

# NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



## NEWS



MAY 2009

### GARDEN NEWS

#### SPRING CLEANUP

The sun shone (perhaps too brightly, with 90° temperatures) for Spring Cleanup Day.

**Stephanie Vasiliades** led the tool shed contingent in cleaning the shed; organizing tools, carts, and wheelbarrows; and preparing a wall for painting. **Art Larson** and his valiant crew turned the compost pile near the dumpster – a Herculean task. **Stan Gryszan** got our mowers running. **Bob Carroll** turned over part of the Survival Center plot and mulched the paths. **Elaine Pourinski** oversaw distribution of hoses to all our spigots.


Many thanks to them! – and to all the other gardeners who helped prepare the Garden for the 2009 season.

#### JUNE INSPECTION

Your plot(s) must be worked by Sunday, June 7; otherwise, the plot(s) will be assigned to a prospective gardener on our waiting list. Inspection teams will walk through the Garden on the afternoon of that day. Your plot(s) should be reasonably free of weeds, have seeds, sets, and/or plants in place, and have a sign with your plot number(s). One tomato plant in a sea of weeds won't do the trick, but you don't need to have every square inch cultivated or planted. The teams just want to make sure that your plot is being gardened.

If you are unable to meet this deadline, you may request an extension of up to two weeks, by e-mail to [MTEx@SMITH.EDU](mailto:MTEx@SMITH.EDU) or by mail to the Recreation Dep't. (90 Locust St., 01060). No phone calls, please. We need to receive the request by Monday, June 1.

#### SIGNS, SIGNS, SIGNS!

 All Garden plots should have a sign showing the plot number in place by Sunday, June 7. The style is up to you – utilitarian (cardboard inside a plastic bag) to creative (look around you in the Garden for examples). But each sign must be large enough to be found without extended search and should be legible from outside the plot.

Why signs? To make it easier for everyone to find plots other than her/his own in the Garden. To make it easier for inspection teams to know which plot is which. To prevent new gardeners from digging up a plot other than the one assigned.



### GARDEN CALENDAR

#### SPRING INSPECTION

Sunday, June 7, 3–5 P.M.

#### GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Second Monday each month  
@ 6:30 p.m. at the Garden  
(Rec. Dep't. if inclement weather)

### COMPOST COURTESY

Please put compostable material on **top** of the pile, not in front of or beside it. Otherwise, compost piles turn into compost monsters, engulfing first the paths, then neighboring plots, and eventually the whole Garden.

Please **don't** put material over the fence of the compost pile near the dumpster; add it from the front of the pile. We need to maintain a two-foot path between the pile and the fence.

If you add large heavy stalks (like sunflower stalks) to the pile, break them down into manageable lengths (not more than, say, 12"). Long stalks take a long time to decompose and make turning the pile difficult.

No (repeat, **no**) wood (branches or stakes), stones, or plastic of any kind should be added to the pile.

Consider having a personal compost pile in your own plot. A 4' x 4' area is large enough, and it's only 4% of a 20' x 20' plot. For neatness, you can enclose it with wire mesh, stakes, boards... You won't have to lug stuff to a distant pile – just throw it over your shoulder. Turn your pile at the end of the season, rake it out over your plot, and have better soil next year.

#### SPECIAL THANKS

► To **Karen Latuchie**, for arranging deliveries of donated food to the Survival Center for the past two years.

► To **Norma Sandowski**, for her service as a Garden Committee member and a liaison to South African community gardens.

## GARDEN TIPS

Surveying your neat rows of lettuce, chard, and carrots and wondering how to add a little pizzazz? Here are some easy ways to decorate your garden.

Herbs can make good borders and good backgrounds, as well as providing zest to your cooking. A row of chive plants along the edge of a bed looks wonderful in bloom; when the blooms fade, cut the plants right down almost to the ground and they will regrow and rebloom. Herb fennel, especially bronze fennel, looks terrific at the back of a border, as does its cousin, dill. Their feathery leaves and showy flowers are fine, and make good filler in summer bouquets.

Edible flowers are another way to go. Nasturtiums, which come in a dazzling array of colors, can be planted together with lettuces for a garden tapestry, and the blossoms add spice to your salads. Calendulas are another culinary mainstay, and they too come in dazzling variety – single, double, orange through yellow to pink, with red on the back of the petals. Check out the seed catalogs, and pick one to experiment with. Borage, with its silvery leaves and flowers of a heavenly blue, will decorate your garden, and it has the advantage that it self-seeds abundantly: if you have it this year, you will always have it, although it is easy to weed out.

Growing vines up supports provides a variety of heights for added visual interest, and the choices are



**Romaine Seedling (Trout's Back); watercolor on paper 2009, by Heather McQueen**

wide. To combine beauty and utility, consider runner beans: they have lovely flowers, and the beans are edible. Not useful, but flamboyantly beautiful, are hyacinth beans, with spectacular purple flowers and bean pods. It is hard to resist morning glories, especially 'Heavenly Blue,' but be forewarned that they are notoriously self-seeding and hard to get rid of once you have grown them.

Plant breeders produce an ever-increasing selection of sunflowers, which now come in almost any height you desire<sup>o</sup> from 3' minis to 8' giants, and almost any color you desire – traditional yellow, red, bronze, green, white. Even one sunflower plant makes a very definite statement (and will want to make it next year, too, so you need to be vigilant about self-seeded plants next season).

Dahlias are always much admired, and they are easy to grow if you can give them heat, lots of sun

(6 hours/day), and adequate water (1 inch/week, more when they are blooming). Plant them after the last frost, about 4" deep. Place a sturdy support and tie them as required. When a shoot has formed several pairs of leaves, pinch out the top to encourage lateral shoots. Fertilize with a low-nitrogen fertilizer in mid-July. Then enjoy the spectacular blooms until the first frost.

Then it will be time to plant a few bulbs for next spring – tulips, daffodils, crocuses – whose foliage will die back in time for a vegetable crop.

Add a little beauty to your garden and be...

—A Happy Gardener

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Every gardener is asked to contribute some time to an activity that benefits the Garden community. If you have a single plot, you are asked to contribute 2 hours; for 2 plots, 3 hours; 3 plots, 4 hours; and 4 plots, 5 hours. There are a variety of ways in which you can fulfill the community service requirement. Check the bulletin board for tasks that need doing, or contact the Garden Committee with your own idea. And remember that you must fill out a log slip to let us know what you have done. You'll find slips in the white mailbox beside the bulletin boards on the tool shed wall; fill one out and leave it in the mailbox. Alternatively, you may file a log slip by e-mail to **MURIELGOULET@COMCAST.NET**.

## LYME DISEASE

With the return of warm weather, Deer Ticks, the tiny arachnids that may carry the *Borrelia burgdorfi* (Bb) bacteria that cause Lyme Disease, are flourishing. Around the Northeast, Lyme Disease rates are increasing. It is important to be able to identify Deer Ticks, take steps to avoid exposure, and be aware of what to do if you find a tick attached to your body.

Children are highly vulnerable to contracting Lyme Disease since they spend so much time outdoors. Becoming educated can help protect you, your family and our community.

Familiarizing yourself with what a Deer Tick looks like can be the key to early detection and prompt, successful treatment. At right is an image of an adult Deer Tick compared to the size of a penny.



(A Massachusetts Department of Public Health brochure about Lyme Disease containing images of Deer Ticks is posted on the bulletin board on the back of the shed.)

In its two-year life cycle a Deer Tick goes through three stages of development: larva, nymph, and adult. In the larval stage, the tick is not yet infected with Bb. In the adult stage, a Deer Tick is the size of a sesame seed; this makes it easier to see and more likely to be removed.

In June and July, most cases of Lyme are contracted via the attachment of a tick in the nymph stage – it's about the size of a dot left by a pencil point. At this stage, it is most likely to transmit Lyme as it has just had its first blood

meals from a mammal host carrying the bacteria (usually a deer or white-footed mouse) and has high bacterial concentrations. Finding a tick attached at this stage is not easy. Many people are aware that a bull's-eye rash may appear at the site of an infected tick bite. However, it is possible that you may see a different type mild rash or no rash at all. Or, the Lyme rash may appear weeks after the tick bite.

Lyme Disease is treated with antibiotics. If an infection is discovered early, treatment may involve three to four weeks of treatment. This may fully eradicate the infection. If Lyme is not detected in the early stages, the bacteria can move throughout the body (disseminate) and many parts of the body can become infected. Left untreated, Lyme bacteria can enter the central nervous system and cause a much more severe and disabling form of illness.

If you are bitten by a Deer Tick, prophylactic antibiotic treatment may significantly reduce the chances of contracting Lyme if that tick is carrying the Bb bacteria. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that a single 200 mg dose of the antibiotic Doxycycline administered within 72 hours of infection can prevent the transmission of Lyme Disease [N Engl J Med. 2001 Jul 12;345(2):79-84] Doxycycline is not given to children under the age of 8. Amoxicillin is commonly prescribed for younger children. Factors such as allergies, pregnancy, or lactation may influence a doctor's choice of antibiotics.

Laboratory testing for Lyme

Disease cannot conclusively determine whether or not you have the illness. Some doctors rely more on a patient's clinical symptoms than lab results in making a Lyme diagnosis. This is a highly controversial area of debate within the medical community. Currently, the Infectious Disease Society of America (ISDA) is reconsidering the diagnostic and treatment guidelines the organization established in 2006. These guidelines have been used by doctors and insurance companies to determine diagnosis and treatment approaches which many physicians around the world feel are inadequate in addressing Lyme Disease. The International Lyme and Associated Disease Society (ILADS) is an international organization of medical practitioners who have established a separate and very different approach to diagnosis of Lyme Disease. It would be useful to educate yourself about the guidelines developed by these medical organizations before discussing the issue of Lyme with your medical provider.

Area physicians vary significantly in their responses to a Deer Tick attachment and in their approach to the treatment of Lyme Disease. You may find that you have to advocate for your own care. It may be useful to ask your health care provider about her approach to managing tick bites and Lyme Disease. For example, if your doctor will not treat with prophylactic antibiotics, you should know this before a tick bite occurs. It is wise to seek medical attention quickly after any Deer Tick attachment, even if you have been able to remove all of the tick from your skin. It is a legitimate reason to go to an

urgent care center or emergency room.

Since you may never know you were bitten by a tick, it is important to familiarize yourself with the wide range of symptoms that may appear with a Lyme infection, so it can be considered as a possibility in the face of new, unexplained physical or psychiatric symptoms. Lyme is considered the true “great imitator” of many other illnesses. Depending on the infection site, the bacterial concentration in the tick and your own immune response, the bacteria can travel, over time, to various parts of the body, including the central nervous system. When Lyme enters the central nervous system (Lyme Neuroborreliosis), it can be very difficult to treat. Common physical symptoms experienced with Lyme infection are fever, joint pain (often in the knees, ankles, wrists and shoulders), headache and severe fatigue. Psychiatric symptom such as panic, depression, concentration and memory problems, and insomnia also can occur with Lyme. Many people experience a flu-like illness at the onset of a Lyme infection but many do not. The list of possible Lyme-related symptoms is long, since the bacteria can affect many parts of the body.

Bellow is a list of prevention strategies compiled by the American Camping Association that may help keep these nasty critters from biting you :

- ▶ Wear light-colored clothing so you can more easily see ticks.
- ▶ Wear long sleeves buttoned at the wrist and long pants tucked into socks.
- ▶ Weat a hat to protect your head.
- ▶ Walk in the center of trails to

avoid brushing up against dense vegetation where ticks hide. Avoid sitting directly on the ground; use a blanket or towel.

- ▶ Do a “tick check” every few hours or more often if in heavily infested areas. Visually check clothing and exposed skin. At the end of the day, do a final, full-body tick check.
- ▶ Use an insect repellent containing DEET. Lightly spray clothing, especially children’s, and avoid direct contact with skin.
- ▶ Remove ticks as soon as you detect them. Do not touch them directly; use a tweezers or tissue, and do not crush the insect until it is separated from the skin and placed in a disposable container.\* (\* Grasp the tick with tweezers around its head, close to the skin, and pull it up slowly and firmly. Disinfect the bite afterward with antiseptic.)

People often have home remedies for tick removal such as smothering them in petroleum jelly or burning them with the end of a match. These practices should be avoided, as they may cause the tick to regurgitate and empty its stomach contents into your body increasing the possibility of bacterial transmission.

The following are excellent sources of information regarding Lyme Disease and other tick borne illnesses:

[WWW.LYME-DISEASE-RESEARCH-DATABASE.COM](http://WWW.LYME-DISEASE-RESEARCH-DATABASE.COM)

[WWW.LYMEDISEASE.ORG](http://WWW.LYMEDISEASE.ORG)

[WWW.ILADS.ORG](http://WWW.ILADS.ORG)

—Lydia Rackenberg

## MASTER GARDENER DEMONSTRATION PLOT

We would like to thank the Northampton Community Garden for inviting us into your community and for giving us the opportunity to create a demonstration plot.

Our committee met last week at the community garden and were very impressed with all of the that we saw. We found the site you have set aside for us to be great.



Jay Yinskey, a Western Massachusetts Master Gardener, developed a few garden designs for us to consider. His three designs were so good that it was very hard for us to pick a particular one. We finally asked him to combine features from each into one and present it at our next meeting.

Over the next weeks and months we will be implementing his final plan, and we hope that you’ll stop by to monitor our progress.

Thanks again,

*Ray Ellsworth,  
Western Massachusetts Master  
Gardeners Association*