

Grow with DIGA



Spring 2015

Plot with DIGA

Garden with DIGA – and grow healthy.

DIGA is promoting home-grown fruits, vegetables and herbs through our accessible community garden plots. Our members find gardening an enjoyable, sociable experience, and the resultant produce to be hearty, healthy and tasty.

We grow a variety of produce including beans, peas, tomatoes, pumpkins, squash and cucumbers. New for 2015 we will be growing olives!

We will take you through all the steps required to start growing.

Helping hands

DIGA needs volunteers to assist clients with their gardening. Contact DIGA coordinator Siobhan Messinger if you are able to support our activities at community or home gardens.

Grow with us

If you want to know more about gardening for people with disabilities in the Metro Vancouver area, check out our website: diga.org.

To garden or volunteer with DIGA, contact coordinator Siobhan Messinger: at siobhanmessinger@gmail.com.



Construction crew: Stantec volunteers building table-top gardens for DIGA, back in September.

We have garden spaces for you!

Garden with DIGA – at one of our accessible community locations or in your own backyard.

We have spaces available in community gardens across Vancouver, and are also able to offer custom-built table-top gardens for people that want to grow produce in their own space. The purpose is to give people with disabilities the support and inspiration to nurture plants.

Since 2008, DIGA has been offering spaces and hands-on help at community gardens for people that don't have accessible land of their own.

It's a program that's grown over the years, and now includes four locations around the city: Pandora Park and Woodland Park in East Vancouver, the more central Pearson Community Garden and the

residents-only Linden Tree Place in Kitsilano. All have a mix of raised beds and roll-under table-top gardens.

Looking ahead to the 2015 growing season, DIGA is able to offer places at:

- Pandora Park: four available gardening spaces;
- Pearson Community Garden: two;
- Woodland Park: one space.

We also have two custom table-top gardens currently available for people that want to grow produce where they live. These are not suitable for use indoors or on most apartment balconies.

These were made for DIGA by volunteers from engineering company Stantec last September – although we could make more if needed. For more information: siobhanmessinger@gmail.com.

Disabled Independent Gardener's Association: Growing Since 1987



Workshop: Turning fresh produce into a delicious treat.



Slippery: Hands-on at DIGA's herb butter workshop.

DIGA herb butter workshop shows how to turn fresh produce into a nutritious and tasty snack

The Disabled Independent Gardeners Association (DIGA) offered a herb butter workshop to promote the tasty, fresh food that's available to gardeners.

Butters can be made with virtually any herb, and can be used on bread, vegetables, meats, fish or eggs, explained DIGA coordinator Siobhan Messinger. The freshness of the herbs and the richness of the butter will transform virtually any savoury dish.

The herbs used at the event – tarragon, rosemary, thyme, basil and garlic – were grown by participants in DIGA's community gardening program, and were fast frozen in a blast chiller to retain nutritional value and flavor.

"There were 22 people – it was packed," said DIGA coordinator Siobhan Messinger. "Everybody had a lot of fun.

"Some people asked if they could join DIGA at our community gardens, and there is someone who I'll work with at their house in Richmond.

"I was saying that eating fresh food was why we garden. We really don't grow flowers, unless they are edible. We don't help people with their flower gardens, but we can get people growing fresh produce."

The next workshop is likely to be a hands-on look at an issue like weed control or bugs, held in late April.

Spring is here - what to plant, when to plant it, and how. . .

Now is the time to get things ready for the 2015 growing season.

Early spring is when gardeners get things in motion so they will be ready for the prime summer growing season. Gardens should be pruned, fertilized and weeded – because it is always better to catch the weeds *before* they've had chance to flower and go to seed.

And start planting seeds indoors, in Styrofoam cups or seed trays. Keep them moist and put them under light, and get ready to plant out the seedlings once the second set of leaves have appeared. But watch out for frost!

Some plants, such as peas, spinach and radishes, can be started ahead of the last frost date, but most seedlings need to be put out *after* this time. Generally speaking, in Vancouver, this equates to the end of March, but we have had frosts as late as April 10.

Start off simple, with a small growing area and using what are considered more reliable vegetables.

Gai lan, radishes, spinach, lettuce and bush (or string) beans are also very easy. Mixed salad greens do well in a container. On the other hand, some plants are difficult to grow from seed – tomatoes, squashes and peppers, are best bought from a local nursery (and planted May/June).

DIGA's Siobhan Messinger says the most successful produce she sees in the community gardens are beans, peas, pumpkins, egg plant, kale and chard. "These are hardy plants – the general rule is that anything with delicate leaves can have problems," she said.

She prepares the soil with worm tea, kelp and/or compost, ready for planting out from mid-April. We don't use manure in the DIGA community gardens for fear of ecoli contamination.

More:

digabc.org

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