

# Whitby Ajax Garden Project

Revised January 2011

- The Communal Garden Project was initiated in 2001 by the Health & Healing Team of Celebration! Presbyterian Church on the east side of Lakeridge Road just south of Hwy 7, as an organic garden where individuals and organizations could work together raising small fruit and vegetables for distribution to low income families and organizations working with those in need.
- The Garden's initial funding came from the Experimental Fund of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, The Mayor's Fund of the Town of Whitby, and the Krembil Foundation of Toronto as well as individual gifts.
- The church, an outreach based ministry, closed in December of 2003. Members of the Health and Healing committee, recognizing the value of the garden project to the area, continued to co-ordinate the garden for 2004. It was hoped enough interest would be generated in the garden so that it could become a community operated project.
- Therefore in 2004, the Garden Committee rented individual plots to community members and groups interested in gardening.
- The Communal Garden Project also continued to operate over the 2004 season donating over 740 lbs. (over a third of a ton) of fresh vegetables to St. Vincent Kitchen, Cornerstone Community Association and individual families in need that worked in the communal garden or were referred to the project.
- In the spring of 2005 Crossroads Community Church (Ajax) came along side the garden project to support its long term sustainability. Ajax was added to the name to reflect their support as well as the participation in the garden by Ajax residents. The garden project also borders on the two communities.
- In 2011 on the occasion of its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary the Garden's name was shortened to Whitby Ajax Garden Project.
- The garden project continues to expand and presently occupies over 2 acres including garden, sitting area, children's space, sheds, cisterns, flower beds, outdoor seminar area and Lynde Creek Tributary Restoration on its original site. The garden project also enjoys another 3 acres of natural area surrounding the garden and rest area creating a sense of sanctuary.
- The number of plots rented out in the Community Garden portion has grown from 6 in 2004 to 53 in 2010 with minimal advertising. In 2010 there were over 100 individuals involved in gardening in this portion of the garden while another 70 volunteered in the communal portion or for specific garden projects.

## **The Communal Garden Project Fresh Produce Donations**

- Over 7000 pounds of produce was donated in 2010 to those in need. This includes 217 pounds collected and distributed through "Share the Harvest" at the Brooklin Harvest Festival to Aids Durham.
- **Recipients** - Salvation Army Whitby, The Eating Well, St Vincent's Kitchen, St Paul's on the Hill, North Durham, an ESL class, mini market at a geared-to-income buildings Ajax and Oshawa, The Refuge, The Durham Youth Shelter, the Muslim Welfare Home, Interchurch Immigrant Support Group as well as individuals and families in need across 4 Durham Region communities

- **Plots for Rent:** Individual 4'x30' plots in the Community Garden portion can be rented for a fee of \$30.00 plus \$5.00 membership fee to help. However fees are not to be a barrier to participation in the garden. Any who might have difficulty with the set fee are asked to speak with the Garden Coordinator.
- **Annual Events** – Kick Off (May), Annual Summer Open House/Marketplace (July), Experience the Harvest (Oct.) - for the broader public to experience what a community garden is. Tours are given through the season on request. Work Days are open to volunteer participation.
- **Tours & Displays:** to visitors at open houses, groups interested in beginning gardens, UOIT nursing students, municipal politicians/staff, ESL leaders. It has presented displays (Idea Exchange, Dress the Part, Communities in Bloom, Pickering Seedy Saturday) and participated in a community fundraisers (Brooklin Harvest Festival).

### **Community Relationships**

- Whitby Community Garden/Communal Garden Project was among the founding members of the Durham Region Community Garden Network as well as initiating the founding its replacement organization DIG (Durham Integrated Growers growing food and community).
- The Whitby Ajax Garden Project representative participated in the Durham Lives! Food Charter Working Group, chaired the Durham Region Food Charter Visioning Day and Strategy Team for the Durham Region Food Charter Task Force to Sept 2007, as well as Food Charter Review Committee. It participates in the Durham Food Policy Council.
- The garden participated on the steering committee of Feed the Need Durham prior to board development Dec. 2007.
- Garden representatives have provided input to the Seaton Land Study Group, Regional Official Plan, Cullen Gardens redevelopment, Whitby Official Plan and the Regional Growth Plan.
- Active in ensuring urban agriculture development was included in the Whitby Culture, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan. Worked with the municipality to identify potential urban garden sites. Participates in Communities in Bloom.
- Advocates for urban agriculture development in other urban centres. Supported and consulted on Valley Plentiful Garden relocation (Pickering), North Oshawa Park Garden and St Andrew's Park Ajax. Encouraged and consulted on Forest Brook Garden in addition to interested groups in North Durham, Brooklin, Courtice and Oshawa.
- Partnered with Durham Region Works Dept. and Carrot Cache through former garden network to install two 4200 litre cisterns to address water shortage at garden site in 2008.
- Developing Relationship with new immigrants through Durham District School Board ESL/LINC and Interchurch Immigrant Support Group.

### **Articles**

- Our Children's Garden was featured in both the Food Wellness Fall 2006 newsletter and the Brooklin Town Crier September 2006; Regular articles in paper through our garden writer 2009/10
- Canadian Association of Parish Nursing Ministry newsletter February 2007.
- "Growing a Sense of Community" July 15, 2007 edition of This Week Metroland Newspapers.
- Fall 2008 segment on Rogers Cable "Greening Durham" taped Aug 5, 2008 aired 2009
- Fall/Winter 2008 Durham Region Works Dept. Newsletter
- Sun newspaper "How does your garden grow" Spring 2010.
- The Garden Committee continues to develop new community partners and to become more widely known throughout the region and beyond.
- Our most precious relationships continue to be those that are grown in the garden with each other, creation and its source.
- Contact Mary Drummond Garden Coordinator at 905 666 1497 or [gangwarily@sympatico.ca](mailto:gangwarily@sympatico.ca).