

# Grow with DIGA



Summer 2007

## Enabling our members to reach their gardening potential

People with significant physical disabilities face two main barriers to gardening: lack of space for planting and having no suitable tools to work the land.

The Disabled Independent Gardeners Association (DIGA) aims to help members with both areas. Not everyone has a backyard or even a balcony for container gardening, so DIGA program coordinator Betty Cheung will be helping people find space at local community gardens, citing the example of member Terry LeBlanc.

Finding himself having outgrown his apartment container garden, which still produces herbs and flowers, he took over some land at Maple Community Garden in Spring 2006. It is an adapted growing area, with raised beds and accessible pathways.



Raised beds: Terry LeBlanc (right) in his "Summer oasis."

"It's very important to me," said LeBlanc. "It's a little summer oasis over there. It's right in the middle of the herb garden. I'd encourage DIGA members to call their local community garden. Hopefully we could involve every community garden in the Lower Mainland."

Volunteers from the community garden, located on a railway right-of way on 6th Ave. between Maple and Cypress, help out, and existing gardeners are available to lend advice. LeBlanc is currently growing lettuce and peppers.

And if anyone requires adapted gardening tools and equipment, they can do this through the Tetra Society of North America, a sister group to DIGA. Tetra exists to match volunteer engineers with people that need custom assistive devices and has previously adapted tools and created seats that allow wheelchair users get closer to their land.

"It could be something as simple as a twist of a handle or turning the prongs of a tool to make it easier to use," said Tetra national coordinator Pat Tweedie. "Or it could be more involved, like creating accessible planters."

Contact Pat Tweedie at 604-688-6464 ext. 108.

### Workshops in the works: upcoming attractions

**Saturday, August 25, 11am – 12:30pm:** A Planter of Culinary Herbs. Hands-on workshop at the RoundHouse Community Centre (181 Roundhouse Mews, Vancouver – intersection of Davie & Pacific). Costs \$10, which includes materials for planter and light refreshments. Underground parking (access off Drake Street) \$1/hour.

**Tuesday, October 2, noon – 2:30pm:** Winter Planters lecture & UBC Botanical Garden tour. Meet at the Botanical Garden reception centre, 6804 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver – 16<sup>th</sup> Ave. intersection. Costs \$5.

**November:** Gardening 101: Session II or DIY Poinsettia Planters.

Info/reservations: contact Betty at 604-688-6464 ext 106, or [bcheung@disabilityfoundation.org](mailto:bcheung@disabilityfoundation.org).



Greenery: DIGA's July workshop.



Digging deep: May's meeting.



Bonsai: The April meeting

## Betty Cheung's workshop reviews

Since the Spring edition of *Grow with DIGA*, we have held three successful workshops: succulent planters in July, soil preparation in May and bonsai in April.

The most recent, the succulent planters workshop at Queen's Park, New Westminster, on July 18, saw members given a deep bowl and a selection of plants and materials to create displays with an under-the-sea theme. Chief gardener Joan Miller presented the workshop, which included five species of succulent plants along with lava stone, sand and soil mix, seashells and other decorations, and gave participants instructions on caring for their creations.

May's event saw members learning how to prepare a container for vegetable growing, using compost and fertilizer. Member Terry LeBlanc shared his experiences of raised-bed gardening (see Page 1).

In April, members braved poor weather for a view of Eastern gardening philosophy. Sandy Knoll, president of the Taguchi Bonsai Club, showed how to create bonsai from everyday garden materials, followed by a tour of Dr Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden.

### Plant sales & garden shows – free entry

**Aug. 11, 10am – 4pm:** Vancouver Orchid Society Plant Sale. VanDusen Garden, 5251 Oak St., Vancouver ([www.vandusengarden.org](http://www.vandusengarden.org)).

**Sep. 13 – 14, 11am – 6pm:** Annual Indoor Plant Sale. UBC Botanical Garden, 6804 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver ([www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org](http://www.ubcbotanicalgarden.org)). Volunteers will be on hand to help choose plants and advise you on their care.

## Bulbs after spring

When your tulips, daffodils, hyacinths and amaryllis flowers have faded, a little care is needed to ensure they re-bloom next year:

- Snip off the dead flowers so they won't go to seed (except daffodils)
- Allow the plant to die back naturally in a warm spot in the light, keep soil moist – this is a critical work period for leaves to re-charge the bulbs, and this takes around six weeks
- Sink the bulbs into the soil outdoors or keep them indoors in a bright spot, and don't let them dry out
- In August, stop watering and place the bulb (still in its pot) in a dry, cool place for two to three months
- More information in the Fall newsletter!

### Call for volunteers

Do you want to share your love of gardening? Please contact Betty (604-688-6464) if you have time to help DIGA members in their gardens.

### Special thanks

Thanks to all at Maple Community Garden, especially Cathy Gole and Margaret Haga. Also to volunteers Mary Jo and Peter Dawe, and Meredith Maxwell.