



Long Beach Organic Inc.

Winter 2011 Newsletter

On the web: www.longbeachorganic.org

Long Beach Organic Inc. (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 six 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.

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Termino Avenue Drain Project Becomes Dream Project

We knew it was coming—this L.A. County Storm-water diversion project was planned more than 20 years ago, well before the Wild Oats Garden was begun in 2004. Last summer R.D. Borders, project manager for the Termino Avenue Drain



Project (TADP), was kind enough to attend a gardener workday/potluck/informational meeting to answer gardeners' questions and explain the scope of the project, a concrete drain being placed sixteen feet deep along the entire Pacific Rail corridor.

Many thanks to the contractors and County and City agencies for their mutual cooperation in listening to our requests and proposals. We asked for a temporary storage structure and that the orchard be spared from demolition, and we drew up a wish-list for the garden area upon its return to LBO, including a new irrigation system, topsoil covering and grading of the final surface. All these requests were accepted and County Supervisor Don Knabe (<http://knabe.com/>) has acquired \$10,000 to help in the rebuilding of the garden. With these funds, we will look at the physical needs of the garden, such as: fixed plot boundaries, fencing, palm tree removal, hose bibs and hoses, etc.

Challenges: Not every aspect of this project has been kittens and moonbeams. We've had



challenges too: loss of a full growing season, and asking gardeners to volunteer the extra hours necessary to get the space ready for the bulldozers. We are grateful to all who did more than their share to get the garden cleared in time.

A new beginning: The best thing about the TADP is that we

start with a clean slate! A chance to re-design the garden with the benefit of seven years experience. Since the founding of the garden in 2004, we have clearer ideas about how to design the beds, pathways and common areas. The final grading will help minimize flooding during rains and with clean topsoil we should see a minimum of lingering weeds and diseases. The new design will maximize space, letting us offer gardens to those at the top of the waiting list.

Termino Avenue Dream Project: Our vision for the future is just a concept at this point, but we would like to see a ribbon of community garden space along the rest of the Pacific Electric corridor, accompanied by mixed use of the non-garden property with a bike path, a dog park, a playground, and California natives habitat. We want to see the right-of-way become a sanctuary in an urban setting. Several community organizations are working with us to develop this local green

space; Lincoln Heights Neighborhood Association, Jefferson Academy, and residents and local businesses that support our mission.

THIS IS NOT A DONE DEAL!

Please send us your feedback and ideas.

— **Spencer Langdon**
LBO President

LBO would like to thank its most recent donors:

Janice Dahl, who donated two composters to be used at our smaller gardens

Ken Gore, native plant enthusiast, who donated milkweed for our butterfly habitat and a mature native grape vine for the Wrigley Village Garden

Debbie Flynnne, for her cash donation

Lynette and Bill Tholkes, who have donated the use of their property for the

Top of the Town Garden

P.G. Herman, for volunteering as LBO's Community Liaison

Will Cullen, for donating his services as an Event Photographer.

The Delta Chi Fraternity of CSULB for assisting us in clearing the Wild Oats Garden

Donations of cash, garden tools and other gifts are always welcome.

Saint Luke's Garden Makeover

The Community Garden at Saint Luke's Episcopal Church on Atlantic Blvd. was recently re-designed to make the beds a bit larger and to add more of them. Now a total of 16 households will have room to garden there. Other recent additions include a small orchard and a community composting project.

St. Luke's Community Outreach Coordinator Andrew Kishman prepares a plot for winter planting.



First Person: Planting on the Square by Cliff Phillips

I really appreciate having come in contact with the concepts and philosophies of Mel Bartholomew of Square Foot Gardening fame. Having tried some of his ideas, I am now able to consider that a lot of what he offers can be classified as “over thinking,” in my opinion. My own ideas are macro compared with Mel’s micro plans.

BUILDING YOUR GARDEN

I recommend that you build four foot by four-foot boxes. Use one-by-twelve-inch boards for the sides and four by fours or two by fours as corner posts. The posts will protect your garden from someone dragging a hose through your plot. Been there, done that.

Building a 4'X4' box should enable most people to reach in to the center of each box without having to walk in the garden itself. Folks with shorter arms' reach, may wish to cut the size of the box down to perhaps 3'X3'. Walking in the garden compresses the soil mix and is best avoided. The goal is to keep the compost mixture light and airy. Most beginners of the SFG concept may use actual divisions for the sixteen squares in the 4'X4', but I don't think it is necessary and you should be able to estimate locations. To keep track of what you have planted, you may use a black permanent marker around the edges of the box.

BUILDING ON THE CHEAP: You can also build your borders with almost anything! Many folks use 16-inch cinderblocks with good results. The interior sections make excellent containments for strawberry plants.

WHERE TO PLANT VARIOUS VEGETABLES: Don't plant corn in rows;

plant it in blocks. A 4'X4' box makes a perfect spot for planting corn. The reasoning to plant corn in blocks is because it is easier for insects to pollinate it and easier for the gardener to pollinate it too. That made me think: Wouldn't it be a good idea to plant other crops in blocks where it is possible, and for the same reason? You will want to plant corn where it doesn't shade your other vegetables or your neighbor's garden. Don't cast a shadow. You should plant things like climbing beans, along the side where you will be able to put up strings or a trellis. Also, vine plants like squash can be planted along an edge, so they may be supported vertically. That really makes good use of your space.



Chive Talk by Ken Yliniemi

Chives, *Allium schoenoprasum*, are one of the easiest and most rewarding herbs to grow in the garden. Unlike other well known members of the onion family, chives do not form bulbs for storage and are also a perennial, so they will come back from year to year without re-planting. The attractive plants have thin hollow leaves and stems that produce lavender pompom flowers.

Marco Polo is reputed to have experienced chives on his travels in China, where they were a native plant, and reported back their culinary attributes on his return to the West, where they were readily accepted and cultivated ever since. The Romans also are credited with bringing chives over to Europe, where they now grow wild. In fact chives now grow wild across most of the Northern Hemisphere. The word "chives" is said to be derived from the Latin *cepa*, meaning onion. Chives have been used in cuisine for a recorded 5,000 years. Chives also have a bit of folklore in their past. It was believed that you should hang bunches of dried chives around your house to ward off disease and evil. Romans believed chives could relieve the pain from sunburn or a sore throat. They also believed that eating chives would increase blood pressure and acted as a diuretic. Most sources tend not to agree with these claims.

The easiest and most successful means of propagating chives is planting rooted clumps in spring, after frost danger has passed. Established plants usually need to be divided every three to four years. Division is best done in very early spring before plants start to grow rapidly. Space plants 6 to 12 inches apart. Replant new clumps in soil enriched with organic matter, such as fine compost. Chives can also be started from seed reliably and easily. However, this can take up to six months for a mature producing plant that you can harvest.

Chives thrive in full sun and well-drained soil rich in organic matter with a pH of 6.0-7.0. They tolerate light shade, but six to eight hours of direct sunlight is best. They will grow to a height of 10 to 12 inches when mature. Over-fertilizing can be detrimental to chives. Like many herbs, slower, more compact growth leads to stronger flavors and healthier plants. A soil rich in organic matter should provide sufficient nutrients. However, if the plant begins to weaken from continuous harvesting each year, an



application of well composted manure or fish emulsion may be needed once each spring to boost the plant's vigor. Chives can also be easily grown in pots near your kitchen for quick and easy harvesting when cooking. Pots 6 to 12 inches in diameter that are 6 to 12 inches deep work best. Use a well drained soil mix that contains ample compost. Be sure pots are well

watered. The chives may need dividing or re-potting with fresh compost every three to four years. They also will go dormant in the fall and come back in early spring with a flush of blossoms.

Harvest chives by snipping leaves from the base of the plant. Cut flower stalks off at the soil line once they finish blooming. This will prevent the plant from forming seed and keep it more productive. Chives are most flavorful when used fresh. A sharp pair of gardening or culinary scissors works best for both harvesting and cutting chives into smaller pieces for use.

Leaves are most often used fresh in recipes or as a garnish, but they may also be dried or you may also freeze any surplus for later use. Cut, wash and dry leaves, then chop or cut into smaller pieces and spread on a cookie sheet. Put in the freezer. When frozen, store in a freezer bag until ready to use. Frozen chives do not need to be thawed out before use. They are great in soups, a favorite on baked potatoes, in sauces and dressings, with eggs, tomatoes, and casseroles, in biscuits and breads, and many other uses.

The flowers can be used in salads as well as in flower arrangements. The flower stalks are edible but usually tough and not as tender. It is best to toss these out and not include in cooking.

GARLIC CHIVES

Garlic chives, *Allium tuberosum*, also known as Chinese chives, are a variety of chives known for their garlic flavor. This variety has flat leaves and fragrant white flowers which bloom later in the season, usually July and August. It may be used just as regular chives are: as a fresh or dried culinary herb, as an ornamental in the garden or in containers, and in cut flower arrangements.

Sour Cream 'n' Chive Biscuits

2 cups all purpose flour
1 Tbsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp baking soda
1/3 cup shortening
3/4 cup sour cream
1/4 cup milk
1/4 cup snipped fresh chives

In a bowl, combine dry ingredients. Cut in shortening until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. With a fork, stir in sour cream, milk and chives until the mixture forms a ball. On a lightly floured surface, knead five to six times. roll to 3/4-inch thickness, cut with a 2-inch biscuit cutter. Place on ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 12 to 15 minutes or until golden brown. Yield: 12 to 15 biscuits.

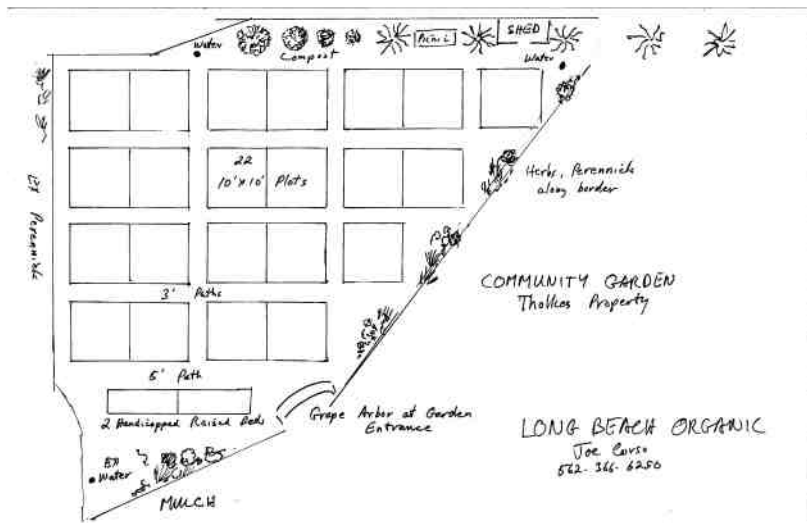
Topsy Turfy!

We're over the top over "Top of the Town," Long Beach Organic's newest community garden, opening in March in North Long Beach.

Bill and Lynette Tholkes have a large rural property off Atlantic Blvd. near the 91 Freeway, a hidden oasis of several acres with gardens, fruit trees and horse stables. They and local activist Debbie Flynne approached LBO to offer a section of their property as growing space for the community, which has limited access to grocery stores and other sources of healthy food. How could we say no?

The 5,000 square-foot garden will offer up to 24 households space in the sun to raise their own crops, as well as room for chickens, compost, and a picnic area. In addition to the use of the land, the Tholkes family is donating water and an endless supply of horse manure! We look forward to many years of a fruitful collaboration.

Debbie Flynne, Lynette Tholkes and LBO Garden Director Joe Corso discuss plans for the Top of the Town garden.



Cooking from the Garden by Joe Corso

Fresh Herb Ranch Dip

If you like ranch dip made with packaged seasonings, you'll love it home made with fresh herbs from your garden. This is a tempting way to get kids and other recalcitrants to eat their vegetables. Substitute lower-fat sour cream or mayonnaise if you'd prefer. For ranch salad dressing, omit the sour cream and thin to the desired consistency with buttermilk

- 1 garlic clove
- Salt
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- 3/4 cup mayonnaise
- A small handful each minced Italian parsley and minced chives
- 1 tsp minced fresh thyme, or a pinch of dried
- Pepper
- Assorted raw vegetables for dipping

Put the garlic through a garlic press into a medium bowl. Sprinkle with salt, then mash with the back of a spoon until smooth and frothy. This step takes away the garlic's harshness but not its flavor. Add the sour cream, mayonnaise, and herbs. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If you have time, refrigerate for several hours or overnight to blend flavors.

Serve with raw vegetables.

