

# NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



# NEWS



MARCH 2003

“ TO THE EYE OF THE GARDENER snow is no winding-sheet, none of the covering of death; it is the warm wrapping mantle of beauty asleep. Beneath the whiteness lie endless radiances of color, wonders untold in flower, plant, tree. How can those who do not garden, who have no part nor lot in the great fraternity of those who watch the changing year as it affects earth and its growth, how can they keep warm their hearts in winter? ”

— from *Pages from a Garden Note-Book* by Mrs. Francis King, 1921

## SIGNS OF SPRING

EVERY YEAR at new gardener registration a couple of seasoned gardeners (like myself) volunteer to help new gardeners find their plots. It seems that this should be a fairly easy task since the garden is laid out on a geometric grid, but as I can attest from experience, this is not as simple as it appears. Many of the plots are unmarked, and borders have shifted (if they ever corresponded to our garden map at all).

### WE NEED SIGNS!

Gardeners, old and new, are encouraged to mark your plots. Clear plot designations will help new gardeners find their plots, and they'll also help avoid potentially painful and unfortunate mix-ups. New gardeners have been known to accidentally roto-till or mow over someone else's established plot that was home to a variety of rare and painstakingly nurtured perennials. At other times there have been disputes about a particular plot where more than one gardener claimed ownership. I personally know of at least one incidence of each of these unfortunate and totally avoidable events.

Clear plot markings will also help during our annual ragweed inspection, when volunteers do their best

to accurately identify plots. There have been a few cases of plot mis-identification, in which a notice about overgrown weeds has been sent out in error, and we'd like make sure this doesn't happen again.

A garden sign can be simple or very elaborate, limited only by your imagination, time, money, and the dictates of common decency. It can be as simple as a number clearly painted on an obvious rock or piece of slate or the standard wooden sign on a post, or as elaborate as a number/letter incorporated into

some type of gate/fence-like structure or mosaic paving stones or, well, anything you can

think of... This year I'm short on ideas, time and money, so I plan to use a piece of paper marked brightly on both sides and covered with a plastic page protector stapled onto a stick. This probably won't last long, but it should make

it through registration, and I can recycle it for use on future inspections. If you have any particularly creative, whimsical or useful, efficient or cheap ideas not previously mentioned, feel free to submit them to future editions of the newsletter. Your sign might even find itself illustrated on our web page. As always, have fun with this and enjoy your new gardening year.



—Sylvia Michaels

## GARDEN NEWS

✿ As of March 10, 120 gardeners had renewed their registrations for 260 plots. This means there will be about 100 plots available for new gardeners. If someone you know is interested in gardening this year, please let her/him know about New Gardener registration (10 A.M. – noon, Saturday, March 29, at the Recreation Dept., behind Smith Vocational School); there's no need to come early to stand in line – there are more than enough plots to meet anticipated demand.

✿ If you would like to fulfill your community service requirements by planting an unassigned plot for the Survival Center, perhaps as a project with other gardeners, let the Garden Committee know (e-mail [info@nohogarden.org](mailto:info@nohogarden.org) or surface mail to the Rec. Dept., or speak to a Committee member). We can tell you what plots are available, advise you about what to plant, and reimburse you for soil enrichment and for seeds and plant sets.

✿ This is the first edition of the Garden Newsletter that can be downloaded from our home page on the Web – [nohogarden.org](http://nohogarden.org) (rather than received by mail.) Gardeners who chose to take advantage of this offer when they registered will save \$2, and a smaller mailing means savings in paper, postage, and volunteer labor for the Garden. We'll send a notification by e-mail when the Newsletter is available for download.

✿ This year Garden Neighbors will be easier to find; look for plots with a tall bamboo stake topped by a distinctive pennant.

✿ The Garden Committee has clarified procedures for dealing with neglected or abandoned plots. Here's what will happen: A list of plots that fail to pass an inspection (midsummer check or fall cleanup) or that appear to be abandoned will be submitted to the Garden Committee at the first possible date. The Committee, in each case, will attempt to get in touch with the gardener and suggest what needs to be done to bring the plot into compliance with Garden standards, with a mutually-acceptable deadline established. If the deadline is not met, or if the

Committee cannot contact the gardener, the situation will come to the next Committee meeting for discussion and resolution. (Action taken could include helping the gardener maintain the plot, reassigning the plot, or clearing and planting a cover crop.)

## ANSWERS TO SOME FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS:

### When will the water be turned on?

Usually around the middle of April. Until then, you will have to bring water from home to water seeds and sets.

### When can I start working my plot?

Wait until the soil has drained enough so that if you pick up a handful of soil and squeeze it, it crumbles apart when you poke it. If it holds together in a muddy ball, you'll damage the soil structure if you try to work it.

### What's the earliest I can plant?

In an ordinary year, April 1 is about the earliest you might think about planting seeds of onions, peas, radishes, spinach, and turnips. Wait a couple of weeks longer before planting seeds of beets, leeks, lettuce, broccoli plants, and onion plants and sets. If it is colder than normal, wait a week or so.

### If I have questions about gardening, whom can I ask?

Your first resource is a Garden Neighbor (see above for finding same) or another gardener. Or send in your question via e-mail to [info@nohogarden.org](mailto:info@nohogarden.org). ✿

— Mimi Teghtsoonian

## CALENDAR

### NEW GARDENER REGISTRATION

Saturday, March 29

10 A.M. – noon

Recreation Dept., 90 Locust St., behind Smith Vocational School

### GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, April 14, 7 P.M.

Recreation Dept.

### CLEANUP DAYS

Saturday & Sunday, April 26 & 27

(rain dates, May 3 & 4)

10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

### GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, May 12, 7 P.M.

Recreation Dept.

### LAST DAY TO START PLANTING

Sunday, June 1

Teams will check the Garden from 3 P.M. – 5 P.M.

## NOFA/MASS

I have come across a wonderful local organization that promotes organic living. The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts (NOFA/Mass) includes farmers, gardeners, landscapers and consumers working to educate members and the general public about the benefits of raising and consuming organic food locally. Since many of us in the Northampton Community Garden are trying to live organically, the activities of NOFA/Mass should interest us all. NOFA/Mass sponsors programs and publications to promote organic awareness. In response to the growing demand for biotech-free seeds, NOFA held an all-day program in January about high-quality seed production.

The annual NOFA/Mass Winter Conference, held at Quabbin Regional High School in Barre, MA, on Saturday, January 25, featured workshops, a potluck lunch, a farmer's market and exhibits, and a children's program. Some of the workshops which caught my eye were: Growing Great Organic Carrots (the most popular root vegetable in the American diet) and The Basics of (stir-fry) Wok Cooking (with the chef of Amber Waves Restaurant in Amherst). There was also a workshop about

organizing to get your town meeting to pass a resolution opposing genetic engineering in food. Sound far-fetched? Not so! Last year five Western Mass. town meetings passed such resolutions – Buckland, Gill, Heath, Leverett, and Wendell. Could Northampton – with the prodding of Community Gardeners – be next?

Every August NOFA/Mass holds a three-day summer conference at Hampshire College.

NOFA/Mass offers lots of free or inexpensive publications for the organic farmer, gardener and consumer. The NOFA/Mass manual, "Standards for Organic Land Care," is the first of its kind in the country. One of their most popular items is the "Organic Food

Guide," which links producers and consumers in Massachusetts. Revised annually, it lists all the organic farmers in the state and their available products as well as farmers markets where consumers can find local organic food.

My favorite is NOFA's quarterly "The Natural Farmer." It covers news of the national and international organic movement, how-to-do-it articles, listings for apprenticeships and internships on organic farms, notices of farm land for sale, and lots of useful tidbits to raise organic awareness (e.g., an American Chemical Society study that revealed that "organic oranges contain, on average, 30% more vitamin C than conventional oranges.") Each issue of "The



"The Winter Garden" by Kathryn Stout

Natural Farmer” contains a lengthy supplement on a particular crop or topic. The Winter 2002-03 supplement is called “Beginning Farmers.” It’s a comprehensive guide for anyone considering organic farming (beyond their present practice in our Community Garden plots). It examines the problems and opportunities facing new farmers in New England (most of whom are young and come from non-farm backgrounds) and lists programs and resources available to help them. There’s advice on finding the right land, programs to connect retiring farmers with prospective new farmers, apprenticeship or internship on an organic farm as the best way to build skills and to see if farming is for you.

Organic food is the fastest growing sector of U.S. agriculture. Support to your local organic movement! Get a subscription to “The Natural Farmer” at \$10/year or by joining NOFA/Mass for \$30 (low income \$20). For further information contact Elaine Peterson, 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005. (978) 355-2853. Or, go to the NOFA/Mass web site for lots of useful information: <http://www.nofamass.org>. 🌸



— Ed Ferguson

### GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Garden Committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m., at the Recreation Dept. during fall, winter, and spring, and near the shed in the Garden in summer (weather permitting).

Next meetings are April 14, May 12, and June 9....

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](mailto:mtex@smith.edu) or call 584-0317.

### CALL FOR GARDEN SIGN DESIGN

Our large “Northampton Community Gardens” sign on Burts Pit Road is looking pretty shabby and is due for replacement. If you have some ideas for a new sign, sketch them out (include specs about how the sign will look and what materials would be used to make it) and submit to “Northampton Community Garden, Recreation Department, 90 Locust Street, Northampton, MA 01062.”

We’ll post designs on the bulletin board and ask Gardeners to pick their favorite. 🌸

## RIVER VALLEY MARKET MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Are you a member yet? Over 1,400 area families have already joined the natural foods co-op as founding members – inspired by a vision of a community-based grocery store specializing in fresh, local organic foods and supporting local farmers. Starting a new co-op is a grass-roots process. Together these friends and neighbors have raised nearly \$400,000, completed feasibility studies, and secured a location on King Street with a letter of intent. Store design is nearly completed, construction plans and financing and the lease will be finalized in the spring. A fall opening is targeted.

You can join now as a founding member-owner to help the co-op reach its 2,500 member financing goal. Co-op membership requires an investment of \$150 (but there are no annual fees). A payment plan is available. For more information and to join on-line, visit the Co-op’s web site: [www.rivervalleymarket.coop](http://www.rivervalleymarket.coop). Or pick up information at Bart’s Homemade in Northampton. Be part of the community team that is launching this fresh new food co-op! 🌸

