

Grow with DIGA



Winter/Spring 2011

Grow healthy at DIGA event

The next Disabled Independent Gardeners Association (DIGA) workshop looks at health benefits of homegrown produce.

All About Sprouts is held at Cameron Rec. Centre (9523 Cameron St., Burnaby – next to Lougheed Mall), from 1:30 to 3:30pm on **Thursday, Feb. 24**. The workshop will consider sprouting grains, legumes and vegetable seeds – and how to incorporate them into your diet for a pennies-a-day health boost.

“Bring a fork and a small plate as we’re going to taste and sample snacks from sprouts,” said DIGA program coordinator Betty Cheung. “The workshop will cover the health benefits from sprouting, and recipe ideas.”

Admission is \$10.

April’s workshop, **Alpine Plants and Rock Gardens**, will be at VanDusen Botanical Garden, Vancouver. More details will be publicised nearer the time.

Garden space

Organizers of a new community garden at East Vancouver’s Adnac Park have accessible plots available for DIGA members. For more information, contact Nancy McRitchie: 604-294-2202.



Dig it: Cydney Wong digging at Pandora Park Community Garden with a Tetra custom adapted trowel.

Helping hands make light work

DIGA needs more volunteers to maintain its accessible community gardens which give people with disabilities chance to nurture and harvest their own produce.

DIGA currently offers plots at Pandora Park Community Garden and Pearson Park Community Garden – see Page 2 for more – which are used by 11 clients. But more volunteers are needed so the project can grow and involve more people.

“Without volunteers, we cannot run these programs so successfully,” said program coordinator Betty Cheung. “We’re looking for people who like gardening, and those who like to help people and pass on their knowledge.”

Cydney Wong, who has cerebral palsy, has an accessible plot at Pandora garden.

“This is her first garden that she has had to take care of and watch things grow, as she lives in a townhouse,” said her mother Nellie – Cydney is non-verbal.

“Being in a wheelchair inhibits many people from gardening as there is the issue of the height level. Because her garden is raised at the height of her wheelchair, she finds it much easier to actually participate in the planting and watering of her garden. Tetra has even kindly offered to make a special hand-held custom trowel for her. This has been a great opportunity for her.”

Cheung is asking members and supporters to spread the word about volunteering, which mostly involves planting, weeding, advising and encouraging. Contact her to learn more, at 604-688-6464 ext. 106.



Planter: Emily Budinsky (Aug.).



Salad days: at the PNE in June.



Festive: Gaille Lacy, December.



Winter: Shelley Brignall (Sept.).

Workshop reviews – adaptive gardening get-togethers

DIGA events since publication of the Spring 2010 newsletter have covered a lot of ground.

Workshops over summer and fall 2010 provided a mix of lectures and hands-on events, covering topics ranging from salads to perennials. Most recent was December's *Festive Centrepiece* workshop at Queen's Park greenhouse, New Westminster, in which gardener Joan Miller took members through the process of creating a Christmas planter using poinsettias, tropical plants and ornaments.

In September, the theme was *Plants for Winter Interest*, at Phoenix Perennials Nursery, Richmond. Gardener Shelley Brignall introduced plants that would provide winter interest in containers, with some being transplanted outdoors in Spring. This followed neatly on from August's workshop, *Cool Season Edibles*, held at George Pearson Centre, Vancouver. Emily Budinsky of BC Council of Garden Clubs brought planters, organic growing materials and seedlings to grow through the cooler days ahead.

June's workshop was held at the PNE grounds for Rick Hansen's *Wheels in Motion* event. Amidst a party atmosphere, Joan Miller supplied oval planters, growing materials and trays of seedlings. "Every participant created a beautiful 'salad bowl' that added extra colour to a patio or window sill," said DIGA's Betty Cheung.

In April, DIGA members met at GardenWorks Mandeville, Burnaby, for the *Planter with Culinary Herbs* workshop. *Garden Communicator* award winner Conway Lum from GardenWorks provided planters and herbs.

Workshop participants also took part in a discussion about adaptive gardening tools. A presentation by Tetra Society of North America volunteer John Connor and national coordinator Pat Tweedie looked at custom-made tools the group has created for DIGA members and others with disabilities, and how Tetra can help with other day-to-day accessibility needs. (More about Tetra: see www.tetrasociety.org or phone 604-688-6464 ext. 108.)

Thanks to DIGA community gardens are growing accessible

DIGA is following its most successful year of community gardening by offering opportunities to more people.

There are two available plots at the fully-accessible Pandora Park Community Garden. Over the past year, eight clients, assisted by three volunteers, have grown a variety of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers in the raised beds there.

It was all made possible by the efforts of volunteers Eva Machalek, Chris Cairo and Pat MacIntosh. In addition, Andrew Stordy helped out at Pearson Park and also assisted June Yuckin at her home garden.

"Pandora Garden exemplifies what a community garden should be," said DIGA member Barry Londry. "Every time I go there I talk to at least one and usually several people.

"They are genuinely interested in what we are doing and many have said they will water things for us if it looks like they need it. That's what a community garden should be. A community helping out and taking an interest in each other."

Contact DIGA program coordinator Betty Cheung to learn more, at 604-688-6464 ext. 106.



Produce: Barry Londry.

More – contact Betty Cheung: 604-688-6464 ext. 106, bcheung@disabilityfoundation.org