

Dig This!

Winter 2025

Wishing you great gardening in 2025!



Agri-Hero

White Feather Country Store & Farms



White Feather offers a one-of-a-kind shopping and eating experience, in the heart of Raglan, Ontario.

According to local legend, the land was purchased in the 1960s, and White Feather has been operating as the current business model since 1988. White Feather Farms has gradually expanded to a 15,000-bird facility, and has become Durham's largest country store. The shop sells a wide variety of goods, including its own farm-raised fresh eggs and chickens, frozen foods, and locally sourced produce. White Feather Farms remains a family-operated business, now managed by the second generation.

The bakery is renowned for their massive apple fritters, which the store boasts are the region's biggest and best (only available on weekends). They also sell breads, pies and tarts. The café serves comfort food such as quiche, sandwiches, as well as coffee (take out only).

White Feather is a family-friendly destination thanks in part to its outdoor playground area. Especially popular at the moment is White Feather's gift shop with unique items like handmade wood products, household decor, clothing, and pet toys - a one-stop Christmas shopping experience!

Located at 15 Raglan Road E., Oshawa, L1H 0M9, the store is open Monday to Saturday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sundays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, visit www.whitefeathercountrystore.ca

Celebrating ~



St. John's Port Whitby CG celebrated their 10 year relationship with members and their community. It's been a meaningful decade of connection, personal growth and growing together, supporting food security and permaculture techniques. (See pics above.)

Glen St. Community Garden is celebrating approval from the city of Oshawa to expand its garden next season. This will facilitate community requests for gardening space. Next season will be their third year growing together.

Whitby Baptist church is celebrating a great first season and plans to expand next year.

Are you celebrating something at your community garden? Share with us at info@durhamdigs.ca We would love to celebrate with you.



Seed Spotlight: The ABCs of seeds

It's never too early to start planning your 2025 garden! We have poured through seed catalogues from some of the big players (Veseys, West Coast Seeds, William Dam, and a few others), and are thrilled to share some of their delicious products!

A is for Avalanche Beets

A white beet? Why not! Grown for mild and sweet flavours, this organic variety lacks that earthiness, and has no bitter aftertaste. Can be eaten raw or cooked. After 50 days, the beets will be ready to harvest if they reach 8 cm (3"). Get them from West Coast Seeds.



B is for Beans

We chose Noodle King (asparagus beans) to try out this coming year. They are tall vining plants that produce skinny green pods, best picked when 30 to 45 cm (12-18") long. Noodle Kings are quick maturing (for a bean) and are suitable for areas with a shorter growing season. Tall plants must be trellised. Get them from West Coast Seeds.



C is for Chia

Have you ever thought about growing your own anti-oxidant and omega-3 rich superfood? Well, now you can! The chia plant produces leaves that when young, are eaten as nutritional snacks. The plant gets bushy, and will produce a bloom of blue flowers as the nights lengthen and days shorten. Seed production takes 120 days. Get them from William Dam Seeds



D is for Delicata Squash

Delicata squash or sweet potato squash/peanut squash is an oblong shape with edible, thin yellow skin with green stripes or speckles. The flesh is smooth, creamy, and orange-yellow in color, with a mildly sweet and nutty flavor, featuring hints of corn and sweet potatoes.



Each plant produces 5-7 sweet 0.5 kg to 1 kg (1-2 lbs) fruit - a perfect single serving size to bake. Get them from Veseys.

E is for Eggplant

Listada de Gandia organic eggplant is an heirloom variety that is both a pleasure to eat as well as look at! The fruits develop after 75 to 85 days and are 13-15 cm (5-6"), and are firm yet tender in flesh. Get them from West Coast Seeds.



F is for fiddleheads

Not seeds but rootstock, what could represent spring better than fiddleheads sauteed in butter? Fiddleheads are the tightly coiled young fronds (leaves) of the ostrich fern, native to Ontario's woodlands. Purchase crowns or live plants from Native Plants in Claremont.



G is for Ground Cherries (Aunt Molly's Organic)

These charming fruits taste like a mix between pineapples and mango, slightly sweet, a bit tart. Once established, you won't need to buy them again, since ground cherries are prolific, and will "volunteer" the following summer. These fruits store amazingly well if left in their papery husk. Get them from Veseys.



H is for Horseradish

While not a seed, consider planting a perennial root that will live as long as you do (especially if you add it to your diet). A staple in Asian cuisine, horseradish is easy to grow (provided you divide and replant every 2 years). Get it from Veseys (ships in the springtime).



I is for Iperoine Hybrid Organic Melon

This variety of melon is sweeter and quicker to grow than the average cantaloupe, maturing in just 62-65 days



- wow! The fruit's skin is firm, meaning it is less likely to rot or be feasted upon by hungry insects; after all the work spent growing, it's always a shame to share with pests! Get them from William Dam Seeds.

J is for Jalapeño (Early Organic)

Traditional hot peppers don't bear fruit until the end of summer/early autumn, but not this 5 cm (2") sized variety! Maturing in 65 days (green) to 85 days (red), the hot sauce will be flowing in no time, ready for BBQ season. Get them from Veseys.



K is for Kale (Rainbow Candy Crush)

Before turning your nose up, consider what a nutritional powerhouse kale is! It has among the highest levels of beta-carotene of any green vegetable, is high in vitamin C and has calcium to boot! Plus, this variety is oh so pretty, meaning it can be a showstopper in the Autumn when drab grey skies seem to wash the colour out of the world. Get them from West Coast Seeds.



L is for Leeks (Oslo Hybrid Organic)

The perfect vegetable to add to a warming winter soup. Judging by the length of time it takes to grow (110 days), if you start in the spring, you will harvest your beautiful leeks by autumn.



The wait will be worth it, as you cut into the stocky white shanks. This variety is also able to overwinter due to its bolting tolerance. Get them from William Dam Seeds.

M is for Mercury Hybrid Cucumber

Trialled last summer in our own garden, this is the best cucumber (in our opinion)! Thin skinned fruits perfect as is, or in a summer salad, these high yielding cukes had great disease resistance and taste. Get them from OSC Seeds.



See our next newsletter for the rest of the list!

Herbs that heal

Disclaimer:

The information provided here is for general informational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of a qualified healthcare provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or treatment. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you have read here.

If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please call your doctor or seek immediate assistance from emergency services. Reliance on any information provided here is solely at your own risk.

Winter is upon us, and so is the cold and flu season! With that in mind, why not reach for some local herbal remedies to treat the symptoms that are keeping you down.

To start, winter cold and damp seems to make aches and pains that much worse. Adding curry powder (or just turmeric) to your cooking will help because the curcumin contained within inhibits (or slows down) the body's production of a compound called prostaglandin E2, which is responsible for inflammatory reactions, especially in and around the nerves. According to some studies, curcumin blunts joint and muscle pain as effectively as over the counter medication! Curry powder is great in lentil and rice dishes, and with cauliflower.

Many people develop a nagging cough once the temperature plummets. Instead of an artificially flavoured lozenge, opt for rosemary, which may still be present in your garden. The eucalyptol compound has been shown to loosen chest congestion by making phlegm easier to expel. The tannin compounds are also anti-inflammatory, which soothe the throat. Try pairing rosemary with baked apples, white beans, or polenta!

Nothing could be worse than congestion at night, while trying to fall asleep. Right before bed, try a soothing peppermint tea (or just munch



on some leaves!). Peppermint is commonly used as a natural remedy for relieving congestion due to its active compound, menthol. While peppermint doesn't physically open nasal passages, it can stimulate cold-sensitive receptors in the nose, creating a perception of improved airflow, plus it helps to shrink swollen nasal tissue, making it easier to breathe. Add mint to salads, quinoa, feta cheese, and even watermelon. It also goes well with potatoes and carrots.

If the flu hits, reach for ginger.

Known for its promotion of sweating as a diaphoretic, this helps to break a fever and support the body in eliminating toxins through the skin. Ginger is also effective for immune system support because it contains bioactive compound antioxidants like gingerol. When a sore throat manifests, ginger helps reduce swelling in the throat. Its antimicrobial

effects may also help fight bacteria and viruses. Incorporate fresh ginger into chicken soup or other broths, or blend into smoothies along with orange (or other citrus fruits) and honey. Ginger's fresh spiciness balances the richness of fish, shellfish, and sushi.



Finally, as the first French explorers discovered in the winter of 1534, thanks to the St. Lawrence Iroquoian First Nation tribe, Eastern white pine needle tea is high in Vitamin C. It supports the immune system and may alleviate respiratory issues. Unbelievably, pine can be used in the kitchen too! You can add pine needles to brines for pickling vegetables; and dried ground pine needles can be sprinkled on baked goods, mixed into bread dough, or used to flavor homemade pasta. Who knew?

Feed the Need expands choice-based market food banks



Feed the Need in Durham (FTND), a leading community food organization in the Region, continues to innovate its approach to food insecurity. Since opening its first choice-model market food bank in Oshawa in 2022, FTND has transformed how food support is provided. Building on this success, a second location opened in Whitby at Iroquois Park in 2024. Together, these market food banks are serving over 300 clients per week, creating dignified food access experiences.

The choice-model food bank is a shift from traditional methods of food distribution. Instead of receiving pre-packed hampers, clients select items based on their preferences, dietary needs, and cultural considerations—much like at a grocery store. This approach reduces food waste and restores agency and dignity to those accessing support.

The Oshawa location pilot project quickly demonstrated the benefits of a client-centered model. The success prompted FTND to expand the initiative. Located at the accessible Iroquois Park Sports Centre, the Whitby market food bank ensures more families in Durham have access to fresh, nutritious food in a welcoming and inclusive environment.

"By adopting the choice model, we're meeting the unique needs of individuals and families while treating everyone with dignity and respect," says Ben Earle, FTND's CEO.

With food insecurity rising, Feed the Need's innovative market food banks are more than a support service—they are a cornerstone for community resilience.

For more information, visit feedtheneedindurham.ca.

Hedgerows

Long have they been a haven for nature.

A hedgerow is a dense row of shrubs, trees, and other vegetation, often used as a natural boundary between fields, roads, or properties. These living fences are common in agricultural and rural landscapes, but can be found in urban and near urban spaces, dotted around Durham Region.

Hedgerows provide critical habitat for a wide range of wildlife, including birds, insects, mammals, and amphibians. They serve as corridors, allowing animals to travel safely across fragmented lands, and support pollinators like bees and butterflies by offering nectar, pollen, and nesting sites.

Agriculturalists also profit from a system of hedgerows as they help in erosion control by acting as barriers to wind and water runoff. Pests are controlled naturally because beneficial insects and birds that prey on crop pests are attracted to the dense protective nature of hedgerows. Finally, crops are protected because hedgerows act as windbreaks, sheltering crops from harsh weather, including drying winds.

Despite all of the benefits to farmers and gardeners, hedgerows are disappearing from the landscape. Habitat and farmland loss are among the main culprits, but lesser known is the impact that invasive species are having. One such species, buckthorn, is a real menace.

According to Ontario.ca/page/common-buckthorn, Buckthorn is a shrub/tree that ranges in size reaching heights of 6 to 7 m. Ironically, it was first introduced to Ontario from Eurasia as an ornamental shrub and was widely planted for fencerows and windbreaks in agricultural fields in the 1880s. A typical invasive species, Buckthorn forms dense stands under which few other plants can grow, and is readily spread by birds feasting on its black berry-like fruits. To control, small plants up to 1 m tall can be pulled by hand, while larger plants can be dug out with a spade - no easy task. Common buckthorn is listed as a noxious weed in Ontario's Weed Control Act.

Hedgerows can and should be used in a variety of environments from urban yards to community gardens, hobby farms, and traditional large acre farm fields, and can be considered one of nature's greatest allies (and thus ours too)!

To plant a garden is ... to believe in summer, to have faith in tomorrow, to have hope in the future.

Looking for something to do while waiting for Spring?

There's plenty to see on DIG's YouTube channel – youtube.com/@DurhamDigs

Start a gardening blog.

Try listening to a podcast or taking a course, in-person or online. Here's an interesting one from Orchard People on fruit tree care – orchardpeople.com

Better yet – write some interesting articles for DigThis newsletter. We'll welcome your submissions.

Recipe

Apple Cranberry Rhubarb Crisp



Something simple, yet delicious. Use fresh fruit or frozen for a desert that works all year round. Vary fruit to your taste.

Topping

1/3 cup / 75 ml lightly packed brown sugar
1/3 cup / 75 ml oats
3 tbsp / 45 ml whole wheat flour
1 tsp / 5ml cinnamon
2tbsp / 30ml soft margarine or butter

Combine all ingredients. Mix well. Set aside.

Fruit

2/3 cup / 150ml granulated sugar
1 tbsp / 45ml all-purpose flour
Grated rind of 1 orange
2 cups / 500 ml sliced apples
2 cups / 500 ml diced fresh or frozen rhubarb
1 cup / 250 ml fresh or frozen cranberries

Combine sugar, flour and orange rind.

Add fruits, toss to coat fruit thoroughly with dry ingredients.

Spoon into 8 -cup / 2 L baking dish.

Sprinkle topping evenly over fruit.

Bake at 375 F / 190 C for 40-50 minutes or until fruit is tender. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Whip cream or ice cream optional.

GardenArt

Spotted in Whitby, this dead fruit tree was painted a lovely blue. It was a striking adornment in a backyard all summer. And now it's decorated for the season. Gorgeous!



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Editor Mary Drummond

Contributors Adrian Hogendoorn
Ruth Latimer
Feed The Need Durham

Layout Latimer Graphics

WEBSITE www.durhamdigs.ca

EMAIL info@durhamdigs.ca

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/DurhamDIGs

TWITTER twitter.com/durhamdigs

INSTAGRAM [Instagram- @durhamdigs](https://www.instagram.com/durhamdigs)

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