



Local Harvest

Foodlink Waterloo Region • Issue 43 • July 2010

Features

Local Farm Profile:
Garden Party

Finding Flower & Herb
Farms in Waterloo
Region

Fresh in Focus:
Flower Power



FOODLINK
P.O. Box 601
St. Jacobs, ON
NOB 2N0
519-513-8998

www.foodlink.ca

**Local Harvest
content, layout and
editing:**

Anna Contini

Carmen Everest-Wahl

Wendy Koch

Local Farm Profile: Garden Party

It may be a small farm but Garden Party has a big vision. For many years it was the site of the Canadian Organic Growers demonstration gardens and known as Diversity Gardens. But now the farm has expanded to four acres and is a year-round certified organic farm business offering a myriad of services.

Garden Party is located in the picturesque rolling hills of St. Agatha just ten minutes outside of Kitchener-Waterloo. The farm is managed by Theresa Schumilas, who has been a leader in the organic farm community for the past two decades. She is perhaps best known for her research work in local food systems, but after years of coaching new organic farmers she has redirected her attention to her own business. Garden Party now offers a year-round local and organic CSA/food box program, an educational tour program to help people learn organic growing techniques, an organic plant nursery with hard to find organic products, over an acre of cut-your-own flowers and herbs, as well as food skills and food preserving courses taught in a new licensed kitchen. There is even a large tent on site for special events.

The philosophy of Garden Party is *"It's okay to play with your food"*. While Theresa acknowledges that there are many problems with our food system she believes that the solution lies in the spirit and joy people can find through their food. "There are farmers going out of business and people going hungry but at the same time there is something else blossoming," says Theresa. "Being on this side of the fence has given me a new perspective and has changed the way I look at the food system." Theresa believes that what is most important is to empower producers and so she has built her multi-faceted business around this premise.

At the core of Garden Party is a **Community Shared Agriculture** program that offers consumers year round weekly food boxes. Shares change with the seasons so that participants receive the freshest local and organic produce possible. Every Thursday shareholders come to the farm where everything is displayed in bulk so that they can choose the sizes and amounts of produce that they want. It all takes place in the spacious newly built



Theresa Schumilas takes time to smell the flowers at her farm in St. Agatha.



Garden Party (formerly Diversity Gardens) offers over an acre of cut-your-own flowers and herbs.

farm store and licensed kitchen. In addition, there are many other local and organic staples available for purchase such as milk, eggs, cheeses, flours and grains, dried beans, prepared soups, baked goods and meats. Theresa likens it to consumers having their "own private organic farmers market". Members of the public are also welcome to drop by the **Farm Market** Thursdays to Saturdays during the growing season for fresh fruits and vegetables as well as other local organic items.

In the **Farm Kitchen** Theresa and her helpers have been busy preserving the harvest for the months to come. So far rhubarb, asparagus, spinach, bok choy and strawberries have been frozen. Some savoury organic beef, oxtail and vegetable soup stock has also been made. Meanwhile, the bakers have been perfecting a recipe for organic peanut butter cookies and frozen batches of dough to sell in the store.

Consumer education is paramount at Garden Party.

continued on page 2



Local Farm Profile continued

There are many opportunities for families to come out to the farm to learn more about how their food is grown. On Saturdays at 11:00 am there is a **Pick Your Own Vegetable Tour** where participants can harvest their own organic vegetables and learn more about organic growing techniques. Garden Party is home to many unusual and heritage varieties of veggies, including squash, pumpkins and over fifty varieties of tomatoes! Newly launched this spring was an **Edible Plant Nursery** offering a variety of organic flower and herb plants free of synthetic fertilizers, growth stimulants and pesticides.

Another very popular offering at Garden Party is the **Pick Your Own Flower Garden**. Visitors can meander through an acre of gardens to select their own custom bouquet of flowers and herbs. While many will simply enjoy the sight and smell of the blossoms the more adventurous may also choose to eat them! Yes, edible flowers and herbs are another one of Garden Party's specialties. Among the edible varieties available there are day lilies, lilacs, hibiscus, lavender, begonias, nasturtiums, carnations, roses, borage, hollyhocks, and anise hyssop. Because they are all pesticide free, they are safe to eat and ready for consumption.



Every Thursday CSA shareholders come to Garden Party to assemble their food boxes in the on-farm store and licensed kitchen.



Theresa and her crew have made such delights as lilac ice cream, candied rose petals, anise hyssop sprinkles, borage flower ice cubes and many varieties of herbal teas. Some edible flowers have a subtle taste and are used mainly for decorative purposes, while others have a more distinct flavour such as lemony begonias or anise hyssop with its characteristic liquorice essence. But Theresa cautions people to be aware that not all flowers are edible. Some, in fact, such as foxglove are actually poisonous!

Another very exciting new addition to the roster at Garden Party is the special events. This summer there will be two celebrations of **Dinner & Music in the Garden**. The first will take place Saturday, **July 10** and will feature live music by Chuckee Zehr and a delightful local menu in-

spired by the day's harvest. The evening will begin at 5:00 pm with a tour of the organic gardens and will be followed by a handcrafted organic local meal under a large tent. Tickets for the event are just \$25 and reservations are required. Later in the summer on **August 28** a second event will take place, this time with the theme of Flowers & Blues featuring local blues legend Cheryl Lescom. The gardens, tent and licensed kitchen are also available for rent throughout the season for those wishing to organize their own event.

Despite the diversity of offerings at Garden Party there is a common theme—celebrating food and connecting people with it. In fact for Theresa this is the most rewarding aspect of her work. "I really enjoy being the face behind the food, taking people on tours of our gardens, answering their questions and sharing recipes," says Theresa. Clearly she is delighted to be promoting local organic food and sharing this passion with the entire community.

Garden Party is located at 1528 Notre Dame Drive, St. Agatha, 519-885-8775. Open from May to October Thursday & Fridays noon-6pm, Saturdays 10am-4pm. For more information email tschumilas@rogers.com or visit www.gardenparty.ca. ♦



Finding Flowers & Herbs in Waterloo Region

Here are some of the many farms in Waterloo Region that grow and sell flowers and herbs. For a detailed listing pick up a copy of Foodlink's new 2010 *Buy Local! Buy Fresh!* map.



Oakridge Acres Country Meat Store / Jessie's Country Gardens
2132 Greenfield Rd., Ayr
519-632-7653 | www.oakridgeacres.ca



Snyder's Family Farm
936685 Blenheim Rd., Bright
519-632-7356
www.snydersfamilyfarm.com



Brian & Ann Martin
1261 Lobsinger Line
Waterloo
519-664-1358



Gillespie's Garden
1043 Brantford Hwy #24
Cambridge | 519-622-2294



Transpire Organic Farm
1209 Waterloo Street, Baden
519-886-4185 | www.transpireorganic.ca



J&N Martin Produce
5982 Eighth Line, Ariss
519-823-1995



Garden Party
1528 Notre Dame Dr., St. Agatha
519-885-8775 | www.gardenparty.ca



Windy Lane Acres
1041 Huron Sreet, New Hamburg
519-662-3889



Middlebrook Country Farm Market
7192 Wellington County Rd. 18
Elora | 519-846-0756



Fertile Ground
1560 Carmel-Koch Rd, St. Agatha
519-569-8690 | www.fertilegroundcsa.com



Hidden Valley Greenhouses
7123 Side Road 16, Ariss
519-763-0104



Sunny Slopes Family Farm
1183 Northfield Dr. E.
West Montrose | 519-664-1471



Gaia's Gardens
3554 Erb's Road, Phillipsburg
519-570-8940 | www.gaiasgardens.ca



Conestogo Garden Produce
1228 Northfield Drive, Conestogo
519-664-0570



Valley Springs
1764 King St. North, St. Jacobs
519-664-3093



Pfenning's Organic Vegetables
1209 Waterloo Street, Baden
519-662-3468 | www.pfenningsfarms.ca



Floralane Produce
2191 Arthur St. North, Elmira
519-669-3154



Winroe Gardens
221 Katherine Street N.
Winterbourne | 519-664-0556



Flower Power

It shouldn't be surprising to those of us who eat the fruits of blooming plants that we might also enjoy eating their precursor flowers when they occur in abundance. And yet, it would never occur to most people that many flowers are quite edible, providing a dizzying array of flavours, texture, and colour to our meals. Edible flowers can be used in a myriad of ways to enhance both the presentation and the taste of our foods. For example, hibiscus or day lily flowers can sit within small glass bowls and function as serving dishes for dips and nuts. Flowers of varying sizes and colours can ramp up the presentation of a dish or really jazz up a green salad or ice cubes. Larger flowers from pumpkins and zucchini can be stuffed and baked with meat, grains and vegetables.

To gain an appreciation of the diversity of edible flowers available in our climate, let's explore some different categories of flowering plants. It is important to note, however, that while many flowers are safe to consume, there are some that can make us ill. Before eating any flower, consult specialty books, the internet or your local plant nursery to ensure that there are no harmful effects associated with its consumption.



Eating flowers has been a tradition throughout the world for millennia.

If you are looking for garnish or decorative flowers, consider anise hyssop, carnations, bachelor buttons, daisies, impatiens and violets. Flowers with a spicy kick would include nasturtiums, dame's rocket, chrysanthemum, calendula, cilantro or dill. Many flowers provide varying degrees of licorice flavour, such as angelica, fennel and clover. Sweet, grassy notes can be found in sweet woodruff, gladiolus and pansies while cucumber overtones predominate in day lilies and borage. For a citrus highlight, look for bee balm, lavender, lemon verbena and garden sorrel. While mint will most likely give you the ultimate minty flavour, also consider Johnny jump-ups for a hint of wintergreen. Flowers providing a floral flavour would include lilac, peony, scented geraniums and jasmine.

When it comes to broccoli, cauliflower and artichoke, we already eat the flowering portion of the plant! If left to ripen further, the artichoke would open up into a pink cactus-like flower while the small green buds on the broccoli would become tiny yellow flowers. For the most part, herb flowers tend to taste like milder versions of their leaves. *continued on page 4*

Edible Herb Flowers

Angelica	Cilantro	Mint
Anise Hyssop	Dill	Oregano
Basil	Fennel	Rosemary
Bee Balm	Garlic	Sage
Borage	Lavender	Savoury
Camomile	Lemon Verbena	Thyme
Chives	Marjoram	

Edible Vegetable Flowers

Artichoke	Radish
Broccoli	Scarlet Runner Beans
Cauliflower	Sunflowers
Garden Sorrel	Squash, winter and summer
Peas	

Edible Tree and Shrub Flowers

Apple	Honeysuckle	Phlox
Elderberry	Lilac	Rose
Hibiscus	Peony	

Edible Garden Plant Flowers

Bachelor Buttons	Day lilies	Pansy
Calendula	English Daisy	Phlox (perennial, not annual)
Carnation	Gladiolus	Scented Geraniums
Chrysanthemum	Impatiens	Sweet Woodruff
Clover	Johnny Jump-Ups	Violets
Dame's Rocket	Marigold	
Dandelion	Nasturtium	

Borrowed Hands *Personal Chef Services*

Dinner Parties
Personal Chef Services
Special Occasions & More

www.BorrowedHands.ca
519-502-3398 or michelle@borrowedhands.ca

Servicing Woolwich, Guelph, K-W & Surrounding area



continued from page 3

Always remember to only pick flowers from gardens and fields that have not been sprayed with chemicals or pesticides and never eat flowers from florists or other retailers as they have likely been sprayed. The best way to ensure you are eating healthy flowers is to pick from your own garden, preferably in the morning when moisture content and flavour are at their maximum.

Before eating, remove the stamen, styles and the white base of the flower, which can leave a bitter flavour in the mouth. To clean flowers, first always shake gently to remove any insects or dirt caught amongst the petals. Place flowers or petals in a colander and spray with water. Dry the flowers on paper towel, and if not using immediately, gently wrap in a moist towel paper and place in the refrigerator for a few days. The flavour of edible flowers is best in the raw form and so they are rarely cooked and instead added just before serving.

One last note of caution when it comes to eating flowers is that people who have hay fever or other plant related allergies may find that the flower pollen triggers their allergic reaction. When adding flowers to your diet, add only one new flower at a time. But do try them, if you can....why stop and smell the roses (or lilacs or lavender....), when you can indulge all your senses by adding them to drinks, salads, dips, cheese platters, rice, pasta and desserts? ♦

A FRESH ADVENTURE
EVERY TUES., THURS. & SAT.

Seasonal vegetables, fruit, meat & cheese, baking, crafts, flowers, fashions, furniture, quality flea market

500 vendors: variety, choice & quality!

St. Jacobs Farmers Market
www.stjacobs.com
878 Weber St., North of Waterloo

• Thurs. & Sat. all year, 7-3:30
• Tues. until Aug. 31/10, 8-3
519-747-1830

Flower Butters

Theresa Schumilas recommends Flower Butters as a great way for people to get started with edible flowers. You can make savoury butter and serve it on a hearty whole grain bread, or try a sweet butter spread on a carrot or zucchini loaf.



What you will need:

Savory Butter (Nasturtium Butter)

4 ounces of butter and 12 chopped flowers
Add fresh herbs or chives if you like

Sweet Butter (Rose Butter)

4 ounces of butter and 2 Tbsps of chopped rose petals.
Add 1 tsp very fine sugar and ¼ tsp almond extract

Method:

Remove the petals from the flowers, rinse and let them dry. (Don't use the green parts or the inside parts of the flowers and wash off the pollen which will be bitter.)

Using a very sharp knife, mince the flower leaves. This is easiest if you roll the flowers into a little ball first.

Soften butter to room temperature. Mix in the minced flowers and any other ingredients.

Flower butters can be frozen in sealed containers for several months.

Stuffed Nasturtium Flowers

What you will need:

1 8 oz. (230 g) package cream cheese or any soft cheese
2 tbsp. (30 ml) plain yogurt
1/4 to 1/2 cup (60 to 125 ml) mixed chopped fresh herbs, such as chives, parsley, dill and chervil
18 to 24 unsprayed nasturtium flowers

Method:

In a mixing bowl, combine all ingredients well except for nasturtium flowers. Chill for 2 to 3 hours.

Fill each nasturtium bloom with 1/2 to 1 tsp. (2 to 5 ml) of cheese mixture. Arrange on a platter and serve immediately.

Makes 6 to 8 appetizer servings

How to Candy a Flower

Candied violets, rose petals, or pansies are beautiful garnishes for spring and summer cakes, cupcakes, and even sugar cubes for that extra-special tea party. Some blooms such as pansies work particularly well because their sturdy structure holds up under the weight of the sugar.

Candied Pansies

Gently rinse under cold water and set flowers aside on a clean tea towel. Let dry. Lightly beat an egg white, and, with a small paintbrush, apply a thin coating of the egg white to each petal. Cover a plate with a layer of super fine sugar and set painted pansies onto the sugar. Lightly sprinkle more of the sugar over the pansies to cover. Gently shake off any excess sugar and set on wax or parchment paper for several hours or until fully dry.

