

# NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



## NEWS



JULY 2009

### GARDEN NEWS

Our rainy spring has finally come to an end; our rain gauge topped out at 5" and was starting over again before June 21. Sun-loving plants are languishing, but lettuces are lasting longer.

### RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH

Because ragweed pollen is a notorious allergen, a Garden goal is to get rid of as many ragweed plants as possible before they flower. If you don't know what ragweed looks like, see the photo below, or ask a fellow gardener. Please pull up any ragweed you find in your own plot(s). Keep an eye out for ragweed growing in public spaces, and pull that up too. Once ragweed has flowered, it will continue to ripen seed even after it is pulled up.

Because ragweed seed remains viable for many years, you should throw flowering ragweed in the **dumpster** – not in the compost.

On Sunday, July 12, inspection teams will walk through the Garden to check plots for ragweed. When they find plants in a plot, they'll tag

one or two samples with red tape. Avoid that red badge of shame, and get rid of the ragweed now!

The teams will also check for plots that seem overtaken by weeds. If yours is one of these, you'll receive an e-mail or a phone call to make sure you are still working your plot.

### SURVIVAL CENTER

**Survival Center Plot.** The Survival Center plot is looking quite fine this year. Lisa Andrews is managing the plot, and Kate Collins has organized a group of volunteers from the local Unitarian Church to plant and tend the garden.

**Survival Center Delivery.** Ben Winter is organizing deliveries to the Survival Center. Donations of vegetables and fruit are needed: Put them in the cooler by the tool shed, beneath the bulletin board. Please wash vegetables and place your donations in a bag to facilitate delivery. Delivery is every Monday and Wednesday, so your donations should be made between 4 p.m. Sunday/Tuesday

and noon Monday/Wednesday. Ben's e-mail address is vitamin\_ben@hotmail.com.

### THEFTS FROM THE GARDEN

As many of you are aware, one gardener has had many plants taken from her garden over the past month. Others find themselves missing flowers and vegetables. All of us need to be alert to marauders. Make it a point to know your neighbors, so you can spot a stranger in a nearby plot. Let your neighbors know if you will be away and someone else will be tending your plot. If you see someone you don't recognize taking things from a plot, challenge that person for identification (you can ask for his/her plot number – a thief won't have any idea). If there is an automobile, get a license number. Report the theft to the Police Dep't (911) and to the Garden Committee (nohogardens.org). 🌿

### GARDEN TIPS

Talk to a community gardener these days and hear: "The weeds are taking over!" "I'm spending hours weeding!" "We're overwhelmed by the weeds!" Is there a solution to the Weed Problem? Yes – and no. Weeds are always with us, but there are means of control.

**The Role of Tilling in Weed Production.** When you till your garden in the spring (turn the soil with spade and fork, then rake it out to a fine tilth), you provide a splendid



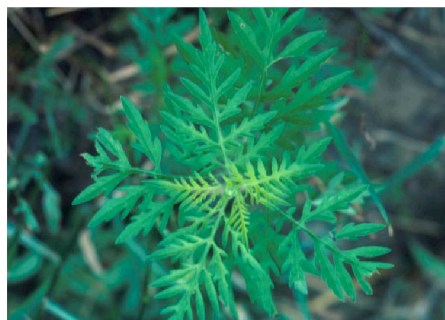
### GARDEN CALENDAR

#### RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH

Sunday, July 12

#### GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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



This is ragweed!

Dr. John Meade, Rutgers Cooperative Extension

bed for your seeds. Unfortunately, you also provide the same bed to all the weed seeds that were underground and have now been brought to the surface, exposed to the light and warmth they need to germinate. Which they do, growing more vigorously than the seeds you have planted.

**Getting Rid of the Weeds**

- ▶ The first line of attack is hand weeding, which you will need to do around your seedlings.
- ▶ The second line of attack is hoeing, which you can do in the rows between seedlings. The best tool is the stirrup hoe (there are a couple in the tool shed. Your aim is to behead the weed seedlings with minimum disturbance of the soil (more weed seeds are lurking down there).
- ▶ The third line of attack is mulching. Once your plot is reasonably weed-free, lay down a couple of inches of some mulch material—straw, Mainely Mulch (a chopped, compressed hay/straw product), mulch hay, chopped leaves. This mulch keeps moisture in the soil longer. It prevents more weed seeds from sprouting from below, and it protects the soil from airborne or bird-deposited seeds from above.

**Other Tactics**

- ▶ Various plastic mulches are suitable for particular crops and are very effective in preventing weed germination. Black plastic warms the soil and is recommended for melons and squash. Red plastic is claimed to improve the yield of tomato plants. If you use plastic, you cut a hole big enough to set your plant; you then punch small holes in the plastic so that water

goes through to the soil below.

- ▶ If you have paths in your garden, weed-proof them with a layer of four sheets of newspaper covered with wood chips, a solution that is both effective and attractive.
- ▶ Vinegar is a fairly effective herbicide. You can spray it on full-strength (use plain distilled white vinegar), and in a couple of days the weeds will brown up and die.
- ▶ Keep the grass and other plants around the edges of your plot cut back. If they go to seed, they are a prime source of “weed infection.”

**Long-Term Weed Control.**

Come fall, when you are putting your garden to bed for the winter, consider switching to no-till gardening. Cut down all the stuff remaining in your plot. Add a layer of compost, fertilizer, lime if necessary. Cover the plot with newspaper (4 sheets in a layer, overlapping, and wetted down) or newsprint (roll ends available from the Hampshire Gazette). Cover the paper with hay, straw, or chopped leaves – a thick layer, at least 4”. Come spring, you can cut through the newspaper to put in started plants. To plant seeds, pull back the mulch and paper, put in the seeds, and return mulch slowly as the seeds grow.

The question is, “Who is to be master, me or the weeds?” Follow these prescriptions, and you’ll be able to answer, “Me!” and be...

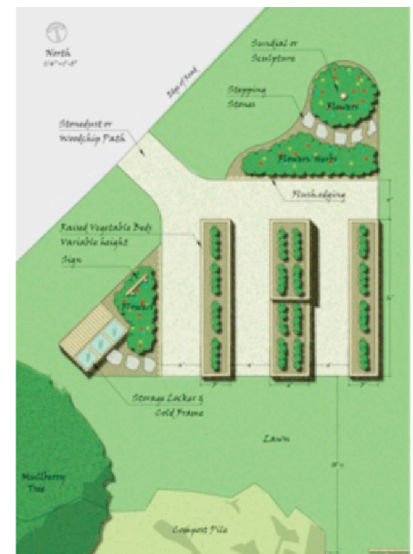
—The Happy Gardener 🌿

**MASTER GARDENER DEMONSTRATION PLOT MAKES PROGRESS**

The creation of the Western Mass Master Gardener Association (WMMGA) demonstration plot is well underway, with a finalized design and the construction of the first raised bed.

The idea for this plot came from community gardener and WMMGA intern Norma Macogee-Sandowski, who encouraged her fellow interns to develop a demonstration garden with access for those with limited mobility. Ray Ellsworth volunteered to lead the effort and worked closely with Master Gardener Jay Vinsky to develop a design that is not only beautiful, but is also highly functional.

The garden plot will feature three tall raised beds, a cold frame, and a separate plot for flowers and berry bushes, all connected by pine bark paths. The project team is grateful to the Community Gardens, WMMGA, and several anonymous donors for the funding to purchase the raw materials.



WMMGA Garden Plot Schematic

This year is devoted to construction and laying the groundwork (so to speak) for ensuing years of gardening demonstrations and educational presentations, in line with the WMMGA mission to teach sustainable gardening practices. The first raised bed has been constructed and the rest are soon to follow. If you see the team at work, feel free to stop by and offer suggestions for demonstration topics and theme beds. 🌿



WMMGA interns Gary Lemay and Ray Ellsworth finish construction of the first raised bed

## COMMUNITY GARDEN WATERING EXCHANGE – FOR GARDENERS ON VACATION

Are you going on vacation? Do you need your garden watered? Are you tired of imposing on friends? Then join the Noho Community Gardens Watering Exchange, and work with your neighbors to make our gardens grow.

How it works:

- 1) Gardeners who need watering while on vacation fill out the form below and e-mail it to Andy Donson, the watering exchange agent, at adonson@yahoo.com. They can also mail the information on a postcard to 40 Winthrop St., Northampton, MA 01060.
- 2) Andy will broker one-to-one



Heuchera in bloom by Gloria Santa Anna

exchanges between participating gardeners and put them into contact with each other by e-mail or (less preferably) telephone with a message like the following:

Dear Gloria Steinem,

Jonathan Edwards (413-666-1703, jedwards@calvin.org) would like you to water his plot #Q13 for five days, June 20 to 24.

Please confirm that you received this message, and contact Mr. Edwards.

Thank you!

Andy Donson,  
Watering Exchange Agent

3) Gardeners taking longer vacations may have to make multiple exchanges.

4) The exchanges are based on plot-days. Example: A gardener with two plots that need watering for three days can make an equal exchange with a gardener with one plot that needs watering for six days or with two gardeners, each of whom has one plot that needs watering for three days.

5) The Mother Nature's good luck rule holds: Gardeners under obligation are not expected to water on days when there is sufficient rain but nonetheless still get credit for those days.

6) Participants agree to let the watering exchange agent give out contact information to the other gardener in the exchange.

7) Participants should send information as early as possible to facilitate the brokering.

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NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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TELEPHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

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PLOT NUMBER(S) \_\_\_\_\_

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NUMBER OF DAYS OF WATERING NEEDED \_\_\_\_\_

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DATES OF WATERING NEEDED \_\_\_\_\_

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DATES AVAILABLE TO WATER OTHER GARDENS (THE MORE OPEN, THE BETTER) \_\_\_\_\_

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WATERING INSTRUCTIONS: (E.G., ONE INCH ONCE A WEEK) 🌿

## NORTHAMPTON WILL BUY 11 ACRES

Through the generosity of a local family, Rita and Bruce Bleiman, and with the help of funds from the Community Preservation Act (CPA), the City will soon be purchasing the Bleiman's 11-acre parcel of "Meadows" land behind South Street's residential neighborhood. This parcel will be 1) forever preserved, and 2) put to an agricultural use that shall benefit the public.

Five acres are fertile, open field – former alluvial plains of the Mill River. The remaining six acres are wetlands habitat that will remain undisturbed.

Lilly Lombard, a member of the Community Preservation Committee, organized a community forum on Wednesday, June 24, to envision possible agricultural uses for the land.

Phil Korman, Director of CISA, spoke about different models of urban agriculture, including CSAs; the Natick Community Organic Farm; and Nuestras Raíces in Holyoke.

Wayne Feiden, Director of the Northampton Office of Planning and Development, gave a description of the parcel and spoke about some of its challenges. For example, no permanent structures are allowed since it's in a flood plain; automobile access is limited; there's no possibility to connect to city water; and there are lots of mosquitos.

The forum was attended by about forty Northampton residents who discussed how the land might be used – for more Community Garden plots; for a CSA; for an

educational center; for a plant nursery and seed saving operation; or for some combination of the above.

Many ideas were generated, and some of the participants agreed to form a group to explore the feasibility of the ideas considered at this forum and possibly to submit a CPA application for initial design and prep. work.

For more information, visit <http://groups.google.com/group/grow-food-in-northampton>

See photos of the land here: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/29768180@N04/?saved=1> 

## GARDEN LOVE SONG

by Kathryn Good-Schiff


This is the year of our garden  
of gravity and momentum  
water and fire  
stones and potatoes.

You clear the plot of earth,  
enrich it.

I will plant tomatoes, melons,  
fruitful things  
and chard for good luck.

This is our year.

You settle stones in a ring around  
the bed

I will weed and sing to the leaves.  


Please do not  
turn your car  
around in our  
neighbors'  
driveways on  
Burt's Pit Road.



Drive down to the ball field to turn.

Northampton Recreation Dep't.  
90 Locust Street  
Northampton, MA 01060