

**The Maple Ridge Agricultural Advisory Committee
is proud to announce the eighth annual**

FOOD GARDEN CONTEST WINNERS



2018 Food Garden Contest Winners:

- Best Problem Solving Garden: Darren Manweiler
- Best Self-Sustaining Garden: Ken Manweiler
- Best Front Yard Garden: Ayuko Takahashi
- Best Back Yard Garden: Elena Rokhina & Mike Mercier
- Best Children's Garden: Luka Takahashi
- Best Overall Garden: Bernice Van Netten

The Agricultural Advisory Committee would like to extend their thanks and appreciation to Renata Trivieri from Grow and Gather Nursery who generously donated her time to judge all of the wonderful 2018 entries.

Best Problem Solving Garden:

Darren Manweiler

Trouble with bears and a steep slope in his yard prompted Darren Manweiler to create a terraced food garden that spans two levels and includes an assortment of containers for added space. It's neatly contained in stone retaining walls and boxwood hedges, and produces baskets of produce for his family.

At time of nomination:



At time of judging:



Best Self Sustaining Garden:

Ken Manweiler

Ken's garden is diverse with produce, having collected and maintained seed for unique and special varieties, reproducing crops from these seeds year after year. His garden boasts a crop of foot-long, tender-sweet green beans, that originated from a friend who brought a pocket of seeds from Asia many years ago; Ken received 13 of these seeds, and has maintained this heirloom variety for decades since. His Music garlic production (from bulbils, not cloves) is prize-worthy in and of itself: at maturity, his garlic heads fill a hand with giant, juicy cloves, that resemble Elephant garlic in size. Ken saves seeds from peas, Jubilee corn, and other produce as well, growing everything using pesticide-free practices. His experiments with crop timing (June seed potato planting to prevent blight; summer cucumber planting for an additional light crop!) have shown great success.

The garden has been many years in the making, and its original heavy clay soil has been improved year over year with extensive composting practices. Heavier stalks (like corn) are even used to lighten the soil: Ken uses a mulching lawn mower to shred tough-to-compost vegetation and turn into the beds.

We'd be remiss if we didn't mention Ken's cactus and amaryllis collection, impressive in their own rights!

At time of nomination:



At time of judging:



Best Front Yard Garden:

Ayuko Takahashi

Plagued by a rolling, bumpy lawn, and a little constrained by a shaded back yard, Ayuko converted her front yard into the family vegetable patch. Raised beds and soaker hoses help make efficient use of water throughout the garden, and Echinacea, Rudbeckia, lavender and scented geraniums attract pollinators to the space. Her harvests rotate through the season, and the family often spots volunteers from the compost (tomatoes, squash, etc) and transplants them to spots where they can be tended and harvested. Carrots, beans, strawberries, raspberries, chard, lettuce greens, and an abundant harvest of Asian pear, round out the selection to minimize fresh vegetable purchases throughout the growing season.

At time of nomination:



At time of judging:



Best Back Yard Garden:

Elena Erokhina & Mike Mercier

Although Elena and Mike have only been growing their own vegetables for two years, their garden quickly grew from a 25 x 25 plot to a remarkable grid of sizeable raised beds, timed watering systems, and enough produce to supply their family with all their hearts' desire. The beds that had recently been harvested were showing signs of replanting; young greens were sprouting and second sowings of carrots were evident. The garden has been lovingly planted, harvested, and replanted in succession, truly making the most of their entire back yard.

They say, "One of the best things about having your own veggie garden is that you can come home from the office, hungry, go outside, and pick up your dinner." They add that having this variety of produce in their yard has inspired multiple cooking experiments, and they enjoy roasted zucchini, homemade pesto, and meals from more than 300 garlic they plant each year.

At time of nomination:



At time of judging:



Best Children's Garden:

Luka Takahashi

Seven-year-old Luka proudly pointed out his very own raised garden bed, where he planted peas and beans for the family. He harvests from the garden every morning. He says raspberries are his very favourite part of the family garden, and it's clear he loves to work alongside his parents as they produce the bulk of their produce.

At time of nomination:



At time of judging:



Best Overall Garden:

Bernice Van Netten

Bernice's garden is thoroughly impressive, positively bursting with edibles. From plums and raspberries along her drive, to a gorgeous storey-tall fig laden with plump fruit at her front door, sweet harvests are first to greet visitors.

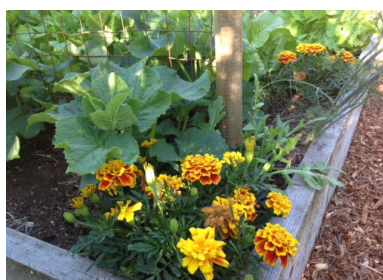
In her raised bed yard, Bernice points out an heirloom apple from her childhood that she had grafted onto a Fuji; the name is lost but its fruit, she says, are filled with pockets of sugar and are unlike any other variety she has encountered. An expansive grid of vegetables fill the raised beds, and many areas have second-sowings in progress for later harvests. To keep pests either at bay or alternately amused, marigolds and nasturtiums grow among the food crops. Mirrors are tucked between the plants to discourage racoons.

A volunteer cleome is preserved for its pretty bloom despite being misplaced in the veggie patch, and drifts of bee balm (Monarda) and Phlox add colour and nectar for the bees. A birdbath and stones surrounding her koi pond are busy with honeybees enjoying drops of water on a dry day. Bernice's garden is home to a couple of hives, tended by a local beekeeper. She plants for them, for the butterflies and hummingbirds (her ornamental plant collection is breathtaking), and for her grandchildren who gleefully harvest armloads of tomatoes and other treats from the yard.

We passed trays of garlic as big as baseballs, curing in a shed. Her secret to her sizeable harvests, she says, is sheep manure (a small flock lives in her pasture), aged chicken manure from her hens, and the compost she adds in layers each season. Bernice is careful not to overdig, preferring not to disrupt the balance of microbes, aerobic and anaerobic, that work her soil.

A new view and surprise opens around every corner: pretty spots to sit and smell the roses, small ornaments, a cluster of herbs, a little kale thriving along the edge of the raspberry patch. There is truly something to discover around every bend, and proof that edibles and ornamentals can be planted in balance with one another to the benefit of both.

At time of nomination:



At time of judging:

