



Western Environment Centre

Western Newfoundland's Environmental Education Organization

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Newsletter Summer 2011

From the Editor's Desk

Greetings from the Western Environment Centre!

This summer, a number of fantastic projects are underway. WEC has a highly productive partnership with the Blow-Me-Down Ski Park and together we have developed a wonderfully successful community garden. The soil here is incredibly rich, resulting in crops that are abundant, toxin-free, and quite tasty. The garden will be expanded, a greenhouse is about to be constructed that will extend the growing season, and work is already underway to develop a second site. More details about this are in the pages that follow. Be sure as well to read the tips offered by our resident gardening expert, Katie Temple.



The West Coast Farmers' Market has begun a new season and what a cornucopia it offers! Already we have vendors with local and organically grown produce for sale. There is also an array of handcrafted items showing a remarkable degree of workmanship and creativity. In this issue, we have profiled a number of vendors, such as Colette Urban of Full Tilt Creative Centre, seen in the photograph to the right.

All of this is part of the environmental action and education that WEC promotes. Environmental action in a community can take many different forms. One can write letters to government officials and companies, or participate in peaceful demonstrations, or express one's views through voting. Yet, participating in a community garden or a farmers' market is part and parcel of environmental action, too: these activities help to build awareness not only of food security, but also of the benefits and need to buy and grow locally. Environmental action thus can encompass a variety of perspectives and approaches, even a diversity of political, social, and religious views. Individual approaches may differ, but we are all working towards a common goal.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of the Western Environment Centre newsletter. The committee that compiled this newsletter and the Board of Directors wish you a happy and fruitful summer.

Edwin Bezzina



Southhead Lighthouse Trail,
near Lark Harbour



Colette Urban

More Plots, More Gardeners, More Organic Crops – The Blow-Me-Down Community Garden is Growing!

Although WEC's community garden near Blow-Me-Down Ski Park started just last year, it is already undergoing expansion. Last summer seventeen beginner to avid gardeners were granted a plot and this year eight more plots have been created in order to meet growing public demand for more garden space. There is actually a waiting list of people craving the chance to jump into organic gardening! To address this need, a second site is being created across the road from the two existing gardens and further expansion is planned as resources become available.



WEC initiated the community garden project to offer an alternative to unsustainable global food production systems and to provide an opportunity for people to become more connected with their food. A community garden allows people the chance to grow their own food and develop a deep understanding of the elements that produce it. All produce in the community garden is grown organically without the addition of harmful chemicals (this helps to promote and increase community awareness of the benefits of organic, local food).

Not only is the community garden a model for local and environmentally sustainable food production, it is also a way to teach about the growing issue of food security in our society. Rising food prices can make it difficult to afford healthy meals; highly processed foods are often cheaper and more readily available than fresh, local produce. What better way, then, to combat these pressures than to enable people to grow their own fresh and healthy produce?

This year, WEC is planting a native plant pollinator garden on site at the community garden. The idea is to attract more pollinating insects to the garden, which in turn will help produce healthier produce. Another exciting addition to the community garden this summer is an 8x24-foot greenhouse that will extend the growing season for community gardeners. Throughout the year, WEC also presents gardening-themed workshops for the general public to quench their thirst for gardening knowledge. As Carolyn Wheeler, WEC Project Coordinator, puts it quite poetically, "As an educational tool, a community garden is the perfect classroom. People learn as they work, with the opportunity to see, smell, feel, and eventually, taste their success."

Image from www.wecn.ca

Katie Flynn, Danielle Fequet

How to become a WEC member

(and how to encourage a friend to become a member): Please fill out the membership form on p. 8 and then send it by post to our surface address or by scanned copy to our e-mail address. Becoming a member is a fabulous first step to becoming environmentally involved in your local community!

Clean Up Corner Brook 2011

Members of WEC teamed up with the First United Church to participate in the city clean-up that took place on Friday, May 6th. Helping with a clean-up not only makes Corner Brook a cleaner and brighter place, but it sets an example of good environmental citizenship and stewardship.



The Annual General Meeting (Tuesday, May 10th)



The AGM was a huge success, with the best turnout ever! There was fine conversation, updates on projects, and tasty treats.

Thanks are extended to Harbour Grounds for hosting the event.

Photo courtesy Simon Gallagher

Outreach and Communication Committee

Laura Simms.....Committee Facilitator
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Erin Kelly.....Assistant Editor
Carolyn Wheeler.....Project Coordinator
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Katie Flynn...Summer Intern

Gardening Tips by Katie Temple

I have recently started a bi-weekly gardening column for the local blog Cornerbrooker.com. I've pulled together some of the main gardening tips from these articles and hope that some of them may be useful to you:



1. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the climate can be a challenge to growing anything, but there are certain ways that you can extend the season. One of the methods that I've tried this year to protect crops from the cold is to use a frost blanket. It is basically just a huge white sheet made of polypropylene. It's simple! I cut a small section of blanket, gently lay it over the plants, and then seal it by tucking it into the ground and putting rocks at the edges to keep it down. It's permeable to sun and rain, so they'll get everything they need until the risk of frost is over.

2. Another obstacle might be the soil conditions in your backyard. If you're not lucky enough to have beautiful dark soil, then you can try building raised beds. A raised bed is a vegetable garden that is basically a large frame that you build above ground and fill with a mix of topsoil, compost, peat and/or vermiculite. Raised beds also can be great for keeping out weeds. They're also easier on your back because you don't have to lean so far down to the ground to work.

3. Luckily, here in Newfoundland we often don't have to worry about our gardens getting enough water, so if you're a beginner gardener it might be a good idea to try some plants that love the rain! Green, leafy plants such as kale, spinach, chard, and lettuce all adore Newfoundland's weather. They grow like mad during our cool wet spring, and then become quite unhappy when the weather turns hot and dry. All these greens need shade during the hottest parts of the day, however; otherwise they will wilt. It's usually a good idea to plant them next to some taller plants (i.e. beans and peas), so that they receive some shelter from the direct sunlight.

4. Compost is important for every garden, so make sure to use the compost from your kitchen and yard! 'Greens' and 'browns' are the yin and yang of compost. You need the right balance of both to ensure that your compost breaks down properly and doesn't start to smell unpleasant or attract unwanted creatures. Greens include kitchen waste (fruit and veggie scraps), grass clippings, plain rice, pasta, and bread (no sauces), tea bags, and coffee grounds. Greens provide nitrogen to the compost, and must be balanced with browns, which are a source of carbon. Browns are usually drier materials and include egg cartons, sawdust, paper scraps, and cardboard, as well as dried leaves and grass.

Feel free to check out my column and if you want to get in touch to chat about growing veggies, please email me at kgtemple@gmail.com

Happy gardening!



One of Katie Temple's highly successful garden workshops

Six great ways to get involved in the WEC

1. Join one of the subcommittees (Outreach and Communications, Farmers' Market, Community Garden)
2. Join the Facebook group and invite others to do the same
3. Attend WEC events
4. Become a WEC volunteer
5. Visit the Farmers' Market in the summer
6. Participate in the WEC community garden

Do you have an eye for photography?



WEC is looking for a volunteer who would like to serve as official photographer at WEC events and activities. If you're that person and you have a good camera, please contact us.

We're on Facebook!

You can find us by searching by Western Environment Centre.

facebook

We're also on Twitter

(twitter.com/wecnl)

twitter

The Western Environment Centre is developing a **wonderful new website** which will be launched in the near future. Stay tuned!
(In the meantime, please use the current website www.wecnl.ca)

The Provincial Election



Another election is on the horizon, this time in our province. Be sure to vote, but also please remember to keep environmental issues and policies on your radar screen when evaluating the candidates. Voting for a government that has a solid environmental program is one of the best ways that an individual can bring about real environmental change. Your vote matters!

Image: <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/facts3.html>

West Coast Farmers' Market!

The West Coast Farmers' Market brings together growers, crafters, bakers, and artists every Saturday at the Majestic Lawn in a fun and friendly atmosphere. Organized by the Western Environment Centre, one of the main goals of the market is to create awareness about the connections between food and the environment. By bringing producers and consumers together, WEC hopes not only to foster greater understanding of how food is produced locally, but also to encourage support for local growers.



Increasingly, people are concerned about how and where their food is produced. They prefer food that is produced locally and with environmental responsibility in mind; the Farmers' Market is trying to make these products more available to Corner Brook residents. WEC also aims to support local artists, crafters, bakers, and other businesses by providing a venue for their products.

The West Coast Farmers' Market is now in its third season, and runs from July to October each year, with one special market in early June for Environment Week. The regular market season began on Saturday, July 9 and will run until October 29. For this season, the market will have a variety of different displays and vendors, including The Greenhouse, Hillview Gardens, and Full Tilt Creative Arts Centre and Organic Farm. Market customers can expect to find local preserves, baked goods, veggie transplants, fair trade organic coffee, as well as information on non-timber forest products.

Carolyn Wheeler, Katie Temple, Susan Pottle

Farmers' Market Vendor Profiles

Full Tilt – Creative Arts Centre and Organic Farm

Colette Urban is the great mind behind the Full Tilt Creative Centre and Organic Farm. The Centre is set on a lovely 25-hectare piece of land in McIvers and is host to many visitors from all over the world. Full Tilt is a regular presence at the Farmers' Market, offering fresh produce throughout the summer and fall, including salad greens, fresh herbs, beans, garlic, beets, peas, and gorgeous heirloom tomatoes of all shapes and sizes! If you're lucky, she might also happen to have some fresh spring rolls and a pot of spearmint tea steeping at her table. Colette also sells bags of her own dried spearmint tea – a beautiful wake-me-up cup at breakfast time! Check out her website at www.fulltiltnewfoundland.com/ or visit Colette at the Farmers' Market.



Flower Phantasy Art

Ron and Mariya Zawaski sell beautiful figures created entirely from dried flowers and reproduced in print form. These unique displays of Halloween witches, fancy ladies, and children at play are made using various parts of a variety of flowers in each portrait. The artist uses a special technique of drying in order to preserve the vivid colours of these hand-picked wild flowers. No paint or ink is used in the original flower art, which can take anywhere from five minutes to five days to complete. The art work is available in 5x7 framed prints and 3x5 multi-purpose cards.



The Greenhouse and Garden Store in Little Rapids is owned and operated by Kim Thistle and Sean Dolter. In addition to annuals, perennials, trees, and shrubs, they grow many varieties of heritage and newer hybrid tomatoes as well as peppers of all colours (green, red, purple and yellow), eggplant, zucchini, lettuce, cucumbers, soybeans, and purple beans. Herbs such as basil (purple and green), cilantro, parsley, dill, savoury, and arugula are also available! Can you believe they even grow cantaloupe, watermelon, kiwi and grapes? The Greenhouse is committed to gardening without chemicals. They also provide recipes with their produce and plants. You can visit them at their store in Little Rapids or at the West Coast Farmers' Market on Saturdays. Later this summer (August 1st – 5th) they will be offering a Local Roots Summer Camp for youth, ages 8-11, to teach them about sustainability, gardening, and healthy living. For more information call: 709-634-5757.



Farmers' Market Vendor Profiles (continued)

Paul Caines, The "Jam Man"

Paul has a passion for picking, preserving, and pickling! His life-long hobby has become a mainstay at the market and his jams have become a popular hit. Using organic methods, Paul grows gooseberries, black currants, raspberries, strawberries, rhubarb, cherries, and five kinds of plums. Many hours are also put into picking wild blueberries, squash berries, bakeapples, and partridge berries as well as preparing the finished product. He also whips up preserves which include a variety of delicious pickled food items such as cabbage (chow), rhubarb, bread and butter, green tomato, and cucumber. This impressive selection of jams, jellies, and preserves will tantalize your taste buds.



Photos courtesy Katie Flynn, Edwin Bezzina

Helping WEC as you recycle

Here is a creative way to donate to the WEC financially. The WEC now has an account at Scotia Recycling on 55 Maple Valley Rd ([709] 634-2025). When dropping off your recyclables, donate by telling the people at the desk that you wish to give the proceeds to WEC. Visit their website: <http://scotiarecyclinggroup.com/services-by-location>. For information on recycling on Corner Brook, visit <http://www.cornerbrook.com/default.asp?mn=1.24.100> or phone their recycling line at (709) 637-1630

WEC's participation in **Earth Day** in April featured a fabulous array

of events: first, we met for some fun activities on the lawn of the First United Church, then we enjoyed a guided nature tour of the Corner Brook Marsh, and then watched the award-winning film, "No Impact Man." We extend our heartfelt thanks to the First United Church for partnering with us, to Sorrento for hosting the film, and to Dr. Henry Mann, retired Biology Professor, for the tour of the Marsh.



How to tread lightly on the Earth this summer

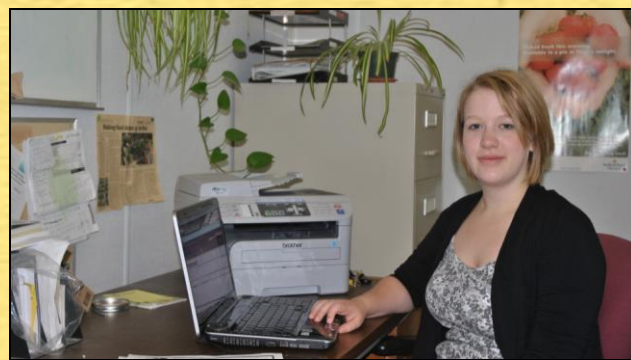
1. When you lather up while camping, try to ensure that you are at least 60m away from any rivers, lakes, ponds or streams. Even biodegradable soap can harm aquatic life, so it is important to ensure that your soap suds will be filtered by the soil before entering any water bodies.
2. Try repairing older camping and outdoor gear before tossing it out and buying new material.
3. Avoid burning plastics in your campfire. Burning plastics releases harmful fumes such as dioxins. Some are carcinogenic and can end up in the food chain.
4. Try cleaning your BBQ grill with a wire brush and a mix of baking soda and water (instead of caustic grill cleaners).
5. To reduce emissions, trade in your old gas-powered mower for a push mower or an electric option.
6. To reduce water use during hot summer months, save your grey water or collect rain water in a barrel to use on your garden.
7. Try natural bug repellent with ingredients such as lemon and eucalyptus instead of harmful chemicals such as DEET (according to a study done in Colorado, DEET is one of the top five contaminants found in urban streams and can cause shortness of breath, headaches, tremors, joint pain, and seizures).

Source: Adria Vasil, *Ecoholic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Information, Products, and Services* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009).



Intern Profile

Katie Flynn is WEC's dynamic summer intern. Originally from southern Labrador, Katie Flynn is a student at the University of New Brunswick. This internship is financed by the TD Canada Trust Scholarship, which generously offers students four years of funding for tuition, living expenses, and summer employment. Here, she speaks about her program and the kind of work that she does for WEC.



1) How did you find out about WEC?

In the past academic year, I have learned a lot about the issue of food security and how prevalent it is in our world today. I am currently completing a four-year degree program in three years, which means that I have school throughout the summer. I have two summer internships that are each equivalent to one semester in university. My first internship is my Canadian Internship. I found out about WEC through my aunt, who lives in Corner Brook. WEC's projects not only focus on the environment, but also on the growing issue of food security. They really appealed to my interest and I was itching to begin work with this organization. WEC suited my summer internship perfectly.

2) What kind of work do you do at WEC?

There are so many interesting projects involved in this internship! I have written bylaws for the Blow-Me-Down Community Garden, worked on re-vamping last year's lease for this year's gardeners, wrote a press release, and helped draft the text for the community garden signs that we are in the process of creating. I have also built three pollinator gardens at the BMD Community Garden. I have researched the logistics of purchasing the greenhouse for the Garden. I also help out at workshops and I plan to be helping out with the Vermicompost we are selling at the West Coast Farmers' Market.

3) What do you like most about working at WEC?

My favourite part about this internship is working with the people involved with the organization. I do love the projects that WEC is involved in and I really enjoy the work that I have been doing over the past two months. I especially like working with the Board, the volunteers, and the WEC members. There is a strong sense of community amongst everyone and people seem motivated and genuinely dedicated to the organization. Everyone is friendly, kind, supportive, and wonderful to work with. I believe that when one has great co-workers, then work becomes much more enjoyable.

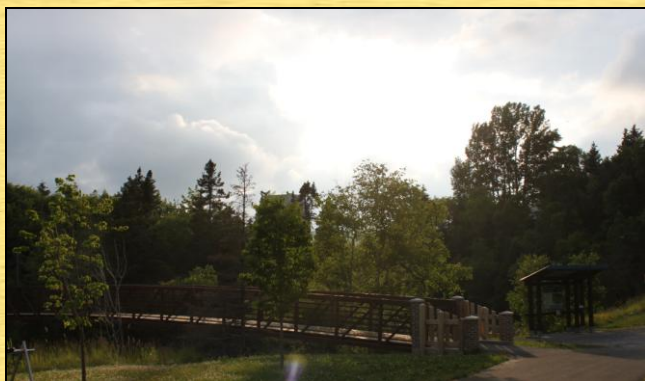
4) How does this internship contribute to your career path and goals? Also, could you provide a few details about the academic program that you're currently undertaking at the UNB?

I am currently studying at the University of New Brunswick, enrolled in a program called a Bachelor of Philosophy in Interdisciplinary Studies (Renaissance College). This is an innovative and award-winning program to develop a student's leadership abilities through an interdisciplinary approach and real-life projects such as participating in food security conferences. While my career goals lie in education, my internship with WEC is deepening my knowledge of food security issues and has helped me develop an important skills set that will prove invaluable to my future. This internship is a fantastic opportunity, providing me with not only a summer income and credit course hours, but also exposure to new ways of thinking and doing things.

Photo courtesy Edwin Bezzina

New Bike Trails in Corner Brook

Photos courtesy Rhea Hutchings



WEC congratulates the City of Corner Brook on the inauguration of a new bike corridor in Corner Brook. The funding for the corridor was made possible by a Federal Public Transit Infrastructure Funding Agreement. The project will do much to help people in Corner Brook use bicycles as a viable transit option. For more information, contact Rhea Hutchings, Supervisor of Sustainable Development, City of Corner Brook, rhutchings@cornerbrook.com; (709) 637-1574.

A Very Successful First Year for Project Webfoot

The inaugural season of Ducks Unlimited Canada's Project Webfoot began with some wetland field trips in Western Newfoundland. It all kicked off during Environment Week this year with the first session being held on Clean Air Day (June 8th). Despite the wet weather and grey skies of late, we were granted pleasant warm days during all field trip sessions. In total, we hosted eleven classes of grade-four students from CC Loughlin, St. Gerard's Templeton, Immaculate Heart, and Stephenville Elementary. Western Star reporters were even on site to investigate the fun.



Each field trip began at the Brook St. entrance to the Corner Brook Marsh with a "meet and greet" between the students and the facilitators. Ready to explore the Marsh, each class was led through a series of three wetland-themed activities: critter dipping, a wetland values relay race, and a beginning birder activity. Critter dipping was a particular hit among the students, as everyone searched for tiny invertebrate creatures and learned of their importance in food chains and wetland health. Although the focus was on invertebrates, the students were also intrigued by some of the marsh's many amphibious residents. During the beginning birder activity, students learned how to use binoculars and identify birds of many a stripe and colour. These activities also had a touch of humour: when asked why female birds are often less colorful than their male counterparts, the children offered some comically creative responses. In the Wetland Values Relay race, the students learned ten important wetland values using props to represent each value. For example, a sponge taught students that wetlands can hold a great deal of water and help control flooding while a simple sieve was used to express the wetland's ability to filter water.

The overall aim of the program is to teach students about the importance of wetlands and to apply experiential learning to show the connectedness among organisms within the natural world. We anticipate that the grade-four students who participated this year gained this knowledge and will share it with others.

Ducks Unlimited Canada would especially like to thank the volunteer facilitators from the Provincial Wildlife department and the Western Environment Centre who helped make the program so successful. Also, thanks are extended to Exxon Mobil Corporation who sponsored ten of the eleven classes and to CNB Holdings of Stephenville for sponsoring an additional class, and to Pet City, Dollarama, and Walmart for offering discounts towards field trip materials.

Danielle Fequet

Conservation Programs Specialist

Ducks Unlimited Canada

For more information contact: d_fequet@ducks.ca

Check out free DUC educational resources online at: <http://www.ducks.ca/aboutduc/how/edu.html>



Photos courtesy Danielle Fequet



Western Environment Centre

Annual Membership Form

Type of Membership: New ☐ Renewal ☐ Lapsed ☐

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number (with area code): (_____) _____

E-mail address: _____

Would you like to be added to our e-mail list? Yes ☐ No ☐

What environmental issues interest you the most?

Coastal habitat ☐ Wildlife ☐ Energy ☐

Urban Planning ☐ Community Garden ☐ Forestry ☐

Climate Change ☐ Farmers' Market ☐ Transportation ☐

Other: _____

Would you be willing to help out with WEC events? _____

Would you be interested in sitting on any of the following WEC committees or working groups:

Events ☐ Fundraising ☐ Farmers' Market ☐

Outreach and Communications ☐ Community Garden ☐

Are you interested in becoming a Board Member? Yes ☐ No ☐

How did you hear about WEC? _____

Do you have any additional information for WEC?

To learn more about WEC, visit www.wecnl.ca or join us on Facebook or Twitter.

Benefits of Membership

- Receive updates on WEC events and activities
- Receive our newsletter
- Access to WEC resources
- Become part of a growing organization that is committed to protecting the environment in Western Newfoundland and elsewhere

Office Use Only

Date: _____

Origin (e.g. walk-in): _____

Payment method:

Cash ☐ Cheque ☐

Memberships are tax deductible.
Memberships expire after 1 year.

Please return form & payment to:

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Corner Brook, NL, A2H 2Z3
E: info@wecnl.ca
T: (709) 634-9470

WEC will protect your private information. We never share or sell our membership lists.