

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



OCTOBER 2007



FALL PLOT CLEANUP

As gardening season draws to a close, it's time to prepare your plot(s) for the winter. Follow these guidelines, and cleanup will be a snap!

- Cut down all dead plant material and dispose of it. Compost it in your own plot or in one of the community compost piles. This includes old tomatoes, squashes, etc.; leaving them lying in your plot un-composted attracts animals.
- Toss diseased plant material – such as tomato plants with brown blight spots – in the dumpster.
- 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, and 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 not in use.
- Take home hoses if they are not in use; if you must leave them – coil, and store flat. 🌿

HOW TO REGISTER FOR YOUR 2008 GARDEN PLOT(S)

Here's what you need to know about signing up for your plot(s) for next year's gardening season. If you've cleaned up your plot(s) this fall and completed your community service hours, you may register for these plots for 2008.

QUESTION: *What if I can't clean up my plot by the deadline for fall inspection?*

ANSWER: You may request an automatic extension to a specified date when you can complete the cleanup, by mail to "Community Garden, Recreation Dep't., 90 Locust St., 01060" or by e-mail to mtex@smith.edu. (No requests by phone, please.)

Q: *What if I haven't put in enough time on community service projects?*

A: You could come to Fall Cleanup Day and pitch in on one of the tasks we're working on. You could also make arrangements (via e-mail to mtex@smith.edu) to work on some project that you see needs doing. Registration forms will be mailed early in December; be sure we have your current address. Please return your completed registration by the specified date in January. There's a \$5 charge for late registration, although registration forms are accepted until mid-February. After that date, your plot could be given to a returning gardener who requested it.

Q: *Why is the deadline so early?*

A: So that the Garden Committee has time to process the forms, fill requests for plot changes in February, and prepare a list of available plots for New Gardener Registration in March.

Q: *What if I'm not sure I'll be able to garden next year?*

A: Send in your registration form without a check, explaining the circumstance. We'll hold your plot(s) until mid-March, with no penalty for late registration.

Q: *What if I can't pay the registration fee by the January deadline?*

A: Send in your registration form without a check, with a note saying when you'll be able to pay the fee. We'll hold your plots until then, with no late fee.

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GARDEN CALENDAR

- FALL CLEANUP DAY –
Saturday, October 6
- GARDEN COMMITTEE MTG. –
Monday, October 8
- FALL INSPECTION –
Sunday, October 14
- REGISTRATION FORMS –
mailed first week of December
- COMPLETED
REGISTRATION FORMS –
due Friday, January 4

Q: How do I request more plots?

A: The registration forms have a space for indicating that you wish to add a plot or give one up. Returning gardeners have priority in signing up for available plots. There is a limit of four plots per gardener.

Q: How is it decided whether a request for a plot is granted?

A: The Garden Committee tries to meet all requests. A request received earliest has priority. If more than one gardener asks for a plot, the Committee tries to find equally desirable plots for each. If this isn't possible, a coin toss decides. 🍀

GARDEN NEWS

The **east-end compost pile** is a reality! It made the transition from wish list to a done deal thanks to **DAVE BROWNLEE** and **BILL GRIFFITHS**. Located just east of the dumpster, it is ready for your compostable waste.

Come to **Fall Cleanup Day, Saturday October 6**, 10 A.M.–noon, or 2–4 P.M., (especially if you haven't fulfilled the community service requirement) to help get the Garden ready for winter. Remember you won't be able to register for your plot(s) in 2008 until we have a record of your service hours. Submit a log by filling out a slip from the mailbox beside the bulletin board, or by e-mail to murielgoulet@comcast.net.

Order your **Garden T-shirt** and sport sunflowers all winter; Nancy First (nancy.first@comcast.net) will take your orders and arrange delivery at the Garden. You can buy one T-shirt for \$14, 2 for \$25.

A **radio show** of interest to community gardeners is broadcast the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays and Thursdays of each month from 6 to 7 P.M. Johanna

Halbeisen, who gardens in I/J 11, says, "In Oct '06 I started a radio show on Valley Free Radio that I've wanted to do for some 25 years. **Good News** brings stories of successes, progress, the hope in our work for justice and peace, with songs about those stories. We hear very little good news. I believe that we need to hear good news, not only to keep from getting discouraged in our work for social justice, but also to learn what has worked, who is working, and the breadth and depth of that work."

Listen to *Good News* on WMUA (91.1 FM) or WXOJ-LP (103.3 FM). If you have an item for *Good News*, contact Johanna at JH@newsonglibrary.org.

Special thanks to

STAN GRYSZAN, who with **JIM FERGUSON** and **ART LARSON**, has kept the mowers in working order this season.

KAREN LATUCHIE, who has coordinated Survival Center deliveries.

JASON WOOFENDEN, who has completed another year as our Garden Web master.

NANCY FIRST, who carried out the Garden T-shirt project.

ANN WETHERBEE, who refurbished the sadly-peeling tool shed door.

SHEILA MURPHY, **DEVORAH LEVY**, **JOANN LUTZ**, **SUZANNE WALKER**, and **BETSEY WOLFSON**, who organized the Autumn Harvest Potluck. 🍀

GARDEN TIPS

As the gardening season draws to a close, plots need to be put away for the winter. After running through the fall cleanup check list to make sure you'll

pass inspection, what else can you do?

Fall is a good time to lime your plot if needed. Pelletized lime acts quickly, but powdered lime is much cheaper, and now is the time to spread it.

You could also take preventive action against unwanted seeds (aka weeds, if the plants are not part of your garden plan). As the wind and the birds spread seed from a variety of plants, you can keep them from falling in your plots and sprouting in the spring by spreading layers of newsprint (check the tool shed for rolls of newsprint, or recycle newspaper). Put down four layers, soak with water, then cover with mulch. The mulch could be straw or hay, or chopped leaves. Seeds that fall on this will either not sprout or will be easy to eliminate. You can plant sets right through whatever remains of the paper in the spring, and the mulch will add to the organic matter in your soil.

It isn't too late to plant spring-flowering bulbs. A dozen daffodils or tulips, or a variety of small bulbs like snowdrops, crocuses, or squill will brighten your plots next April and May. You can plant tulips until the ground freezes!

It is a little too early to plant garlic – wait until the end of October or the beginning of November.

That's what you can put *into* the garden. What should you take out? Once frost kills the leaves of dahlias, you can dig up the bulbs. Wash them, let them dry, then wrap them in newspaper and store them in a cool, dry place. Come spring, look for pieces with a small dark protrusion – that's an eye – and separate the roots so that each portion has at least one eye.

Then take a well-deserved rest before you start planning for next year... 🍀

—The Happy Gardener

DRY BEANS

If local foods are the sustainable alternative we used to search for in the organic foods aisle, where does that leave the garden burger? Or the soy dog? The more we consider how many miles our foods travel before reaching our plates, the more buying organic produce from the other side of the continent seems questionable.

Many of us have responded to this problem by trying to grow and preserve as much of our own food as possible. By canning and dehydrating vegetables and by lining my apartment hallway with last season's harvest of squashes, my little family made it to April on our own vegetables. We were dependent on the supermarket throughout the year; however, for protein foods. For health-conscious eaters, vegetarians, and others like us, this has meant depending on a variety of soy products and dry beans from hundreds or thousands of miles away. Although I remain dependent on far-away sources for some of these foods, I decided this season and last to take matters into my own hands – by growing one of the world's most ancient crops: the dry bean.

Fast-growing annuals that are frost-tender and love the sun, dry beans are grown essentially the same way as bush or pole snap beans. Like snap beans, they enjoy a light, well-drained, neutral or slightly acidic soil and germinate best when the soil has warmed to at least 60–65°F. Inoculant, dusted on bean seed before planting, may be used to increase yield and nitrogen fixation. For early plantings, a 1" seed depth allows seeds to take advantage of solar radiation penetrating the soil surface, while later plantings may germinate better more deeply (at 1 1/2" – 2"). Some gardeners row plant bush beans, while others prefer wide rows or raised beds. An equally wide array of support strategies exists for pole dry bean varieties.

Mexican bean beetles, the brownish-

yellow lady-bug-like creatures familiar to snap bean growers at the Community Garden, can be removed from dry beans by hand picking. (Don't forget the fuzzy yellow larvae and yellowish egg masses under the leaves!) If this kind of intimate insect control unsettles you, never fear: Even with no Mexican bean beetle control, my seemingly defoliated bean plants have given me a respectable yield in years past.

Let the bean pods ripen – turning yellow, then brown – on the plants. (This will generally happen in Sept. or Oct., but earlier plantings may give you an earlier crop.) Mature bean pods can be plucked from the plants by hand and then dried, or entire plants can be pulled from the ground and hung upside down in a dry, well-ventilated place. (Incidentally, if you are saving seed to plant the next season, seeds from pods dried on the plant – whether in the garden or in your garage – may germinate better.) Be careful not to leave your bean pods out too late in the field, however, since they may become susceptible to mold. Whatever you do, be sure to turn the roots of these potent nitrogen-fixers in to the soil.

There are several approaches to shelling dry beans, and if you decide to try this noble crop, you may discover your own. For small to moderate harvests, the beans can be shelled by hand once the beans and pods are thoroughly dry. (At this point, the pods will be brittle.) For larger harvests (or just for a higher-impact athletic experience), whack the dry plants against the insides of a barrel, put the plants or pods inside a burlap sack and stomp or beat on it, or construct a flail to coax the beans from the pods. Winnow off the pod fragments on a windy day and store the beans in a dry place. To avoid insect infestation, freeze the dry beans for several days or heat them in an oven for 10–15 min. at 250°F (with the oven door ajar to avoid burning).

As you plan your dry bean crop, you're likely to find the range of varieties avail-

able to be a genuine pleasure. In *The Encyclopedia of Country Living* (Sasquatch Books, 1994), Carla Emery writes that approx. 500 varieties of dry beans are cultivated worldwide.

Many common beans, including kidney, navy, and pinto, belong to the species *Phaseolus vulgaris*. Other well-known beans (adzuki, lima, and mung) belong to the genus *Phaseolus* but to different species. Still others (fava, garbanzo, lentil, soy, and southern beans) are located elsewhere in the *Fabaceae*. The beans of some varieties may be eaten when young and still in the pod (as snap beans) or later as mature dry beans.

Fedco, Seed Savers, Johnny's (online), Vermont Bean Company, and other seed suppliers offer a beautiful collection of bean varieties – from the modest Swedish brown bean to the somewhat flashy Tiger's Eye. You may choose a bean variety for its flavor, for its usefulness in a favorite dish (fava beans in *ful* or yellow-eye beans in hulled corn soup, for example), for its history (as an heirloom variety native to a particular region, people, or family), or for the bean's sheer beauty.

I planted four dry bean varieties this year at the Community Garden, and I have experimented with other varieties in the past. (Interested parties should contact me later, after harvest, for details on my experience with Calypso, King of the Early, and Hutterite Soup Bean, all available from Fedco.) I have had the best luck at the Community Garden with Brown Crowder Peas. These sweet, small, brown beans, similar in flavor to black-eyed peas, set heavily on bushy, glossy-leaved plants that are virtually immune to Mexican bean beetles. I have also had good luck in the past with Jacob's Cattle or Trout beans and the beautiful, shiny, jet-black Tepary bean. Whatever bean you may decide to grow, you're sure to be met with an interesting experience and a harvest of healthy, local, vegetarian-friendly food. Here's to the bean! 🍀

—Annabel Bradford