

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



SEPTEMBER 2004

GARDEN NEWS

► **Mark your calendar** for the **Fall Clean-up** on Sunday October 17!

BY OCTOBER 17 YOU SHOULD:

- Cut down all dead plant material and dispose of it. Compost it in your own plot or in the community compost pile at the west end of the garden. This includes old tomatoes, squashes, etc. – leaving them lying in your plot uncomposted attracts animals.
- Put diseased plant material – such as tomato plants with brown blight spots – in the dumpster.

GARDEN CALENDAR

BUTTERFLY WALK • September 19 & 26

FALL CLEAN-UP • Sunday, October 17

- Cut down tall grasses and weeds around your plot – to no more than six inches tall.
- Cut back perennials where appropriate.
- Dispose of all paper and plastic debris – paper and plastic bags, plastic plant pots – in the dumpster.
- Lay flat any stakes, tomato cages, etc. that you leave in your plot.
- Firmly anchor any structures – arbors, trellises, birdhouses – that remain in your plot. The wind blows hard during the winter, and you run the risk of losing anything that is not well secured.

- Remove all tools and watering cans if they are not in use.
- Take home hoses if they are not in use, or, if you must leave them, coil and store flat.

If you still have vegetables growing, you do not need to remove them by October 17.

If you cannot make the October 17 deadline, you may request an automatic extension by Friday, October 15, either by e-mail to mtex@smith.edu or by mail to Community Garden, Recreation Department, 90 Locust Street, Northampton, MA 01060.

Give us your name, plot #, and the date by which you can have your plot ready. There is no charge for an extension. Inspection teams will tour the Garden on Sunday afternoon. If your plot is OK, you will not hear from them. If one or more of the above items has not been taken care of, you'll receive a phone call, e-mail or postcard, pointing this out. A second inspection will take place on Sunday, October 31; there is a \$10 fee if your plot needs a second inspection.

If your plot is not cleaned by the second deadline, you will not be able to register for the 2005 gardening season.

► **Web Master needed!**

Susan Kimball, who has served as our Web master for the past two years is resigning, and we're looking for a volunteer to take over her responsibilities. (This will count toward your community service hours.)

THE WEB MASTER:

- Maintains the Garden Web site – www.nohogardens.org. This has been a very low maintenance project, but there are lots of opportunities for a creative person to improve the site.
- Renews registration of Web site through Web hosting company and renews domain name annually.
- Maintains e-mail listserv and sends out periodic messages from the Garden committee.
- Posts the newsletter on Garden Web site
- Receives and forwards or answers questions from gardeners.

If you think you'd be interested, please contact Susan Kimball as soon as possible at sjkimball@amherst.edu.

► **New Garden Carts**

The new garden cart we purchased in the spring was such a hit – in nearly constant use earlier in the season – that we have purchased a second one and will discard the cart with a missing wheel. If you find the

carts locked when you go to use one, your tool shed key fits the padlock. If you are the last person to return a cart, please be sure the cable is threaded through the handles and the padlock is locked.

► **Community Service**

Many gardeners have already contributed their community service hours, but some still have not. Please remember to fulfill your service requirement so you can register for next year's gardening season. Check the bulletin board for current tasks that need volunteers to do them. Remember to fill out a log slip and put it into the mailbox by the bulletin board so that you'll get credit for your time. You may also submit your hours by e-mail to cmgoulet@valinet.com.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

- ✿ Susan Kimball for managing our Web site and e-mail distribution list.
- ✿ Bill Griffiths for making sure our water systems works properly and for helping us conserve water.
- ✿ Stephen Lindow for his work as feature editor on this issue of the Newsletter. ✿

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Garden Committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 P.M., at the Recreation Dep't. 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 Dep't. (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.

POLLUTING MOWERS

DID YOU KNOW that using a gas-powered lawn mower for an hour puts out as much pollution as driving a car for 1,000 miles*? Now look around and see how much of the land around our homes, schools and businesses are lawns that need regular mowing. And think about how much lawn we have in the Community Garden. When I first learned about the pollution capabilities of our Community Garden mowers, I began using the manual one. That was fine when I'd been good about keeping up with the grass on the edges of my plot. But when the grass and weeds get high as they has this year with all the rain, the hand mower just mashes it down.

What are the alternatives? Goats? Goats are very good at trimming everything down to a manageable length. They also convert it to great fertilizer and spread it around. But keeping the goats from leveling your lettuce, beans and flowers would be a steep challenge. If, instead of mowing, you had goat duty, you'd need to set up fencing around all the garden plots within goat reach.

What else could we do? Find someone who can convert our mowers to run on old cooking oil? Cover all paths with wood chips? Plant something that doesn't need mowing? This is going to require some deep and imaginative problem solving.

I challenge Community Garden members to find out about the pollution that gas mowers produce and then talk with other garden members about what we can do. Whatever we do, we should let the rest of the valley know about it and get more people thinking about the long-range cost of our lawns to our planet.

Here are two web sites with information about gas mower pollution:
<http://greengrasscutters.com.hosting.domaindirect.com/id7.html>
<http://www.mindfully.org/Air/Lawn-Mower-Pollution.htm>

*Estimates range from 300 miles to 3400 miles. ✿

—Johanna Halbeisen

WEED CONTROL

I've just discovered an easy, nontoxic way to discourage weeds. I thoroughly weeded a strip on the edge of my plot and then sprayed it with vinegar. That was about a month ago and only a few weeds have come up in the strip since then. I got the idea from a great little book that I highly recommend: *Slug Bread and Beheaded Thistles; Amusing and Useful Techniques for Nontoxic Housekeeping and Gardening* by Ellen Sandbeck. You'll find more weed solutions along with help for garden bugs, slugs and other marauders. ✿

—Johanna Halbeisen

BUTTERFLIES and BUTTERFLYING

IT'S NO SECRET TO MANY, but there has been a real surge of interest in the watching, identifying, and listing of butterflies lately. Because of the variety of flowering plants at the community garden, butterflies have made it their destination spot – and so have their watchers, some of whom come all the way from Boston and New York state to see the rare varieties.

To celebrate this interest in butterflies, Paul Gagnon, past president of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club, and his partner Bruce, who is new to the gardens, will lead two butterfly walks at the garden – on Sunday, September 19 and Sunday, September 26. Specific times for these walks will be posted on the garden bulletin board.

Two helpful, but not vital, accessories for butterfly watching are a copy of Jeffrey Glassberg's *Butterflies through Binoculars – A Field Guide to Butterflies in the Boston-New York-Washington Region*, and a pair of minimal focusing distance binoculars (range under six feet). Glassberg recommends the Minolta pocket binocs, and the book can be ordered through Noho's Backyard Birds store. Even if you don't make a purchase, come anyway if you're interested. Your learning curve will be steep and it will be fun!

Butterflies are attracted to tall clumps of Verbena, which last the whole season, as well as Zinnias and New England Asters in the fall. It seems these beautiful insects are finely tuned to the seasons of abundance. Dead-heading the flowers of some plants will extend not only plants' flowering period but also the length of time that butterflies will stick around. This is especially true of Butterfly bushes.

Gagnon estimates that roughly 45 species are identified in our gardens each year. Most people know a few of the more common species: the large black and yellow striped Tiger Swallowtail, the small Black Swallowtail, the Monarch, the Cabbage White, and the Yellow and Orange Sulphurs. Some of the smaller ones are too quick for even the experts to identify.

Some rare species of butterfly that were seen last summer were the Long-Tailed Skipper, the Common

Checkered, Satin, and Ocola Skippers, and the White "M" Hairstreak. In other years watchers have seen the Pipevine Swallowtail, the Fiery and Brazilian Skippers. This last one had not been seen in our area for 70 years. Extra-Liminal butterflies are also possible in the late summer and fall. When you start to look for butterflies, remember basic butterfly etiquette: don't trample through someone's plot to get to a butterfly; some are going to get away. A little mystery is a good thing. 🌸

—Andrew Magee and Stephen Lindow

ZUCCHINI BREAD

Beat three eggs lightly.

Add :

1 C oil

2 C sugar

3 C zucchini (peeled and chopped)

3 tsp. vanilla

Sift and add:

3 C flour

1 tsp. baking soda

1/4 tsp baking powder

1 tsp salt

1 T cinnamon

Add :

1/2 C nuts (optional)

Pour batter into loaf pan.

Bake at 350°.

3/4 – 1 hour for small loaf

1 1/4 hour for large loaf

I gave some zucchini from my plot to a friend's mother who made this recipe. It was deeeelish!

—Judy Sherman

...BEARS... OH, MY!!!

It was August 8, and the evening arrived warm and humid. The garden was aromatic with the summer smells of basil, ripening vegetables, and pollen-laden sunflowers. A whiff of decaying vegetation was a reminder of the past weeks' rain and too-soon-to-be-here autumn. The soothing melody of buzzing bees, chirping crickets, and singing goldfinches completed the sensory welcome. It had been a very hectic week at home and work, so I was delighted to finally have a few hours to relax in my garden.

After mowing the paths I got busy cutting flowers to take a bit of the garden home. The colorful snapdragons, sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, and rudbeckia would brighten my kitchen and lift my spirits. I saved tomato picking for the final task of the evening. Squatting down amid the vines, I happily selected one ripe fruit after another.

My thoughts of fresh tomato salad were suddenly interrupted by a swiftly moving flash of black to my right. Expecting to see an unleashed dog, I stood up and was amazed to see three silently running black bears! Mama bear immediately spotted me. With just one step she shifted from running to standing, facing me across several feet of tomatoes and cucumbers. To make the scene even more interesting, she was standing next to my parked car.

Our eyes met, and she held my gaze. I held my breath while she considered her next move. After what seemed like a long time, probably only five seconds, Mom dropped down on all fours and huffed/grunted a signal to her three large youngsters that it was time to move along. They loped across the street and played in the side yard for a while before disappearing behind a house.

The entire event lasted no more than a minute or two, of course, but it seemed so much longer. In fact, as soon as they vanished from my sight I felt it hard to believe that they had been there at all! If their motion hadn't caught my attention, I probably wouldn't have seen them at all because they were so silent despite their size. I spent the rest of the tomato harvest looking around every few second to be sure they didn't suddenly reappear. The ride home seemed longer than usual since I was so excited about sharing my bear story, along with the harvest, with my family.

I feel honored to have experienced such a close and thrilling bear encounter. I also realize that it's wise to try to avoid a repeat performance in case the ending should take a different turn. The events of the evening have taught me to be more alert and to make a bit of noise while I enjoy the garden. The advice to "whistle while you work" comes to mind.

Happy and safe gardening to all. 

— Anne Lafontaine



WRITE FOR THE NEWSLETTER!

We welcome your contributions to the Community Garden Newsletter. Write about your gardening experience; let us know what has worked in your plot; suggest earth-friendly or time-saving methods; submit recipes; etc.

Contact Betsey Wolfson at BWOLFSON@BIKHER.ORG.