

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



JULY 2005

What Makes a Community Garden Flourish?

PART 2: GOOD NEIGHBORS

When we ask gardeners what they like most about the Garden, they frequently say it is other gardeners – their friendliness, their helpfulness, their beautiful gardens. They value the sense of community and the camaraderie above even gardening itself. Every gardener can contribute to that sense by following a few common-sense guidelines:

- ✿ **Your neighbor's plot** is like your neighbor's home – you wouldn't enter either without an invitation. And you certainly wouldn't pick flowers, fruit, or veggies without your neighbor's knowledge.
- ✿ **Keep your plot tended.** Weeds in your plot are not just your business: They'll be happy to broadcast their seeds far and wide.
- ✿ **Keep noise to a minimum.** If you play a radio while gardening, ask if it will disturb your neighbor; accept a No answer in good grace; keep the volume low. If you have wind chimes, muffle them or take them down before you leave.
- ✿ **Well-behaved dogs on leashes** are welcome, but please – *no barking and no running loose.*
- ✿ **Well-behaved kids** are also welcome – we hope to raise a crop of future gardeners. But your kids should follow the same rules you do about being quiet and staying out of others' plots.
- ✿ The Garden is a **no-smoking zone.** Be considerate, and don't pollute your neighbor's air space with cigarette smoke.
- ✿ **A little helpfulness** will be repaid many-fold. You might share extra seeds, sets, and perennial divisions with your neighbors. You might offer to water when they are on vacation.

Garden Neighbors are gardeners with experience who are willing to share their expertise with others. This year, their plots will be marked by green flags with a yellow sunflower, and their first names and plot numbers will be posted on the bulletin board. Please consult them if you have Garden/gardening questions. 🍀



RAGWEED INSPECTION

It's that time of year again – ragweed is about to come into flower and release the pollen that makes allergy sufferers miserable. Our Garden has an ongoing campaign to reduce the amount of ragweed.

If you don't know what ragweed looks like, please see the sample near the shed – or ask another gardener.

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 are capable of germinating for years.

This year's **ragweed walkthrough** will be on **Sunday afternoon, July 17.**

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. 🍀



This is ragweed!

GARDEN NEWS

MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS AT THE GARDEN:

★ Tool Shed.

By the time you read this, the remodeling of the tool shed – now more than twice its original size – should be complete. To keep it looking its best, gardeners should clean tools, wheel barrows, and lawn mowers before returning them to the shed.

★ Our Sign on Burts Pit Road.

We are presenting a new face to the public – a mosaic comprising myriad tiny ceramic tiles artfully arranged to spell “Northampton Community Gardens.”

Margaret Herpich and **Kendra Rosenblatt** are the artists; Kendra gardens in plot J9 if you want to express your admiration to her. **Carole** and **Muriel Goulet** are renovating the garden beneath the sign.

RAGWEED

The rain and hot weather have produced a flourishing crop of ragweed – the nasty plant that gives allergic people the sneezes, runny noses and eyes, headaches,

and general misery. Once again, you should be on the lookout for ragweed plants and pull them up now while it’s still easy. **Dave Brownlee** has planted a labeled demonstration plant in front of the tool shed; also, ragweed plants along the back road are tagged with red plastic ribbon. Take a good look, then search and destroy.

DUMPSTER AND COMPOST

Some gardeners seem to be mistaking the one for the other. The gardener who looks after the dumpster reminds you NOT to use it as a compost pile: With pickup every other week, there is not enough room for compostable waste. The gardener who looks after the compost pile reminds you NOT to use it as a dumpster: Wood (sticks, stakes, logs, . . .), plastic (bags, pots, labels, twine, . . .), and paper do not belong in the pile, as they will disintegrate very slowly or not at all.

CUCUMBER BEETLES

Gardener Vahram Elagoz suggests consulting the Web site www.ghorganics.com/CucumberBeetles.htm, for suggestions on how to deal with this pest. 🌿

FAUCET AND HOSE ETIQUETTE

Watering cans have precedence at the faucet.

That means someone with watering cans may temporarily interrupt anyone using a hose if both spigots are flowing. If it is necessary to stop water flow, please be sure the faucet is fully turned back on.

This year the Garden is providing one 50' hose at each faucet for everyone’s convenience – **first come, first served**. You may, of course, bring your own hose(s) for the other spigot on the T-valve.

- ▶ Soaker hoses should **not** be left unattended.
- ▶ Sprinklers are **not** allowed.
- ▶ If a community hose needs a new **washer** or has other leaks, please follow up. Usually there are washers available in the Garden Shed.
- ▶ Questions? **Carol Strobelberger**, our volunteer water manager, helps us keep our water fees reasonable. Reach her at 527-7018 or lightandairy@hotmail.com.
- ▶ Last but not least, **please recoil the hose(s) after use, and hang it/them on the hose rack** (rather than the faucet) to make community mowing easier. 🌿

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Garden Committee meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 P.M. – near the shed in the Garden in summer (weather permitting) or at the Recreation Dep’t. during fall, winter, and spring. Check with the Recreation Dep’t. (587-1040) the day of the meeting to confirm time and place.

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



BRING ON THE NATIVES!

by Denise Pavao and Barbara Lagoy

When the Newsletter Committee asked us to write an article on native plants, we immediately agreed that any discussion of native plants should include information regarding the problems some non-native plants are posing to plant diversity. Loss of native plants due to out-competition from invasive species of non-natives is the *second greatest threat to plant diversity*, only behind habitat fragmentation. Fortunately, avoiding problematic plants while encouraging our native plants is something every gardener can do to *help ensure the diversity of both our gardens and natural areas*. We hope to share with you information about some of the beautiful and useful natives that are happy in an open field habitat like the Community Garden, and to provide a list of 13 plants that pose the greatest risk to our native plant populations in Massachusetts.

NATIVES AND FRIENDLY NEWCOMERS...

Native plants are generally thought of as having made their home here since before Europeans arrived. They evolved and adapted along with the native animals, insects and microorganisms with which they share their habitats. Europeans brought with them many new plants – both the plants they loved to grow in their gardens back home, and the weeds that came in with animal fodder and dung. In most cases, nature accommodated the newcomers. Flora and fauna made adjustments, and the habitats we know and love – fields, forests, and wetlands – are richer for it.

TO KNOW THEM... IS TO AVOID THEM!

However, there are plants that were introduced at one time or another in our history that are out-competing our native plants and now pose the risk of replacing them. Such non-native, *invasive* plants often grow easily under various conditions, have few natural pests or diseases, have aggressive root systems, and/or produce great numbers of seeds that can be dispersed by birds, wind or water, allowing them to spread into natural areas. These highly successful plants are understandably attractive to landscapers, gardeners, and homeowners.

The problem arises when they escape the confines of our controlled landscapes and become established in natural areas where they can spread unchecked – *in the worst*

cases crowding out native plants altogether. One result is alteration of the native food supply in the area, putting stress on the wildlife populations dependent on that food source. For instance, the lovely **Purple Loosestrife** (*Lythrum salicaria*), once established in a pond or lake, irrigation ditch or other wetland, replaces native cattails that would otherwise provide food, shelter and nesting habitat for many different species of animals, including migrating birds.

At the end of this article you will find thirteen of the worst offenders in *Massachusetts*. We encourage you to look around, either at the Community Garden or where you live, and consider replacing an invasive non-native with one of the native alternatives. We can all protect the natural balance by helping to prevent introduction of a new invasive to the wild. *Can anyone guess which two invasive non-natives we discovered in and around the Community Garden?* (We will reveal the mystery at the end of the article!)

The good news is that there are terrific organizations like the New England Wildflower Society that make it easy to learn about alternatives to these non-native invasives and even help us match them to our particular conditions. The native alternatives are adapted to life in our area, generally don't need supplemental watering once established, provide beauty and diversity to our landscapes, and benefit our native wildlife.

NOW BRING ON THE NATIVES!

Whether you like the idea of reconnecting with the native plants that make up our natural plant communities, want to help with their preservation, or simply want to add a native or two to your garden for fun or interest, there are plenty of options. Since the Community Garden habitat is an open field, we've narrowed our suggestions to plants native to the Northeastern U.S. that thrive in full sun to light shade. We've included plants that like their soil either dry or moist (as opposed to wet), since it's fairly easy to attain these two conditions by either improving drainage or adding organic matter to improve moisture retention. **Please be sure you buy nursery-propagated native plants – not plants that have been dug from the wild!!**

THE PLANTS

Let's begin with a hummingbird favorite! Some of you may already have **Bee Balm** (*Monarda didyma*) in your garden. Available in red, pink, white or shades of purple, Bee

Balm will grow in partial shade but will flower more profusely in full sun, and prefers evenly moist soil. Hummingbirds will begin and end their summer days at these striking 3'-4' plants, and you'll enjoy the citrusy fragrance of the foliage each time you brush against it. In general, hummingbirds are most strongly attracted to red and reddish-orange flowers, as well as tubular flowers.

If you're looking for something a bit more unusual, try **Bowman's Root** (*Porteranthus trifoliatu*s). The attractive toothed leaves of this erect, 2'-4' shrublike perennial are held on reddish stems. Delicate white starry flowers appear in May or early June and are later replaced by reddish seedpods that provide continued interest throughout the summer. Once established, Bowman's Root is drought tolerant and will withstand full sun in our region.

Lofty **Joe-Pye Weed** (*Eupatorium* species) will certainly make a statement in your late-summer garden. Butterflies are drawn to the large clusters of nectar-filled purple or white flowers atop strong 5'-8' tall stems (great for standing up to summer downpours!). These impressive plants like moist soil in full sun to light shade, and will spread to form multi-stemmed clumps. But be patient – it takes two years for plants to reach full height!

Another tall native requiring even moisture and plenty of sunshine is the **New England Aster** (*Aster novae-angliae*). The purplish flowers with bright yellow centers will bring butterflies to your September garden. While plants can reach heights of 6'-7', you may pinch back the tips once or twice a season for shorter, bushier plants. Also blooming in September, **Smooth Aster** (*Aster laevis*) has lavender-blue flowers and blue-green foliage. Smooth Aster is a more modest 3'-4' and is tolerant of drier soil.

Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*) is a 3'-4' shrublike perennial with soft gray-green or bluish foliage that eventually spreads to form a large clump. Spikes of pale blue pea-like blossoms in June give way to showy seedpods that last through the autumn and can be used in dried flower arrangements. Like many natives, False Indigo is drought tolerant once established. Since it has a deep taproot, this otherwise low-maintenance plant does not appreciate being moved. While False Indigo has escaped from cultivation and is now commonly accepted as a naturally occurring plant in our region, yellow flowered **Wild Indigo** (*Baptisia tinctoria*) is the true native.

Also an early bloomer, **Wild Columbine** (*Aquilegia canadensis*) is somewhat smaller, with less showy blossoms, than the hybrids with which many gardeners are familiar. This native with nodding red and yellow flowers benefits from average to dry (or at least well-draining) soil and light shade during part of the day. Wild Columbine will invite the hummingbirds back to the garden in Springtime, and is also the larval host for the Columbine Duskywing Butterfly.

Speaking of butterflies, consider the Milkweed family. The fiery orange flower clusters of **Butterfly Weed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*) are irresistible to butterflies. **Common Milkweed** (*Asclepias syriaca*) is often dismissed as a weed, but if you've ever seen the exquisite, jewel-like green chrysalis of a Monarch Butterfly hanging delicately from the bottom of a leaf, you'll want to keep one or two around in your garden for the sheer possibilities! Milkweed is the only host plant for Monarch Butterfly caterpillars! Both of these Milkweeds thrive in full sun and average to dry soil.

Beardtongue (*Penstemon digitalis*) is another interesting choice for a sunny garden spot with average soil, but is one of the only Penstemons that will also tolerate moist soil and partial shade. Shiny green rosettes of leaves are sometimes tinged with red, and spikes of white or red tubular flowers may reach heights of 3'-5'. These June-flowering plants form clumps which may need dividing after four or five years to keep them vigorous, but they also self-seed profusely.

Three additional natives that grow in full sun to light shade are **Nodding Onion** (*Allium cernuum*), **Stokes Aster** (*Stokesia laevis*) and **Wild Geranium** (*Geranium maculatum*). The tear-shaped buds of Nodding Onion reveal loose clusters of pink flowers in mid-summer on 1'-2' plants. Also in the 1'-2' range is the beautiful and somewhat drought tolerant Stokes Aster. This prolific early-summer bloomer produces lavender-blue aster-like flowers with fuzzy white centers. The rose-purple flowers of Wild Geranium will also be among the early-season bloomers.

"Snowbank" Boltonia (*Boltonia asteroides* "Snowbank") is the compact form of our native. For up to 6 weeks in the autumn this 3'-4' rounded plant will light up the garden with an abundance of white daisy-like flowers. This plant is easy to grow when given even moisture, and once estab-

lished will tolerate drought; however, plant size will be diminished in consistently dry soil.

A much smaller native that deserves a special little corner of your garden is the 8" **Blue-Eyed Grass** (*Sisyrinchium ssp.*). Actually a member of the Iris family, this grass-like plant has half inch bluish-purple flowers with yellow centers held at the tips of flat, pale green leaves. The tender young foliage might easily be mistaken for grass, but you will quickly develop an eye for spotting the fan-like growth habit of the leaf blades. Blue-Eyed Grass forms diminutive iris-like clumps.

A trio of small shrubs rounds out our suggestions. **Bearberry** (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*) is a creeping evergreen that makes a nice groundcover in full sun and sandy soil. Terminal clusters of white or pale pink bell-shaped flowers bloom from May to July on trailing plants with attractive small leathery leaves. Birds favor the red berries that appear in the fall. **Lowbush Blueberry** (*Vaccinium angustifolium*) prefers partial shade and may grow to 2'. The reward is sweet berries in summer, with a bonus of red autumn foliage. **New Jersey Tea** (*Ceanothus americanus*) is a nitrogen-fixing shrub that produces airy clusters of small white flowers. These 3'-4' shrubs thrive in full sun and average soil. The dried leaves are said to make a delicious tea. New Jersey Tea has the added distinction of attracting a small fly with which hummingbirds feed their young!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This is by no means a complete list. Please check out the web sites and other sources we've provided for full plant lists and locations of native-plant nurseries, as well as lots of great information on choosing and growing native plants, and on how and why to avoid the invasive non-natives that are threatening our natural flora.

MYSTERY REVEALED

Do you know which invasive non-natives are growing at the Community Garden? Most gardeners have probably noticed the **Japanese Knotweed** (*Polygonum cuspidatum*) across the dirt road behind the Garden, but we also found **Goutweed** or **Bishop's Weed** (*Aegopodium podagraria*) in one of the plots. On a positive note, it is a variegated form of Goutweed, which seems to be somewhat less aggressive than the typical all-green form. In natural areas, Goutweed has been known to take over and replace existing vegetation in as little as one or two years.

13 MOST INVASIVE NON-NATIVE Plants in Massachusetts

1. **Amur, Morrow's, Bell's, Tatarian,** and other shrub **Honeysuckles** (*Lonicera maackii*, *L. morrowii*, *L. xbella*, *L. tatarica*)
2. **Autumn-olive** (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)
3. **Burning Bush** or **Winged Euonymus** (*Euonymus alatus*)
4. **Common and Japanese Barberry** (*Berberis vulgaris*, *B. thunbergii*)
5. **Common and Glossy Buckthorn** (*Rhamnus cathartica*, *Frangula alnus*)
6. **Goutweed** or **Bishop's Weed** (*Aegopodium podagraria*)
7. **Japanese Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera japonica*)
8. **Japanese Knotweed** or **Bamboo** (*Polygonum cuspidatum*, *Fallopia japonica* and its varieties)
9. **Multiflora Rose** (*Rosa multiflora*)
10. **Norway Maple** (*Acer platanoides*)
11. **Oriental Bittersweet** (*Celastrus orbiculata*)
12. **Purple Loosestrife** (*Lythrum salicaria*)
13. **Yellow Iris** (*Iris pseudacorus*)

SOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE:

Butterfly Gardening in New England, Cheryl B. Lowe, New England Wild Flower Society, 2000

Projects for the Birder's Garden, edited by Fern Marshall Bradley, Yankee Publishing Inc. 2004

The New England Wildflower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada, William Cullina, Houghton, NY, 2000

Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Perennials, Ellen Phillips & C. Colston Burrell, Rodale, PA, 1993

Massachusetts Wildlife No. 3 "Hunting the Invaders", pp. 28-37, Michelle Robinson, 2004

The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Wildflowers, Eastern Region, William A. Niering and Nancy C. Olmstead, Knopf, NY, 1979

HELPFUL WEB SITES:

www.newfs.org New England Wildflower Society.

A wonderful web site for information about native plants. They have a list of non-native plants and offer native plant alternatives.

www.wmassmastergardeners.org

The Western Mass. Master Gardener Association has a hot line (both phone and e-mail) to answer questions.

www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/nhesp.htm

Mass. endangered species website – lists of endangered species by county, vernal pool info etc.

<http://hcs.osu.edu/plantfacts/web/index.html>

Good general information about plants.

www.umext.maine.edu/onlinePubs/hempubs/2502.htm

Lists places to purchase native plants in Maine. Hardiness zone is similar to Massachusetts, 5a&b.

<http://www.cyberonic.com/~gwlt/invasive.html>

Greater Worcester Land Trust article about invasive plants in Massachusetts.

www.gardening.cornell.edu

Fact sheets on ecogardening.

www.nps.gov/plants/alien

Information on invasive plants, fact sheets about the invasive plant and ranges of where they are a problem.

<http://site.www.umb.edu/conne/jennjim/fjaponica.html>

Information on Japanese Knotweed/Bamboo.

BOOKS:

Noah's Garden, Sara Stein, Houghton Mifflin, NY, 1993

The Natural Habitat Garden, Ken Druse, Clarkson Potter/Publishers, NY 1994

The New England Wildflower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers of the United States and Canada, William Cullina, Houghton Mifflin, NY, 2000

The Secrets of Wildflowers, Jack Sanders, Lyons Press, Guildford, CT, 2003

LOCAL NATIVE PLANT NURSERY:

Nasami Farm, 128 North Street, Whately, MA is the New England Wild Flower Society's Native Plant Nursery.

www.newenglandwildflower.org (413-397-9922) 



PLEASE DO NOT DRIVE YOUR CAR INTO THE GARDEN AREA.

PARK ON THE STREET OR ON THE BACK ROAD,
AND USE A WHEELBARROW TO CARRY
TOOLS AND SUPPLIES.

GARDEN HAIKU

**SPRING NOTES
FROM THE NORTH-EAST
NEIGHBORHOOD**

Ellen's brand-new son peers up
under apple blossoms.

Hummingbird sighted
at Pat's bleedingheart bush –
early evening, May 29th.

Tom's "Q" "5" markers double
as 21st-century scarecrows –
cut up cd-roms dangle,
catching light in the breeze.

Smart Alex wields posthole digger,
preparing for an army of tomato plants.

Wrens won Aimee's nest house.
We love their company.

Menthol shaving crème rings
all squash plant stems in Beth's garden.
No sanctuary for stem borers.

Jeff's dark green jacket
now recognized by kildeer sharing his plots –
four beautiful eggs hide in plain view.

Ground cover comparison in progress.
Kathy broadcast clover seed this spring.
Now newspaper lies under mulch hay nearby.

Across the path Bob anchored black plastic –
tomato plants sail in formation.

Snow pile still solid June 7th.
Rubble row barrier
edging old soccer field grows longer.

Back road holes grow deeper.
Help to arrive soon.

Gardening in the rain –
mud baths and hot showers.

A little sun –
a lot of iris
and so many poppies.

Gardening – "it's all an experiment."

© Patricia Lynn Wood – a garden neighbor – June 2003