

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



MAY 2007



GARDEN NEWS

Gardeners are thronging to the Garden this season. All our plots have been assigned to someone, and we have started a waiting list in case plots become available as people move or fail to garden. Gardeners are asked to note that plots are nominally 20' x 20'; however, grass paths do tend to creep, and many four-square plots end up being, say, 36' x 38', rather than 40' x 40'. Please note that taking 20' in each direction for your own plot would mean your neighbors would have plot sides of only 18' and 19' respectively; if you want to mark boundaries, work from the center of the four-square, so that the available space is equitably divided. If you expand into the grass path, remember that you must leave 3 feet for a garden cart to pass.

Cleanup Day at the end of April saw many gardeners in attendance and much work accomplished. Art Larson and a compost crew worked wonders with our compost pile; Norma Sandowski led the crew that installed the pavers along one side of the tool shed; Lisa Andrews and Hailu Dyami, coordinators of the Survival Center plot, had many volunteers to till and spread compost; Elaine Pourinski, with the help of Bill Griffiths and Helen and Peter Payne, installed spigots and hoses and ensured that all were working well. 

GARDEN NOTES

ON WEATHER IN THE GARDEN

Gardeners divide crops into those that grow best in cool weather and those that prefer warm weather. Cool-weather crops include beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, lettuce, radishes, parsley, turnips, and spinach: They all prefer temperatures between 60° and 65°F. Interestingly, their optimum germination temps are much higher: Peas, for instance, have the highest germination rate at 75°, although they will germinate at a temp. as low as 40°. You can work around this paradox by planting seeds more thickly if you choose to put them in at the lower temps. As the season progresses, you can use your warm-weather crops to provide shade for their cooler cousins: For instance, if you use trellises to grow beans or cucumbers, you can plant lettuces in their shade.

Warm-weather crops include cucumbers, pumpkins, squash, and melons, which are happiest between 65° and 75°. Another set of crops, including eggplant, bell peppers, tomatoes, and watermelon, as well as basil, prefer a minimum temp. of 70°. You won't kill them if you plant them out at lower temps (above freezing), but they will respond by sulking and refusing to grow until the weather warms up.

Some crops have tolerance for a range of temperatures from cool to warm. Sweet corn will grow well at temps from 60° to 75°; onions, from 55° to 75°.



GARDEN CALENDAR

– First Inspection –

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, is the deadline for starting work on your plot. Teams of gardeners will walk through the Garden at around 4 P.M. to check on plots. Inspectors will be looking, not for perfection, but for evidence that you have tilled and weeded your plot(s), and that you have planted seeds or sets, or tended your perennials.

We will send you a notification if the inspection teams see that your plot has not been worked, and your plot may be assigned immediately to another gardener on our wait list. If you cannot work your plot before June 3, but wish to keep it and intend to start soon, please let us know that and specify a date by which you will start; send an e-mail to mtex@smith.edu or a note by mail to the Recreation Dept., 90 Locust St., 01060. Please do not request an extension by phone.

GARDEN WORKSHOPS

GETTING YOUR GARDEN STARTED

with Julie Abramson;
Saturday, May 19, 10:30

HIGH-QUALITY, HIGH-YIELD VEGETABLES

with Kathryn Stout;
Saturday, May 19, 2:00

Most crops call for an inch of water a week, as a general guideline. If Mother Nature supplies it, that's good news; if not, you need to stand in for her. The soil at the Garden is sandy and quick-draining, so it pays to check the soil a couple of inches below the surface, where the plant roots are, to see when watering is needed. Longer-range solutions to keeping your plants from getting thirsty are, first, to increase the amount of organic matter in your soil by adding compost, and, second, to mulch (with straw, hay, chopped leaves) after the soil warms up.

Gardeners themselves have to develop tolerance for any kind of weather that comes along. Garden gloves, which used to be clumsy cotton affairs that prevented you from feeling what you were working on, have improved a lot in the past few years; check out the new models at a garden store – they are comfortable and inexpensive. A broad-brimmed hat and sunscreen are good tools for outdoor work, especially at midday; they help prevent wrinkled skin as well as skin cancers. 🌿

—The Happy Gardener

NEW T-SHIRT DEBUTS



The 2007 Garden T-shirt made its first appearance on Cleanup Day. With an aqua ground and a splendid yellow sunflower, it makes a Garden fashion statement. Every Gardener will want one (or even two), at the very reasonable price of \$17 each. Shirts will be on sale at the picnic table on weekends. Check them out, make a purchase, and help the Garden and yourself. 🌿

BE AWARE of **POISON IVY** along the back road at the garden!

KNYSNA AIDS COUNCIL COMMUNITY GARDEN (KAC) AND HORNLEE TOWNSHIP COMMUNITY GARDEN, SOUTH AFRICA

I would like to thank everyone who sent seeds to South Africa last year. Although I arrived late in the planting season last year, we planted most of the seeds, and the 12 gardeners who participate at the KAC garden were very appreciative!

I'm already planning a return trip to Hornlee Township sometime between late June and mid-July. I have been asked to help them establish a community garden on the grounds of the Hornlee Methodist Church, begin some programs for children and women, help with soup kitchens, and develop a visitation program for the sick. I promised to return early enough for planting season so we can start the Hornlee Community Garden, a first for Hornlee.

Everyone is excited about the land that has been given for the project, but we still need seed. If you'd like to help the Hornlee Community Garden, you can provide vegetable seeds in sealed, never-before-opened packets. Please place them in the multicolor box on the high shelf to the left as you enter the garden shed. Or you can bring them to plot T1 and put them in the covered galvanized container or, if I am there, just give them to me.

While I am away you can also visit my blog at [HTTP://INDLELA.TYPEPAD.COM/GARDENS/](http://INDLELA.TYPEPAD.COM/GARDENS/). Again, thanks to those who gave seed for last year's project; and thanks in advance to all who will send seeds with me for the new Hornlee Community Garden this year. 🌿

—Norma Sandowski

WHY MULCH?

- Mulch saves water – by reducing evaporation of water from the soil.
- Mulch inhibits weeds – by blocking sunlight from reaching weed seeds in the soil.
- Mulch discourages pests; light-colored mulches reflect sunlight underneath plants to repel aphids and other flying insects.
- Mulch keeps soil cool – to promote root development.
- Mulch prevents diseases – by protecting foliage from muddy splashes that can spread fungus and putting a barrier between soil-borne diseases and plants.
- Mulch builds fertility; as organic mulch decomposes, it nourishes microbes in the soil that become nutrients for plants.
- Mulch preserves soil structure – by keeping heavy rains from eroding the soil and by encouraging earthworm activity which aerates soil. 🌿

from Organic Gardening Magazine



FAUCET AND HOSE ETIQUETTE

- ▶ Please recoil your hose after each use, and hang it on the hose rack.
- ▶ Watering cans have precedence at the faucet.
- ▶ 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. Washers are usually available in the Garden Shed.
- ▶ Questions? Elaine Pourinski, our volunteer water manager, helps us keep our water fees reasonable. Reach her at AZULHERON@AOL.COM 🌿