

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



MAY 2002

GARDEN NEWS

REGISTRATION UPDATE

At the end of April, there were 210 gardeners registered for 389 plots (out of 415 total), including 60 new gardeners. Registrations continue to trickle in, and we expect that most plots will be taken; remaining spaces will be turned over and planted with a cover crop by garden volunteers and allowed to remain fallow for this season.

CLEAN-UP DAY

Saturday, April 27, a gorgeous spring day, was perfect for clean-up projects around the Garden. Energetic crews cleared abandoned plots, tended the compost area, weeded shrub borders and the garden at the foot of our sign, and painted the tool shed. The Survival Center plot was prepared for planting, and 75 donated lettuce sets were put in place. Thanks to all the cheerful volunteers, the Garden starts the season with its best foot forward. Special thanks are due to JOHANNA HALBEISEN for organizing the sale of mulch hay; BART'S HOMEMADE for providing the excellent coffee; and CHRIS TEGHTSOONIAN for brewing and delivering it.

OPEN MEETING OF THE GARDEN COMMITTEE

All Community gardeners are invited to attend an open meeting of the Garden Committee on Monday, May 13. We'll meet at the Garden, near the garden shed, at 7:00 P.M. Please bring a lawn chair. (Rain date is Monday, May 20, same time and place.)

On the agenda: What additional landscaping should we plant – trees, shrubs, other? Should some plots be devoted to permanent plantings? Should we have specific parking areas? What ideas do you have for improving the Garden? Come to this meeting and join the discussion.

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND PLANT SWAP

Memorial Day weekend – May 25-27 – is the traditional

time in New England to put in tomatoes. In celebration, we will have a take-it-or-leave-it Plant Swap at the Garden, plus refreshments and a variety of Community Service tasks for volunteers.



PLANTING DEADLINE

Sunday, June 2 is the last day to start planting your plot(s). We'll have an inspection at 4:00 p.m. Sunday. If your plot is still unused – and if there is a waiting list for plots – the plot may be assigned to another gardener. Don't delay – get the weeds out and get your plants in place.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Gardeners are reminded that each of us owes some hours helping with Garden projects – two hours if we have a single plot, plus an hour for each additional plot. Many got the season off to a good start by working on Cleanup Day. Others should look for the list of projects posted on the bulletin board at the tool shed, updated bi-weekly. Also consider working on the Survival Center plot, making Survival Center deliveries, or helping put together the Newsletter.

A mailbox is mounted on the tool shed beside the bulletin board. When you complete Community Service hours, take a log slip from the bulletin board, fill it out, and put it in the mailbox. The slips will be collected on a regular basis, and the hours noted. Please take a minute to do this whenever you work on a Community project, so you'll get credit for the time you contribute.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR ROTATION

Betsey Wolfson, whose work you have admired as editor of the last three issues of the Newsletter, steps aside for the moment. The Summer edition will be edited by Sandra Suarez. Let her know (suarez87@hotmail.com or 587-0995) if you have an idea for a feature article (local garden news, garden book reviews, recipes for seasonal produce, gardening tips...). And remember that working on the Newsletter is a Community Service project.

GARDEN NEIGHBORS

More than a dozen gardeners have agreed to serve as Garden Neighbors. They are available – on a catch-as-catch-can basis – to answer anyone’s questions about the Garden and gardening practices, and especially to make new gardeners feel welcome. You may also share with them any concerns about Garden happenings, and they will be in touch with the Garden Committee. Look for them in their plots:

Mary Beth Averill	M-24; I-32, 33
Dawn Baker	C-9
Donn Boulanger	K-13
Ellen Carter	Q,R-7, 8
Ellie Cook	O-14, 16; N-16
Eric Howard	L,K-3, 4
Mimi Kaplan	E,F,G,H-9
Robin Kirkpatrick	S,T-3
Shirley Landry	H-24, 25
Sue Lindgren	K-24, 25
Joann Lutz	F-3, 4
Sylvia Michaels	F-11, 12, 13
Catherine Murphy	L-1, 2
Jane Noll	I,J-15; H-13, 14
Glenn Rubeck	F-12, 20; E1
Iain Stewart	I,J-30, 31
Pat Woods	Q,R-9, 10

—Mimi Teghtsoonian & Mary Beth Averill

www.nohogarden.org

Our virtual garden is now online! The web page may look a little bare, but it’s early in the season. We plan to post community garden announcements and information, photographs, newsletters, recipes, and links to other gardening sites. Your input is essential. Please send your suggestions or submissions to zzylvie@aol.com or click on Community Garden Questions. Check back periodically to watch as our web site grows. We’re also assembling a listserv that will enable us to send announcements to all gardeners with e-mail. If you’d like to be included, please send your address to zzylvie@aol.com.

—Betsey Wolfson

GARDEN NOTES

LAST FROST

May 9 is the average date of last frost in this area. Unless we are in the midst of an unusual cold spell, you can start seeds or sets of frost-sensitive plants by a week after that. Bean and cucumber seeds can go in then if the soil is warm – between 70° and 85°. You can take a chance on tomato plants if the weather is warm. Heat-lovers like peppers, eggplant, and basil will just sulk until the weather really warms up – mid-June is not too late.

BEDDING PLANTS

Many gardeners start plants from seeds, while others prefer to start with bedding plants in order to get a jump on the season. There are many excellent local sources, which include :

- ANDREW’S GREENHOUSE – 1178 South East Street, Amherst (413-253-2937)
- ANNIE’S GARDEN STORE – Route 116, North Amherst (413-549-6359)
- BLUE MEADOW FARM – Meadow Road, Montague Center (413-367-2394)
- FLORENCE FARMER’S MARKET – Florence center, Wednesday 2:00-4:00
- GOLDEN HARVEST – Damon Road, Northampton (413-586-6246)
- HADLEY GARDEN CENTER – Route 9, Hadley (584-1423)
- LAURENITIS VEGETABLE STAND – Rt. 116, Sunderland (413-665-4860)
- NORTHAMPTON FARMER’S MARKET – downtown Northampton, Saturday A.M.

CALENDAR

MAY 13 / Monday
Garden Committee meeting
at the Garden

May 26-28 /
Memorial Day Weekend
Plant Swap

JUNE 2 / Sunday
Plots should be planted
4:00 P.M. Inspection

JUNE 10 / Monday
Garden Committee meeting
at the Garden

JULY 21 / Sunday
Weed and Ragweed check

PASTE TOMATOES

Lee Reich’s gardening column in the New York Times on April 21 rated paste tomatoes for their tastiness in sauces. Winners were San Marzano (“best-tasting tomatoes after cooking”), Amish Paste (“full-bodied and rich”), and Anna’s Russian (“most tomatoey flavored stew ... and most intensely red”); not recommended was Roma (“insipid”). 🌱

—Mimi Teghtsoonian

SURVIVAL CENTER PROJECT SURVIVES!

Each year, the Community Garden collects produce donated from individual gardens as well as what's harvested from the Survival Center plot around the tool shed, and contributes it to the Northampton Survival Center, which provides food supplements to those on a limited budget. This year we're pleased to be able to continue this project, thanks to Jane Hillman and Trudy Hooks, who will manage the Survival Center plot, and to Heather Damon, who will coordinate Survival Center deliveries (each Tuesday and Thursday after June 1).

If you indicated an interest in either the working on plot or making deliveries, you should receive a notice from Jane, Trudy, or Heather by the first of June. If you want to get in touch with them, you can find Jane at wdp@javanet.com or 586-6399 (h), 527-5665 (w); Trudy at trudyhooks@hotmail.com or 584-6885; or Heather at hmdamon@earthlink.net or 586-1067.

All gardeners should be aware that any surplus produce may be donated to the Survival Center; donations should be put on or under the picnic table near the tool shed on Tuesdays and Thursdays before 6:00 P.M. If you will be away and want us to harvest the surplus, let Heather know. 🌱

DROUGHT GARDENING

At this writing, the Board of Public Works has not announced a need for water restrictions due to drought, but it remains a possibility at some time during the summer. Though we haven't been able to find out just what restrictions might apply to the Garden, it would be prudent to plan ahead and plant your garden with the possibility of water restrictions in mind.

Gardening during a drought presents a number of challenges, but the intrepid community gardener should not be daunted. There are a variety of ways to conserve both water use and physical energy, and to make creative choices with your plantings to meet these challenges – “opportunities” as optimists like to say.

HOW TO WATER: Water deeply approximately once a week, rather than doing frequent shallow watering. The deeper watering allows plants to use water more effectively, helps them grow a stronger root system while losing less moisture to surface evaporation, and frees you to do other fun things, like weeding. When you water, do it in the early morning or late afternoon to prevent moisture loss by evaporation. You may have heard that evening watering makes plants prone to fungi, mildews and slugs. This has not been my experience – at least not during drought conditions – so don't be afraid to give it a try. Also, be sure to check your hoses and spigots for leaks, and repair or discard them when necessary.

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The garden committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 7:00 P.M., near the shed in the Garden. The next meetings will be on May 13 and June 10.

All gardeners are welcome to attend and participate; check with the Recreation Dept. (587-1040) the day of the meeting to confirm the time.

Gardeners are welcome to suggest items for the agenda. E-mail Mimi at mtex@smith.edu or call 584-0317.

MULCH, MULCH AND MULCH AGAIN – Mulches help to retain soil moisture and have the added benefit of keeping weeds at bay. Depending on your financial and aesthetic sensibilities, you could use hay, straw, cacao hulls, wood chips, various cloths fabricated expressly for this purpose, or even plastic sheeting. All have their strengths and drawbacks. Ask other gardeners what has worked for them or what they recommend. You can even use a “living mulch” to create a humid microclimate – for example, densely planted lettuces next to taller vegetables.

Adding organic materials to the soil also helps soil retain moisture. Composted manures, compost, and turned under cover crops (green manure) can make a dramatic difference to the health of plants under the stress of drought.

Another way of approaching the whole drought situation is to go with it, rather than fight it. This is done through xeriscaping, otherwise known as “dry

scaping” or gardening requiring little moisture. Simply put, this means cultivating types of plants that naturally favor a dry soil. The community garden soil actually lends itself very favorably to this practice. You may have noticed that without amendments, the community garden soil is very sandy, with great drainage. Lots of plants thrive naturally on this type of soil. Think of the wonderfully architectural Scotch thistles and yuccas, or the colorful prairie meadow plants like Echinacea and Rudbeckia.

Many herbs also love these conditions. There are the numerous varieties of sage (both annual & perennial), mint, oregano and thyme, just to name some of the more common ones. Many ordinarily invasive plants like Physostegia (Obedience Plant) can be contained easily in a dry soil. Contrary to what we might picture, many arid climate plants are actually quite delicate. My favorites of these are the aromatic Lavenders and Santolinas typical of the Mediterranean. Then, of course, there are the beautifully airy Gauras, native to Texas but grown as annuals here, as well as the daintily-starred Tunicas.

If these are not to your taste, you might prefer succulents such as the Sedums, or the myriad alpine rock garden plants available at local garden centers. There are many, many more drought tolerant planting options; just remember to conserve water and enjoy your summer’s gardening! ✿

—Sylvia Michaels

AIDS CARE GARDEN PROJECT

The gardeners of the AIDS CARE Garden Project are actively seeking volunteers to help out in their newly-expanded garden at the Northampton Community Garden. The AIDS CARE Garden was first planted in 1998 and has provided an abundant supply of organic fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers for our friends and neighbors living with HIV/AIDS. The AIDS CARE Garden Project also provides a social and educational activity for anyone interested in organic, community gardening regardless of HIV status.

Garden Work Parties have been organized for Wednesday, May 1 from 4 to 6 P.M., Sunday, May 12 from 10:00 A.M. to noon, and Wednesday, May 22 from 4 to 6 P.M. Come for an hour or two, one day or all three! Our plots are L-7, K-7, L-8 & K-8 (near the soccer

fields). Remember that no experience is ever necessary to volunteer in our garden. Also, if you have any “extra” starter plants, please bring them along. We’ve expanded our garden from one to four plots this year and have lots of room to grow additional crops. Please call Court Cline at 586-8288 if you have any questions. See you in the garden. ✿

—Court Cline

Volunteer Coordinator, AIDS CARE/Hampshire County
(413) 586-8288

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL FARMERS!

One of the wonderful things about living in Hampshire County is our proximity to numerous Farmers Markets, where it’s easy and fun to shop for local produce. Early in the season you can buy starter plants; later on, stock up on annuals and perennials, fruits and vegetables, heirloom tomatoes, irises, cheese, bread, maple syrup, soap, and lots more.

Last summer at the Amherst Farmers Market I discovered NANTES CARROTS – fat, chubby, unbelievably sweet carrots; and TOMATILLOS – those round, green things that look like they’re wrapped in pale green parchment. The tomatillo man had samples of tomatillo salsa at his stand, and one taste had me hooked!

Eating fresh, locally grown food is good for you, and it helps sustain the farms and farmers in our area. Meet the people who grow your food at these Farmers Markets:

AMHERST / Spring Street parking lot, Amherst Center /
Saturday, 7:30 A.M. - 1:30 P.M. / May to November

EASTHAMPTON / Union Plaza /
Tuesday, 2:30 P.M. - 6:30 P.M. / May to October

FLORENCE / Florence Civic Center /
Wednesday, 2:00 P.M. - 6:00 P.M. / May to October

NORTHAMPTON / Gothic Street, Downtown /
Saturday, 7:00 A.M. - 12:30 P.M. / May to November ✿

—Betsey Wolfson

