

## Applemead Garden

Applemead Co-operative members started to develop a community garden at the end of May 2011. We had unused land available with access to water and members believed a community garden would provide us greater access to healthy food, help bring members of the community together, and offer us an opportunity to learn gardening skills from each other.

We decided our community garden would consist of 19 20 x 4 patches. Each patch was used to grow 1-2 fruits or vegetables which were exchanged with the 20 families participating in the garden. The harvest was also distributed during our Food for Life program and shared among neighbours.

Our first challenge was to raise the funds required to develop the garden.

Karen Bonham was aware of our desire to create a garden so she invited us to a grantwriting workshop held at Forestview. Karen met with us to outline our plans and on the day of the workshop she mentored us through the process writing the grant proposal. We successfully secured the grant from Forestview.

We also applied for and received a grant from Burlington Community Foundation. Participating members of the garden contributed funds and plants towards for the garden and our Co-op provided us with some soil.

Then the hard work began. We rented a sod stripper to assist with preparing the garden beds. A tremendous number of rolls of sod were redistributed to many back and front yards in our Co-op.

The children in our community were a great help as they worked hard to help sod the yards for people who could not do it themselves. The children also helped with adding soil and mushroom compost to the beds. They also enjoyed helping with planting, watering and harvesting.

Member Lee Scott, believes the community garden has been one of the best things that ever happened to our community as it brought all of us closer together.

It was fantastic to see everyone from children to seniors so involved in the garden. Children and adults alike learned a lot, tried new foods and developed stronger relationships with their neighbours.

The garden created new social and learning opportunities for our community as we held big screen movie nights in the garden and the Oakville Sustainable Food Partnership provided us with a canning workshop to help us learn how to preserve the foods we had grown.

The first time the members put the knowledge gained from the OSFP to the test, we successfully preserved 17L of spaghetti sauce and made 19 apple crisps. It was a fun and rewarding experience.

In the future, we hope to learn how to collect seeds and use them to start plants in the greenhouse we recently erected. More families are eager to get involved in the community garden so we are looking into the possibility of expanding the garden next year. We also hope to get an early start next year, box our garden beds and reduce our water costs through the use of cisterns.

We are very grateful for all the help we have received as our community garden would not have been possible without the knowledge and support we have received from outside organizations including the Burlington Community Foundation, Forestview Church OSFP and Sean James of Fernridge Landscaping.

We look forward to achieving new milestones with our community garden and welcome the opportunity to share our experience with others.