

# The Daily Gleaner (Fredericton)

## Green thumbs keep busy over cold winter months

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Gardening novices, experts and those interested in eating locally produced food are keeping busy during this harsh winter season with workshops put on by New Brunswick Community Harvest Gardens Inc.

The non-profit group began offering workshops shortly after its inception in 2010. The idea was to combine the tradition of community gardening with an educational component on food sustainability, said Edee Klee, co-chairwoman of the organization.

"You know there's many generations of lost knowledge in terms of how to grow food, so we created these workshops to coincide with the gardens," she said.

"We do green thumb workshops, teaching people gardening, and then we complement them with cooking workshops. Because once you've grown the stuff, gosh, what do you do with all that zucchini?"

The group now has two operating gardens on the north side of Fredericton, with more than 150 members gardening there.

Even though you can't garden in snow and cold, Klee said, winter can be as busy a time as any for gardeners.

"The seed catalogues usually come out at the end of December, beginning of January. So people start planning their

gardens at this time of year, even though there's a ton of snow out there," she said.

The first green thumb workshop of the season, held recently, was all about teaching people how to start their seedlings indoors and transplant them outside once the weather warms up.

Other winter workshops deal with canning and preserving to get through the winter season while still relying heavily on locally sourced foods, Klee said.

"We also have to change the culture," she said.

"Right now, you're going to be eating more rutabaga and squash, and things that keep well, like onions. ... It's (onions) one of those underappreciated vegetables. You know it's here, we've got it, let's show you unique ways that you can use it."

Gail Steeves has attended many of the workshops, including one on how to pre-ferment yeast.

She first heard about the workshops last winter and went to one to learn how to ferment vegetables. She said she picked up a sauerkraut recipe at the event that she's still using.

"I don't eat anything from a box, bag or can, so it just gives me some ideas on what I can make that I haven't tried," Steeves

said.

"It's also a social outing in the wintertime, when there's not a lot going on in Fredericton."

In the cooking workshops, Klee said, they encourage the use of locally produced foods whenever possible.

"If we're making bread, we're going to source flour from Speerville Mill. If we're looking at using butter, we're going to use Northumberland," she said.

"It's just to make sure that people are aware that if they're going to be shopping, that they make that conscious choice to support a local New Brunswick producer."

For Steeves, eating locally is also a priority. When grocery shopping, she tries buy as much as is possible from whole foods stores that sell locally sourced produce.

"I have a garden, so I freeze a lot of vegetables ... but it is a little more expensive obviously in the winter months," she said.

Cooking and planting workshops are held on a weekly basis. The cooking workshops take place at the Greener Village Community Centre, while the planting workshops take place at St. Mary's Anglican Church.

The sessions are \$10 per person or \$5 for members.

All of the workshops are recorded and uploaded to the group's website at [nbchg.org](http://nbchg.org), where they can be viewed for free.

"We're all about removing the obstacles," Klee said. "Our whole mantra is making sure that the gardens are accessible and sustainable."

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