

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



MARCH 2013

GARDEN NEWS

REGISTRATION FOR NEW GARDENERS is coming up fast — Saturday, March 30. If you know someone who would like to garden, let her (or him) know about registration — 10 to noon at the Recreation Dep't. (behind Smith Vocational High School). Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Plots go fast, so many people come early to stand in line. A wait list is maintained for those who can't be accommodated on Saturday.

NEW GARDENERS: There will be an **ORIENTATION MEETING** for you on Wednesday, April 17, 7-8:30 P.M., at the Community Room at Forbes Library. The Garden Committee will introduce themselves; they'll review Garden rules and guidelines, give tips about making the most of your plot, and answer your questions. If you attend, you'll have a chance to win one of several great door prizes.

The first **GARDEN WORKSHOP** of the season will be **GETTING STARTED**, with Julie Abramson, Master Gardener and friendly person. Meet on Saturday, April 20, at 10:30 A.M., at the Recreation Dep't., 90 Locust St., behind Smith Vocational High School (where New Gardener Registration was held). Julie will discuss clearing your plot, use of compost, fertilizer, and mulch; deciding what plants to grow and how to space them in the garden;

organic practices; — and more. She'll also answer your questions. Registration is not required. If you have questions, e-mail Julie at JABRAMSON@ALBANY.EDU.



2013 GARDEN CALENDAR

NEW GARDENER REGISTRATION

Saturday, March 30
(10 A.M.–noon, Rec. Dep't)

ORIENTATION FOR NEW GARDENERS

Wednesday, April 17
(7-8:30 P.M., Forbes Library)

SPRING CLEANUP DAY

April 27

GETTING STARTED WORKSHOP

with Julie Abramson
April 20, 10:20 A.M., Rec. Dept.

IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED? INSPECTION

June 2

RAGWEED/WEED WALKTHROUGH

July 14

FALL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday, October 12

FALL INSPECTION

Sunday, October 19

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Second Monday each month
@ 6:30 P.M. at the Rec. Dept.
(or in the Garden during nice weather; call to confirm)

SPRING CLEANUP DAY will be Saturday, April 27. Meet at the tool shed to find out what tasks need doing to get the Garden ready for the 2011 season. This will count towards your required community service. Ed McGlew will deliver his excellent Red Bag compost (order from Ed ahead of time at EMCGLEW@EHS.UMASS.EDU), and Sandy Jaescke will have mulch straw available for sale.

Special thanks to **PETER PAYNE**, for building a new door for the tool shed. (The old one was vandalized, apparently by someone who was looking for something to steal from our tool shed).

We were sorry to learn of the passing of **CAROL GOULET**, who was for some time a member of the Garden Committee, and, with her sister Muriel, kept community service records for several years. She loved nasturtiums, and we will remember her when we plant our own this season.

ROCK DUST: The Garden has contracted to have a truckload of rock dust delivered to the Garden during the first week of May. Rock dust serves to remineralize the soil after it has been depleted by generations of plants and is reputed to improve the health and productivity of your plants. It will be available free to all gardeners, who are asked to limit themselves to one 5-gallon bucket per plot. We'll talk about how to use it when its arrival is imminent. 🌿

GARDEN TIPS



The poet's conceit is that April is the cruelest month, but any gardener can tell you that March wins that contest in a walk. March! February is over; spring, by some accounts has begun. So why does the month start with a snow storm, followed by freezing temperatures? Why is there a biting wind from the northwest? Why is the ground still frozen, so that dreams of planting peas on St. Patrick's Day are abandoned? And yet — one morning you walk outside and the wind has shifted. It comes from the south and it is soft and warm and smells of earth. The sun is shining, the sky is blue. You see the first crocus and the first foraging bee. Then you know that it is spring, and time to begin again the cycle of planting, watering, weeding, harvesting.

And, damn it, spraying — neem oil for flea beetles, copper fungicide for tomatoes, spinosad for larvae — and hand-picking potato beetles and bean beetles and squash beetles. There should be an easier way. Well, there is, and its name is **ROW COVER**. Strictly speaking, row cover is anything you use to cover your plants, including the old sheets you put over tomatoes to protect them from the first frost of autumn. But it generally refers to a specific kind of cover, a white fabric spun from polyester or polypropylene, that is extremely light-weight. It keeps the temperature underneath higher than the ambient temperature during the day and slows the loss of heat at night. It transmits light, and lets water through. At the same time, it keeps insects

out. Many people know it as Reemay, a trade name, and it is sold under other names as well.

HOW DO YOU USE IT? You cover a bed of plants with the fabric (it is 6 ft wide, and comes in longer lengths which may be cut to fit the size of your bed. You may simply drape it loosely over the plants. Be sure to leave plenty of extra fabric so the plants have room to grow. Secure the edges by covering them with soil, with boards, or — most neatly — with a length of pipe with the fabric rolled around it. Because it is so light in weight, it does not damage the growing plants. The alternative is to use hoops — wire half-circles whose ends are pushed into the ground; the fabric is draped over them, forming a tunnel; the edges are secured in the same way.

WHEN WOULD YOU USE IT? First, in the spring, when it will protect plants from frost and provide the extra warmth for seeds to germinate and seedlings to grow. Row covers vary in the degree of frost protection — from 4° to 8°F; in light transmittance — from 50% to 85%; and in weight — the heaviest weights go with the greatest degree of frost protection and the lowest degree of light transmittance. Most gardeners will find the greatest use for the lightest weight. **TIP: You can use two layers of the light-weight cover to increase frost protection.**

Second, in the spring and summer to protect plants from predatory insects. Plants that are especially susceptible to flea beetles — broccoli, eggplant, Chinese greens in general — should be covered as soon as the sets are in the ground

or the seeds germinate. With broccoli and eggplant, you may remove the cover when the plants are sizable; with eggplants, you must remove the cover to allow pollination. The same is true for other plants that require pollination to set fruit — for instance, beans, cucumbers, squashes, and melons. **TIP: If you grow cucumbers with all-female flowers, they don't require pollination and you can keep the cover on all season.** If you are planning to cover a particular plant, check specific instructions for when you should remove the cover. **TIP: If you have tried and failed to grow arugula because the flea beetles get more than you did, row cover is the answer.**

Be sure to check under the cover from time to time, to make sure that insect pests have not outwitted you by somehow gaining access to your plants. Many pests lay eggs in the soil at the base of the host plant, then hatch the next season to repeat the cycle; your row cover will be their protection. It's one good reason to rotate crops.

Third, in the fall to protect susceptible plants from frost. Often, the first frost is followed by two to three weeks of warm weather; it's extremely annoying to lose your crops to that frost when they would have kept producing.

Are there drawbacks to using row cover? **1)** It certainly requires a certain amount of labor to get the cover in place and secure it. However, the investment is one-time, whereas spraying or hand-picking are multi-time endeavors. **2)** It doesn't look as beautiful as rows of plants against the earth

(or mulch), but it is more beautiful than half-dead plants being consumed by insect larvae. 3) Using a synthetic product that requires fossil fuel for its production is objectionable, but you may in part mitigate that sin by saving cover and using it again the next year.

Most garden supply houses that do mail orders will carry row cover in different lengths. Also, check local garden stores to see whether they stock row cover.

I hope you will explore the many uses of row cover and discover for yourself that they will make you...

— *The Happy Gardener* 🍀

COMMUNITY SERVICE LOG: CHANGES FOR YEAR THREE

Hello, Fellow Gardeners:

Thank you for making the second year (2012) of this new system run even better than the first! It made the process of recording community service hours much faster and easier, using far less paper while streamlining the process with less confusion.

This year, I am simplifying and making some changes. You will have only two options for sending your community service to me (see below). In our continuing effort to reduce our impact on trees and encourage you to use the e-mail method, when you send me an e-mail detailing your community service, I will automatically add to your hours a one-time 15-minute community service credit!

Here are the two options:

1) **E-MAIL:** You can send me an e-mail at glorianohocg@gmail.com, stating the following information:

- a. The name of the person the plot is registered to (which may not be your name);
- b. Your plots numbers;
- c. The date and amount of time of community service;
- d. A brief description of the community service

2) **PAPER:** This is the less preferred option. I do know that a few of you do not use e-mail; therefore, I have created a paper form you may use. Use the form to write all the information needed to properly credit your community service (same as 1 a-d). Please, please, write legibly! I'm sorry, but we cannot accept those teeny, tiny bits of paper — it makes it very difficult to properly credit the correct people with their correct hours of service. I will keep the mailbox stocked, but please feel free to take one and copy it a few times for your use; expect the first batch to be in the mailbox by April.

As I did last year, I will keep the records on an Excel spreadsheet. This will enable me to post the community service hours with your balance (hours owed) twice a season on our community board behind the shed. I will post the listing by garden plots only to protect people's privacy.

Thank you in advance for embracing this way of recording community service. Already this new system has cut down on confusion. ... and has hopefully saved a few trees in the process.

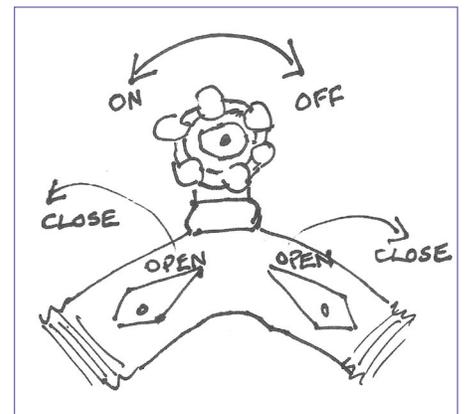
Your patience and cooperation has been much appreciated. 🍀

— *Gloria A. Santa Anna*
Plots T5, S5, R5
glorianohog@gmail.com

WATER SPLITTERS

This is a reminder to all gardeners — both those new to the Garden and more experienced gardeners — about the importance of properly shutting off the faucets.

Each hose connector beneath the faucet handle has its own little on/off toggle. This connector should be shut off **AT THE SAME TIME** as turning off the tap when you have completed your watering.



Left open, there is a good chance water will drip, or else some poor soul will turn on the faucet for a hose on one side and get an accidental soaking from the other side if there is no hose attached! 🍀

— *Frankie Dack*



Song sparrow atop an English Larch (which I trained to be a weeping larch) by Gloria Santa Anna

THE “GENEROUS EARTH FUND” — OUR INAUGURAL YEAR

This year the Northampton Community Garden is creating a special fund to assist members of our community who need financial assistance in order to have a viable garden. The **GENEROUS EARTH FUND subcommittee** has created a process through which both new and returning gardeners can apply for up to \$30.00 to help offset the cost of growing their own food.

In this inaugural year, the **GENEROUS EARTH FUND** has limited funds to distribute through an application process. Eligible community members include the unemployed, the disabled and those receiving SNAP benefits. Applications will be processed within 10 days of receipt and grants will be made on a **first-come, first-serve** basis. The application form can be found on the NCG web site. After April 5th, a limited supply can be found attached to the community bulletin board behind the shed.

In order to improve the **GENEROUS EARTH FUND**, awardees will be asked to fill out a very brief survey at the end of the growing season. In addition, The **GENEROUS EARTH FUND subcommittee** will submit a year-end report to the full Garden Community through the newsletter summarizing the participation and success of the fund.

Much thanks is due to all those garden members who contributed extra funds during the plot registration renewal process making this outreach fund possible.

As part of our effort to assist gardeners in addressing their needs, we will be establishing a Seed Exchange — whose slogan is “take a seed, leave a seed”. This Seed Exchange will be open to all community gardeners. Starting in May there will be two containers — one labeled for vegetables, one for flowers — held on the shelf in the tool shed. Please drop off viable seeds you will not be using. 🌱

Yours, the Generous Earth Fund subcommittee,

Spring Furlow,
Gloria A. Santa Anna,
Elizabeth Thulin



HELP YOURSELF! – NEIGHBORHOOD SPRING PERENNIAL PLANT SALE

Help Yourself! is local non-profit planting and promoting fruit trees and gardens in public places around town. We're offering low-cost native plants that produce berries, roots, nuts and herbs for yards and gardens. Over their long lives, they will yield hundreds of pounds of fresh fruit.

All plants are **\$5 apiece**, or **3 for \$12**.

To order, e-mail HELPHYOURSELF.NOHO@GMAIL.COM.

For more info visit WWW.HELPHYOURSELFNOHO.TK or call Dean at 617 515-5280.

Black Walnut — tree, abundant edible nuts. 70 ft+.

Nannyberry — shrubby tree, delicious raisin fruits. 20 ft.

Beach Plum — bush, makes small plums in late summer. 6 ft.

Rugosa Rose — thorny shrub, pink flowers, edible hips. 6 ft.

American Plum — small tree, flowers, plums in summer. 12 ft.

High-bush Cranberry — shrub, flowers, sour red fruit in fall. 10 ft.

Lemon Balm — spreading lemon smelling mint, lovely tea. 1-2 ft.

Bee Balm (Bergamot) — aromatic red wildflower, bees love it. 4-6 ft.

Peppermint — fragrant classic herb. Spreads. Relaxing, good for stomach aches. 1-2 ft.

Sunchoke — sunflower with delicious potato like root. Spreads, persists, v. productive. 6 ft.

Hops — flowers used in brewing beer, calming tea. Climbing vine for fence, porch. 20 ft'.

Concord Grape — fat grapes ripen in late summer. Edible leaves, tendrils. Climbs to 10 ft.

SOURCE: NH and NY state forest nurseries. 1-2 ft. seedlings. Expect 3-5 years for fruit.

Plants available for pick-up downtown in mid-April.

If you like, volunteers will be able to deliver and plant them for you in your yard.

Order deadline: **April 13, 2013!** 🌱