

BREA NEWS

www.bnl.gov/bera/activities/brea/

Volume 13 Issue 5

September/October 2013

BREA Meetings

BREA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month (except for August), at 1 p.m. in one of the conference rooms in Bldg. 400 (except where noted).

All BREA members are invited to attend and participate.

Meeting Schedule

September 10, 2013

October 8, 2013

November 12, 2013

BREA Officers

President

Dave Cox
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Vice President

Ken Mohring
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Secretary

Louise Hanson
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Newsletter Editors

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Planting in a straw bale? Master Gardener and BREA Vice President Ken Mohring will tell you how and why. Read about straw-bale gardening and other garden exploits in his centerfold spread on "Hidden Potentials Growing on Long Island."



From the President

by Dave Cox, expatdave@aol.com

Alas, summer is almost over – which means that after an August break we shall be resuming our monthly BREA meetings on September 10. Everyone is welcome at these meetings, so if you are not a regular attendee, feel free to drop by and join in the fun!

Please note also that as the end of the year approaches we will be having elections for the BREA Board of Officers for the next two-year term. If you would like to nominate somebody for one of these positions – or better still, volunteer on your own behalf – please let our secretary, Louise Hanson, know. We are lucky to have a number of dedicated volunteers, but we are always looking for new faces!

I would also like to once again remind everybody about the Worker Health Protection Program for retirees and other former BNL employees. This program provides free medical
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Hidden Potentials Growing on Long Island

Tips from a Master Gardener

*Can you eat your landscape?
Is straw in your future?
Why do farmers plant poles?*

As usual, there are things “we just have to learn,” and as a gardener there are many interesting things to learn and try. My latest interests include growing processes that are not new or cutting edge, but which make my gardening endeavors more interesting and challenging.

I also have an interest in anything that will keep farming viable on Long Island. Let us get to the answers.

You Can Eat Your Landscape

For the past two years I have had an edible landscape display garden (5' by 9') at the Cornell research farm in Riverhead, NY, where I volunteer.

		Cornell Late Blight Resistant Tomatoes (Varieties 1, 2, 3, 4)						
M a r i g o l d s	Green Pepper	Egg Plant	String Beans		Begonias		Beets	M a r i g o l d s
	Sweet William	Turnips				Begonia		
		Gazina						
		Radish						
	Oregano		Carrot			Parsley		
	Purple Passion		Coleus			Purple Heart		
Portulaca								

A 5 x 9-foot plot makes a compact and edible landscape.

By definition, an edible landscape is a space where food plants are integrated in an ornamental setting. The design principles for all gardens (including color, texture, form, scale and variety) apply to edible landscapes. Why merge fruit and vegetables into your flower gardens? The primary reason is to grow fresh and flavorful produce. In addition, the mixture provides many interesting planting options, including those not available in a single-purpose planting area. You can see in the diagram above and picture below that the garden is packed with plants, which eliminates almost all of the weeding. I especially like the herbs, beet tops and larger vegetables for their colors and textures.



Straw-Bale Gardening

Halloween and Thanksgiving will soon be here and friends and neighbors will have excess bales of straw (not hay, it has seeds) from decorations. Take them. A new gardening world can begin for free. You will experience less bending, almost no weeding, being able to plant in any spot, and minimal gardening costs. If you have limited space, only a concrete slab for a garden, poor or no soil, or dislike yard work, a small or large straw-bale garden may be for you. Preparation is minimal under any of several options, but the easiest is to fertilize the bale and water it for two weeks in the spring.

This speeds the heating of the straw and starts the decay process inside the bales. Or, live on the edge and just plant and fertilize if the bale is old. Straw bale is great for tomatoes, squash, eggplant and almost everything.

The only downside is watering, where requirements are similar to those for container gardening. You must keep your bales damp. One daily watering – or two in dry conditions – is necessary. For larger gardens, a soaker hose or drip irrigation system (which are now fairly inexpensive) works well. Bale gardening (pictures on right) is especially good for adding height to an area, and for the option to plant in any location.

Poles for Hops

There have been beverage law changes in New York State that now encourage small breweries. The next step was to encourage farmers to grow



hops for micro and home breweries. During the 19th century, New York was the largest grower of hops. Mold and prohibition, however, eliminated the state's hops-growing industry. Within the last five years, the industry was revived in the state's central region. Long Island farmers are currently using the natural mineral-filled soil and mild climate here to produce high quality hops for local brewers.

Hops (left) are grown on vines reaching 25 feet high to avoid mold issues. The change in the farming landscape is welcome as the grown hops are sold, and local breweries and restaurants attract more customers – a double economic impact.

If any of the above sparks your interest, please see the websites below.

Edible Landscape: <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1255.html>

Straw Bale Gardening: <http://www.ohio.com/lifestyle/breckenridge/new-garden-technique-grows-plants-in-straw-bales-1.387193>

Hops: <http://suffolktimes.timesreview.com/2011/06/13789/hops-one-young-north-fork-farmers-unique-crop/>

- Ken Mohring, kenwadingriver@gmail.com

About That Date On Your Mailing Label

When I took over the BREA membership database, there was quite a lot of work to be done in bringing the data up to date. The invaluable help of Sheryl Gertsman made it possible to have a working database defined and implemented.

Recently, I made an error in the "membership expires" field of some records in the database. As a result, the wrong year was displayed on some of the mailing labels of the previous BREA newsletter. I hope I have fixed all the errors in this field for this current newsletter.

Note to all: Your membership fee will expire on December 31 of the year printed in this label.

Please excuse the confusion generated. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to send me an email (sjbenk@optonline.net), call me (631.265.3982), or send me a note at 12 Sandy Drive, Smithtown, NY 11787.

Thank you for your understanding.

- Carmen Benkovitz, BREA Membership Secretary
sjbenk@optonline.net

President's Message (cont'd from p. 1)

screening for possible work-related illnesses that might be eligible for compensation under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program. Many BREA members have taken advantage of these programs, so if you would like to participate, please check the link at www.worker-health.org or contact me.

- Dave Cox, expatdave@aol.com

Renew BREA Membership

If you see 2012 or any previous year on the mailing label of your newsletter, you need to renew your BREA membership. Complete the form below to continue receiving BREA newsletters.

Membership type:

annual (\$10) 5 years (\$40) life (95)

Last name: _____

First name: _____ MI: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Check made out to BREA for \$ _____

Mail to: Carmen Benkovitz
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