

Brooklyn Gardener

Spring 2002



THE NEWSLETTER OF BROOKLYN GREENBRIDGE • BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN

Spring Tips To Make Your Garden an Urban Oasis

In what was once an intensive farming area of Brooklyn that now has more concrete than cabbage, a horticulture program has emerged with the name "Urban Oasis." The program started five years ago in order to introduce horticulture, business, and work skills to clients at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center under the auspices of the Rehabilitation Services Department. Support service, business, administration, and direct care staff work with Urban Oasis trainees to make the program a success. The program consists of landscaping and indoor gardening components, two greenhouses, an organic vegetable garden, and a business selling plants and gift baskets. Brooklyn GreenBridge is privileged to be a partner in this effort.

Isaiah, Lorenzo, Adan, Alvin and Susan – a few members of the team that makes up Urban Oasis – took a break from winter gardening recently to share their spring planting and preparation tips:

- Healthy plants need healthy soil. Get a soil test to learn what's in your soil and what it needs. (Call GreenBridge at 718-623-7209 for a tip sheet.) Make your own compost!
- Building wood frame boxes for your garden is expensive and time consuming. Instead, make raised beds by digging shallow trenches around the perimeter of your beds.
- Try an "intensive" garden method like square foot gardening to optimize space. Since most of the vegetables grown at Kingsboro are sold, the gardeners grow as much as they can in as little space as possible. (Check out "It's Hip to Use Squares!" on the reverse.)
- To prevent weeds, place three layers of newspaper over the soil in planting beds and cut holes to plant transplants. Cover the newspaper with mulch. Use this for your pathways, too! The newspaper will let water seep through, and slowly rot.



- For transplants that need some help getting established, create "water walls" by filling two liter plastic soda bottles with water and placing around the transplants.
- Direct seed cool-season crops like lettuce and radishes in early April to get a head start on the gardening season. Start even earlier in cold frames.
- Try companion planting: the Urban Oasis crew says basil planted near tomatoes makes the tomatoes sweeter!



In future issues of Brooklyn Gardener, we hope to feature other community greening projects in Brooklyn. If you'd like to share your gardening tips, give us a call at 718-623-7209. To learn more about Urban Oasis, call them at 718-221-7132.

—Tara Scott

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

For information, call 718-623-7250 unless otherwise noted.

- March 16. GreenThumb "GrowTogether."** Free. For info, call 212-788-8070.
- March 23. 21st Annual Making Brooklyn Bloom...** "Gardens and Healing." 10 am–4 pm at BBG.
- March 29. Compost Bin Blowout deadline for ordering.** \$20 each; pick up is April 11, 5–7 pm. Call 718-623-7290.
- April 19. Deadline for ordering Window Box Kits.** \$17 each; pick up at BBG May 11.
- May 1 and 2. BBG annual Plant Sale.** For info, call 718-623-7200.

May 4 and May 19. FREE COMPOST! and bins for \$20! (For NYC Residents) Locations will be announced in March. Look in the mail for confirmed site information or call the Compost Help Line: 718-623-7290.

May 18. Plant Sale to benefit GreenSpace at President Street Community Garden (corner 5th Ave.) Lots of native plants! For info, call 718-399-9425 or email presidentstreet@hotmail.com.

Ongoing. Workshops at Floyd Bennett Field Gardens. E-mail digman7@aol.com or call 212-716-2873 for details.

Note: To list your garden's public events in the June–September Community Calendar, call 718-623-7209 with details by April 8.

PLEASE POST!



GreenBridge Workshops

Pre-registration is required at least one week in advance for these workshops. Call 718-623-7220. Free unless noted. Call 718-623-7250 for class descriptions.

Indoor Worm Composting Tuesday, March 5, 6–8 pm OR Wednesday, May 15, 6–8 pm (\$10 for NYC residents; \$28 for others)

Introduction to Horticultural Therapy Thursday, March 7, 6–7:30 pm

Gardening with Children and Youth: For Adult Leaders Thursday, April 11, 4–6 pm

Gardening with Native Plants Saturday, April 13, 11 am–1 pm

Greenest Block in Brooklyn Contest Orientation Tuesday, April 16, 6–8 pm

Composting in the City Thursday, April 25, 1–3 pm OR Sunday, May 12, 10 am–12 pm OR Thursday, May 30, 6–8 pm

Gardening with Children and Youth: Refresher Course Thursday, May 16, 3:30–5:30 pm (Open to anyone who has previously attended Gardening with Children and Youth – City Kids Get Green)

Making Brooklyn Bloom...

Gardens and Healing

Saturday, March 23, 10 am–4 pm, Palm House, Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Kick off the garden season with free workshops and exhibits. Featured speaker: Judith Zuk, President, Brooklyn Botanic Garden. Free, but you must register at 10 am on the day of the event.

From the Heap... How to Get the Gold

Of course, there is nothing more satisfying than making your own compost—you are reducing the amount of waste going to a landfill and treating your soil right with regular additions of beautiful “black gold.” If you are involved with a group gardening project, though, you may need more compost than you can produce on your own.

A limited number of bulk compost deliveries (5 or 10 cubic yard loads) is available each year for New York City community groups. You are eligible for a free compost delivery if you are ordering for a community group anywhere within the five boroughs of New York City. Community groups that qualify include community gardens, block association greening projects, school gardens, or tenant gardening associations. The



compost can even be delivered on a sidewalk (as long as you accept responsibility for a possible fine if it isn't moved fairly quickly). Some block associations organize a compost block party, close the street, and spend the day knee-deep in compost!

To make a request for compost delivery, fill out an online form at the city-wide compost site www.nyccompost.org or call our colleagues at the Queens Botanical Garden's Compost Line: 718-539-5296.

Don't worry; individual gardeners can get free compost, too! New York City residents can pick up free compost, buy discount bins, and learn the art of composting—all at the compost givebacks held each spring and fall by the City's Botanical Gardens and the NYC Department of Sanitation. Look in the mail for confirmed site information for the May 4 and May 19 Brooklyn givebacks or call Brooklyn Botanic Garden's Compost Help Line: 718-623-7290.



—Pat Jasaitis

Brooklyn Botanic Garden gratefully acknowledges support for these programs from the Altman Foundation, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, Con Edison, The Dime Foundation, Greentree Foundation, The Independence Community Foundation, The New York City Environmental Fund, The Leonard and Claire Tow Charitable Trust, Inc., The Joseph LeRoy and Ann C. Warner Fund, United States Environmental Protection Agency/Environmental Education Grant, The New York City Department of Sanitation, The Brooklyn Delegation of the New York State Assembly and Senate, and State Senator Martin Connor.



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Spotlight on...It's Hip to Use Squares!

You've looked through seed catalogs... made your list... whittled it down to only the most essential plants... but you just don't have enough room in your garden to grow everything you want! It's especially tight in the city—there's never enough space to satisfy our garden urges.

For a solution to this vexing lack of space try square foot gardening—a kind of “intensive gardening” where you grow more plants in a smaller area. In a square foot garden plants are close together, reducing space for weeds to dominate. You never walk in the growing area so the soil stays loose and friable. You don't waste water irrigating pathways or between rows. Since each square is planted with seeds properly spaced apart, you reduce the need to thin seedlings. It's also much easier to tell a weed from a plant, so you'll spend less time on maintenance.



Square foot gardening is a great project to do with kids—practice skills like measuring, charting, counting, and multiplication as you lay out and plant. Here's how to do it:

- Start with a square or rectangular bed (4' by 4' or 4' by 8' are good). Make sure you can reach every part of the bed without stepping into it.
- With a tape measure and stakes, mark every 12 inches on the length and width of your bed.
- Using string (plastic-coated laundry line is great), connect the stakes to form a grid. Keep the string near the soil level so it won't get in your way. You'll end up with a grid of boxes, each 12" by 12".
- Now comes the fun part! Each square can have a different plant variety growing in it—no paths, no separate rows. Large plants like tomatoes may hog up a whole square, but stuff 16 radishes in one square foot—they don't mind! Call 718-623-7209 for specifics on plant spacing.



—Julie Warsowe

Calling All Blocks! Is Your Block the “Greenest Block in Brooklyn”?

Every year, judges scour Brooklyn for the greenest, most beautiful blocks. You can't win if you don't enter! Applications for the 2002 contest will be available by March 23, and the deadline to enter is June 10. Get your block association to join in the fun.

New for this year, judges will award a prize to the neighborhood with the most entries. You can also attend the workshop, “Greenest Block in Brooklyn Contest Orientation”—see the GreenBridge Workshops section for details. For information and contest applications, call 718-623-7250.

The Contest is jointly sponsored by Borough President Marty Markowitz and Brooklyn GreenBridge, with support from Independence Community Foundation.

—Ellen Kirby

New York City Blooms Again... Daffodils Bring Hope and Remembrance

Last fall, New Yorkers planted over one million daffodil bulbs to honor those who lost their lives on September 11. Keep watch: soon, the city will be transformed with masses of blooms in shades of gold.

GROW with ACGA

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American Community Gardening
Association

July 25–July 28
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Meet your colleagues from
US and Canada!

More info at:
www.communitygarden.org
or call 718-623-7250

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Compost Help Line 718-623-7290