeterminate types benefit the most from pruning. Keeping the side shoots (axillary shoots) picked off on the lower stem of the plant until the first flower cluster is usually recommended to focus most of the young plant's energy and focus on the earliest and largest fruit production. Most pruning may be stopped at this point, and for determinate types will give the best fruit production. For indeterminate types, you will want three to four stems to develop after this point, and keeping additional shoots off will result in largest and faster fruit production. Tomatoes that are sending energy and sugars to develop further stem growth will have less energy to devote to larger and more succulent fruit.

Staking or caging your tomatoes will provide the best air circulation and sunlight for proper growth and fruit set. Keep the stems tied lightly to the stake with a soft tie, not a wire or small string that can cut. Tomatoes can also be caged to provide the same support, keep in mind that larger cages give better support than the small ones you buy in the garden



center. Remember a mature tomato full of fruit is heavy, so stake and cage well to keep them from falling over, and damaging the mature plant.



Pruning off side shoots below the first flower bud cluster is recommended for optimal growth of tomato seedlings.

Diseases and Pests

Nothing is worse than having your tomatoes die after planting from a disease or pest after putting so much time and energy into them. Listed below are a few of the most common problems and pests. However, take the time to research further and find out more about the specific problems affecting your tomato plant health. These are just a few of the most common:

Tomato Mosaic Virus: plants become stunted; leaves have yellow-green spots, crinkles, ridges, strings, or curls. The stems may develop streaks of dead plant tissue. Generally the fruit shows no symptoms.

Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus: small dark brown leaf spots in the upper portion of the plant. Dark streaking in petioles and stems, and stunted growth at terminals. Brown or black lesions on distorted fruit.

Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus: leaves in the top of the plant develop interveinal chlorosis and the sides of the leaves curl upward. Mostly transmitted by whitefly.

Early Blight: a fungus disease that appears on the stems, leaves and fruit. Look for circular leaf spots, up to 2 inches in diameter, that contain dark rings, looking like a target.

Powdery Mildew: fine powdery growth on the upper sides of the leaflets, they generally appear on the oldest foliage, but

not significant on fruit set or production.

Verticillium Wilt: appearance of yellowing areas on all areas of plant at the same time, becoming brown, midday wilting, and leaves dropping at the bottom of the plant.

Fusarium Wilt: yellowing and wilting of lower older leaves and the disease eventually affects the entire plant.

Blossom End Rot: the bottom of the fruit is dark brown/black and beginning to rot; usually caused by lack of available calcium for plant uptake. Keep plants from drying out, and provide additional calcium source incorporated into soil for best results.

Many of these diseases can be avoided by purchasing seeds or plants that are bred for resistance of many or multiples of these diseases. They are usually specified by a letter or combination of letters on the seed package or varietal name to indicate their resistance (example: Big Boy Hybrid, VFT). These are not genetically modified, but hybridized through traditional breeding methods. You should also keep your tomatoes planted in a different spot from season to season as many of the roots and plant parts can keep the disease in the soil from season to season. Tomato foliage should not be composted with regular compost for these same reasons. Some of the soil borne pathogens may also be controlled through a soil solarization. Placing clear plastic over the area for up to six weeks will greatly help reduce some of these diseases by heating the soil and killing the organisms responsible for the disease, as well as killing any unwanted weed seeds that germinate. Other pests:

Aphids: small green, pink, or black that reproduce rapidly and suck plant sap resulting in deformed growth, and poor flower fruit set. Usually found on young succulent growth or undersides of leaves.

Spider mites: very small red, yellow, green or white very tiny spiders that suck plant sap from undersides of leaves causing distortion and fine webs may also be visible when in large numbers.

Stick bugs: large flattened, shield shaped bright green bugs.

Whiteflies: small white flies usually on undersides of leaves that move when disturbed.

Proper organic control of your pests on tomatoes may involve one or more of the following:

Hand removal: many times simply spraying foliage with water will disturb many of these and even kill them, or hand picking larger insects to squish them will also provide a safe, and reliable control provided it is done regularly, not just once.

Exclusion: keeping the plants covered with an exclusionary row or plant cover that lets through light is also effective in many cases.

Predatory insects: from the simple Lady Beetle to more specialized and specific insect predators that may be purchased from a reliable insectory to be released may be

also quite effective. Understanding and identifying your specific insect pest and predator are key for this to be successful.

Bio-pesticides: insecticidal soap may also be used, as it is compatible with organic gardening techniques. However, as with any type of product like this, understanding the pest and the product is key for effective and proper control. Careful use and following all label instructions are critical.

Remember that no single pest or disease control is 100 percent effective. Using various methods, or alternating methods may work well, and also understanding an acceptable level of tolerance may also be necessary.

Tomato Varieties

When selecting your tomato variety, keep in mind how you will use these in your home.

Beefsteak: the largest you can grow; usually good to eat fresh, low acidity and great when sliced, grilled or fried;

Round or Salad: most common type available, many types to choose from, usually quite acidic with a full flavor, excellent for cooking or eating raw.

Cherry tomatoes: small cherry size tomatoes, high in sugar, and low in acid, good in salads.

Plum tomatoes: also called roma, best for cooking because of concentrated flavor and high acidity, and meaty flesh.

Pear tomatoes: usually quite small and their pear shape. Not very widely grown, but have good flavor.

Heirloom: these may be any of the varietal shapes, and kinds above, however they are defined as plant strains that existed before the 1950s. They are increasingly popular among gardeners for their unique flavors and types that cannot be found elsewhere. There are thousands of these to choose from, all are non-hybrid, open pollinated that you can, and should, save your seeds from year to year.

There is a very wide variety of shapes, types, plant habits and flavors to suit most gardeners and cooks. Keep in mind that certain varieties may do better in different climates and locations than others, and some may even have different flavor than in other locations. Finding the ones that work best for you is essential. Also these will not have any of the pest or disease resistance bred into them that many of today's varieties do, so keeping careful watch for these diseases or insects is essential. The reward may be great from such a unique heirloom variety that you find to work well for you.

Cooking from the Garden - by Joe Corso

Asparagus is the queen of spring vegetables, and here the spears are served baked with cheese until brown and bubbly, while the tougher butts are saved for an elegant soup.

Asparagus with Parmesan

from Classic Home Cooking by Mary Berry and Marlene Speiler.

1¼ lbs. asparagus
2 Tbs. olive oil
1 Tbs. dry white wine
1 Tbs. vinegar
3 garlic cloves, crushed in a garlic press
A big pinch of herbs de Provence, or your favorite herb mixture
Salt and pepper
1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
Lemon wedges
Herb sprigs

Trim the tough ends of the asparagus; reserve them for soup. Mix the olive oil, wine, vinegar, garlic and herbs together to make a marinade. Pour it over the asparagus and let it marinate 15 minutes.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Spread the Parmesan cheese on a plate. Roll the asparagus spears in cheese to coat and arrange them in a single layer on an ovenproof platter or a baking sheet. Drizzle with any remaining marinade. Bake in the preheated oven for 15-20 minutes, until lightly browned and sizzling hot. Garnish with the lemon wedges



and herb sprigs.

Serve as soon as possible.

Asparagus Veloute

from The Paris Cookbook by Patricia Wells

This soup is intensely flavored, and good hot or cold. Exact measurements aren't given—just use whatever asparagus stems you have on hand.

Chopped leeks
Olive oil
Salt
Chopped asparagus stems--the tough parts, roughly the same amount as the leeks
Pepper
Chicken stock or broth
Crème fraîche or sour cream
Chopped chives

"Sweat" the leeks (cook covered over low heat) in a little oil with salt until tender, about 15 minutes. Add the chopped asparagus and sweat another 15 minutes. Add enough stock to

barely cover the vegetables and pepper to taste. Simmer until vegetables are very tender.

Puree in a blender and, if you wish, pass through a food mill for an especially smooth texture. Correct seasoning. Garnish each serving with cream and chives.