

Seattle Tilth

ORGANIC GARDENING • URBAN ECOLOGY • COMPOSTING • RECYCLING VOL 31 NO 5 • OCT/NOV 2008



Karen Luetjen is flanked by Abhaya Kaufman of the Small Planet Institute and Demonstration Garden Manager Laura Niemi on a tour of Bradner Gardens Park on March 12. Kauffman is the assistant of Anna Lappé, who keynoted Tilth's 30th Anniversary celebration. For this photo, Lappé was behind the camera.

Departing ED Karen Luetjen: A Caring, Driving Force ... with a Hatchback

Bill Thorness, Editor

A fond farewell was reluctantly given to Executive Director Karen Luetjen in September, after she announced her departure from Seattle Tilth to pursue new challenges. She had been at the helm of Tilth for five and a half years, and taken the organization from a challenging period into much growth and stability.

"She's been an absolute pleasure to work with," says Willi Galloway, whose five years of service on the Board of Directors nearly matches Karen's tenure.

Karen reciprocates the sentiment, saying the most satisfying part of leading Tilth has been "meeting all of these great people! I got such a warm welcome from the Tilth community."

Karen's first day at Tilth was April 28, 2003. During her tenure she faced a serious budget deficit and a vital bid to retain the contract for the Natural Soil Building (NSB) program. In short order she was tackling those as well as doing many things not in the job description: taking class registrations, editing the newsletter and doing basic office tasks. The staff pulled behind her, and "it really felt like she got us on the

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'Taste, Toast and Twirl' at Tilth's Fall Benefit

Seattle Tilth is hosting a festive evening of food and libations on Wednesday, Nov. 12, 6-9 p.m. Taste seasonal fare featuring local produce and cheeses. Toast with beer, wine and other organic beverages. Twirl to the sounds of The Tall Boys and Trio A Propos.

The benefit event is sponsored by Herban Feast and held at their SoDo event space at 3200 First Ave. S., a rustically beautiful converted warehouse with a soaring ceiling. Herban Feast chefs will prepare delectable hors d'oeuvres with farm fresh produce, artisan breads and cheeses with donations from scores of supportive farmers and producers, and there will be a toothsome dessert buffet.

Your ticket to the event includes tastes of several varieties of organic and local wines, and other beverages such as beer, cider and soft drinks. Purchase your favorite vintages to take home by the bottle or the case.

Try your hand at a "Wine Toss" to win a special bottle of wine, and don't miss the "Golden Ticket" raffle where each winner is guaranteed a prize worth \$100 or more.

Tickets are \$55 for members and \$65 for non-members at www.brownpaper-tickets.com, or reserve yours by contacting Liza Burke at (206) 633-5045, ext. 1 or lizaburke@seattletilth.org.



HERBAN FEAST

Karen Luetjen Departs Tilth

Continued from page 1

right track,” recalls Lisa Taylor, children’s program manager. “She’s been the steady hand at the wheel, and it feels like she has taken us a long ways.”

“Karen has this wonderful ability to recognize the talents and skills in our staff and then provide opportunities where those abilities can develop and shine,” says Amy Ockerlander, NSB staffer.

Reflecting on Tilth’s accomplishments during her tenure, Karen says the biggest one has been “successfully helping so many regional residents to adopt new environmental practices in their yards, P-Patches, and even on their balconies.” But she allows that “in the last five years, nearly every aspect of our operation has been improved or expanded,” and cites a health plan and improved wages as vital elements added “to retain excellent staff.”

Board President Craig Skipton points out that Karen’s duties extended from 7 a.m. executive committee meetings to evening ones, which “speaks volumes to her dedication.” But along with such a schedule, she found time to work through every major Tilth program, from Comprehensive Organic Gardener to Master Composter/Soil Builder.

Karen began gardening as a teenager, and she’s always grown herbs and at least some vegetables, like cherry tomatoes. But when she and husband Duke looked

for a new house recently, a garden space was vital. She built raised beds with recycled materials, and this year they’re “stunning and prolific.”

“We had a staff retreat recently, and the facilitator went around the room asking what Tilth has done for you,” she recalls. “It’s our gardens, and we’re living it every day.”

Staff, board and volunteers line up a string of compliments about Karen: caring, calm under pressure, considerate of peoples’ time, easy to work with, great laugh and sense of humor, trusting of staff, offers positive support, tireless supporter of Tilth, laid-back but business-minded, a steel trap for remembering peoples’ names, amazingly organized, an expert on Tilth’s work. She’s also been instrumental in building partnerships and driving a comprehensive strategic plan, which have laid the groundwork for present stability and further growth, even in a situation when a new leader will soon take the helm.

“She’s leaving Tilth in a much stronger position,” says Galloway, who recalls a situation with Karen that typifies her cheerful hands-on attitude. Unloading her carload of Tilth gear for yet another event, Karen commented that “one thing I’ve learned is that if you’re an executive director of a non-profit, you definitely need a hatchback.”

Tilth in the News

KIRO-TV kicked off their Web-based “Green Scene” program in the Tilth garden. Garden Hotline Educator Amy Ockerlander spoke about how to deal with four common garden problems in a non-toxic manner. Visit their Web site at www.kirotv.com/video/17191386/index.html to view this nice segment.

Seattle’s Child magazine ran an article featuring our children’s programs, “Seat-

tle Tilth Children’s Garden Celebrates 20 Years.”

The Seattle Times featured Tilth’s long-time advocacy for red wigglers, the “Cadillac of worms” (http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/local-news/2008051773_redworms15m.html).

Coffee.net featured our urban chicken teaching programs (www.coffee.net/charity/seattle-tilth.html).

Seattle Tilth Association is a non-profit organization and an urban chapter within Tilth’s regional network.

Our Mission Statement

Seattle Tilth inspires and educates people to garden organically, conserve natural resources, and support local food systems in order to cultivate a healthy urban environment and community.

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 206-633-0224 The Garden Hotline
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Seattle Tilth Newsletter

Bill Thorness Editor
 Sarah Kulfan Design/Production

The Seattle Tilth Newsletter is published by the Seattle Tilth Association. Readers are encouraged to submit articles, ideas for articles, original artwork, and other commentary. All material should be mailed c/o The Newsletter to the address above or e-mailed to tilth@seattletilth.org. Submissions will be printed as space allows. Seattle Tilth reserves the right to edit for interest, length, and style.

Interested in serving on the Tilth Board of Directors?

Call (206) 632-1999 for more details.

Tilth \ˈtɪlθ\ n [ME, fr. OE, fr. *tilian* to till] (bef. 12c) 1: quality of cultivated soil
 2: cultivation of wisdom and the spirit

Abundance and Scarcity: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Craig Skipton, President, Board of Directors

This time of year our gardens, farmers markets and counters overflow with the bounty of summer. Even with this year's less-than-perfect heat index, the long hours spent tilling the land have surely yielded up a familiar bonanza of fresh food. One response is to revel in it, eating tomatoes till our mouths hurt from the acidity. Another is to store it like a squirrel for that day not so far in the future when the scarcity of winter arrives. Both seem equally important and appropriate, but there is a distinct tension in the air.

For me, this tension between abundance and scarcity, hot and cold, light and darkness goes right along with the late summer struggle between contentment in the present and frenetic preparation for the future. That's where I see Seattle Tilth. We're quickly cycling to the end of our 30th year, full of milestones and wonderful events—Anna Lappé, the recent Harvest Fair, the upcoming "Taste, Toast and Twirl."

Our year has been full. With the help of scores of volunteers, we've sung songs and talked bugs with 3,000 children (and almost as many parents!), taught 7,201 people about the joys of composting and sold 47,603 edible plants to local gardeners.

We are also reaping the benefits of the labors of our executive director of five-and-a-half years, Karen Luetjen, who is leaving her post to share her gifts in new ways with new people.

Karen's leadership has taken the organization to a new level, expanding the scope and breadth of programming, reinvigorating Seattle Tilth's community, and leaving a high-

quality staff that she has both hired and retained, all of whom continue to shape the organization in new and exciting ways.

But there is little time to rest on our laurels. Even as we take stock of our stores, we must move boldly ahead toward our 31st year. Everything points to the fact that, working together, our potential is growing to cultivate community and organic local food systems.

The Board of Directors is moving quickly to ensure that the organization remains on track with clear leadership during this transition period. Our search process for a new executive director has begun and we welcome any input or suggestions related to filling this pivotal position. Contact me at craigs@mithun.com or call (206) 390-1811.

Thank you for your support!

Build Soil This Fall as Gardening Winds Down

Laura Niemi, Demonstration Garden Coordinator

It may surprise you to hear that fall is one of the most important times to work in your garden. Sustainable organic gardens depend on the health of the soil. As you finish harvesting your summer crop, you must turn your energies to replenishing the soil that produced those crispy beans, fragrant herbs and spicy salads.

First, if you don't already know this, determine your soil type. Sandy soil's large particles allow water to drain quickly, which in turn washes nutrients away during winter rains. Heavy clay soils hold water and drain very slowly; waterlogged soil can rot roots of over-wintering plants and drive away beneficial soil organisms.

No matter the soil type, cover crops can help, because they feed and protect soil. You can find a variety of cover crop seed at local nurseries.

If you sow cover crops in October or November, choose cold-tolerant varieties. Those with clay soil should look for fava or bell beans whose tap roots loosen compacted soil and bring valuable nutri-

ents up from the sub-soil. In sandy gardens, plant a winter wheat or rye whose fine roots help hold nutrients in the soil. When in doubt, plant a "soil builder" mix, which includes a mix of seeds good for all soil types and will germinate in warmer or cooler temperatures.

Spreading mulch on your garden is another way to feed and protect soils over the winter. Mulch, a layer of organic material spread on top of the soil, can keep weeds down, protect beneficial soil organisms and add valuable organic matter.

Over-wintering crops, perennials and beds slated for early spring planting are all good candidates for mulching. Layer material three to four inches deep around plants (be sure to keep a ring around the base of the plant free of mulch) and six to 12 inches deep on empty beds. Organic nutrient-rich mulch materials, like deciduous leaves, abound in the fall. Visit your local pesticide-free park with a rake and a bag if you don't have a source in your own yard. Fading vegetable crops also make a

great mulch when mixed with leaves. Be sure to avoid any diseased crops. When in doubt, put those materials in yard waste bins or compost them in a hot pile.

No matter which method you choose, a little work now can make a big difference in the health and productivity of your garden next year. So take advantage of the lovely autumn afternoons and get to work mulching and cover-cropping!

For more information and resources, including a fact sheet on how to determine your soil type, call our Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224.



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Harvest Fair Delights, Engages Community



The weather was perfect, the musicians in tune, the farm stands bursting with goodness and the gardens looking stunning for the annual Seattle Tilth Harvest Fair on Sept. 6.

Thousands of fairgoers enjoyed our country-style fair in the city, held each year at Meridian Park adjacent to the Good Shepherd Center and Tilth gardens.

New this year were a demonstration of chicken tractors, a display of mini dairy goats, a beekeeping display and a family square dance.

Photo: The Snake Suspenderz kick up some hot tunes. Event photos by Ben Stencil.

Harvest Fair Sponsors

Thank you to our generous sponsors, including media sponsor KUOW, for underwriting Seattle Tilth's annual community gathering. Please check out their valuable services and let them know you appreciate their support of Seattle Tilth.



- Alliance Healing Arts
- CROPP Co-op/Organic Valley
- Pacific Northwest
- Eco Haus
- Northgate Chiropractic
- Shore Bank Pacific
- Zipcar



What did you like best about the Harvest Fair?

Dan Kennedy, interviewer/photographer



"I appreciated the community and seeing like-minded people come out and having fun together."

-- GRANT YUAN, COFFEE.NET



"I liked the PCC cooking demo. It was delicious! And the music, the people, and the community. Just being a part of it all."

-- LINDA LEIBOLD



"I liked the homemade worm bin. I thought it was really clever."

-- LOVICA CALLISTI

Thank You to Volunteers, Partners

A very special thank-you from Tilth staff to our donors and supporters, and especially all the volunteers who gave their time and energy to make the fair a success. While thanks is never enough, our wonderful volunteers are recognized on our Web site, and we think warm thoughts of your generosity as we do our work every day.

Friends of the Fair / In-kind Donors

Annie's Homegrown	Maritime Pacific
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Harvest Fair classes were led by staff and volunteer experts, and included topics such as Building Soil Life, Wildlife Friendly Gardening, Food Preservation, Eating Local for Better Health and Why Compost Is Hot. Thank you to all our presenters:

Emily Bishton, Garden Hotline Educator
Jonathan Chen, Master Composter/Soil Builder and Coordinator, Danny Woo Community Garden
J.J. Jacobi, Master Composter/Soil Builder
Arthur Lee Jacobson, Professional Gardener and Author
Acacia Larson, Grown Nutrition
Sue McGann, Coordinator, Lettuce Link's Giving Garden at Marra Farm
Katie Pencke, Seattle Tilth Garden Coordinator
Puget Sound Beekeepers Association
Lesa Sullivan, Chef

More than 125 volunteers bring the Harvest Fair to life. Special thanks go to these Super Volunteers:

Carol Bennett, handywoman & sponsor coordinator
Rachel Bair, setup captain
Pete Covell, sound technician
Liz Dunnigan, farmer coordinator
Lida Enche-Keene, poster art & layout
Lee Le Croix, vendor coordinator
Rebecca Maskin, volunteer coordinator
Elizabeth Mullaly, program layout
Charmaine Slaven, music coordinator, stage manager, dance caller & musician
Heidi Unruh, community village coordinator

Throughout the day, fair-goers enjoyed a wonderful live soundtrack. Thank you to the following musicians for volunteering and sharing their talent:

The Holy Crows	Lee Stripling Trio
The Blogtrotters	The Whisky Swillers
Snake Suspenderz	

We also were delighted by these young musicians:

Dermot Creegan	Beach 3:
Laura Lockshon	Riley Calcagno
Jasiah Ruby	Samantha Braman
	Leo Shannon



Crown-making demonstrations are a big hit.



Mini dairy goats make friends.



"I enjoyed talking to the people who love our food--who put their food first."

-- MIKE PERONI, BOISTFORT VALLEY FARM



"I was interested in the Crooked Trails booth and the idea of traveling with others in unobtrusive ways. Oh, and the herb sliders at Herban Feast's food booth!"

-- AARON GREEN



"It was good to learn about local sustainable food supplies from Sue McGann of Marra Farm."

-- CHI CHI SINGLER



Naked Gardener: The Camel of Decrepitude Speaks in Metaphors

Introduction:

I am pleased to note that this year the University of Washington installed a ring of eight bells in the bell tower of Gerberding Hall on the Seattle campus. According to the UW, this peal of bells will be the first change-ringing installation in the mainland United States west of Texas. Wow!

To ring them bells the University also installed a company of amateur campanologists (are there any *professional* campanologists?). Well, what they've really done is invite volunteers with an interest in the subject to form such a company, and what that group will actually be doing is ringing the changes.

Philosophy Section:

To "ring the changes" has become a useful metaphor for something most of us do all

the time: work through the repeating patterns of life by adding a touch of variety here and there.

Among our dilemmas as human beings, I think, is that we're trapped between the need for predictable regularity in our affairs—so that we know what to expect—and the directly competing need for novelty, excitement and some relief from what would otherwise become deadening tedium. One's perception of this dilemma grows with time and age: the young are forever discovering a world of novelty; those of us past the mid-point of life sometimes really feel (metaphor warning) that we've seen it all. Be on guard against that, Oldsters; (multiple mixed metaphor warning) it's the thin end of the camel's nose in the tent, and that's a slippery slope, believe me.

The camel is Decrepitude. Welcome him not. (That's some weird figure of speech we know nothing about.)

Gardening Section:

And so it is that each year sees a few subtle—or perhaps grand—changes in the garden. The end of the growing season is a good time to reflect on these.

In my own garden this year, I double-dug the carrot bed (this was before I prepared the seedbed and planted the seed: we call that Applied Intelligence). The garden rewarded us with splendid carrots, big and healthy and sweet. I invited a small, healthy and sweet three-year-old guest to pull up her own, and she tugged out a pair of champions and took them home to feast upon for a week.

Another gardening variant this year is mustard, which I planted too late and which promptly went to seed, and a scattering of nasturtiums which seem to thrive amongst the vegetables and look so lovely. A tip: if you're picking nasturtium blossoms to dress up a green salad for the dinner table, check the blossoms carefully for baby slugs first. I didn't.

Mystery Section:

The principles of catch-and-release vegetable gardening are well understood by those who practice it, and largely misunderstood by those who don't.

But, alas, I'm out of space. Put that garden to bed properly, now.

Tilth Gardeners Thank Dedicated Volunteers

The Tilth demonstration gardens at the Good Shepherd Center in Wallingford and Bradner Gardens Park in Mt. Baker benefitted greatly from groups and individuals who volunteered their time this growing season. A big shout-out from the demonstration garden folks to:

- **David Burger and David Hymel from Stewardship Partners** for their work with volunteers setting up rain barrel installations in our teaching garden.
- **Carrie Stuart from Attachmate, and 20 of her colleagues**, who completed a day of service in the Tilth Garden in Meridian Park.
- **Sue Hartman and J.J. Jacobi** for their dedication, leadership and help with managing the garden and the volunteer program at the Tilth Garden in Meridian Park.
- Last but definitely not least, **110 individual volunteers** who participated in the Garden Intern, Early Season and Late Season Volunteer crews. Their hard work, enthusiasm and dedication helped us manage and maintain our teaching gardens at the Good Shepherd Center and Bradner Gardens.



Harvest Moon Square Dance

The dance and potluck was, in a word, a BLAST – a great way to celebrate our community and support Seattle Tilth! Thanks go out especially to organizers Charmaine Slaven and Justine Dell'Aringa, and the three bands who volunteered their talent: The Tallboys, the Queen City Bulldogs and the Atlas Stringband. Our callers were excellent too: Charmaine Slaven, Sherry Nevins and Tony Mates. Photo by Meryl Schenker.

Join Seattle Tilth!

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Hot Questions from The Garden Hotline

Contact the Hotline at (206) 633-0224 or help@gardenhotline.org.

I bought a rain barrel this spring and am excited about the amount of water I collected and used this summer (we had rain!). However, it fills up pretty quickly and I am concerned that this winter I will have a lot of overflow. What should I do with the excess water?

You are right to plan ahead. The Seattle area typically receives the bulk of its rainfall in the winter months. The annual median rainfall here is roughly 34 inches and most of it falls from October through March.

So how many gallons of storage would you need? To estimate how much water your roof sheds when one inch of rain falls, use this handy equation: multiply your roof's square footage by 0.625 gallons. A 600 square foot roof would shed 375 gallons with an inch of rainfall. In December, when rainfall averages five inches, that comes to nearly 1,900 gallons of water! The water you capture will most certainly exceed your rain barrel's capacity.

As a first step, you could increase your water storage: link several 55 gallon rain barrels or purchase a 325-gallon (or more)

cistern. As for the overflow, you could simply run a hose out to the lawn and let it sink in slowly. However, depending on your soil type, that much water may not be the best thing for your lawn, especially in high traffic areas.

Other options include conveying overflow to an underground French drain that runs along a planting bed, allowing some moisture to percolate near the plants' roots. Or, build a swale or rain garden designed to contain the overflow using soil that drains slowly, then add plants that do not mind wet feet in winter.

One final, important point: capturing rainwater is a significant way to contribute to the overall health of Puget Sound. Any rainwater captured and used on your lawn decreases runoff, which, in turn, decreases the amount of storm water reaching the Sound. Reducing storm water is particularly important during heavier rains when the amount of water in the system can cause sewer overflows, threatening the Sound's water quality and wildlife habitat. Thanks for doing your part!

To find out more about catching and storing rainwater, let the Garden Hotline help. We have information on obtaining cisterns, building rain gardens, wet winter/dry summer plant lists and more.

Contact the Garden Hotline at help@gardenhotline.org or (206) 633-0224, or visit our Web site, www.gardenhotline.org.



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Become a Master Composter/Soil Builder

Graham Golbuff, MC/SB Volunteer Coordinator



Alexis Vanden Bos turns compost in the MC/SB class. Photo by Katy Broker-Bullick.

October is Compost Month, and while you're mulching your garden beds, consider joining in the next training session for Master Composter/Soil Builders. We're now registering attendees for the program, which is held next March and April.

Here's what two current MC/SBs discovered when they took the program—

"What I've enjoyed most is the people I've met. The second best thing is watching children handle worms. It's been a great opportunity to learn about new things, and nurturing our relationship with our shared environment makes me feel good." — Paul Peterson

"Having grown up on a farm in Montana, it has been a struggle to merge my desire for the land with my love of city living. After beating cancer, the type of food I put into my body became even more important to me. Being accepted into the MC/SB Program gave me the opportunity to not only heal my body after cancer, but to help heal the earth around me.

"I loved being with like-minded people, meeting new people from Beacon Hill, where I live, and building a sense of community with others in the program. Learning how to create healthy soil was amazing and intriguing—my own garden has grown so much better this year!

"Outreach was just icing on the cake. I enjoyed sharing what I had learned, and I found folks excited and wanting to do more to help the land. Hanging around with other MC/SBs was like being with a great group of friends." — Alexis Vanden Bos

For registration or more information on this program, which is managed by Tilth for Seattle Public Utilities, visit www.seattletilth.org/resources/articles/mcsb; or call Volunteer Coordinator Graham Golbuff at (206) 633-0097.

Clean Greens Program Gets Assist From Tilth

The Clean Greens Farm and Market Project aims to involve members of the African-American community in organic farming and to bring affordable, local, organic produce to a new farmers market in the Central District. The project was initiated by the Black Dollar Days Task Force and New Hope Baptist Church.

The project's multifaceted goals include providing training and employment for young people in the field of organic agriculture and delivering affordable local produce.

Seattle Tilth has engaged in the project in a variety of ways. Our garden coordinator and a number of volunteers spent a cloudy Saturday in early August sowing cabbage-family crops, spinach and peas in five acres of recently tilled land. Also we became a member of the Advisory Board, and the

project's Farm Manager, Ken Evans, attended a Tilth volunteer work party.

Taalib Sankofa and Brian Liggins, the project's two farm apprentices, have moved to the site in Duvall. They hope to bring the first crop to market later this fall.

Support this new partnership between Clean Greens and Seattle Tilth by donating to their wish list, looking for future work parties and shopping at the new farmers market when it's up and running.

The Clean Greens wish list includes:

- Plastic sheeting to cover a greenhouse, approximately 40' x 60' x 12'.
- Organic seeds
- A multi-purpose toolbox
- Seeder tool
- Ten garden hoes
- A four-cylinder pickup truck

For more information on Clean Greens, contact Lottie Cross at contact@blackdollardays.org.

Children's Programs Enrollment Now Open

Monday Mornings at the Children's Garden

Fun, hands-on garden camps for parents and children ages 2 to 5 years.

Mondays, Oct. 6 and Oct. 13, 10-11:30 a.m.

Cost: \$30 / \$20 Tilth members

Earth Steward Tours

Fun, hands-on garden field trips for school groups in preschool through sixth grade.

Sept. 16 through Oct. 31, 2008 and March 10 through June 5, 2009. Tours run Tuesday through Friday at 10 a.m. or 1 p.m. Cost: \$475 per child (17+ children) / \$80.00 minimum (1-16 children). Spaces fill quickly. For reservations, call (206) 633-5045, ext. 2 or see our Web site, www.seattletilth.org/classes-and-workshops.