

April 2009

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eat local caledon

Upcoming Events

Home Canning Basics Workshop, Sat. April 18th, 1-5pm, Caledon Community Complex, \$30 per person. To register, call (905) 584-6221 or email eatlocal@eatlocalcaledon.org

Earth Day 2009 – Payback, Wed. April 22, 8pm, \$18 per person, Claude Church, 15175 Hurontario St., *The centrepiece of the event is a dramatic interpretation of Payback, Margaret Atwood's latest book. The focus of the piece is on the environmental issues that are facing our planet today, presented in a humorous but pointed manner.* For more information, visit <http://thevaluecrisis.com/payback/>

Everdale Seedy Saturday, Sat. April 25th, Everdale Organic Farm, for more information visit www.everdale.org

Earth Week Celebrations at Harmony Whole Foods Market, Orangville, April 20-26th

Vegetable Gardening Tips

Thinking of growing vegetables in your own backyard this summer? Having a vegetable garden is a great source of healthy, local food as well as a source of satisfaction. Here are some tips for the starting vegetable gardener:

- Put your garden in a location that is in full sun and that will not be shaded by trees or buildings.
- Prior to planting, ensure your garden is completely weed-free. Dig down and loosen your soil to a depth of 8-10 inches. Add compost (such as rotted animal manure) to your garden, 2-3 inches thick.
- Avoid digging, walking and working in your garden when the soil is really wet, as this compacts the soil.
- You can get a head start by starting seeds indoors now. Alternatively you can buy seedlings from a greenhouse or seed event in May. Good vegetables to plant in your garden as young plants are tomatoes, melons, cucumbers, peppers and some lettuces and herbs. (refer to the April 2008 Eat Local Caledon newsletter, downloadable from www.eatlocalcaledon.org, under Publications, for more information about seed starting)
- It is much easier to stay in control of weeds if you pick them when they are young and small. When weeds are young, their roots are not fully established in the soil and they can be easily removed with a gentle sweep of a garden hoe. (A back-saving tip: when using a garden hoe, hold the handle with your thumbs pointing towards the sky. This will help keep a more back-friendly posture)
- Clearly mark where you have planted your seeds (e.g. with popsicle sticks and string) so that you can weed without disrupting seed growth.
- It is important to keep seeds and seedlings moist, so water them often if it does not rain. Once plants are bigger, it is better to water less often, but deeply, to encourage deep root growth (soak the soil thoroughly). The best time to water is in the early morning.
- Put a top layer of mulch (e.g. grass clippings, leaves, straw) in your garden, around your vegetable plants (not on top of them) to inhibit weed growth and encourage soil water retention.

Sources: Gavin Dandy, Everdale Organic Farm and www.vegetablegardeningtip.com

The Dandelion... So Much More Than a Weed!

Although the north American view of the dandelion is typically unfavourable, this edible plant has a lot to offer. Dandelion greens and roots are very nutritious and are full of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. They are also high in potassium and effective as a diuretic and for liver and blood detoxification.

Dandelion greens are actually one of the most nutritious greens one can eat. The best time to harvest the greens is in early Spring before the plants have flowered. At this time the leaves are young, tender, and at their tastiest. Serve them raw in salads and sandwiches to add a spicy bite.

After the plants have flowered the leaves tend to taste bitterer. The bitter flavour can be lessened by blanching the leaves in salted boiling water before cooking with them.

Dandelion roots can be ground up and used as a healthy coffee substitute.

See the Dandelion Recipes section for some recipe ideas for dandelion greens, roots and flowers.

Enjoy and have fun!

Important note: When harvesting dandelions this spring, be sure to do so in an area where you know that they have not been sprayed with herbicides.

Caledon Countryside Alliance Sustainable Caledon



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Carrot Cache

<http://www.carrot.com/carrotcache/index.htm>

Rutabaga Recipes

Dandelion Honey

Source: <http://www.pesticidefreeyards.org/Pages/Weeds.html>

Yield: 1 Litre

1 litre dandelion petals
1 litre water
3 slices lemon – 1/2 cm thick
1/4 vanilla bean, cut in half
1 kg sugar

Pick the dandelions in full sunshine. Pull off all the dandelion petals and put them in a pot with the water, lemon slices and vanilla bean. Simmer for about 30 minutes.

Let the mixture sit by the side of the stove for 5 to 6 hours. Strain to separate the petals from the juice. Return the juice to the pot and bring to a simmer. Slowly add the sugar and simmer until desired thickness (takes about 4 hours). Serve on toast, muffins or Danish.

Weed Balls

Source: www.anpc.ab.ca/d-recipes.pdf

2 cups dandelion greens (or other spring greens), chopped
2 cups bread cubes, cut into 1/4 inch pieces
2 large eggs
3/4 cup grated parmesan cheese

Toss greens and bread cubes together. Add eggs and mix. Form into 16-20 ping-pong-sized balls and roll in parmesan to coat. Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 10 minutes, until browned.

Dandelion Dip

Source: www.anpc.ab.ca/d-recipes.pdf

1/4 cup plain yogurt
1/2 cup cottage cheese
1 cup dandelion greens
Garlic and salt to taste

Mince greens and garlic and combine with yogurt and cottage cheese or blend all ingredients in a blender. Serve with tortilla chips.

Dandelion Root Coffee

Source: www.anpc.ab.ca/d-recipes.pdf

Gather a few cups of large dandelion roots. Scrub well and chop coarsely. Spread the chopped root in a single layer on a baking sheet and place in an oven on very low heat with the door propped open a crack so that air can circulate through. Roast slowly until the pieces dry completely and turn deep brown. The darker the colour, the stronger the flavour.

Grind in a blender or coffee grinder until the pieces reach the consistency of coffee grounds. Perk or drip as you would regular coffee. Alternatively, the grounds can be simmered gently for 10 minutes and then strained from the coffee. Use approximately 1 tablespoon of grounds per cup. Serve with milk/cream and/or sugar/ honey.

Dandelion Delight

Source: <http://Earthnotes.tripod.com/dandelion.htm>

4 cups opened dandelion blossoms
1/4 cup cornmeal
1/4 cup unbleached flour
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 tsp pepper
3 tbsp olive oil

Wash flowers. Add cornmeal, flour, salt and pepper and stir well. Sauté the coated blossoms in the olive oil, turning often till crispy. Serve with a side of rice and wild greens.

Dandelion Pesto

Source: www.anpc.ab.ca/d-recipes.pdf

2 cups washed, dried and tightly packed dandelion greens
1-2 tbsp. dried herb of choice (basil, thyme, savory, or others)
2-3 cloves garlic crushed and left to air for a few minutes
1 cup sunflower seeds
1/2 cup olive oil
1 cup grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
Dried herbs may be used, however fresh are preferable.

Add each ingredient one at a time in a food processor until completely blended. Drizzle in the olive oil to allow it combine thoroughly. Same for the cheese. Just add a bit at a time so it can become completely blended. Fold into cooked pasta until the pasta is completely coated with pesto. Add diced black olives, fresh diced Roma tomatoes, diced fresh mushrooms and/or diced summer squash to create a pesto recipe all your own.

Cream of Dandelion Soup

2 pounds (about 6 cups) dandelion greens, trimmed and washed
1 tablespoon butter or olive oil
4 cups vegetable stock
2 large leeks, white and light parts only, cleaned and sliced
1 carrot, cleaned and diced
2 1/2 cups milk
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard (optional)
Salt and pepper to taste
Dandelion buds and/or flower petals for garnish

If using more mature or very bitter tasting greens, blanch them in a pot of boiling salted water, then drain and squeeze out the excess water, chop and set aside.

Heat butter or oil in a large pot over medium high heat, add greens, carrot and leeks and cook, stirring often, for 15 minutes. Add stock and simmer for about 15 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and whisk in milk, cook stirring frequently, until slightly thickened. Puree mix in a tightly-covered blender until smooth, taking care with the hot liquid. Season with salt and pepper, and add Dijon mustard if you like. Serve in bowls and garnish with flowers or buds.