



# The Express

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Spring 2008

## Our Mission

The mission of the Olympus Garden Club is to promote and support the love of gardening, floral arranging, landscape design, horticulture, plant research and environmental improvement by providing education, resources, networking and leadership opportunities to our members and the community.

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## Looking Back Looking Forward

This first week of March with the clouds and rain is wonderful for germinating seeds and ideas for the coming seasons. I am looking forward to another spring and summer of learning and experiencing the world of gardening. This time around, I am not going to work as hard as last time. I am looking forward to a lazy person's garden; low maintenance. I am going to watch what happens in my garden, as the days grow longer and warmer, and the buds start budding. Last season I was implementing the design, getting the raised beds built and



The Marble Plaque

## By the Light

Was it enough to know when the moon phased in and out? Not for our LUNATIC ancestors. They had to build a whole science around it. Astrological signs are considered by many to be a science, and these signs play a part in the lunar life of gardening.

Does that mean a potato has the traits of a Bull, the symbol for Taurus, or that Libra, the balancer, governs a tulip? Could it be that two opposing fish, otherwise known as Pisces, rule Nymphaea alba, a white water lily?

According to our ancestors, the zodiac signs placed in the different moon cycles played a huge part in agricul-

ture. This time I want to wait and see what comes back on its own – like the Fuzzy Peppermint in the container, and the regular Peppermint, Thyme, and Rosemary in the beds. I have given some native plants (gardeners do a lot of sharpening) and I will be looking for them also. After all the perennials return I will decide what to plant among them this spring.

## of the Silvery Moon

Part II

ture. They believed that certain astrological signs at certain phases of the moon could produce healthier and hardier plants. Talk to some farmers and gardeners and they will swear, that if you plant during the time the moon is in Scorpio, seeds will burst, leaves will sprout, and flowers will bloom; that the best time to hoe is when the moon is in the seventh house and Jupiter aligns with Mars. This is the dawning of the Age of .. Oh, sorry. Hippie flashback. But, hey! Who knows? There might be some truth to this. After all, Scorpio is a water sign. As you know, adding water to a seed equals growth.

Maybe there is something to

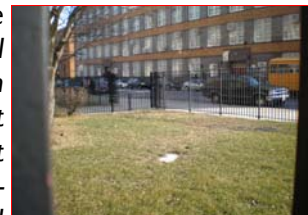
this zodiac business. The water signs (Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces) are fertile as well as the earth signs (Taurus, Capricorn), but Virgo who is also an earth sign is BARREN. Well, that does not make any sense. Or, does it? After all, Virgo is the virgin. Hmm, enough said there. On the other hand, like Virgo, the fire signs (Aries, Leo, Sagittarius) and the air signs (Gemini, Libra, Aquarius) are thought to be less fertile or barren. All of this stems from the fact that it is believed that the metaphysical elements of earth, air, fire, and water are able to influence plant growth as well as the



(Continued on page 2)

As a gardener every vacant plot of earth has the potential to become a garden. In our neighborhood there is a high school that I know of where there is a garden begging to be planted. There once was a school that went through some phasing out issues. The ghost of the school lingers under a small marble rectangle monument, covering the spot where a time capsule is buried, in the corner of the new school's grounds. Olympus

Garden Club members and a teacher who has an after-school gardening club, at one of the new schools located at this site, will be working together with me to create a Memorial Time Capsule Garden. It was the idea of the principal of this phased out school, to plant the time capsule, she is as excited as we all are about this opportunity to beautify our surround-



New Garden Site

(Continued on page 2)

# President's Message

Changing weather patterns have been on the minds of many of us in recent years. Record dry spells, freak rain and snow events and more intense storms of all kinds in different parts of the globe have become big news. Global warming is one such connected process. Welcomed (they say) by those who hate cold, it is a real concern of the saner part of the population.

We as gardeners in the northeast think at times that we wouldn't exactly mind a longer growing season. However, the consequences of warming trends on the planet do not bode well. Plants that need cold winters to control fungal

diseases have been undergoing hard times. The sugar maple for one is rarely seen now at our latitude.

There are a few things that we as gardeners can do to try and cope with these changes. Good gardening practices have always increased food yields and prevented damage to ornamentals. Composting, crop rotation and efficient watering practices including rain water collection are some of the things that we can do to help.



Rain Barrel

Agriculture needs to get back to being smaller, more local, more organic, using fewer or ideally no pesticides and herbicides and with greater varieties of produce. As consumers we

can try to support these food movements with our purchasing power and by communicating these beliefs to elected officials.

A better, safer world can exist if we all think about the connections between climate, food, gardening and our own relationship to the web of life.



Robert Florin, President

## Happenings

During the winter our members worked with Green Thumb, Just Food, and Brooklyn Botanic Garden to lead workshops on seed starting, vermiculture, cold frame building, sat on panels to discuss soil health and structure, and hosted information tables at Brooklyn & Bronx gardening events hosted by Green Thumb and Brooklyn Botanic Garden BrooklynGreenbridge.

We just got word that the daffodils we planted last fall at Hearts and Hands community garden in East New York are coming up. We will be sure to take pictures. Sharpen up those tools everyone, Spring is here and now!

## Olympus Word Scramble - Spring

Aerate	V	C	S	N	V	V	S	X	T	Y	T	X	P	P	S	N	M	E	H	C
Bait	C	D	Z	N	N	R	L	L	Y	L	L	X	R	P	E	R	W	T	V	T
Consolidate	C	E	T	A	T	S	E	W	S	L	L	L	L	R	P	W	B	A	N	T
Estate	G	T	R	C	G	Q	T	D	W	L	Z	Y	R	K	A	K	R	R	J	J
Gate	H	A	P	J	N	Q	A	W	W	S	P	T	C	C	R	A	K	E	C	C
Grate	P	G	X	X	G	Q	V	R	R	G	P	V	V	P	A	K	H	A	S	Z
Invigorate	P	P	R	N	P	Q	O	S	Z	D	C	P	K	P	T	C	N	S	C	U
Irrigate	Z	Z	N	Q	C	O	N	S	O	L	I	D	A	T	E	P	P	P	Q	Q
Plate	S	S	N	X	P	B	E	T	L	R	R	D	F	T	E	Q	Y	Z	L	X
Rake	Z	Z	N	Z	L	N	R	J	J	R	R	L	D	P	D	N	X	V	T	K
Renovate	N	X	Z	L	L	R	R	N	I	Q	I	S	X	X	D	N	V	D	N	D
Separate	R	B	B	Z	Z	V	C	V	N	B	G	R	A	T	E	Z	V	D	F	S
Weight	F	T	R	R	R	V	D	D	V	R	A	Q	G	N	T	Z	R	B	L	P
	P	Q	Q	S	S	Z	Z	L	I	L	T	Q	S	N	A	N	L	B	F	T
	P	R	N	L	R	Z	T	H	G	I	E	W	S	K	L	G	P	P	Q	S
	T	F	T	R	H	D	I	B	O	K	B	Z	L	M	P	R	P	P	G	N
	T	K	L	F	H	T	A	Q	R	T	N	G	L	M	B	B	G	D	D	N
	X	Z	L	H	P	H	B	B	A	V	N	N	Z	Z	D	N	G	D	R	G
	X	L	B	R	T	H	Q	H	T	P	V	P	L	R	T	N	X	L	G	G
	J	D	Z	Z	Q	K	J	J	E	P	N	N	T	R	L	H	H	D	H	P



Ans. on pg. 4

R. Murray

(Looking—Cont'd from page 1)  
ings.

The science teacher and gardening club leader told me he has access to plants and supplies. So, even if we do not win the grant that we/OGC applied for, we WILL definitely plant the Memorial Time Capsule Garden in 2008.

R. Raysor

(Moon - Cont'd from pg. 1)

physical elements.

The astrological moon signs are placed two to three days apart throughout the month. The fertile signs usually fall on the days when the moonlight and gravitational pull on moisture is the strongest. What plant would not take advantage of that? The opposite is true for the less fertile and barren moon signs.

(Cont'd on page 3)

# Metal Migration

**Paranoid** about contaminants in your garden? You may have good reason to be and then again you may not. Years ago we called any new product or procedure that came along “progress”.

Natural elements have been extracted and combined to give us things, achieved through chemistry and companion sciences. One metal, which has been heavily used for at least a century has been lead. It is found in such common products as lead-acid batteries, paints and solder. It was once an important additive in gasoline. Known as a poison in heavy doses, it was linked to learning disorders (even in small amounts) in children, over the last 30 to 40 years. Lead may enter the body through the skin, digestive system and lungs. Children under the age of 5 are particularly susceptible to injury of their new brains when lead finds its way there.

**Because** of recent concerns in the me-



Soil Profile

dia about high lead levels in urban children, some members of the Brooklyn Queens Land Trust (BQLT) decided that soil in their community gardens should be tested for lead. Soil samples were gathered from common (non-amended) areas of 33 different gardens and sent for analysis. The results, though they varied from garden to garden, indicated high levels of lead in about 1/3 of the gardens. After consulting with soil scientist John Ameroso, it was determined that covering common areas with a layer of wood chips, sod or ground cover would be adequate to remedy the problem of children’s exposure to lead when playing in the gardens.

**Still**, there was concern about the food grown in vegetable beds. Were the fruits of garden trees safe to eat? We learned from John that plants don’t use lead but will be fooled into taking it up. Stems, leaves, and roots can take up lead when it is present in soil. Fruit parts such as tomatoes, squash, pep-

pers etc. do not contain lead even when it is present in soil. A pH of 6.5 or higher prevents plant roots from absorbing lead, as does the presence of phosphorus. The planting beds of BQLT gardens have yet to be tested for lead, but where high levels of lead were found in common areas, the growing beds will also be tested.

**As** the BQLT gardeners learn more about these processes, they are learning that the potential dangers, once understood, can easily be dealt with. Urban gardeners are doing their best to keep their patches of green pleasant, useful and safe.

R. Florin

(Moon -Continued from page 2)

There is not so much of a gravity tug and less moonlight. However, our ancestors probably did not know that. They most likely thought that if you planted during the time of the goat (Capricorn), you would not get anything to grow. It is more likely that their goats ate it.

(Continued on page 4)



# Tip Time



**Starting** your own plants from seeds gives you the opportunity to experiment with new varieties. You either love it or you hate it but I will grow coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) for the first time this year. What new plants will you try this season?

**Did** you know that seed, bark, and root parts of a plant used for culinary purposes are called spices and the green leafy parts of the plant are called herbs?

**The** fragrant seed heads of the cilantro plant is coriander, the spice and the leafy part is the herb we grow called cilantro.

**Culantro** (*Eryngium foetidum*) also known as shadow benny or long



Cilantro

coriander is similar in flavor but stronger than cilantro. The leaf is linear and almost five inches long.

**Reuse/Recycle** your clear bakery containers, cardboard egg cartons, and those four and eight ounce milk and juice boxes to start your seeds. Because the bakery containers have covers, you have a ready made mini greenhouse. Put the egg crates and the boxes in a clear plastic bag, blow air into them, and tie off to create that mini greenhouse after you planted the seeds. Don’t forget to make holes for drainage.

**The** most important step in the seed starting process is to read every single word and number on the back of your seed packet. All the information you

need to get those seeds started are included along with special seed treatment instructions.

**Put** the additional light your seedlings will need on a timer so that you don’t forget to turn the lights on and off. They need 15-18 hours of supplemental light.

**The** light should be kept 6-8 inches above the seedlings at all times.

**After** the second set of leaves form, you can thin out or transplant the seedlings, remember to hold the seedling by its leaves (not by the stem) and gently shake it loose from the soil. Do not bury the stem. Plant in a new container at the same level it was growing previously.



Basil Seedlings

**‘you either love it or you hate it’**

# Carbon Carbon Everywhere

Did you know that by volume our atmosphere only has about .033% carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)? The Oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) uses up almost 21% of that space and Nitrogen (N<sub>2</sub>) uses a little more than 78%. So why then there is such a raging debate over such a miniscule amount of this gas?

Carbon is the basic building block necessary for life. It cycles in our atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). During the cycle if too much CO<sub>2</sub> is removed from the atmosphere the earth cools; if the opposite occurs the temperature of the earth will rise because in this gaseous form carbon dioxide is a heat trapping gas and the slightest change can affect our climate.

Terrestrial plants remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. Since it dissolves in water, aquatic plants remove it from the water.

Our oceans store the majority of carbon; and our forests store the next larg-

est amount. Do you see what is coming next?

All over the world we are losing our forests, with them gone, we lose our second largest user of carbon dioxide. Add to that the endless carbon emissions dumped into our atmosphere as a result of our consumption of fossil fuels and it becomes obvious that we are working with an environmental deficit.

Bear in mind that fossil fuels that took millions of years to form from the carbon stored over time in dead plant material deep within the earth are being used up at an unprecedented rate. With our forests disappearing, we have lost the ability to have this gas reused at a rate that would diminish the greenhouse gas effect.

Now we are in the midst of a situation that leaves too much carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. The percentage by volume if you recall is only about .033,

so it makes it easy to see how the smallest change can cause our average temperature to rise.

The rise in temperature is normal when the pattern is tracked over millennia. The problem lies in the rate at which the current rise in temperature is occurring; faster than ever before in recorded history. The rate of this change is at the heart of the crisis and this is why we have this current raging debate.

Can we slow down this race to the incinerator? The word is yes, if we can cut carbon emissions, re-plant our forests, restore our natural areas, learn to recycle efficiently, learn to be more conservative and get all this done long before 2080.

Here in New York City, they started the million tree initiative and that is one way to start growing an urban forest. When you plant a tree over the next few years, let it be one of a million.

S. Stephens.

ing by the Moon Phases By E.A. Crawford

- R J Harris's Moon Gardening
- Gardening and Planting by the Moon by Nick Kollerstrom
- <http://www.gardeningbythemoon.com/signs.html>
- <http://www.homesteadcollective.org/mpg/2001/plantmoon.shtml>
- <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Troy/2214/lunar.htm>

... to be continued

E. Cornier

## Our 2008 Monthly Meeting Schedule

**April 28**

Video: Basic Gardening

**May 26**

Activity: Gardening Craft

**June 23, 2008**

Video: Summer in the Garden

**Please check our website for last minute changes or cancellations.**

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### Word Scramble Answer

V C S N V V S X T Y T X P P S N M E H C  
 C D Z N N R L Y L L L X R R P E R W B E A N T  
 C E T A T S E W S L L L L R R P A K K H A S C C  
 G E T R C G Q Q V W W S P T C C A K H A S C C  
 H A P J N Q Q V W W S P T C C A K H A S C C  
 P G X X G Q V W W S P T C C A K H A S C C  
 P P R N P Q Q V W W S P T C C A K H A S C C  
 Z S N Q C O N S O L L I D D A T E P P P Q Q X  
 Z S N X P B E T L R R I R R L D D P D N X V T K  
 Z Z N Z L N R R J J R R I R R L D D P D N X V T K  
 N B B Z Z V C V N V J N Q J S X X T E D N V D F S  
 F T R R R V D D L V I R R L E Q Q S N Z R B L P  
 P Q Q S S Z Z L H I G A T E W S K N G L P P F T  
 P R N L R Z Z T H I G A T E W S K N G L P P F T  
 T F T R H D T I B O R A T E W S K N G L P P G N  
 T K L F H T I A B Q R A T E W S K N G L P P G N  
 X Z L H P H Q B R A T E W S K N G L P P G N  
 X L B R T H Q B R A T E W S K N G L P P G N  
 J D Z Z Q K J J E P N N T R L H H D H P

*Moon - (Cont'd from page 3)*

If that is not enough to confuse you, just remember there are twelve zodiac signs plus the four phases of the moon. That should thoroughly baffle you. Nevertheless, here is a short list of books and websites to help you along.

- The Farmer's Almanac (classic standard)
- The Lunar Garden: Plant-

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