

# Brooklyn Gardener

THE NEWSLETTER OF BROOKLYN GREENBRIDGE • Brooklyn Botanic Garden • SPRING/SUMMER 2005

## Altogether Now! Let's Get Green

Once upon a time, barn raising was a collective effort that brought folks together to help their neighbors. That spirit is alive and well in Brooklyn, where community gardeners rallied last fall to build a state-of-the-art rainwater harvesting system (RWHS) at the **Brooklyn Bears Carleton Avenue Community Garden**.

The project began when **Lenny Librizzi from the Water Resources Group (WRG)**, an open collaboration of environmental groups, met with the Carleton Bears gardeners last spring to talk about capturing rain from an adjacent rooftop and storing it in a tank to irrigate the garden. Lenny says, "Working with the Carleton Bears fulfilled all of WRG's criteria for a RWHS project: that members of the garden participate in designing and installing the system, help with fundraising, and commit to using the garden for education and outreach about water conservation." Lenny introduced **Susan Luescher, a landscape architecture student at Cornell University**, to the gardeners, and she agreed to help them design and build the system. **Brooklyn GreenBridge, an active member of WRG**, also supported this project. To take a WRG walking tour of this RWHS and others, see our Community Calendar.



Charles Bayrer, Susan Luescher, and Robert Florin volunteered to help.

As word got out that the Carleton Bears needed help to build the system, **neighbors, activists, and people from other community gardens volunteered more than 500 hours over 4 days to install it**. Without this help, the project couldn't have been built. **Liz Sharp, coordinator of the Carleton Avenue garden**, says "The group spirit was great—it was hard work, but everyone had a sense of humor and believed in the idea. We needed folks to do everything from unloading and mixing bags of cement to digging holes and attaching pipe to the wall. The whole thing was fuelled by pizza, Mexican food, and excitement about the idea of harvesting rainwater."

## "Community gardening is a sustainable way of life"

A lot of volunteers found out about the project through list serves, or e-mails that go to groups of people. **Jon Crow, a longtime Brooklyn Bears gardener and environmental activist**, says "E-mail is the way community gardens in this area keep in touch. Gardens are sustaining themselves now by reaching out and getting help from each other, whether it's manpower or knowledge that is needed." **Another Bears gardener, Roy Arezzo**, brought in volunteers via the list serve for Time's Up, a non-profit environmental group.

So why were volunteers willing to show up and sweat for other community gardens? **Robert Florin, a member of the David Foulkes Memorial Garden on Bergen Street**, says he did it because "I enjoy being useful and felt a sense of camaraderie with these folks because they're community gardeners. Also, I got experience that I could apply to my garden even if it's not on the same scale." Community gardening truly is a sustainable way of life, a way to meet like-minded neighbors and learn how to make your own dreams of a greener city come true.

—Robin Simmen, Community Horticulture Program Manager

PLEASE POST!



## GreenBridge Workshops

Pre-registration is required at least one week in advance for these workshops: call 718-623-7220 to register. Free, but space is limited.

**Composting in the City** Tuesday, February 8 \* 6-8 pm, OR Wednesday, March 2 \* 4-6 pm

**Street Tree Pit Gardening** Tuesday, February 15 \* 6-8 pm, OR Tuesday June 14 \* 6-8 pm

**Window Box and Container Gardening** Tuesday, April 12 \* 6-8 pm OR Wednesday, April 20 \* 6-8 pm

**Drip Irrigation** Tuesday, May 17 \* 6-8 pm

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

For information, call 718-623-7209 unless otherwise noted. Listings are free unless otherwise noted.

**March 1 to 31. Photo Exhibit of Winners from 2004 Greenest Block in Brooklyn Contest**, at BBG Visitor Center.

**March 12. Annual Making Brooklyn Bloom "Designing Gardens for Everyone."** 10 am-3:30 pm at BBG

**March 19. Annual GreenThumb "Grow Together."** For info, call 212-788-8070.

**April 29. Deadline for ordering Window Box Kits.** \$17 each; pick up at BBG May 14.

**May 4 & 5. BBG Annual Plant Sale.** Free with Garden admission. For info, call 718-623-7200. Members' Preview Sale, May 3.

**May 21. Self-Guided Walking Tour of Rainwater Harvesting Systems**, sponsored by the Water Resources Group. For info, call 718-623-7209.

**June 3. Deadline for entering the Greenest Block in Brooklyn Contest.** Applications available in March.

SAVE THE DATE!

Making Brooklyn Bloom

Designing Gardens for Everyone!

Saturday, March 12, 10 am-3:30 pm

Palm House, Brooklyn Botanic Garden

Kick off the gardening season with free workshops, exhibits, and tours.

Free, but you must register at 10 am on the day of the event.

## GREENEST BLOCK IN BROOKLYN CONTEST 2005

- Applications available in March. Contest is open to all residential and business blocks in Brooklyn. Get your block or business association to join in!
- Prize for the neighborhood with the most entries! Deadline to enter is June 3.
- For information and applications, call 718-623-7250.
- Sponsored by Brooklyn GreenBridge in cooperation with Borough President Marty Markowitz and with support from Independence Community Foundation and Lowe's Companies, Inc.

## Seasonal Tips

### Winter (January-February)

- Compost dead plant material (except diseased plants)
- Clean up, put away tomato cages, bring clay containers inside
- Clean tools, store indoors
- Order catalogues, seeds and plants
- Refill bird feeders regularly
- Use sand instead of salt on side-walks; salt poisons tree pit soil

### Spring (March-May)

- Start flower seeds and vegetable seeds indoors
- Cut back dead material on perennials, shrubs, and small trees
- Prune summer-flowering shrubs (roses, buddleias)
- Apply organic fertilizer (fish emulsion) as new growth begins
- Plant trees, shrubs
- Divide perennials

### Summer (June-August)

- Add mulch around all plantings
- Monitor plants for pests and diseases
- Weed! Pull weeds now, before they get out of control
- Let bulb foliage yellow completely, then cut back
- Deadhead flowers to encourage repeat blooming
- Water if rainfall is less than one inch per week. Water deeply, less often; mornings are best

—Emily Neustrom, Horticulture Therapy and Community Outreach Intern

### GOT QUESTIONS? GET HELP!

About gardening, houseplants and much more. Call the BBG Gardener's Help Line at 718-623-7270, Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30AM– 12:30PM, and 2–4PM.

### GREENBRIDGE STAFF

Ellen Kirby, *Director*

Robin Simmen, *Community Horticulture Program Manager & Newsletter Editor*

Joshua Cohen, *Urban Composting Project Manager*  
Emily Neustrom, *Horticulture Therapy & Community Outreach Intern*

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## From the Heap...The Urban Composting Project Is Here!

As the most recent addition to the Brooklyn GreenBridge team, let me introduce myself and the return of the Urban Composting Project (UCP). I'm excited to be managing this vital, vibrant project. With renewed funding support from the NYC Department of Sanitation (DOS), UCP is back in full swing! **UCP educates the public about the practice and importance of composting, a method of "recycling" organic waste into rich, fertile soil.** Composting helps reduce municipal solid waste; at the same time, it helps make Brooklyn greener. For tips on composting in your home or garden, please see the contact information below.

Our plans for this year include Christmas tree recycling in cooperation with Green-Wood Cemetery, NYC Parks, and NYC DOS. Mulch made from tree chipping at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn is available for free to the public all year. Call (718) 768-7300 for more information on picking up mulch at Green-Wood.

The DOS fall leaf collection went well last fall, and we are hopeful that compost, produced from these leaves, will be ready in the spring. Stay tuned for more information on where and when these **compost givebacks** will be held. Brooklyn residents will be able to pick up this free compost for use in your gardens. **Discounted compost bins will be sold** on these giveback days. For a limited time afterward, compost bins will also be available at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG).

UCP's current education and outreach initiatives include the Composting Exhibit at BBG, the BBG Master Composter Program, and our Compost Help Line. Stop by and check out the Composting Exhibit site, currently being upgraded near the BBG's Cranford Rose Garden. Consider becoming a **BBG Master Composter** by applying for our very popular six-week Master Composter training program. In addition to this program, at least **three free composting workshops are being offered this spring** (see front for workshop schedule, and call us for our summer schedule). We will also be offering neighborhood workshops at local Brooklyn community gardens. **To inquire about any of our projects or workshops, to make a suggestion, or to ask questions about composting, please contact us at the Compost Help Line at 718-623-7290, check out our website at [www.bbg.org/compost](http://www.bbg.org/compost), or email us at [compost@bbg.org](mailto:compost@bbg.org).**

I look forward to meeting and working with many of you in the future.

—Joshua Cohen, Urban Composting Project Manager



UCP Manager Joshua Cohen demonstrates a favorite composting tool.

## NEW NYC WOOD DEBRIS GUIDELINES TO STOP THE ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

The Asian longhorned beetle (ALB) poses a dire threat to trees in New York City, where more than 4,000 trees have been removed to eradicate it. The beetle, which was first discovered in Greenpoint, Brooklyn in 1996, reappeared last summer in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Williamsburg, and Prospect Heights. The ALB attacks many different hardwood trees, including all species of maple, birch, horsechestnut, poplar, willow, elm, London plane, and sycamore.

NYC residents can help stop the spread of the beetle by simply calling 311 when discarding prunings, firewood, and other organic woody debris. NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation will provide free on-site wood chipping and disposal; however, any organic woody debris generated from commercial activity is not eligible for the program. To schedule an appointment, you must call 311 or request a pick-up online at [www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks). The Dept. of Sanitation will no longer collect firewood and wood from trees growing on residential properties in Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn. However, DOS will continue to pick up treated or painted lumber, which includes wood furniture, wood pallets, and building lumber, as well as mulch, chips, and leaves.

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