



1. Participants

Approximately 45 people joined in this teleconference presentation and discussion session. Participants included participants and organizers of existing community gardens in Newfoundland and Labrador, community group representatives interested in starting community gardens, individual gardeners, farmers, and representatives from the health and education fields. Participants were from both rural and urban areas of the province, including:

- Bonavista
- Bonne Bay
- Botwood
- Conception Bay South
- Corner Brook
- Deer Lake
- Elliston
- Heart's Content
- Holyrood
- Labrador West
- Marystown
- St. John's
- Torbay
- Trinity

2. Introduction

After a round of introductions of all on the line, Rick Kelly of the [Food Security Network](#) provided some introductory comments and information on:

- **The Food Security Network NL (FSN)** as a membership based non-profit organization with the mission to actively promote comprehensive, community based solutions to ensure physical and economic access to adequate and healthy food for all.
- **Food security** as existing when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Food security also means that the people who produce foods are able to earn a living wage.
- **The importance of fostering a healthy, sustainable food system** which focuses on local, seasonal foods, the health of the population, building communities, local economic development, and supporting local producers, processors, distributors and retailers.
- **Four new Best Practices Toolkits** for community organizations, including a **Community Garden Best Practices Toolkit**. All four toolkits are available at FSN's website: <http://www.foodsecuritynews.com/best-practices-toolkits.html>. The toolkits provide Step-by-step guides and resources to help you start community gardens, farmers' markets, community kitchens, and bulk buying clubs.

3. Keynote Presentation: Ross Traverse – Extending the Season

Ross gave an overview of all the methods that can be used to extend the gardening season in NL. Listen to the audio recording of the presentation to get the full details. For more information about Ross Traverse and his book, *Ask Ross Traverse About Gardening: Practical Advice for Gardeners in a Cool Climate*, visit <http://www.traversegardens.com/>.

- Newfoundland and Labrador has a 90-100 day frost free growing period. Given that challenge there are four main ways to extend the growing season.
 1. Protect crops and improve the growing environment
 2. Start seeds early
 3. Choose crops that are hardier
 4. Grow plants that store longer

The following methods can be used to achieve these goals:

Greenhouses

- Only useful if there is someone available to tend to it consistently.
- The greenhouse should be located somewhere with the most sunlight possible.
- Glass is the best material to use. If using plastic be sure to get plastic that is designed for a greenhouse.
- Be sure to consider shelter from wind when placing your greenhouse.

Cold Frames/Hot Beds

- A great way to start off plants or harden off plants from a nursery.
- Great for warm climate plants.

Soil Heating

- Electric Heating cables buried in the soil.
- Helps maintain the temperature for quickly germinating seeds.

Plastic Mulch

- A great way to extend the season for warm season crops such as corn, squash, and strawberries.
- A specially designed material that stretches over a bed and is buried at the edges.
- Increases the temperature of the soil and helps control pests.

Row covers

- Use a specially designed floating row cover that rests on top of the plants. It is water permeable and lets in sunshine. Available at nurseries.
- Helps control insects and warms the soil.

Starting Seeds Indoors

- If you are just starting seeds indoors, as opposed to growing a plant to maturity inside, you do not need expensive specialty lights.
- You can use a growing mat to heat the soil for germination.
- Always check the temperature of your soil to make sure it is appropriate.

- The most critical point is that you use a good clean soil mix with clean containers. Obtain a soil mix that a nursery uses themselves, and clean your containers using a bleach solution if you are reusing containers.

Raised Beds/Plastic Coverings

- Raised beds increase the soil temperature and can be helpful when growing on a slope.
- Create a mini greenhouse or hoop house using wire or pipes with plastic over top.

Growing Transplants

- Sow your seeds in small trays and then move them into larger containers as the seedlings get larger.
- Make sure there is drainage so that your seedlings don't get water-logged.

Crops to Extend the Season

- Collard greens – can be harvested when the plant is small or big
- Grow vegetables that can withstand frost and be harvested late in the season such as brussel sprouts or Kale.
- Leeks, carrots and parsnips do very well and can be left in the ground over winter and dug up in the spring.
- Damson plums and perennial green onions can be harvested after the frost.

4. Key Questions and Information from the Following Discussion

Following the Keynote Presentation, participants had the opportunity to ask Ross questions and discuss issues facing them as gardeners in Newfoundland & Labrador. Some key information included:

Starting Seeds

- The ideal temperature for starting seeds in a house is usually around 20° - 22° C, and a bit higher for germination (varies by plant).
- You can't have too much light when starting seedlings.
- Best fertilizer for seedlings: seaweed if going organic, if using a chemical fertilizer use a soluble 15-5-15.

Growing Methods

- Locations to find heating cables: Gaze Seed in St. John's, Halifax Seed, and some other garden centres.
- When to start to plant if using plastic covering: Depends on the plants. Plant frost sensitive plants such as pumpkins and beans later. Plant carrots and beets early. Broad beans are one bean that can be started earlier.
- How to use seaweed: If using a bed, take the seaweed and spread it over the bed (3-4 inches) and cover with soil. It will break down quickly. If using a trench system, say for growing potatoes, put the seaweed in the trench up to 6 inches and then plant your potatoes on top.
- Using plastic mulch and watering: The bed will actually conserve water when using plastic mulch, so it doesn't need as much water. No need to do hand watering except when you are feeding the plants with a soluble fertilizer.

- Composting leaves: one method is to spread 6-8 inches of leaves, then soil, then leaves, etc. (makes a good compost for the following year)
- When using plastic for cold frames use 4 mill greenhouse plastic.

Soil Testing and pH

- Dolomitic lime is the most effective way of decreasing acidity of soil. To find out the pH of your soil send a sample to a laboratory that conducts tests on soil samples.
- Soil Testing Labs:
 - **Agrifoods – Soil, Plant and Feed Laboratory**
http://www.nr.gov.nl.ca/nr/agrifoods/land_resources/soils/soilpflab.pdf
 (709) 729-6738

 Soil and Plant Lab
 Department Natural Resources
 Provincial Agriculture Building
 308 Brookfield Rd.
 PO Box 8700 St. John's, NL A1B 4J6
 - **Eastern Analytical Ltd – Springdale, NL**
 Eastern Analytical will analyze lead and metals in soil, as well as nutrient levels and pH.
 (709)673-3909
 PO Box 187
 Springdale, NL
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Advice for Starting Out

- Advice for a new community garden: Make sure that you have dedicated people that are interested in gardening, and that you have some people with basic gardening knowledge.
- Easiest things to try when starting out: Use frost tolerant crops, plant crops that you can harvest and plant again throughout the season, learn techniques to preserve vegetables past the growing season (storage, freezing, canning, etc.)
- Good places to get seeds: Gaze Seed in St. John's, Veseys in PEI (online and mail-order catalogue), Stokes Seeds in Ontario(online and mail-order catalogue) which has very good instructions on their seed packets, and West Coast Seeds in BC.