



Long Beach Organic

Summer 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

Dale Maul

Darwin Thorpe

Debbie Williamson

A Model Citizen

"Woo-Hoo! Yes! Way to go Michelle!"

That was my immediate response when I read the news several months ago that Michelle Obama was digging up the White House lawn to plant an organic vegetable garden. The produce harvested is to either be served up to the first family at the dinner table or donated to Miriam's Kitchen, an organization that feeds Washington's homeless.

This gesture is not only gastronomically practical for White House dwellers who, I have heard tell, enjoy real food; it is symbolically important to a nation suffering from the health consequences of a poor diet and an economy of increasing poverty — a leading risk factor for a poor diet.

As a family doctor, I spend much of my time battling diseases caused in large part by excessive empty calories derived from the Standard American Diet (aka SAD diet) of highly processed food. I also care for many patients who, because of poverty, just don't have access to good nutritious food

(when was the last time you drove by a Whole Foods in South Central?). When real food is available, often my patients can't afford it. (If you only have \$5 dollars to feed your hungry family, will you choose 4 burgers or four bell peppers?).

So, while I prescribe the medicines that help slow the diseases, I find myself increasingly frustrated by a backward system — one in which expensive drugs and invasive procedures are easier to get for the community than an environment conducive to true lifestyle change, especially when the solution is so simple.

As a community gardener who has experienced firsthand that it is truly possible to grow enough vegetables for a family of four on a 10' x 10' plot (I think I supplied four families of four with green beans last summer), I know that community garden is a direct and cost-effective solution to the diet problem.

Now, finally, the grassroots movement toward community gardens has gone mainstream with the First Lady's action. When national leadership and the grassroots are on the same page, watch out! I predict rapid and abundant growth of urban gardens in Long Beach and nationwide. And there is no doubt in my mind that when this trend takes off it will go much further towards reversing obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and cancer than any pharmaceutical breakthrough ever could.

Thanks, Michelle.



Children from Bancroft Elementary School help First Lady Michelle Obama plant the White House Vegetable Garden April 9, 2009. (Official White House Photo by Samantha Appleton)

— Julie Bolton
LBO Board of Directors

Spread the word! Invite your friends!

We still need additional volunteers for the event. If you can help out in some way, contact Joe Corso at tapenadecatering@msn.com. Volunteer time counts towards community work hours for Wild Oats gardeners.



Wild Oats community garden

Sunday, June 21 from 1 pm to 6 pm



10th street and Grand Avenue
(diagonal from Armstrong's Nursery)

Join Us For Sun And Fun . . .

- Tour the Long Beach Organic garden
- Artisan Market focusing on homegrown and handmade
- Enjoy delicious organic food by Primal Alchemy
- Live Music, petanque tournament, kid's activities, and more...
- Convenient parking across the street

For more information visit: www.longbeachorganic.org

All proceeds to benefit Long Beach Organic, a non-profit corporation

Operation Mulch-A-Lot

A few years ago, one of the favorite activities for youth service learning volunteers was "Mulch Madness" at the Wild Oats Garden. Large groups would come and grab wheelbarrows, load up from the mulch piles and rush to spread the love. Instantly, our paths looked neat, our weeds were smothered and the garden looked a little nicer with freshly spread mulch.

In our former Signal Hill garden, Mulch Madness served to deter the dumping of items on a four acre adjoining lot and Long Beach Organic's YEL Team was commended by the City of Signal Hill for taking initiative and keeping it clean.

We are happy to report that the madness has spread! The City of Long Beach Sustainability Office will be sponsoring Operation Mulch-A-Lot! Vacant city lots will be mulched to bio-remediate the soil and keep them looking neat, and save our precious mulch from landfills. For more information about future Mulch-A-Lot days, please contact the City of Long Beach Sustainability Office at 562-570-6396.



Petanque/Bocce court installed at Wild Oats Garden

Wild Oats gardeners Jen and Eric Alden, Chris Giaco and Dawn Geary masterminded the installation of a sand-filled court for the European game of petanque, as it's known in France, or bocce, as it's known in Italy. Jen plans to add multicolored flag pennants to crisscross across the court, one more coat of orange paint on the wooden court boundary, "folk-art" bottle caps to decorate the rim of the wood, more seating, a picnic table and perhaps a locked trunk to keep the balls in.

Also in the works is a permanent sign detailing how the game is played. Come check it out and play a round during the Summer Solstice Celebration on June 21!



Cooking from the Garden by Joe Corso

Picnicking with Peppers

Roasted Red Peppers with Jalapeños and Garlic

Forget charring and peeling! These easy peppers, based on a recipe from *Bistro Cooking* by Patricia Wells, make a superb side dish or relish on their own. They also add zip to a traditional French picnic sandwich, Pan Bagnat. Adjust the spiciness to your own tastes with your choice of peppers.

4 large red bell peppers (about 3 lb.) cored, seeded and cut into thick strips

2 large green jalapeño peppers, or, for more heat, several green Serrano chiles, cut into thin strips

1 head of garlic, cloves separated, peeled and minced

¼ cup olive oil

A pinch of salt

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Toss the bell peppers, jalapenos, garlic, olive oil and salt in a baking dish. Cover with foil. Bake until the peppers are quite soft, 45 minutes to 1 hour. Uncover and continue baking until the peppers are just slightly charred and very soft, about 45 minutes more.

Serve hot as a side dish, or store, covered, in a large jar and served chilled, as a condiment. If covered with their liquid and oil, they will keep several weeks under refrigeration.

Pan Bagnat

This "bathed bread" is a specialty of Nice, really a Salade Nicois on a bun, and you can use whatever ingredients you have on hand. It is ideal for a summer picnic or lunch on a sunny patio.

NOTE: Tuna brings up issues of mercury contamination and humane fishing practices. Even though this recipe feeds four people with one can, it is wisest to choose Yellowfin tuna, lowest in mercury. "Line caught" insures that netting does not harm dolphins. For more information, follow this link:

<http://www.edf.org/page.cfm?tagID=16314>



Trader Joe's recently introduced a delicious canned Yellowfin, and all of their tuna is labeled "dolphin free." While you're there, check out their organic eggs. You'll taste the difference!

1 large baguette (or four French rolls)

1 garlic clove, minced

2 Tbs. olive oil

2 cups arugula

1 6½ oz. can tuna, drained

2 Tbs. capers, drained

1 small red onion, cut into thin rings

2 or 3 hard boiled eggs, preferable organic, sliced

Salt and pepper

2 medium tomatoes, cored and thinly sliced

1 2-oz. can flat anchovy filets, drained

½ cup Roasted Red Peppers with their oil (recipe above, or use peppers from a jar)

Slice the bread in half lengthwise. If bread is dense, cut out some of the interior. Combine the garlic and oil and brush both top and bottom of the bread, pressing the mixture in firmly. Line the bottom portion of the loaf with the arugula.

Mix the tuna with the capers and spoon it evenly over the arugula. Layer on the onions and eggs, sprinkle with salt and pepper, then continue with the tomatoes, anchovies and peppers. Top with the top portion of bread.

(Can be made up to a day ahead of time. Wrap and refrigerate.)

To serve, slice into 4 portions.

Prosperous Peppers - by Ken Yliniemi

Peppers are heat-loving vegetables that require a long, warm season. Despite the name, they are not related to the spice, pepper. Instead, they are close relatives of tomatoes, potatoes and eggplants.

There are two groups of peppers: sweet and hot. The sweet or mild category includes bell, sweet cherry, pimiento and sweet banana peppers. They range in color from green, red, yellow, orange, and purple to brown. Jalapeños, Serrano, cayenne, chili and hot cherry are examples of hot peppers. Some are red, some green and some yellow.

Climatic Requirements

As peppers are of tropical origin, plants thrive best when temperatures are warm. Being sensitive to the cold, planting should be delayed until the weather is sufficiently warm in the spring. Ideal temperatures are 70 to 80 degrees F during the day and 60 to 70 degrees F at night.

Extremely high temperatures (90 degrees F or above) during flowering often results in blossom drop. Fruit that set when temperatures average above 80 degrees F may be small and poorly shaped due to heat injury to the blossoms. Temperatures below 60 degrees F at night will also result in blossom drop.

A shortage of water at bloom time can also result in blossom drop or failure to set fruit. Usually, the plants set satisfactory crops when temperatures are between 65 and 80 degrees F and the soil is well-supplied with moisture. Avoid a soggy, water-logged soil condition when growing peppers. Mulch over the soil and around the plants is very helpful in keeping the soil evenly moist and avoiding fluctuating soil moisture conditions.

Soil and Feeding

Peppers, just like tomatoes, grow best in a loamy, well-drained soil with good compost incorporated for healthy roots and foliage. Extra fertilization may also be applied at the time of planting and when flowering with fish emulsion, composted steer manure, liquid seaweed, or other organic sources for good growth and fruit production.

Problems

Most of the insect and disease problems will be very similar to those of tomatoes (see last quarter's newsletter). Following similar guidelines, insect and disease treatments will be successful with peppers as with tomatoes. One of the main differences, is pruning side shoots, as peppers do not need this, and very rarely grow side shoots that will need pruning for better fruit production. Caging and staking for support, however, is recommended for peppers for a healthy plant to bear plenty of heavy fruit.

Blossom end rot is another water stress problem. It appears as a tan, leathery patch at the tip of the fruit as it starts to enlarge. It indicates a past water shortage, often due to fluctuating moisture levels. You may cut away the leathery patch and eat the rest of the fruit.

Water the soil regularly to a depth of 6 inches. Uneven watering causes moisture stress problems. If possible, don't water overhead as splashing water can spread diseases from the soil to the plants or from leaf to leaf. Water at the base of the plants instead, or use a soaker hose.

White patches on the sides and stem end of the fruit may be signs of sunscald. It occurs when mature green fruit is suddenly exposed to sunlight. The white patch will never ripen. To avoid white patches, don't prune pepper foliage; try to keep leaves healthy so they don't drop on their own.

Aphids often feed on new growth and can transmit cucumber mosaic virus. Confuse aphids by placing aluminum foil-covered squares of cardboard on the ground beneath young plants. The reflected light discourages aphids from landing on the plants. You can also wipe aphids off the plants by hand, wash them off with a garden hose or apply insecticidal soap according to directions on the bottle.

Harvesting

Bell peppers are usually picked green and immature but when they are full-sized and firm. However, if they are allowed to ripen on the plant they will be sweeter and higher in

vitamin C content. Other peppers are usually harvested at full maturity.

Care should be taken when picking the peppers from the plants, as the branches are often brittle. Hand clippers or pruners can be used to cut peppers from the plant to avoid excessive stem breakage

Green bell peppers are actually immature red peppers; they'll turn red if left on the plant to ripen. Pick them any time after they're 3½ to 4 inches long. Red peppers should be used quickly as they deteriorate more rapidly than green peppers.

Pick hot peppers once they're large enough to use. Frequent harvesting encourages a steady supply. Wear garden gloves and pick hot peppers carefully. It's easy to accidentally get the oil, capsaicin, which makes peppers hot, on your fingers, then accidentally in your eyes.

A pepper's pungency depends on the amount of capsaicin it contains. It's most concentrated in the seeds and membranes inside the fruit. Sweet peppers become sweeter and hot peppers become hotter as they mature. Each type of hot pepper will be different in its level of heat; it is a good idea to know how hot you like your peppers before using in culinary dishes and most importantly, before you begin planting for use.

