



## **Pacific Gardens Makes National Cohousing Day International!**

For the second year in a row, cohousing communities across the U.S. – and in Nanaimo - are welcoming the public on National Cohousing Day Saturday, April 29th.

Pacific Gardens was the only cohousing community in Canada that participated in the event last year when it was first held.

The idea behind National Cohousing Day is to foster the growing interest in this community-oriented and environmentally-friendly lifestyle, and give the public an opportunity to find out more.

The day's activities are still in the planning stages, but include our regularly-scheduled work bee from 9 am to 1 pm, all-day tours with coffee, tea and refreshments, plus two film showings.

The first, "Within Reach", tells the story of young couple who give up everything to go on a pedal-powered search across North America for community – the secret ingredient to a sustainable life.

Along the way they visit co-ops, cohousing, communes and transition towns, but in the end discover the timeless truth that community is everywhere, and you can create it right where you're at.

The second, "Jimmy's Hall", from British film director Ken Loach, tells the story of a free-thinking Irish man whose efforts to create a community space for learning, art, debate, and dance have dramatic consequences.

It looks like it will be a fun and interesting day. At last year's Open House, Bill Wilson and Carolyn Pate made their first visit to Pacific Gardens, which ultimately led to their coming to live here!

We still need people to help with organizing and making sure that everything is in place for the refreshments, tours, and film showings on the 29th, as I will be busy celebrating Canada's 150th birthday with the Malaspina Choir (but that's another story).

Please contact me if you'd like to help. We have our international reputation to keep up!

*Submitted by Kathryn Hazel, #210*



## EATERS FOR EASTER

Will you be in town for Easter? Would you like to participate in an **Easter potluck dinner?**

Would you prefer to have the dinner on **Easter Sunday (April 16th)** or **Easter Monday (April 17th)?**

Judy Roberts has posted a voting sheet on the office window. Please indicate the date (s) you will be available and the number of people in your party.

The number of participants for each date will be tallied a couple of weeks before Easter, around April 3rd. The date with the largest number of participants will be the winner.

Questions: Judy, #102 or  
[roberts.judy@gmail.com](mailto:roberts.judy@gmail.com)

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Every Thursday  
**Potluck 6 pm**

Every Saturday  
**Coffee in the Hall 11 am**

Monday, April 3  
**Community Meeting 630-830 pm**

Saturday, April 29  
**(Inter)National Cohousing Day**

Monday, May 1  
**Community Meeting 630-830 pm**

Monday June 5  
**Community Meeting 630-830 pm**

## Welcome to Pacific Gardens!

### Welcome to Baby Willa

The very youngest resident of Pacific Gardens joined Stephanie, Christopher, and big sister Sophie in early January.

Just a few hours before she was born, Christopher was out with a friend and a borrowed chainsaw bucking up part of a large maple tree that had fallen across the path down to the Chase River. Was that what sent Stephanie into labour?? In any case, Willa was delivered safely at NRGH later that evening.

Big sister Sophie loves to cuddle her sister, and looks forward to playing with her when she gets bigger.



We also look forward to welcoming the new owners of #201 and #208, when they arrive later this spring! Hopefully they will write something for the next edition of the newsletter.



### The Snow Kept Falling...

This was an unusual winter for Vancouver Island with snow starting in November and continuing on and off into March. I guess that ground hog had it right when he saw his shadow. Many thanks to all the snow elves who shoveled and sanded to keep the pathways and stairs clear as much as possible.

*Submitted by Anne*



## the new composter at work!



There was talk of obtaining a cat... Last month our very own "CAT" came to live here (see photo!).

On Saturday 18th February, a shiny new composter joined us. It lives in the shed at the far end of the car park. After a few days of residence here, the first compartment was already steaming hot and cooking away nicely. After only 9 days, it was about two-thirds full and ready for sealing. We moved on to the second compartment which was puffing out steam after only a few days as well.

As well as looking rather cool, some of its special features are that it is apparently rodent proof (hurrah!), generates compost at a high temperature (which has the benefits of breaking down unwanted seeds and creating compost at a much, much faster rate), it is relatively easy to spin and everyone can be involved in spinning it when they add their food waste (giving John a much deserved rest from the wonderful work he does turning the lower temperature compost pile).

Based on my occasional peering into the left-hand side, closed compartment, and watching of the temperature, the first compost from the composter should be ready in the last few days of March. We are letting the other compartment fill up more than the first and will be sealing it towards the end of March.

Thanks to everyone for your food waste additions to the composter. Thanks also to the gardening committee for considering and approving the purchase of the composter, Andrew for doing the background research and organising for the arrival of the composter, and to Chris, John, Drew, Stasia and Mia for helping to move it and welcoming it into the garbage and composter shed.

## Tips on how to use the composter

- There is a list of what you can and cannot add on the doors of the composter.
- Cut your food/soft garden waste ("greens") into small pieces, about an inch or so in length. This greatly helps the composting process and reduces the need for sifting before using the compost.
- Add "browns" (see below) as well when you add your greens to the composter.
- Turn/spin the composter each time that you make an addition. If anyone is having trouble turning the composter, let me know and I can show you a technique to help make it easier.
- One compartment should be used until it is about two-thirds to three-quarters full, then sealed. The other compartment should then be added to until it is also two-thirds to three-quarters full.
- The compost is ready when the relevant three phases have been completed: an initial heating up phase (first few days), then a high temperature phase and a final lower temperature phase.
- Sifting may be required, although the compost is likely to be quite fine grained from this method.

Hot composting needs both greens and browns to achieve the relevant initial carbon to nitrogen ratio (approximately 25 to 30:1) for the relevant bacteria to thrive and undertake the decomposing. Greens are relatively high in nitrogen and browns are relatively high in carbon. Therefore, when adding food waste and other greens, it is necessary to also add sufficient browns to obtain the optimal carbon to nitrogen ratio. We started with wood pellets (compressed sawdust) and these are great to add because they are a high surface area material and they are very rich in carbon; when used, please add such that the wood pellets form about 10% of your added waste. We also have plenty of other options for browns. For example, dry wood chips and/or dry leaves from the garden could be used, with the amount to add calculated based on their carbon to nitrogen ratios.

*Article, photo, and tips submitted by Claire*

### Call for Newsletter Submissions

A big thank you to everyone who contributed stories, photos, and ideas to this season's newsletter! The summer edition is due out in June, so remember to save your photos and stories about life at Pacific Gardens between now and then. You can email them to Stephanie at [sjyeker@gmail.com](mailto:sjyeker@gmail.com) anytime before June 15.

## Neighbouring



It's always more fun with a friend or two.  
*Photos submitted by Stasia*



Movie night in the dining room.