

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



JULY 2007



GARDEN TIPS ON GARDEN THUGS

WHAT, YOU MAY ASK, IS A GARDEN THUG? No, not a thief who steals your melons, reprehensible though he (or she) is. And no, not an insect who makes short work of destroying your squash plants, discouraging as *that* is. These garden thugs are plants that tempt you to introduce them to your plot because they are so beautiful or so tasty, but, once there, start taking over your whole garden. Here's a rogue's gallery of such thugs.

Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*): A native American sunflower, planted for its edible tubers. Once planted, it is almost impossible to eradicate. Its tubers lie 2 ft. below the surface, making it difficult to dig out, and it will regrow from a single tuber. It will also spread, first in your own plot, then to adjacent plots. Be good to yourself, and be a good neighbor: Don't plant it.

Brambles (Raspberries and blackberries, genus *Rubus*): Fruit-bearing shrubs. Their roots travel underground, and shoots may pop up several feet away from the parent bush. The brambles need to be thinned and pruned, and you need to be vigilant to see that they do not spread beyond their appropriate boundaries – for instance, into your flower beds, into paths, or into your neighbors' plots.

Mint, oregano, marjoram: Aromatic herbs for culinary purposes. These,

too, are rapid spreaders from underground traveling roots. If you plant them, you need to keep them within bounds by confining them to a given space, rooting them up if they move outside.

Morning glory (*Ipomoea sp.*): A vine grown for its decorative flowers. Surprised? Doesn't look like a thug, does it? But it is one twice over – once when it expands to take over not only its allotted space but everything within reach of its tendrils, and again when it broadcasts its plentiful seeds everywhere. You will be pulling up morning glory vines for several years if you plant one this year.

Other gardeners will have their own nominees for garden thugs. Send us an e-mail and we'll start a list for gardeners to consult when they are deciding what to plant. Meanwhile, you will be a happier gardener – and so will your Garden neighbors – if you keep these garden thugs under house arrest.

—The Happy Gardener



GARDEN CALENDAR

– RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH –

Sunday, July 15

SAVE THE DATE!
COMMUNITY GARDEN
– HARVEST POTLUCK –

Sunday, September 9

WWW.NOHOGARDENS.ORG

RAGWEED

Common ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) causes great discomfort for more than 10% of our population; among a few unfortunate individuals, its pollen triggers a severe reaction. Our Garden has an ongoing campaign to reduce the amount of ragweed.



Ragweed reaches an average height of 70 cm. Its hairy stem is crowned by greyish green leaves. In June and July, the plant sprouts tiny green flowers. In August, the flowers bloom, releasing billions of pollen grains into the air. These grains can then lie dormant but are capable of germinating for years. The best way to stop ragweed's spread is to pull it up before flowering.

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.

This year's **ragweed walkthrough** will be on **Sunday afternoon, July 15**.

Teams of volunteers will search out ragweed in plots and mark offending plants with orange tape. If you find the tape in your plot, please pull up and discard the offending plants immediately. 🍀

SWEDE MIDGE UPDATE

You may have noticed the swede midge traps hanging from stakes in the garden with laminated fact sheets.

Massachusetts conducted its first survey for the swede midge in 2005 at 11 farms and the Northampton Community Garden as part of the USDA's Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey. During that survey I found a single male swede midge in the community



garden. In 2006 we continued surveying for swede midge at 8 farms and 4 community gardens and didn't recover any swede midge, even from Northampton.

What does this mean? There are 2 possibilities: (1) the swede midge population levels are so low in the Northampton community garden the midges are difficult to detect; or (2) the initial population of swede midge in the garden died out. In 2007 I'll continue placing pheromone traps in the community garden to help determine if there is an established swede midge population or the midges didn't survive.

WHAT IS A SWEDE MIDGE?

The swede midge is very small fly that feeds on cruciferous plants including vegetable crops such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale or collards and cruciferous weeds such as wild mustard or shepherd's purse. The larval stage feeds on plants causing brown corky scarring especially along stem, distorted and twisted leaf stalks, death of the growing point resulting in no head formation, deformed and asymmetrical heads, and multi-headed or multi-stemmed

plants resulting from destruction of the growing tip. Damage can be mistaken for common physiological or nutritional problems so swede midge larvae or adults need to be found to

confirm the diagnosis

How could the swede midge have arrived at the garden? The insect most likely hitched a ride as an egg or larvae on a crucifer transplant or in the soil of a plant as a pupa. Since a community garden has transplants

coming in from a variety of locations, some transplants could have come in from an area of Canada or New York where the swede midge is established. So far swede midge has been found in 13 counties in New York, 1 county in Connecticut, 23 counties in Ontario and 26 counties in Quebec, Canada. The swede midge has caused cold crop losses of up to 85% in Canada.

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF A NEW INSECT PEST

The Northampton Community Garden is the only place in Massachusetts where swede midge has been found; preventing the spread of this insect will help area farmers.

The Department of Agricultural Resources asks you **not to remove soil or crucifer plants** (except produce) from the garden; this will slow the spread of the insect. Soil can be a vehicle for movement of a variety of plant pests: nematodes, weeds, pathogens, and various life stages of insects. Swede midge has 3 or more generations a year where the insect resides as a pupa in the soil before emerging as an adult. [The pupa is an insect life stage between the larvae

("little worms") feeding on plants and the adult fly.] Mature plant parts harvested for consumption are not known vectors for movement of the swede midge. The swede midge larvae feed on the youngest part of the plant and have left the plant to pupate in the soil by the time you harvest a head of cabbage or a handful of collards.

I will continue to report on the progress of the survey in MA and other participating states. For more on the swede midge please visit WWW.MASSNRC.ORG/PESTS/PESTFAQSHEETS/SWEDEMI DGE.HTML. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 413-577-0809 or via e-mail at JULIE.CALLAHAN@STATE.MA.US. 

—Julie Callahan,

Plant Pest Survey Coordinator,
MA Department of Agricultural Resources

HARVEST POTLUCK

This year's Community Garden Potluck will be held on Sunday, September 9, from 5 to 7 P.M. at Rocky Hill CoHousing (off Florence Rd., between Burt's Pit and Rt. 66). 

- **Mingle with other gardeners!**
- **Bring a dish to share!**
- **Show off some of the food you've grown yourself!** (Please include a label listing ingredients for persons with food allergies or aversions.)

Potluck hosts are Sheila Murphy, Suzanne Walker, and Betsey Wolfson, and we're looking for people to organize activities. These could include: • salsa tasting • flower arranging • produce-art contest (create art from your fruits or vegetables; make a centerpiece; etc.) • or something you'd like to propose.

Contact Sheila to organize an activity or for more information: SHEILAM@LITERACYPROJECT.ORG 