

Meeting Minutes
With Our Own Two Hands Urban Organic Gardeners Meeting
January 27, 2008

Note: All emails to this group following this one will show individual recipient email addresses to enable you to share with each other. Anyone not wishing to share their email can unsubscribe at the bottom of this email.

We had a great turnout!

Elizabeth wants to welcome everyone, both those who are members (and members to be) and those who simply want to attend classes and aren't in a place for membership at this time. We welcome everyone because you're all working toward sustainable and green living and we bless that.

James talked about our need to network and get together with each other to trade resources, skills and abilities. We need to look at how we can help each other.

Note: toward this end, our member Priya Patel has volunteered to develop a blog on our website elizabethanna.net. As soon as this is available we will let you know.

Most people do not yet have their garden plots in place. It is best to start small if this is your first veggie garden, generally 25 to 50 square feet. A 25 square foot plot is 5x5.

On the other hand, the larger the plot, the easier it is to maintain biodiversity, and thus the health, of the soil.

According to Wikipedia, "Biodiversity is the variation of life forms within a given ecosystem, biome, or for the entire Earth. Biodiversity is often used as a measure of the health of biological systems."

Good soil maintains a balance of plant matter, animal matter and minerals with a healthy population of fauna and flora, such as earthworms and miccorhizal fungi.

Different crops add to and take from the soil different nutrients. Because of this, certified organic farmers cannot monocrop. Monocropping is the growing of the same crop in the same plot year after year.

To maintain the health of your soil, consider rotating your crops to different plots every year. In winter, it is good to plant a cover crop of legumes, which have nitrogen fixing roots. Dry beans and peas, rye grass, and clover and vetch are common cover crops.

Using chemicals to feed plants depletes the nutrients in soil, kills earth worms and benifaical miroorganisiums. The soil does not have to have organic matter in it for

plants to grow, and the roots of plants do not have to grow deeply because the food is supplied by chemicals in the upper level of the soil.

Raised beds allow for deeper organic matter. You can use regular lumber to build raised beds. The boards will eventually deteriorate, but it will take several years if not longer.

You can also use an alfalfa bale to make a raised bed. Simply hollow out the middle of the bale and fill it with compost. This makes a great planter for potatoes.

Alfalfa hay also makes a wonderful mulch for vegetable beds. Be sure to use alfalfa and not coastal.

When we come by to your plot site and evaluate your soil we be able to determine other materials that you will need such as additional compost, and may need other additives such as green sand, lava sand, or worm castings.

Note: James has hardwood shavings for anyone who wants them. These would be good ingredients in a compost pile.

Other composting ingredients include turkey and chicken manure, horse and cow manure, and rabbit manure. Rabbit manure can be put directly on gardens without composting. Molasses, leaves, yard clippings, urine and kitchen scraps can all go on the compost pile. When using cow and horse manure, it is important that the compost gets good and hot to kill any grass or weed seeds in the manure. A good layer of mulch will cut back on the sprouting of weed seeds.

One member recommended Smelly's Dairy as a source for composted cow manure. She said they will sell you a truckload of composted manure for \$20. It was also suggested that riding stables are a good source of manure.

James said that composted manure reaches a high enough temperature to kill hormones and other things that might be expressed in the manure.

Lasagna planting is another method of improving soil. You start with a thick layer of newspaper or cardboard and add compostables on top of that, keeping it moist. This is the way to go if you don't have the strength of help it requires to dig our an area.

Compost should be about 80% plant products and about 20% animal products. You do not need animal product to have successful garden, but you will need lots of earth worms making poop, or castings

All compost piles should be kept moist. They say about as moist as a damp sponge.

If you need compost delivered, James will be able to deliver 2 yards or more to your garden, provided there is access by wheelbarrow. Elizabeth Anna's regular charge to deliver compost is \$85 per yard, but members receive a discount of 20%. This will

include amendments of earthworm castings, lava sand and an alfalfa based feed. We will move the compost to your plot and spread it for you.

You can also get your own compost from either Clear Fork or Silver Creek, and they charge \$20 per yard. A yard is the size of a standard pickup bed. We give members a 20% discount on soil amendments sold here at Elizabeth Anna's.

The formula to decide how much earth you need is:

How much soil do you need

1. Determine coverage = length X width
2. Determine volume in cubic feet = coverage X depth

2" deep = 0.17 feet

3" deep = 0.25 feet

4" deep = 0.33 feet

6" deep = 0.50 feet

3. Divide cubic feet by 27 to convert to cubic yards.

Garden Example: 25 feet long X 25 feet wide = 625 square feet X 0.33 feet (4 inches deep) = 206 / 27 = 8 yards

James is going to be getting in grub hoes, or "aggies" as they are called in Texas. He uses a 6" and says that women may want a 4" model. Please let us know if you want an aggie. They will cost \$30 or less. This is James' favorite tool for digging sod and they will be in in 2 to 3 weeks.

We will also have Urban Composters available later in the season. These are the barrels that sit above ground and you rotate them periodically to mix the ingredients. This is an expensive way to make compost, but it is contained, fast, and orderless for those of you who may live in a close knit dwelling.

If you find you need certain ingredients for your compost pile, do some networking with each other and within your neighborhood. Leaves in the fall and winter, grass clippings in the spring and summer are great additions to the compost pile. A good pile that gets hot enough will kill pathogens.

James recommends a drip irrigation system because it's 75% more efficient than surface sprinkler systems and also it avoids wetting foliage which invites fungal infections. He uses a company called Netafim irrigation products.

At a local water meeting James learned that when the reservoirs fall to 75% of capacity, we are allowed to water 2 times per week. When they fall to 65% we can water 1 time per week. When they fall to 45% we are not allowed to water at all.

One of our members has a source for 55 gallon drums for \$5.00 each. I did not get their name or any other information. Could someone please send the details and I will pass them along.

It's time to plant onions, and we will be getting our plants in either toward the end of this week, or the beginning of next week. We are ordering onion sets from Dixondale Farms. I will send out an email and let you know when plants are in.

Onions are easy to grow, easy to sell, and are low maintenance. Most onions keep in a cool, dry area for two months. Garlic is another crop that is easy to grow. It can basically live off of rainfall.

Potatoes are another crop that is easy to grow. They can even be grown in hanging baskets.

Elizabeth is going to experiment with growing potatoes from seed. She'll keep us updated on her progress.

We are having a work weekend, this coming weekend. I have the following volunteers down:

Volunteers for Saturday, February 2, 2008
Meeting at Elizabeth Anna's at 10 am

Elizabeth forgot she was one of the speakers at a Women's Retreat and is so sorry to miss the first with our own two hands fund day. But she will have someone in her stead.

Others who I didn't sign up just show up.

Bring heavy digging tools if you have them!

Mitch Kellam
Akarya Rehnquist
Adrienne Johnson
Priya Patel
Jeff

Volunteers for Sunday, February 3, 2008
Meeting at Elizabeth Anna's at 1 pm

Akarya Rehnquist
Adrienne Johnson

Volunteers for one of these days, don't know which one yet

Sharon Cansler
David Cansler

If I have any of this information wrong, please let me know. If you would like to participate and I don't have you down, please let me know when you can come.

NOTE

For those of you who missed the meeting and want the handouts, they will be available online at the address below in a day or two. Please bear with us! Thanks.

IF YOU WISH TO JOIN THIS MAILING LIST, PLEASE GO TO:

<http://www.elizabethanna.net/getinvolved.htm>

AND SIGN UP AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE. PASS THIS INFORMATION ALONG TO ANYONE YOU KNOW WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED!

Thank you and we are looking forward to seeing you next Saturday or Sunday!

Elizabeth & James Samudio and Staff