

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



JULY 2004

GARDEN NEWS

► The newest addition to the Garden is a **portable toilet** in the wood-chip area to the north, near the tool shed. Many gardeners have suggested this improvement over the years, and our improved financial status allows us to take action this year.

► Check out the demonstration plot maintained by **Master Gardeners** of Western Mass. It's just kitty-corner to the tool shed – look for the sign – and drop by Saturdays between 11 and 1 for advice or a garden chat with a Master Gardener.

► As the season progresses and vegetables and fruit ripen and flowers bloom, the Garden attracts – not only walkers who come to admire, who are welcome – but also **unwelcome guests** who help themselves to produce from gardeners' plots. If you see activity that looks suspicious, it's OK to ask the person if he/she has permission to harvest from that plot. If you're not convinced and you can get the license number of the person's car, phone in a report to the Recreation Department (587-1040), which will notify the police.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

✿ Sarah Metcalf, for the elegant signs reminding dog walkers to control their dogs.

✿ Rachel Smith, for her help in managing the compost pile.

✿ All gardeners, for remembering to put their compostable material on top of the pile.

✿ Madeleine Charney, for overseeing the Survival Center plot around the tool shed.

Gardeners are reminded that they may not park on the grass paths within the Garden. It's OK to drive your car in to unload heavy stuff, but it's not OK to park there while you work in your plot.

SURVIVAL CENTER DELIVERIES

This year the Survival Center has requested that we make deliveries in the morning – before 11 A.M. Since this time is not necessarily convenient for gardeners, Heather Damon has been picking up / collecting produce in the evening – on Tuesdays and Thursdays – and delivering the next morning.

Please leave your donations of produce at the picnic table near the shed before 6 P.M. (Tues. and Thur.). Heather would love some help making deliveries, too – contact her at hmdamon@earthlink.net. ✿

GARDEN CALENDAR

RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH!

Sunday, July 18

RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH

It's that time of year again – ragweed is about to come into flower and release the pollen that makes allergy sufferers miserable – giving them itchy eyes, running noses, and bad headaches. Our Garden has an ongoing campaign to reduce the amount of ragweed, and that requires everyone's cooperation.



Dr. John Meade, Rutgers Cooperative Extension

This is ragweed!

If you don't know what ragweed looks like, see the photo above, or ask someone.

PULL IT UP in your own plots. PULL IT UP in common areas. POINT IT OUT (in a friendly way) when you see it in other plots.

Ragweed is a relentless foe – every flowering plant produces thousands of seeds which can then lie dormant but capable of germinating for years.

This year's **ragweed walkthrough** will be Sunday afternoon, July 18. Teams of volunteers will be looking for ragweed in plots and marking offending plants with orange tape.

If you find the tape in your plot, please pull up and discard the offending plants immediately.

The teams will also be looking for plots with a big border of **uncut grass** – you should keep the grass around your plot mowed down to less than 6 inches. If it has gotten away from you, use the string-trimmer mower or a hand-held weed whacker to take it down.

Finally, the teams will be looking for **plots** that seem to have been **abandoned**. If your plot is one, you'll get a phone call inquiring about your intentions. 🍀

IN OUR BACKYARDS

River Valley Market Garden Tour comes to the Community Garden Sunday, July 18: 10 A.M. – 2 P.M.

The Northampton Community Garden will be one of the stops on the River Valley Market Garden Tour. Take a scenic drive through Florence, Haydenville, Northampton, and West Whately to visit the distinctive gardens of seven co-op members. Learn about organic gardening, too! Tickets are \$7.50 in advance; \$10 day of the tour; free for kids 17 and under. The tour is open to the general public, and tickets are on sale at For the Record in Amherst, the Hadley Garden Center, Beyond Words Bookshop in Northampton, and Collective Copies in Florence. Tickets will also be sold during tour hours at 1 Bardwell Street in Florence, one of the garden tour sites.

If you'd like to help with the tour, please contact Jade Barker at jade@jadebarker.com or call 413-549-8874.

More information may be found at: www.rivervalleymarket.coop. 🍀

UPDATE ON NO-TILL, NO-WEED GARDENING

Last year's summer Newsletter carried a review of Lee Reich's book, *Weedless Gardening*. (Workman Publishing, New York). Here's an update on one gardener's experience with his recommendations.

Reich argues that tilling the soil is counter-productive: It exposes buried weed seeds to the light they need to germinate, ensuring a fine crop of weeds each year. Instead, he says, build up your soil as nature does, by laying down organic matter on top each year. Start by knocking or cutting down weeds – not pulling them up and disturbing the soil. Spread the fertilizer of your choice. Then cover the area with a layer of newspaper 4 sheets thick, water well to moisten, then cover that with 2 or 3 inches of organic matter – chopped leaves, straw, weed-free compost. Plant by cutting through the paper; seed directly into the mulch.

I've been converting my four plots to no-till gardening over the past year; the operation is about 75% complete. How successful has it been? Well, the no-till part is easy! as well as easy on the back. No weeds is an exaggeration – weed seeds do fall in

the top layer of mulch and germinate, but the total amount of weeding needed is enormously reduced.

I've encountered two problems:

- The edges of raised beds have exposed newspaper at the sides and they are also a place where weeds flourish. I cover the edges with boards, which works pretty well, but they don't look great and tend to get knocked out of place.
- The converted plots work really well for already established plants, like the ones I start at home under grow lights or buy at the Farmers' Market. They work less well for seeds sowed directly, which have a lower germination rate than I expect. I'm hoping that, as more organic matter is added each year and the tilth and fertility of the soil improves, the problem will disappear.

Is this method worth trying?

Absolutely! The amount of weeding I have to do has decreased a lot, so I have extra time to devote to the more rewarding parts of gardening.

If you find me in plots H and I, 28 and 29, I'll be glad to show you around and suggest how you might get started on weedless gardening. If you have tried it yourself, send in a report to the Newsletter about your experience. 🍀

— Mimi Teghtsoonian

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Garden Committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 P.M., at the Recreation Dept. during fall, winter, and spring, and near the shed in the Garden in summer (weather permitting).

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

Gardeners are welcome to suggest items for the agenda.

E-mail Mimi at mtex@smith.edu or call 584-0317.