

The Barkhamsted Garden

March 30, 2010
Barkhamsted Town Hall

MINUTES

Attendees: Evelyn Betz, Lisa Candels, Sharon Farber, Jenn McGevna, Brighton McGevna- youth representative

1. Garden Installation Evaluation

10 adults and 8 kids- ranging in age from 14 months to 62 years.

All felt that the event was a success. It ran smoothly- in part due to Khea's great organizing email sent several days ahead listing all the jobs and supplies necessary. The photos by Jeff Krug and Lydia Noelke were beautiful and are already posted on the blog. There was one Girl Scout troop. Jobs were evenly distributed, everyone pitched in, there were a number of kids involved and all were working together. Gary Lovell came and installed poles that he lashed together.

Donations received from:

- Pleasant Valley General Store for coffee, hot chocolate and fig newtons
 - Ms. P (need to find out real name from Erick!) and Regional 7 students for site work
 - Kerri Donahue and family for 2 gallons of organic fish emulsion at \$32 each
- Jen will contact the Register Citizen for next big activity and provide written report and photos.

2. Treasurer's Report/Grants

Sharon, Treasurer reported that we now have an account! Checks can be made to Barkhamsted Garden.

Income:

\$19.83 from donations to the beautiful jars placed at Pleasant Valley and Riverton General Stores;
\$1 from the Gas Station/store on Rte. 44.

\$100 committed but not yet received from the Barkhamsted Women's Club- Sharon will let Linda Jacobs, President, know that we have the account now.

Expenses:

\$77 for hay bales
\$21 for potting soil

Donations

\$20 for seeds (Farber-Krug)
\$64 fish emulsion (Donahues)
\$ for potting soil (Pinton West)

* Suggestions for additional placement of jars at Roxanne's- Aerie Mountain

Jenn reported that 3 small grants (\$2-500) have been submitted and they will send a response within the next 1.5 months.

- Annie's Organic
- Horizon Milk and
- Organic Valley

All three would donate snacks for events and Organic Valley will also donate a silent auction item of 1 year's worth of free milk.

Jenn also contacted Clean Air Gardening, Gardener's Supply and The New England Rain Barrel Company for composter and/or rain barrels. Larger grants- for budgets of \$500-\$2,000- are due from October to January. Jenn is prepared!

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3. Water Schedule and Sign up and Water Harvesting

Pam Welles has set up a connection through lotsahelpinghands.com which is VERY user-friendly. The link is listed in the school newsletter - ***we need to put the lotsahelpinghands.com link into the blog and on the town website so people have a solid site where they can sign up regularly.**

It was suggested that Pam contact again the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and other youth groups regarding signing up to fill the weeks. Lisa reported that the 3rd grade Brownie troop is interested and she will follow up with Tina Keegan and Holly Griswold.

Khea raised possibility again of rain barrels to collect water to lessen impact on town hall water, especially since we do not yet have a soaker hose. Khea reported a 60 gallon food grade water barrel at the dump. She will check with town hall for permission and check on necessary height- perhaps on pallets, buckets (Farber-Krugs). Evelyn has the schematic for faucet, overflow, coupling, washers, etc.

4. Distribution Plan

Lisa has begun creating the list of soup kitchens and food pantries. She raised the suggestion made outside the last meeting of asking groups/families to sign up a week at a time for watering and harvesting as well as distributing as they wish. The group unanimously agreed. There will also be two garden parties- a salad party at the end of July and another following the 2nd week of school.

Darlene Sczygiel had gotten material about the 5 steps for Food from gardens for school use. Lisa will review and share with all at next meeting. Khea willing to bring idea to school board in future.

5. Safety officer designated for work days

Evelyn suggested we have such a person dedicated to safety: tools, cautioning people, children, etc. We agreed it should be a different person each time so designated.

6. Saturday June 5- big day. Jenn suggested having Open House in the afternoon with snacks(see above!), perhaps a raffle (free year's milk), kids to do mini-tours and explain the garden. Jenn will make up large signs on poster board. Great idea!

7. Youth report

Amy O'Toole's troop bought wood and paint and have completed the vegetable tags. Khea brought the polyurethane for Andrew to complete. This will be a Girl Scout badge with some additional components Jenn is working on.

The thank you crew will be Acacia and Brighton. They will send thanks to

-Pleasant Valley General Store for coffee, hot chocolate, fig newtons AND allowing our jar to be there
-Kerri Donahue and family for two gallons of organic fish emulsion- Sharon suggested ordering through Fedco- much cheaper for future.

-Riverton General Store for allowing jar

-Dan Pinton and Sue West for potting soil

And any future donations! (Khea sent a thank you to the Senior Citizens already- thanks Khea!)

8. Reserving room- Lisa to clarify with Deb Gilpin and Karen Cersoli for next meeting. Khea will then have the fob (new key system.)

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Lisa Candels

*Next meeting date to be determined and emailed soon- location- Town Hall

Follow up:

Roger Newberry, Principal of Regional 7 regarding being a project of the school since many grants are for non-profit organizations or schools.

Suggestions on how to plant a Straw Bale Garden

What kind of Bales:

1. Wheat or oat straw is best as it's the stalks left from harvesting grain with very few seed left.
2. Use what you can get locally — it may even be lucerne or pea straw bales.
3. Older hay bales that have begun to rot tend to work best.
4. Ask if they bales that have gotten wet and maybe get a discount

Placing the bales

1. Place the straw bales in their permanent site before preparing them for planting, as the bales get very heavy when waterlogged.
2. Put the bales so the string runs around the bale and not in contact with the ground. This will also orient the bale so the stems run vertically as well. (Making planting easier.)
4. Set bales with the strings wrapping horizontally and the straws set vertically which allows better root penetration
5. Keep the twine there to hold it all in place and if it does rot, bang some stakes in at both ends, or chock up the ends with something heavy, like rocks or bricks.
6. Orient the bales with strings ON the ground. Water doesn't seem to flow through the bales as fast. (Most sites recommend the other way but this guy has been doing a lot of bale gardening and has done it both ways and now prefers this.)

Watering the bales prior to planting:

1. Water the bales to the point of water running out every day for 5 days.
2. Sprinkle a cup of blood meal on each bale, and water the bale thoroughly. This helps the bale begin to decompose, and provides a more soil-like environment for plant roots.
3. Bales aged for 6 months or so are ideal. Some people leave them out for the winter.
4. Soak for at least 10 days. The bale may be too hot if it is planted in too soon.

Fertilizing suggestions:

1. Because the drainage provided by straw bale culture is excellent, gardeners may wish to fertilize frequently with weak compost or manure tea with each watering
2. Once every 1-2 weeks water in a liquid organic feed, such as compost tea or fish emulsion.
3. After the initial 5 day soak, continue to soak daily, but add fertilizer. Experts recommend blood meal or fish fertilizer to keep it organic. Add 2 lbs of blood meal the first day and then 1/2 a pound every day thereafter for 5 days. If using fish meal, dissolve 1/4 cup in some water and pour on the bale with more water.
4. Alternate with applications of liquid seaweed, fish emulsion and compost tea.
5. Weekly feeding with compost tea or a liquid fish emulsion

Planting:

A. Seeds

1. To start seed, cover the bale with 1/2 inch of fresh compost soil. Sprinkle seeds, and cover with a light layer of compost.
2. Rough up the surface with a three-tined hand fork. Top-dress with 3-" of compost. A commercial bagged potting soil will also work if you don't have compost.

B. Plants

1. "Pull apart or use a trowel and depending on the state of the straw, put a handful of compost soil in too, then let the straw go back into place."

2. "Dig a small hole into the bale with a pointed garden spade or other pointed instrument. Place a little compost in the bottom of the hole, and add the plant start. Cover the base of the starts with a layer of compost."
3. Place the plant down to its first leaf, and gently close the crack back together

How many plants per bale:

1. The number of plants per bale depends on the mature size of the plant. Plant up to four small vegetables, such as peppers, per bale. Limit large plants like tomatoes to two per bale.
2. Each bale should take up to half a dozen cucumbers, trailing down. Squash, zucchini, melons — maybe 3 plants, or a couple of tomato plants per bale with one or two herbs and leafy veggies in between. Four pepper plants will fit or 12-15 bean or pea plants.

Watering:

1. You really need to water once/day in the beginning, especially. As the bales decompose over time, the straw holds more moisture for a longer period.
2. The orientation of the straw stems (vertical) means that much of the water simply runs out the bottom of the bale.
3. A soaker hose placed over the tops of the bales is a great way to gently deliver water to your plants.

Trimming the bales

1. The wheat/oat/whatever seeds will sprout. Trim with knife or scissors. Don't try to pull.

Mushrooms:

1. Mushrooms often grow out of the bales. Do not panic.
2. This is a good sign that your bales are providing a nice environment for your veggies. Knock them off if you don't like them.

The above suggestions were compiled from the following web sites:

http://organic-vegetable-gardens.suite101.com/article.cfm/organic_straw_bale_gardening
<http://www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com/straw-bale-gardening.html>
http://container-gardens.suite101.com/article.cfm/straw_bale_planting_an_instant_garden
<http://www.nicholsgardennursery.com/store/strawbales.php?CZSESSID=4f0993a30d155da8dcd840c32bacc78d>
<http://www.co.clay.mn.us/Depts/Extensio/ExAPHydr.htm>
<http://www.beginner-gardening.com/straw-bale-gardening.html>
http://www.growandmake.com/straw_bale_garden/
<http://www.4042.com/4042forums/showthread.php?t=12405> This site has great photos!

To whom it may concern:

We have formed a small group to create a garden in our town, located behind the Town Hall. This garden will not only provide food for the Food Pantry here in town, it will also bring members of our community together for a worthy cause. It is our hope that this garden will teach the children in our community about sustainable produce, provide a place of beauty for all Barkhamsted residents, and provide our town with an avenue to explore “green” living!

We are exploring many avenues for financing this wonderful project. Our small group is full of determination, and we are ready to work hard to make this garden a success. There are many organizations that offer small grants for creating and supporting community gardens. We are looking at several grant opportunities, and are ready to write several grant proposals. However, we are currently trying to obtain a tax-exempt 501(c)3 status through an existing organization or school—and we cannot apply for most grants without this.

In addition, we are planning to create community fund-raisers to raise money to purchase items needed for our garden, and we are contacting many organizations that donate materials to assist with creating community projects. That is where you may be able to help us. We are in need of certain materials to make this garden a success. Our *Wish List* is as follows:

- ✿ 15 oat / wheat straw bales
- ✿ Blood meal
- ✿ Organic starter mix
- ✿ Fish emulsion
- ✿ Rain barrels (not a necessity—it would help our garden be self-sustained)
- ✿ Composting Bin & Tea-maker (not a necessity—it would help our garden be self-sustained)

We thank you for your time in reading this proposal, and for exploring how you may be able to help this project come to fruition. It is our hope that we may join together to create this project for the benefit of our community. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Members of the Barkhamsted Garden Group

Evelyn Betz, Lisa Candels, Khea Cook, Sharon Farber, Jennifer McGevna, Pam Welles, Erick Wildes

Please visit our blog at <http://barkhamstedgarden.blogspot.com/>

Our meeting minutes may be found on the Barkhamsted Town website under the Recreation Commission- Town Hall Garden.