Garden Journal 101

Willi Galloway

Last year I grew a gorgeous variety of pumpkin. The vigorous, disease-free vine meandered through my herb garden and produced loads of large, deep green, rumpled fruit with bright orange flesh. This was by far the best pumpkin I’ve ever grown. My only problem? I do not have a clue what the variety was. To prevent this frustrating situation from happening again, I’ve resolved to keep better records of what I plant in my garden. Here’s my plan:

Make a Map

I drew a simple map of my vegetable garden on graph paper and made several copies. As I plant my garden this spring, I plan on noting what vegetables I grew where on my map. I also plan on using the map as a basis for a crop rotation plan. Plants that belong to the same family—such as the solanaceae family, which includes tomatoes, peppers and eggplants—share diseases and pests. A basic way to avoid disease and pest problems is to practice crop rotation. Simply group your plants from the same family together and rotate them to a different spot in the garden each year. This organic gardening technique works by denying diseases and pests quick access to their favorite host plants. Mapping your garden makes it easier to group plants together and remember where they need to be rotated to the following spring!

Common plant families include the brassicas (cabbage, broccoli, kale, cauliflower, mustard greens), legumes (peas, beans, favas), alliums (garlic, onions, shal-

Tilth’s Visual Image Gets a Makeover

Bill Thorness, Editor

Seattle Tilth is rolling out a brand-new look, and with it comes a new focus on who we are in our 31st year. It’s a way to stay relevant, relate to new audiences and become more cohesive as an organization.

It’s most visibly encompassed in our new garden fork logo. Initial response has been positive; people really dig it.

Behind that logo is a year-long effort by board and staff, led by branding expert Peg Marckworth of Marckworth Associates, who provided pro bono leadership.

Peg has consulted for the Natural Soil Building program for eight years and last year led the effort to rebrand the Garden Hotline. While doing that, she considered Seattle Tilth’s brand image as well. “I felt the organization was known more for its programs and events than it was as an organization,” she says. She shared her perspective with then-Executive Director Karen Luetjen and other staff.

“For a non-profit, branding is an opportunity to transform the core messages of the organization into action in a way that increases community support, volunteering and funding,” she explains.

Because Tilth was celebrating its 30th anniversary, and at the same time growing and diversifying its services, the organization decided to go through the process and create a new visual identity that is cohesive and professional to cap off the milestone year. With Karen as staff lead, Peg led Tilth through an extensive learning process about refining and applying a brand.

“Behind it, we did a lot of work to distill who we are, what we do and what makes Tilth unique and different from
Tilth Starts New Year with New Phones, Office Space

Changes to the Seattle Tilth offices and phones at the Good Shepherd Center (GSC) in Wallingford greeted the staff as 2009 began. The gardeners moved into the main office on the ground floor of the GSC, other staff moved to new office space and the entire organization was outfitted with a new phone system and extensions.

Tilth was notified by GSC management that it would need to vacate the “garden office” in the center’s South Annex due to needs of the Meridian School.

The space was the original office for Tilth, utilized in most of the organization’s 30 years of existence. For many years, it was the only Tilth office, housing its few employees. In the late 1990s, as the staff grew, more space inside the GSC was leased. An extensive reference library had been housed in the garden office, and countless planning meetings, including board meetings, had taken place in the tight cinderblock room just off the service area at the end of Corliss Ave. N.

The Demonstration Garden and Children’s Garden staff will now be housed in Tilth’s main office in Room 120. Their arrival necessitated a move for other Tilth program staff. Space was located just down the hall, in Room 122, to house staff for the Natural Soil Building Program, the Garden Hotline, and the Master Composter/Soil Builder Program.

Members who have navigated Tilth’s array of phone numbers and extensions will probably be pleased to hear that a new phone system was installed along with the office changes. The main phone number, (206) 633-0451, will now field all calls, from which each staff will have an extension number. The Garden Hotline number remains (206) 633-0224, and the MC/SB number remains (206) 633-0097.

The move from the garden office was handled in just a few hours on Saturday, Jan. 11 with overwhelming support of volunteers. Staff thanks the moving crew and invites all members to visit the office and see the revised layout.

The Garden Hotline’s Lead Environmental Educator, Laura Matter, left, welcomes new educator Laila Suidan to the staff.

Transitions

Laila Suidan has joined the Seattle Tilth staff as an Environmental Educator for the Natural Soil Building Program. She has a degree in zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has both an AAS in Landscape Management and an AAS in Landscape Design and Construction from South Seattle Community College.

Laila also operates her own landscaping business, Down To Earth Landscapes.

Seattle Tilth inspires and educates people to garden organically, conserve natural resources, and support local food systems in order to cultivate a healthy urban environment and community.

Tilth \tilth\ n [ME, fr. OE, fr. tilian to till] (bef. 12c) 1 : quality of cultivated soil 2 : cultivation of wisdom and the spirit
Seeds of Thought
Craig Skipton
President, Board of Directors

At the start of a new year I like to look back—not just to the previous year, but also further back, to get a renewed sense of where I’ve been and where I’m headed. This month I’ve been thinking about the past five years, back to when I joined the Seattle Tilth Board of Directors.

Fresh out of graduate school, I was energized to join an organization that empowered people to get to know soil and grow food in the city. I knew Seattle Tilth did just that. I had already been a member for several years and had attended amazing annual events, including the Edible Plant Sale and the Harvest Fair.

What I didn’t know about Seattle Tilth is the depth and reach of its community, made possible by the dedicated volunteers that bring fresh enthusiasm and provide tireless support year after year, and by the staff, whose brainpower, brawn and genuineness make the organization truly extraordinary.

That’s what is making my last job as board chair so much easier—finding the next executive director. The search committee has been hard at work screening applications, talking to potential finalists on the phone and finding the best pea in the pod.

As the transition to a new executive director takes place and I step down from my current role at Seattle Tilth and pass the baton to others, it’s a pleasure to realize that the current board is a strong, resilient and nimble group that is ready to grow along with the organization.

And grow it will. In these challenging times, Seattle Tilth’s mission is more relevant than ever. Fortunately, its dedicated members, staff, board and volunteers have the knowledge and wherewithal to ensure that the seeds of change are sown and grown far and wide.

I personally am looking forward to seeing the growth unfold over the next five years—and to participating in new ways. Come harvest time, I am confident that we will have much to show for our efforts and much to celebrate, as always.

Craig and Alice Skipton at Tilth’s Issaquah Edible Plant Sale with their children Beatrice and Rowan.

Tilth Names 2009 ‘The Year of the Volunteer’

Volunteers are essential to the success of Seattle Tilth. To acknowledge and honor the amazing work of our many volunteers, we are naming 2009 “The Year of the Volunteer” at Tilth.

To celebrate this auspicious year, we will create the Wall of Fame, a giant bulletin board outside the Tilth offices. The wall will include photos of volunteers who are working in the garden programs and events. Additionally there will be a Volunteer Corner on the Tilth website which will post photos and record volunteer experiences working in garden programs.

A volunteer social hour and spring seed exchange will be held on April 2, 7-8 p.m., in conjunction with an organization-wide volunteer orientation, which runs 6-7 p.m.

As we do every year, we will hold volunteer parties in conjunction with our major events, the Edible Plant Sale and the Harvest Fair. We again will hold a pre-sale the day before the Edible Plant Sale exclusively for volunteers.

We will round out the season with a community celebration and fall cider pressing in October.

Volunteer Orientations

Everyone is invited to learn more about volunteer opportunities at Seattle Tilth. Volunteer orientations will be held in the Senior Center on the ground floor of the Good Shepherd Center. Please fill out a volunteer application on our Web site, www.seattletilth.org.

Feb. 17, 6-7 p.m.
April 2, 6-7 p.m.
May 18, 6-7 p.m.
Tilth's Work in Issaquah Yields New Avenue for Gardener Education

In 2008, Seattle Tilth and the Resource Conservation Office of the City of Issaquah entered into a partnership to provide services for the development of community classes, volunteer involvement and garden education as well as a design for community demonstration gardens at the Pickering Barn Community Garden in Issaquah.

Former staff member Sarah Cassidy served as Issaquah Garden Coordinator, and Garden Hotline staff spent time in Issaquah to provide public information.

Seattle Tilth taught six, two-hour classes on seasonally appropriate organic gardening topics in the city’s Pickering Barn and garden monthly between May and October. Summer class attendance averaged 22-25 people, with the fall classes drawing slightly less.

We also taught five children’s classes in the demonstration garden at the Pickering Barn. Children ages 2-5 years attended with a parent or caregiver and participated in garden tours, singing songs and crafts. As with the adult classes, great response to registration brought an average of 30 people to the summer classes, and fewer in the fall.

Seattle Tilth held its first Eastside Edible Plant Sale at the Issaquah Farmer’s Market on a spring Saturday, selling 1,600 plants and turning a small profit.

Garden Hotline staff tabled at the Farmer’s Market one Saturday per month during the season, answer more than 300 queries from attendees and distributing a number of brochures.

Volunteers were involved in the garden work at Pickering Barn as well. One event was organized through the United Way Day of Caring and attracted participants from American Steel and Microsoft. Staff and volunteers prepared the gardens for winter, harvested pumpkins, planted garlic and did other seasonal work.

A garden design and plan was begun for a demonstration garden at the Pickering Barn as well. Seattle Tilth and the City of Issaquah’s Resource Conservation Office are currently discussing how to build on for 2009.

Tilth’s Visual Image Gets a Makeover

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other organizations,” says Garden Program Manager Laura Niemi. “It will help us better serve our customers and our constituents, because we really understand what we are and what we’re trying to do for people. That was something we knew before but we weren’t as cohesive about it.”

Over a number of meetings and retreats, a vision of Tilth emerged as a friendly neighbor, sharing wisdom in a conversation over the garden gate. The goal is to engage constituents as friends and partners, and to show people how to enhance the world through organic gardening. The garden fork image was created by freelance graphic designer Heidi Smets, who also created branding guidelines. It is being implemented in print by our newsletter designer Sarah Kulfan, and on the Web by online networking firm OneNorthwest.

The new brand image, which comes along with new colors, typefaces and graphic designs, is being implemented across all communication tools. Besides this newsletter and our e-newsletter, the Web site has received a makeover (and additional functionality – more on that in a future issue). New letterhead, business cards, brochures and event signage will all reinforce the brand.
Register Now for Children’s Garden Classes or Help Teach as Intern, Garden Naturalist

Get the little people into the garden this spring with classes and tours in Seattle Tilth’s Children’s Garden. Also, look ahead to summer and register now for our always-popular kids’ summer camps. Or, if you’re an adult looking to help, consider our internship or garden naturalist programs. Details for all classes are available on our Web site or by calling Jessica Heiman at (206) 633-0451.

Earth Steward Tours. Fun, hands-on garden field trips for school groups in preschool through sixth grade will start in March and run through the spring at Seattle Tilth’s Children’s Garden at the Good Shepherd Center in Wallingford. Tours run Tuesdays through Fridays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., March 10 through June 5. Cost is $4.75 per child with an $80 minimum. Spaces fill quickly, and must be reserved in advance.

Monday Morning Toddler, Preschooler Classes. Parents and preschoolers learn together in our Monday Mornings in the Children’s Garden program. The one-day sessions run April 13 to June 8, 10-11:30 a.m. Classes are intended for both parent and children ages 2-5 years. Cost is $20 for Tilth members, $30 for non-members.

Garden Adventure Day Camps. Registration is underway for Tilth’s fun, hands-on garden explorations and camps for children ages one to 14. The camps are held weekdays, June 15 through Sept. 4. They range from two-hour sessions attended by both children and their parents, to three- or four-hour day camps for older children, and a Junior Counselor program for 10-14 year olds.

Internship Program. Being a Tilth intern is an exciting opportunity for hands-on learning and real-life experience in a non-profit organization that is teaching children and adults. Interns devote 6-12 hours per week for three, six or nine months. Teaching Interns lead small groups of children through the garden, inviting these children into the garden world where they learn about the different plants and critters. Applications are due early February for spring-starting internships, May 5 for summer internships and Aug. 17 for fall internships.

Naturalist training. Volunteer to lead Earth Steward Garden Tours in the Children’s Garden. The tours are hands-on garden field trips for school children in preschool through sixth grade. Tours run Tuesdays through Fridays at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., March 10 through June 12. Volunteer training begins in late February. New volunteers should plan on attending an evening and Saturday session.

Stretching Contributions To Meet Hard Times

Liza Burke
Outreach & Development Coordinator

December and January brought Seattle Tilth the good fortune of a surprising number of contributions from individuals and family foundations, including a very useful new copier donated by Brandon Pemberton. This support comes as a welcome relief during challenging economic times, and we wish to express our gratitude for the generous financial contributions from the community.

Perhaps the silver lining in an era of increasing economic pressure is that more people are motivated to seek sustainable solutions. The mission of Seattle Tilth is more relevant than ever. In 2009 at Seattle Tilth, rather than shrink in reaction to economic pressures, we hope to teach more people than ever, in more neighborhoods, how to grow their own fresh healthy food, conserve resources, compost and support local food systems.

By using the model of “each one teach one,” everyone can play a role and work together to continue improving the health of our community and environment– especially during hard economic times. Thank you for your essential support and participation in this work.

Wish List for Seattle Tilth’s office:
Desktop or laptop PCs (Windows XP capable)
Mac computer
Cubicle partitions
Full-sized office desk

Wish List for the Demonstration Garden:
Gift certificates to nurseries
Burlap sacks
Green and brown compost materials for compost demos (until the end of March)
Solar powered lighting
Handyperson volunteer (construct compost chopping bench, renovate cold frames, renovate rainwater harvesting pipe, exterior greenhouse painting)

Wish List for the Children’s Garden:
Gift certificates to Joanne’s Fabrics, Lowe’s, Home Depot, Amazon.com
Children’s storybooks
Sturdy, kid-sized wheelbarrows (available through Terrebonne Ltd.)
Large popup tent (or funds to buy one)
Baritone ukulele
Galvanized trash cans
Volunteers

To make donations, please contact Carrie at (206) 633-0451 or e-mail carrieniskanen@seattletilth.org. Thanks!
The Sophisticated Peasant

Change

Is it time for renewal? I think perhaps it is. A new year, a new President, and a new look for Seattle Tilth. What can a person do but open up to change when change is in the air?

The time for change comes and it happens just like that, ready or not. Some say it’s always happening. Some say everything’s changing all the time and we just pretend it isn’t; we fool ourselves. There’s no fooling now, and no denying it because big changes are in our faces.

In recognition of both these changes and the remarkable times we are witnessing—the collapse of free-market capitalism, the dire economic circumstances facing us all—but mostly in acknowledgement of my own advancing years—this column will no longer carry the ‘Naked Gardener’ appellation. They say that if the music’s too loud, you’re too old, and that’s been the case for me for a while now. I take it as a pretty clear signal to get dressed.

Also, it’s incumbent upon oldsters to set good examples. So I’m demonstrating my respect for my audience by reclaiming my modesty, putting on my clothes and letting that Naked Gardener fellow slip into the past. Others will, I am sure, carry the torch forward (careful with that thing, guys).

Entirely and appropriately clothed – yea, even unto my “wellies”—I step into the January garden to see what I can find there. I find that the collards and kale which were flattened by the snows have begun to stand back up, dust themselves off and start all over again. They even show some new growth, sustained by a few hours of weak sunlight every couple of days. I foresee greens braised with garlic in their future and sunlight every couple of days. I foresee that the collards and kale which were flattened by the snows have begun to stand back up, dust themselves off and start all over again.

Meaning that some of those seeds that shot a few years ago and I’ve been paying for it ever since.

They say something about “one year’s weeding, seven years weeding,” don’t they? Meaning that some of those seeds that shot all over my garden four years ago are still there, just waiting for me to turn over the soil and expose them to the right combination of sunlight and moisture, to germinate, to grow quickly and vigorously, and—if they can—to bloom and shoot out yet more seed over my friable tilthy loam. Three years left on the seed-weed-seed-meter.

So I pull, pull and pull again at those juvenile weeds each time I’m out there. Next time I might try to remember to take a hoe with me. Pulling weeds by hand is honorable but it makes sense to use a tool if it will help you defeat them.

It seems odd in such times as these, but the organic gardener’s battle with weeds is unchanged. Oh yes, you’re going to have to weed and go on weeding: you can count on that. – Ian Taylor

Garden Journal 101

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Start a Variety Log Book

In addition to noting which varieties I planted on my garden map, I also plan on keeping track of each variety, either in a log book or on my blog. I’m reserving a page for each variety and will keep track of the following: planting date, planting location(s), how much was planted, date of first harvest, productivity, flavor and notes on any problems (or pleasant surprises).

Take More Photos

One of my favorite gardening bloggers (Kathy from Skippy’s Vegetable Garden) posts a monthly photo of her garden. The result? A very cool, visual chronology of how her garden changes through the seasons. I want to follow Kathy’s lead and photograph my garden at least seasonally, plus take glamour shots of my favorite varieties. I figure the photos will help me jog my memory next spring and provide a bit of insurance if I don’t keep up on my map!

Continue My Garden Blog

The blog format lends itself to a kind of online garden journal for a number of reasons. First, it is simple to post photos online. You can assign tags to each post, making it easy to search for particular varieties or vegetables later in the season. Blog entries are organized chronologically, but you also have the option to update older posts whenever you like. This functionality makes it easy to create posts for each variety and amend them throughout the season, just as you would in a paper journal.

By keeping my garden map, variety log and blog up-to-date this year, I hope to set the stage for future gardens that are healthy, productive and full of vegetables that I can identify without having to rely on my memory.

Willi Galloway is a Seattle Tilth board member and the founder of DigginFood.com.
Getting Growing with a Good Fertilizer

Q: I didn’t plant cover crops or mulch my garden beds over the winter. What do I do now to prepare my beds for spring planting? Could you recommend an organic fertilizer?

A: Soils pounded by winter rains might have low fertility and be unbalanced. To make a balanced soil, add a complete organic fertilizer (COF) and regular applications of compost. Over several months, COF will decompose in warm soil. All the while, nutrients are being released to feed your plants.

Weed your garden beds, then broadcast four to six quarts of COF per 100 square feet. If you will be planting in hills, add an additional cup of fertilizer. Dig in with a hoe, or leave atop the soil. If possible, allow the fertilizer to sit in the soil for a week or two before planting. To get maximum results, side-dress around the plants with more fertilizer a few weeks after seedlings emerge or are set out. Side-dress every 3-4 weeks after that, each time sprinkling out as far as the root zones will reach.

Below is a recipe for making your own COF. Devised by author and Territorial Seed Co. founder Steve Solomon, it produces an ideal fertilizer—one that releases slowly, does not burn leaves and does not harm soil biota if over-applied.

Formula for Complete Organic Fertilizer (parts by volume)
- 4 parts seedmeal. Buy the one with the largest amount of protein and hence more nitrogen.
- 1/4 part ordinary agricultural lime (pure calcium carbonate), best finely ground.
- 1/4 part gypsum (calcium sulfate). If you don’t use gypsum, double the quantity of agricultural lime.
- 1/2 part dolomite lime (calcium and magnesium carbonates).

For the best results, add 1 part of any of these phosphorus sources: finely ground rock phosphate (hard or soft), bonemeal, high phosphate guano, 1/2 to 1 part kelp meal or 1 part basalt dust.

Seedmeals and limes are the most important ingredients, with gypsum being the least important.

Seedmeals are byproducts of vegetable oil production, made from such plants as alfalfa, canola or soy beans. They contain a blend of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium (shown as N-P-K on a fertilizer label) needed for balanced soil. (The K stands for kalium, which is the Latin name for potash; that chemical element is also commonly referred to as potash.)

Hot Questions for the Garden Hotline
Your Garden. Our Expertise.
help@gardenhotline.org | 206.633.0224

If you can afford only one kind of lime, use dolomite, but agricultural lime or gypsum also will work.

Feed stores will stock these ingredients at low prices, but in bulk it’s more difficult to be assured they are organic. Buy smaller quantities that are clearly marked as organic at your local nursery or garden center. The cost of these products may be considerably higher than in bulk.

If you don’t want to make your own mix, or if you don’t have time, there are good organic fertilizers available. Walt’s Organic Fertilizer in Ballard is a great local choice, and Dr. Earth and Whitney Farms also have suitable blends.

For more on fertilizers, see the “Maritime Northwest Garden Guide” by Seattle Tilth or “Gardening When it Counts: Growing Food in Hard Times” by Steve Solomon (New Society Publishers, 2005). – Falaah Jones
Grow This Season With Tilth; Adult Classes Starting Now

Want to jump-start your gardening this year? Maybe channel your inner farmer by getting some chickens? How about learning a new technique like the Biointensive growing method? Seattle Tilth can help with all these things, plus give you a boost in composting and container gardening, with spring classes.

Basic class listings are below. They are held either at the Good Shepherd Center (GSC), 4649 Sunnyside Ave. N., in north Seattle, or at Bradner Gardens Park (BGP), 1733 Bradner Place S., in south 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 Web site, www.seattletilth.org, or can be gained by calling the Tilth office at (206) 633-0451.

Seed Starting Intensive Two-day Workshop
Feb. 7-8, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at GSC
$90/$105

Composting for Apartment Dwellers
Feb. 11, 7-9 p.m. at BGP
$25/$35

Starting With Baby Chicks
Feb. 21, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at GSC
$30/$40

Comprehensive Organic Gardener Program
Feb. 26–March 19; Thursdays 7-9 p.m. at GSC and Saturdays 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at GSC or Sundays 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at BGP
$235 / $275

City Chickens 101
March 7, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at GSC
$30 / $40

Get Ready to Garden
March 14, 10 a.m.–noon at BGP
$25 / $35

Grow More in a Small Space – Intensive Two-day Workshop
March 25, 6:30–9 p.m. and March 28, 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at BGP
$80 / $95

Choosing the Right Home Composting System for You
April 4, 10 a.m.–noon at GSC
$25 / $35

Starting With Baby Chicks
April 11, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at GSC
$30/$40

Container Veggie Gardening
April 16, 7–9 p.m. at BGP
$25 / $35

Biointensive Gardening – Grow the Most in a Small Space
April 19, 10 a.m.–noon at GSC
$25 / $35

City Chickens 101
April 25, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m. at GSC
$30 / $40

Container Veggie Gardening
May 2, 10–11 a.m. (during Seattle Tilth’s Edible Plant Sale) at GSC
$12 / $18

1,2,3 Grow a Garden
May 2, noon–1 p.m. (during Seattle Tilth’s Edible Plant Sale) at GSC
$12 / $18

Container Veggie Gardening
May 3, 11 a.m.–noon (during Seattle Tilth’s Edible Plant Sale) at GSC
$12 / $18

1,2,3 Grow a Garden
May 3, noon–1 p.m. (during Seattle Tilth’s Edible Plant Sale) at GSC
$12 / $18