Many of us tend to divide our garden into sections according to use. For instance, there’s the vegetable garden, the herb garden, the perennial garden, the hedge, the flower garden and maybe even the orchard (if you are lucky!). What if your garden could serve all or many of these purposes without boundary lines?

If we think of our garden as a collection of “useful” plants that we plant based on their ability to provide a multitude of functions, we increase the usefulness of our landscape for ourselves and the environment. The result is a beautiful community of easy to care for and highly purposeful plants.

Choosing Useful Plants

When composing a list of plants, make it a goal to choose individual plants that provide as many functions as they can for you. Functions should be based on what you need or want. Here are some to consider: produces food for humans, creates wildlife habitat, provides materials for trellising, supplies a buffer to traffic noise or frames a view. Plants could also provide a sensory experience such as fragrance or beauty, or contribution to soil-building by either fixing nitrogen or providing materials for mulching the garden.

Observe Nature’s Design

Nature is truly efficient. Natural plant communities make use of every square inch of real estate, horizontally and vertically. Nature’s pattern is what we want to mirror for our own garden spaces.

Think in terms of layers: canopy tree, vines, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, groundcovers, bulbs and annual, self-sowing plants. What layer is missing in your garden? There’s your opportunity for incorporating a “useful” plant.

In Seattle Tilth’s learning garden in Wallingford, an elderberry tree arches over a strawberry patch on the left, while drought-tolerant phlomis and native nine bark line the path on the right, providing a nectary source for beneficial insects.
Happy Birthday RBLG – My, How You’ve Grown!

Continued from page 1

gan an ambitious garden expansion with a series of community design meetings and expert help from Nic Morin of Barker Landscape Architects.

The advisory committee tapped into all possible community resources, recruited volunteers, and secured in-kind donations. In July, the excitement built as we broke ground. Terrain landscape development company excavated the site and laid out the bones of the design. All summer, volunteers hauled materials, sheet mulched, dug trenches, installed irrigation, built raised beds, laid pathways and planted annual veggies and Northwest natives.

The RBLG now features:
• Five new raised beds. Built of natural cedar slabs, with wood donated by Nicholas Dankers of Tree Cycle and the support of Michael Lentz in construction, we more than doubled the veggie growing space!
• A rain swale. A swale is an elegant landscape feature that captures storm water and encourages water infiltration into the soil.
• A native plant area. Instead of grass, students can now walk on kid-sized paths under the trees to explore Northwest native plantings. Eventually, these plants will provide habitat for many birds and help support school science curriculum.
• ADA wheelchair accessible pathway. People who have special mobility needs will have an easier time navigating the terrain.

In late September, we celebrated the garden’s first birthday and recent expansion. People from the community shared food, music and children’s gardening activities.

This fall, students from South Shore School and Rainier Beach Community Center have been busy starting seeds, planting garlic, learning about garden creatures and making delicious garden recipes.

We are very appreciative to all the generous individuals, groups, and businesses who helped support the garden expansion. They include:
• Barker Landscape Architects
• Cedar Grove
• Department of Neighborhoods Neighborhood Matching Fund
• Terrain
• The Home Depot Foundation

As one student said, “There isn’t any other place like this around here. It was nice before, but now it is really cool. I don’t have a yard, so I ride my bike here and just sit and look at it all.”

Year-end Special: Membership 2-for-1

Do you have a friend who wants to become more skilled at living sustainably? Consider giving a membership to Seattle Tilth as a gift. Buy one membership or renewal and receive a second membership at no cost through December 31. Your own renewal will be added to the end of your current membership cycle.

Membership is a great gift because it offers the opportunity for meaningful experiences. Members receive discounts on classes and events, a vote for the Board of Directors, this bi-monthly newsletter and our bi-weekly e-news.

To order, visit seattletilth.org/get-involved/membership.
Announcing “Your Farm in the City”
New Seattle Tilth Book Sprouting in March

Next spring, urban farmers everywhere can learn Seattle Tilth techniques from our new book, to be published nationally by a New York publisher.

Written by veteran staff member Lisa Taylor, “Your Farm in the City: An Urban Dweller’s Guide to Growing Food and Raising Animals” ($18.95, Black Dog & Leventhal, March, 2011) is an all-in-one resource, taking you step-by-step through the process of changing a typical urban lot into a thriving, food producing city farm. Not limited to backyards, there is information about growing food in community gardens, on rooftops, in containers and using vertical spaces to maximize how much food you can grow in a small city space.

For aspiring urban farmers across the U.S. and Canada, “Your Farm in the City” tells how to plan and design your farmstead, build healthy soil, grow your own organic vegetables and fruit and raise urban livestock.

A synthesis of 15 years’ experience learning and educating others at Seattle Tilth, writing a book was a new challenge for Taylor. “I wanted to write a book for those beginning gardeners and would-be city farmers who come into our office all the time. They are passionate about wanting to grow their own food but don’t have the experience, confidence or know-how to get started.”

Here is Taylor’s advice for beginning urban farmers: “When you’re first getting started, there are so many things to do that it can feel overwhelming... don’t panic.” Instead, start simply. Her pointers include:

- Plant a small vegetable garden and a few herbs
- Start composting
- Harvest and eat what you grow
- Learn as much as you can

Since urban farms include small animals, there is information about raising chickens, ducks, rabbits and goats, and keeping honey bees. “Your Farm in the City” also tells you how to harvest products from your animals: eggs, milk, meat, fiber and manure.

Getting to know the small creatures and insects that inhabit your city farm is the first step to managing diseases and pests, and you’ll find descriptions of our “garden heroes,” the good bugs, as well as ways to combat garden thugs.

For Taylor, eating is the most compelling reason for growing plants; consuming the fruits and vegetables of your labors is a tasty reason to farm in the city. Included in the book are ways to preserve your harvest, as well as some favorite recipes from Seattle Tilth staff.

The Power of Community

Andrea Platt Dwyer, Executive Director

“I’d like to announce that we’ve achieved a milestone tonight – we just reached the $1,000,000 mark during our pledge drive!” That’s the message I heard on the radio while driving home one night this fall, and I thought immediately of Seattle Tilth’s drive to gain 1,000 new supporters in the final months of 2010.

While our goal is considerably more modest than our beloved KUOW’s, it is every bit as important to the continuation of our work.

The radio announcer went on to motivate listeners by talking about the valuable community services provided by the station, primarily educational programs that are designed to build a more informed and engaged community. “Hmm... sounds very similar to the mission of Seattle Tilth,” I thought. “If only we had the power of the airwaves at our disposal, reaching our milestone of 1,000 new supporters would be a snap!”

Supporter Drive Gains Momentum

You might wonder why Seattle Tilth needs 1,000 new supporters. Your gift to the annual giving campaign will help us retain our highly skilled and knowledgeable educators, support the maintenance and improvements of our five community learning gardens and subsidize educational programs like our Earth Steward Tours that engage thousands of children and adults each year. There’s much more, and you can read about our efforts in this newsletter or come to our upcoming annual meeting to get the full scoop.

Listener support—prompted by numerous sound bites and messages—makes it possible for public radio to maintain their high quality programs. Seattle Tilth may not be able to speak directly to you in your car, at the office or in your kitchen, but if we could, we’d tell you the same thing. Your support is critical to our ability to build a more informed and engaged community.

And just consider for a moment what your gift—multiplied by 1,000!—could help us do. Now that’s the power of community.

Donate by using the form on page 7, or online at www.seattletilth.org/support. Donations made “in honor of” a special gardening friend or family member also make a great holiday gift.
New Adult Classes Inspired Growth, Expanded Our Reach This Year

Carey Thornton, Program Coordinator

Backyard beekeeping. Mushroom cultivation. These are just two of our new classes added to Seattle Tilth’s adult education roster this year. We offered more than twice as many classes and workshops as we did last year, reaching more people than ever. Through volunteer class assistants and our emerging intern program, we were also able to reach and educate folks on a deeper, more fulfilling level.

Partnerships with organizations and programs like Madison Market/Central Co-op, the P-Patch Program, Seattle Parks and Community Harvest of Southwest Seattle have allowed us to continually widen our reach in the community.

For me, one of the highlights of the year was teaching a hands-on component to the Permaculture Design Certification Course (PDC) with Toby Hemenway. Forty Permaculture students built a “hugelkultur” keyhole hybrid garden bed at the South Seattle Community College. Hugelkultur is a method of building gardens on top of fallen logs or chunks of wood piled with branches, wood chips, various organic debris and finer-grade compostables. Soil or finished compost is placed on top and then planted into. The wood at the bottom breaks down slowly, releasing nutrients over a long period of time. Rotting wood, like a nurse log in the forest, holds a lot of water and is habitat for tons of soil critters, creating a medium teeming with life. Falaah Jones, PDC class participant and Garden Hotline staff member, said the experience inspired her to build a hugelkultur keyhole bed at her home.

Expect more new classes in 2011. We are planning more urban livestock classes, a new series on seasonal gardening, from seed starting to preservation, and expanded Permaculture and sustainable landscape offerings.

Educating the Public Outside of the Classroom

Laura Matter, Natural Soil Building Program

The friendly, knowledgeable staff and volunteers in the Garden Hotline and the Master Composter/Soil Builder (MC/SB) programs had a busy year engaging our community on sustainable gardening topics. Together the two programs make up the Natural Soil Building program, which is sponsored by Seattle Public Utilities, the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program of King County and the Saving Water Partnership. It is a program that complements Seattle Tilth’s classes and gives people a different way to learn.

Some highlights:
- More than 22,000 community members contacted the Hotline or discussed sustainable landscaping techniques with us at community outreach events.
- Forty-nine MC/SBs were trained to share information with other community members about soil building, water conservation and waste management techniques in two compost training events.
- Ten youth from the Wilderness Inner-city Leadership Development (youth program of the International Housing Alliance) learned all about composting and then connected with 1,800 residents in Seattle in 200 volunteer hours—impressive! They capped their program with an Iron Chef contest in conjunction with the International District Chinatown Community Center.
- MC/SB volunteers and the Garden Hotline have been promoting and answering questions about the new RainWise rain garden cistern rebate program in Ballard, an exciting model for water conservation, in partnership with Seattle Public Utilities.
- MC/SBs held “composting for community gardens” classes at five P-Patch gardens and at New Holly public housing, interpreted into Chinese, Vietnamese and Khmer.

We conducted a Garden Hotline survey, and received many responses like these:
- “I LOVE being able to have access to garden help while I garden. I keep a phone in my garden tool caddy and the garden hotline is stored in my personal contacts!”
- “Thank you so much for having the hotline service. I have used it several times and have gotten the help I needed every time. I don’t know what I would do without you!”
- “Thanks for always being available and for being so thorough and well researched with your answers. The Garden Hotline is one of the best resources in the city of Seattle.”
Rockin’ Children’s Garden Year Capped by Library Show, Educator Workshops

Jessica Heiman, Program Coordinator

Successful, challenging, fun and meaningful are all good descriptions of the 2010 year for the children’s garden programs at Seattle Tilth. If numbers are any indication, we rocked it. More than 3,200 children and 1,000 adults participated in our programs all over the city, especially at our home base at the children’s garden behind the Good Shepherd Center and at our new garden in the Rainier Beach neighborhood (see article, p. 1).

We are particularly proud of the Garden Educator Workshops held in spring, summer and fall this year. The summer session was a full week-long series, allowing us in-depth time in the garden with teachers from all over the region. The workshops allow us to share what we do with countless other young gardeners through the instruction of their teachers, parents and many diverse participants.

In the spring, Lisa Taylor and I performed our music-based learning show “Creepin’ Critters” at the Central Library for 250 kids and adults. It really felt like the big time and an interactive show on that scale was such a rush. The kids were singing, dancing and hollering just as usual, but there were so many of them! By chance, the students who attend our after-school garden club at T. Marshall YMCA were all in attendance, and it meant a lot to me to share the show with them.

Volunteers in the children’s garden programs deserve a huge thank you for our successful year. They help make our programs possible. In particular, our dedicated interns have contributed in a monumental way. A very special shout-out to Americorps members Kristen Roewer and Katelyn Stickle for their role in this twenty-third year of the children’s garden!

Volunteers, You Mean the World to Us!

Hayley Pickus, Volunteer Program Intern and Liza Burke, Volunteer Program Manager

Seattle Tilth has an impressive volunteer crew. We would not be looking back on a banner year without the caring efforts of 900 volunteers who tend the gardens, support classes, assist with events, help educate the public and provide administrative support at Seattle Tilth.

In Seattle Tilth’s community learning gardens, more than 500 volunteers have spent the past months planting, tending, composting and harvesting the garden, as well as teaching others, often under the leadership of volunteer Garden Steward interns. They have been donating fresh food to food banks and providing invaluable support in inspiring Seattle residents to garden organically.

Thanks to volunteers, the one-year-old Rainier Beach Learning Garden has doubled in size during a recent expansion, increasing the space for hundreds of youth from neighboring schools and community centers in South Seattle to gain experience raising food organically. The community learning garden at the Pickering Barn in Issaquah is undergoing a renovation with essential oomph from volunteers. And volunteers have made it possible to inspire over 3,000 children, teachers and parents in garden curriculum and activities in our Children’s Garden in Wallingford.

The Master Composter/Soil Builder volunteers have been teaching people how to compost all over the city. A 26-household West Seattle Co-Housing Community learned how to compost the majority of its organic waste on site with the help of three dedicated MC/SBs. The Edible Plant Sales last May were made possible thanks to 450 volunteers and the Harvest Fair was an exuberant community celebration due to the huge efforts of 130 volunteers.

Jason Zabriskie and other volunteers turn apples into cider the old fashioned way.
Vibrant Garden Community Begins with ‘Useful’ Plants  Continued from page 1

In small spaces, you may have room for only the lower layers. In narrow planting spaces, you may start with the vine layer, taking advantage of available space vertically. This model can be modified in various ways to fit your space.

Finding Plant Information

So where do you turn for useful plant info? I highly recommend signing up for Seattle Tilth’s series of classes “Beyond the Vegetable Garden,” scheduled for next year. You’ll receive an extensive plant list and plenty of inspiration. Also check out the Permaculture and sustainable landscaping offerings for more ideas.

Until then, browse the Plants for a Future Database (www.pfaf.org). Plants are rated and researched according to their usefulness. Local nurseries and regional perennial food plant growers are also an invaluable resource to turn to. For resources, contact the Garden Hotline.

Volunteers, You Mean the World to Us!  Continued from page 5

To show our appreciation to Seattle Tilth volunteers, we hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Party in October, complete with cider pressing on a beautifully crafted old style wood- en press lent to us by Solid Ground. Nettle Honey played lovely tunes under the cover of a tent, and an amazing cake created by our friends at Little Rae’s Bakery was a special treat. The event was wet but jolly.

Thank you to these friends for helping thank our volunteers:

Cathy Tuttle  The Henry Art Gallery  Seattle Aquarium
Full Circle Farm  Little Rae’s Bakery  Solid Ground
Grateful Bread  Nettle Honey  Tall Grass Bakery
Jersey Boyz Farm  PCC Natural Markets  Woodland Park Zoo

Are you surprised about all these volunteer accomplishments? Want to get more involved? Join us! Although our volunteer program slows down during the winter, stay tuned as we gear up again in 2011. The first volunteer orientation of the year is on Tuesday, Jan. 18. Mark your calendars!

Garden to Table: Deconstructing Zuppa Toscana
Lara Elizabeth Vyas, Issaquah Garden Steward

Foggy mornings, cloudy days and misty rain are typical of winters in Seattle. For me, such days are perfect to indulge in comfort foods and snuggle up near a fireplace.

There is something special about hearty winter soups, how they warm your insides and make you feel so content. Zuppa Toscana at Olive Garden is one of my favorites. It combines the goodness of potatoes with spicy sausage and crunchy kale. However, nothing can beat a homemade soup, with its delicious aroma floating around the house.

Winter is also the perfect time to harvest kale, a ‘super vegetable’ with high nutritional qualities. It grows very well in our cool Northwest; in fact, a touch of frost adds more flavor. The leaves can be harvested all through the winter; the young leaves can be used in salads and mature ones in stir-frys and soups.

Zuppa Toscana

1 large yellow onion, cubed
4-5 medium Russet potatoes, halved and sliced
4 cloves of garlic, chopped fine
2 strips bacon *
½ pound ground Italian sausage *
Salt and pepper
4 cups chicken or vegetable broth
4 cups water
1 cup heavy cream
1 bunch of kale, chopped
2 bay leaves

Sauté the bacon with the bay leaves in a stock pot. Add onions and garlic and sauté until soft. Add the sausage and break into small lumps. Once brown, add potatoes. Season it with salt and pepper. Add the broth and water. Let it come to a boil. Simmer on low for one hour.

Crush the potatoes lightly with a ladle. Stir in the kale and the cream. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with a loaf of crusty bread.

*Vegetarians: Substitute capers or olives for bacon to add a salty taste. Sausage can be replaced with soy nuggets. Use butter or olive oil for sautéing.

To see it in practice, visit SeattleTilth’s community learning garden at the Good Shepherd Center, where we display several groupings of perennial and annual plants that are designed to support our needs in a variety of ways.

Rain did not deter volunteers from fall clean-up and harvesting at the Seattle Youth Garden Works Farm.

The Sophisticated Peasant is on holiday this month.

More recipes from Lara at ammedemol.blogspot.com
Consider Winter Garden Activities, Plan Crop Rotation For Next Year

Q: What can I do in my garden now?

A: Drain and store all outdoor hoses. If you don’t have the newer frost-free outdoor faucets or a separate shut-off valve for them, wrap the faucets or place a foam cover over them.

If you have a rain barrel, clean off the top of the screen to keep from clogging. Make sure the overflow is not clogged. In the winter when rains are heaviest, you may want to reconnect your downspouts to send the heaviest flows back into your drainage system.

Plant perennials. Some nurseries will offer plant bargains and clearance sales. Bulbs such as tulips and daffodils can still be planted.

Remove dead material. All annuals should be cut back; leaving roots in place helps with soil structure and minimizes weeds. Seed heads of rudbeckia, echinacea and achillea are quite attractive and provide food for birds during the winter.

Clean, oil, and sharpen your tools, then store them in a dry place for the winter.

Plan for the future by having your soil tested for nutrients and pH. See the King Conservation District’s website, http://kingcd.org, for more information.

Weed. Get a head start for next spring.

Apply a winter mulch to tender perennials and empty raised beds. You can use shredded autumn leaves, pine needles or straw for protection from cold and nutrient erosion. For plants in containers, insulate the pot by wrapping the sides in bubble-wrap and covering the soil with a layer of mulch.

Scrub bird feeders to rid them of moldy, bacteria-laden seeds.

Q: I planted kale and tomatoes in my garden this year. Can I plant them in the same place next year?

A: It’s a good idea to rotate your crops to a new location each year, and not plant them in the same place.

Crop rotation is important for maintaining soil fertility, preventing diseases and controlling pests. Many garden pests rely on a specific host plant family, and rotation is a way to disrupt and confuse them. Growing crops from the same family in the same spot year after year builds up populations of disease organisms specific to that family. This makes subsequent crops more susceptible to damage or complete failure.

It is most important to rotate plants in the *solanaceae* family (tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, eggplant), *brassicacea* (broccoli, kale, cabbage, mustards, arugula, radish, turnips), and *alliaceae* (leeks, onions, garlic, shallots). It is best to wait three or more years between growing crops of the same family in the same bed.
Plan Ahead With Seattle Tilth’s Winter Classes

Start your urban farm with a winter class at Seattle Tilth. Classes below are held at the Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N., in north Seattle.

Lower price listings are exclusively for Seattle Tilth members, higher prices for the general public. Advance registration and payment are required. Class details and registration forms are found on our website, www.seattletilth.org under the Learn tab, or can be gained by calling the Seattle Tilth office at (206) 633-0451, ext. 101.

Beekeeping 101
Jan. 15 or Jan. 29, 10 a.m.-noon, $25/$35
Have you been thinking of raising bees in your backyard? Honeybees are assets to the backyard gardener by pollinating fruit trees, berries, fruiting vegetables and other garden plants and they provide a valuable by-product for you: honey! Now is the time to prepare for starting hives in the spring. This introductory course will cover the basic fundamentals of beekeeping, including equipment, parts of the hive, location and codes of the apiary, feeding and treating bees, and seasonal management.

Starting with Baby Chicks
Jan. 15, 2-4:30 p.m., $30/$40
A comprehensive introductory course for those interested in keeping chickens and who want to start with baby chicks. Learn the most important considerations in caring for baby chicks, including chicken physiology, behavior, health, nutrition, housing and city regulations. This lecture-based class also covers a wide variety of chicken breeds. Questions are encouraged and you will leave this class with everything you need to know to start raising chicks.

City Chickens 101
Jan. 29, 2-4:30 p.m., $30/$40
A comprehensive introductory course for those interested in keeping chickens and who want to start with adult birds. Learn the most important considerations in caring for a small flock of hens in limited space, including chicken physiology, behavior, health, nutrition, housing and city regulations. This lecture-based class also covers the wide variety of chicken breeds. Questions are encouraged and you will leave this class with the knowledge you need to know to start raising chickens in your own backyard.

Shop Green: Holiday Gifts

Go green with holiday gifts this year! Buy one of these special gems and support Seattle Tilth at the same time.

Order our new book!
Be one of the first to purchase our NEW book, "Your Farm in the City: An Urban Dweller’s Guide to Growing Food and Raising Animals." Pre-order your copy hot off the press and we’ll mail it to you as soon as we receive it early March, signed by the author Lisa Taylor. ($18.95)

Other great gifts:
Seattle Tilth’s "Maritime Northwest Garden Guide" ($16.50)
Seattle Tilth’s "Teaching Peace Through Gardening" manual ($10)
"Worms Eat My Garbage" book ($12.95)
"Chickens in Your Backyard" book ($12.95)
Gift certificate ($35, $50 or $100) – redeemable for any class for adults, kids or families in 2011 or any merchandise
Seattle Tilth Apron ($20) – black with adjustable strings, big pockets and the Seattle Tilth garden fork logo; great for kitchen, workshop or garden
Membership ($35 individual, $60 family or $20 limited income) - 2 for 1 through December when purchased online

Tax and shipping are additional on all items except memberships. Gifts can be purchased online at seattletilth.org/get-involved/buystuff, by mail or at the Seattle Tilth office.