



# Northampton Community Garden Newsletter

## Garden News

### Weed/Ragweed Plot Check Sunday, July 21

There will be a check for weed and ragweed in plots. (NOTE: This is a week later than announced in the last Newsletter.) The inspection teams will be looking for weeds, including grass at the edge of the plot that are getting ready to go to seed and ragweed. If they find either (or, heaven forbid, both) in your plot you'll get an e-mail or phone call asking you to get rid of them.

Why have such a check? First, weeds take water and nutrients that your vegetables and flowers need. Second, even if you prefer to keep weeds remember that their seeds won't stay with you but will migrate to adjacent plots--and your neighbors probably don't want them at all. Third, because many people have a strong allergic reaction to ragweed pollen which makes it unpleasant or even impossible for them to work in the Garden. Out of consideration both to your plants and to your neighbors, we ask you to please keep weeds under control.

### Special Thanks to

**Heather Damon** and **Rick Bean**, for painting and posting the signs asking dog walkers to leash their dogs. The signs look great!

**Jane Hillman** and **Trudy Hooks**, for organizing work on the Survival Center plot around the tool shed and the two new plots nearby.

**Ed Ferguson**, who is leaving the Garden Committee, for his many contributions to the smooth running of the Garden.

### Garden Committee

The next meeting of the Garden Committee will be Monday, July 15, 7:00 p.m., at the Garden if weather permits, at the Rec Department if not. All gardeners are welcome to attend, share concerns, and propose ideas to improve the Garden.

### Dumpster Dilemma

A major item in our budget is the fee for bi-weekly pickups for the dumpster. Each pickup costs \$145, which, in a gardening season, adds up to \$900. Several gardeners have suggested that we eliminate the dumpster service and each be responsible for removing trash that we bring in or create. Others are doubtful that everyone would be responsible and fear that trash would accumulate. We are compromising by going to monthly pickups. Please try to limit your use of the dumpster to diseased plant material and items that would be burdensome to transport away from the Garden.

### Water Matters

The divider at each spigot has been replaced by a new, sturdier model thanks to **Bill Griffiths**, our water conservationist. Some of you had already replaced the dividers; those replacements remain. **Bill** has also put an identifying number (from 1 to 10) on each post. If there are problems with the water supply (broken divider, leaky connection, leaky hose, etc.) with which you'd like help please call or e-mail **Bill** (923-9994, bgriffydd@yahoo.com) tell him the problem and the number, and he'll respond promptly.

The predicted drought conditions in the Northeast have been alleviated by greater than normal rainfall this spring so we don't need to take extraordinary conservation measures. We continue our policy of using water wisely and wasting as little as possible. Some guidelines:

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## Garden News cont'd

- ◆ Water early in the morning or late in the day when possible to decrease loss by evaporation.
- ◆ Water close to the roots of plants rather than throwing water high in the air; this also decreases evaporation loss, prevents dirt from splashing on plants, and is better for mildew-prone plants.
- ◆ Check the soil before you water. Poke a finger in; if it's dry an inch down it's time to water; if it's moist at that level watering is not needed.
- ◆ It's better to water deeply but infrequently rather than just sprinkling your plants daily. Aim for an inch of water a week--either by rain or through supplementary watering--more if it's unusually hot and dry.
- ◆ It's not unusual for plants to look wilted at the end of a hot day; don't rush to water them. If they look wilted in the morning, then water is called for.

### NOFA Conference

The Northeast Organic Farming Association is holding its annual conference August 9-11 at Hampshire College. There are three days of workshops, some 200 of them, including Flea Beetle Forum, Eating Locally 12 Months a Year, Growing Green Beans & Pumpkins, Introduction to Biointensive Growing, Culinary Herbs from N. E. Gardens, Native Grass & Wildflower Meadow, Growing Fertile Soil, Using Herbs and Weeds for Health, and Weedless Gardening. The program also includes entertainment for the whole family--a party and contra dance on Friday evening, a fair and farmer's market on Saturday afternoon, and entertainment and zydeco music on Saturday evening. Conference registration is \$78 for 3 days (less for a single day), plus \$15 for non-NOFA members. For further information or a registration form, contact **Dennis & Audrey Cronin**, 508-799-2278, before 9:00 p.m., or [nofareg@juno.com](mailto:nofareg@juno.com).

### Community Garden goes online

Our web site is up and running! Please visit the site at: [www.nohogarden.org](http://www.nohogarden.org) next time you are on the web. You will find a photo gallery, interesting links, past issues of the Newsletter, updates and more. While at the site please make sure to send any comments, pictures, and suggestions you may have to: [info@nohogarden.org](mailto:info@nohogarden.org)

## Natural Pest Control For Your Garden

There is nothing more delicious than a luscious strawberry or juicy tomato, picked at the peak of ripeness, and on your table ten minutes later. If you have never tasted vegetables that have not been treated with chemicals, you do not know what you have been missing. Many people think that organic gardening is too difficult. Others think it is too time consuming.

The first thing to know about organic gardening is that the best defense against insects and disease is prevention. When you are planning your garden, choose plants that are well suited for your climate. Choose a variety of plants, so that if you do get an infestation of a particular insect it will not wipe out your entire crop. Keep your plants healthy. The best way to do this is to have your soil tested in either the



spring or fall. Your county extension office will do this for a nominal fee, and make recommendations on what to add to your soil for optimum health. Something as simple as lime, well-rotted manure, or compost can make all of the difference in your garden's health. Once your soil is in condition, go ahead and plant your crops. When you plant your crops, make sure to give each plant plenty of room to allow for the circulation of air. This greatly reduces the chances of fungal infections. When planting your vegetables you may want to plant some herbs among the rows, as some herbs have pest-repelling properties. Sage repels cabbage moths and flea beetles, chives repel aphids, and marigolds repel a wide variety of harmful insects. Once you get your vegetables planted, plant a flower border. Wildflowers and sweet alyssum provide food and shelter for beneficial insects

such as ladybugs and praying mantises, as well as frogs, lizards, and birds, which will eat pests from your garden. By keeping your garden weeded you also reduce hiding area for pests.

Despite your best efforts, you will undoubtedly see some insects in your garden. The first thing you should do is look carefully at the bug. Is it actually eating the plant, or just resting on the leaves? If you deduce that it is a harmful bug, pick it off your plant. You can dispose of it any way you like. This is the simplest method of pest control, and a stroll through your garden at the end of the day may be all it takes to keep your garden pest free. If you feel like doing a little more, you can spray your plants off with soapy water. Just add a squirt of lemon scented dish soap to your watering can and make a pass over the affected plants. They will appreciate

the bath. If your plants are strong and healthy, they will be able to withstand the occasional nibble from a pest. If your plants develop a fungus, you can bring it under control by picking out all affected leaves and plants and throwing them away, but not in your compost! Do not work in your garden while it is wet, or you will spread the fungus to other plants. If things do get out of hand and you have a real problem, there are several organic solutions. Sticky traps and row covers are available at your

local garden center, and are simple to use. *Bacillus thuringiensis* is also available from your garden center, and disrupts the digestive tract of leaf eating insects. There are also a variety of insecticidal soaps, horticultural oils, and garlic and hot pepper sprays that will work on pests. The most important thing is to identify your pest before you treat your plant. If you do not recognize the bug take one into your garden center, they should be able to help. Likewise, if your plant develops a fungus, take a

few leaves into the store, and they should be able to recommend an organic solution.

Organic gardening is both fun and rewarding. The challenge of staying in tune with your garden is rewarded with succulent fruit and vegetables and an incredible harvest.

-name withheld by author's request

**Related web sites:**

- [www.gardenguides.com](http://www.gardenguides.com)
- [www.buglogical.com](http://www.buglogical.com)
- [www.planetnatural.com](http://www.planetnatural.com)

## Rocky Hill Cohousing Seeking Members

A new cohousing community is being planned for Northampton.

What is cohousing? Cohousing communities are cooperative neighborhoods designed and developed by their residents. Individual, self-sufficient homes are clustered around a Common House with facilities like a dining room, large kitchen, children's playroom, and library. Parking is typically in lots rather than individual driveways, and homes are linked with pedestrian walkways. Most cohousing communities share 2 or 3 meals a week in the Common House, as well as

other community projects and celebrations. Decisions are made by consensus, with a focus on shared resources and respectful communication. Cohousing has been called "the 50s neighborhood of the modern day," with its focus on knowing one's neighbors and providing a safe and nurturing environment for children. Many residents of cohousing point to the daily contact with their neighbors as providing a connectedness, continuity



and quality of life often lacking in today's busy, disjointed, and isolating lifestyles.

Rocky Hill Cohousing will be a community of 28 clustered homes on 27 forested acres with a planned sledding hill and a pond. We will share resources, community projects and celebrations with our neighbors. We're planning healthy, super-insulated solar ready homes at reasonable prices. Come join the community and improve the quality of your life. Call **Sharon** 413-584-9987 or visit: [www.rockyhillcohousing.org](http://www.rockyhillcohousing.org)

## Warm Spring Vegetable Salad

- 1-1/2 lbs fava beans, shelled
  - 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
  - 3 tbls extra-virgin olive oil
  - 3 tbls chopped fresh chervil
  - 8 oz asparagus, thinly sliced on the diagonal
  - 4 oz (or 4 small) carrots, peeled, thinly sliced or julienned
  - 1 lb green peas, shelled
  - 1/2 small fennel bulb, cored, thinly sliced crosswise
  - 1/2 tsp salt, plus salt to taste, pepper to taste, tarragon vinegar to taste
- Bring 3 quarts of water to a boil, put

in the shelled fava beans & cook 1 minute. Take them out with a slotted spoon (save the water), rinse briefly to cool, then remove their outer skins. Put the peeled beans in a bowl along with the sliced onion, olive oil & chervil. Return the water to a boil.

Prepare the rest of the vegetables & add to the boiling water, along with 1/2 tsp salt. Check after a minute to see if the vegetables are done; cook longer if necessary.

Drain the vegetables in a colander &

shake off as much as possible. Add them to the onions & beans & gently mix everything together using a rubber spatula.

Taste & season with salt, if desired, & a grinding of pepper. Gradually add vinegar until it is as tart as you like.

Serve right away.

- from Deborah Madison, founder of "Greens," San Francisco's pioneering-vegetarian restaurant



*Where flowers bloom so does hope.*  
~Lady Bird Johnson

*Give a weed an inch and it will take a yard.* ~Author Unknown

*To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves.*

~Mahatma Gandhi

*He who plants a garden, plants happiness.* ~Chinese proverb

*ness.* ~Chinese proverb

*If you are not killing plants, you are not really stretching yourself as a gardener.*

~J. C. Raulston

# Heirloom Vegetables

Not so long ago, heirloom vegetables and flowers were the rarified charges of determined seed-savers; of families and community groups dedicated to the preservation of the rich variety of cultivars that have been grown and passed along for generations.

As gardeners today we are fortunate to have access to heirloom seeds and plants and to be able to participate in saving the many varieties that are threatened with extinction. Heirloom vegetables and flowers have a new-found popularity in catalogues and magazines. For gardeners and small growers, they are an important part of maintaining the genetic diversity of our food crops.

## What is an heirloom vegetable?

There are three general characteristics that define an heirloom variety:

- (1) they are open-pollinated
- (2) they are at least 50 years old
- (3) they need to have some history of being saved on a personal or small community level.

## What does the term *open-pollinated* mean?

When something is *open pollinated*, it means that the cultivar can be grown from seed, and will come back true to type. If you plant the heirloom tomato 'Green Grape' and you save and store its seed this year, when you plant that seed next year, you will get the same plant with the same fruits and the same unique flavor.

Vegetatively propagated plants like shallots, potatoes and asparagus can still be considered heirlooms even though we do not generally grow them from seed.

Modern F1 hybrids (a term which refers to the 'first filial generation' plants which are the product of crossing two separate, genetically uniform parent strains) produce seeds that generally prove sterile or do not produce true-to-type offspring.

## Why is there a time restriction on the concept of 'heirloom' vegetables?

How old a variety must be to be considered an heirloom is still a point of

discussion. While it may seem that the 50 year mark is arbitrary, most modern plant hybridization has occurred since around 1950. In the late 40's and early 50's plant breeders introduced the first hybrid plant lines that were inbred. Some purists consider heirlooms to be only those varieties developed and preserved on a non-commercial level. Others take a wider view, including seeds that were dropped from the seed trade long ago and were saved over the ensuing years within families or community groups.

## What's the relationship between seed saving and heirloom vegetables?

For gardeners who want to save their seeds, open-pollinated plants are the only choice. If you plant an F1 hybrid and save the seed, (a) it may never germinate (because it may be sterile), and (b) if it does germinate, you have no idea what plant you're going to get – it may have none of the important traits of the parent plant. That's the reason you have to buy new hybrid seeds year after year.

For generations, gardeners and farmers have saved seeds. Now, with genetically modified organisms, it can even be illegal for farmers to save seeds – because the company that developed the organism owns that seed. With identified heirlooms, you own the seed if you own the plant that produced the fruit that produced the seed.

## Can Vegetables be patented?

Patenting is becoming an increasingly controversial aspect of hybridization, genetic modification, and agribusiness. The US currently allows the patenting of newly developed hybrid plants, and heirlooms that have not been previously named and marketed.

## Why grow heirloom vegetables?

My reasons for growing heirloom vegetables include flavor, quality, and the unique and beautiful shapes and colors. But another important reason to grow these plants is biodiversity. Ge-

netic diversity is crucial because the vulnerability of our food supply (both in terms of disease and exploitation by big business) is inversely proportional to its diversity. If farmers and gardeners everywhere all plant the same crop, and that crop fails for some reason, then that crop fails everywhere. If we plant only the narrow lines of conventional hybrids, we are settling for vegetables developed for large-scale production, shipping and storage. Growing heirlooms is a good way to understand the vast array of food crops available in and adapted

to your gardening area. We're meant to grow different things in different places. We, in Northampton, can't grow every bean or every tomato, nor should we. Community gardeners will note that diverse plantings are much less susceptible to being wiped out by disease than homogenous plantings of single varieties.

## What is the relationship between biodiversity and hybridization?

Commercial pressures in agribusiness have resulted in a narrowing of overall choice of seeds for today's gardener. According to *Heirloom Vegetables*, by Sue Stickland, "In the US and Canada, two thirds of the nearly 5000 non-hybrid vegetable varieties that had been offered in 1984 had been dropped by 1994... In France, the 1925 seed list of the Vilmorin seed company offered more varieties of cabbages, beetroot, melons, and onions than were available on the entire French seed market in the 1980s."

-Susan Mikula

## Related web sites

Deep Diversity/Seeds of Change  
[http://store.yahoo.com/seeds\\_of\\_change](http://store.yahoo.com/seeds_of_change)

Johnny's Selected Seeds  
<http://www.johnnyseeds.com>

The Thomas Jefferson Center for Historic Plants

<http://www.monticello.org/shop/>

Eastern Native Seed Conservatory  
email: [natseeds@aol.com](mailto:natseeds@aol.com)

