

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



MAY 2012

GARDEN NEWS

SPRING CLEANUP DAY, April 28, was graced with fine weather and a good turnout of gardeners. The results included a tidy tool shed, splitters and hoses delivered to all spigots, compost piles turned and organized, much garlic mustard (a nasty invasive) pulled and added to the compost, and the edges of the back road cleared.

Gardeners who helped are reminded to log their community service hours; see this Newsletter's article In the Cloud for instructions on how to do this. Ed McGlew delivered his Red Bag compost, and Sandy Jaescke supplied us with straw bales and

chopped straw. (The new gardener who won a free bag of compost as a door prize at the orientation meeting for new gardeners never claimed her/his prize; please contact Mimi (MTEx@SMITH.EDU) to arrange a pickup.)

JUNE 3 INSPECTION is just a couple of weeks away. On that Sunday, teams of volunteer gardeners will be walking through the garden, checking that plots have been worked. That doesn't mean that every square foot must be planted. Teams will look for evidence that plots have been tilled and/or weeded, and that seeds and sets are in place. (Two tomato plants in a sea of weeds is not sufficient!) *Plots that have not been worked will be reassigned to people on the waiting list.* The inspection teams will look for a clearly visible sign with the plot number, and also check for compost piles in plots that claimed the compost credit at registration.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Bob Burger, Eric Howard, Art Larson, and their Cleanup Day helpers, for bringing our compost piles under control.

Jessica Gifford, for organizing the plant & seed swap on Cleanup Day.

Gloria Santa Anna, for setting up and managing our system to record community service hours.

Johanna Halbeisen, for organizing schedules for tool shed and garden cart monitors.

Owen Williams, for his continuing work in clearing unwanted trees from the Garden. 🍀

GARDEN TIPS

What do gardeners most obsess about? Soil pH? Fertility? Which variety of seed to plant? When to plant it? No. It's *weeds*. We dream about the weed-free garden, but we cope with the reality of weed-ridden plots. It helps to know your enemy, so here's some information about some of the common little nasties that infest your rows.

Often first to appear in the spring is a plant with a basal rosette of leaves, from which rises a stem with tiny white flowers on alternate sides. A plot that was clear in the fall may be completely covered. My neighbor in the Garden says it's called bitter cress, and is one of the spring greens that can be eaten; I believe its botanical moniker is *Aradopsis*.

If you watch it develop, you'll see that each flower gives rise to a long thin seed, which turns from



2012 GARDEN CALENDAR

IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED? INSPECTION

June 3

RAGWEED/WEED WALKTHROUGH

July 15

FALL CLEANUP DAY

October 20

FALL INSPECTION

October 21

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Second Monday each month
@ 6:30 P.M. at the Rec. Dep't.



green to brown as it matures; as the flowers are alternate, the seeds along the stem look a little like fish bones. Touch the plant when the seeds are brown and discover why it appears everywhere: There is an explosion, with each seed sent off like a miniature missile. The take-home lesson: Get it out while it's young.

You'll also see lots of a plant with square stems (making it a member of the mint family), hairy lower leaves, and pink-purple two-lipped flowers that form on the upper leaves. This is henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*). It flowers in early spring, and its seeds mature from April to June. If left, it will spread into an ever-larger plant. Fortunately, it's easy to pull up.

Another square-stemmed plant very much in evidence now is ground ivy (also known as Gill-over-the-ground and creeping Charlie), botanically *Glechoma hederacea*. It can be identified by its kidney-shaped leaves, with round toothed edges. Its flowers are bilaterally symmetrical, funnel shaped, blue or bluish-violet to lavender, and grow in opposed clusters of 2 or 3 flowers in the leaf axils on the upper part of the stem or near the tip. It usually flowers in the spring. It spreads by stolons (shoots that grow horizontally above the ground and produce roots and shoots at the nodes). Part of the reason for its wide spread is this method of reproduction. If left unchecked, it will form dense mats which can take over large areas. Control is by hand-weeding, but persistence is required, since any portion of stolon left will survive and reproduce.

Are there more? Oh my, yes! But

that's enough for now. Check out the July 2009 and March 2011 articles ("Garden Tips" and "Weeds Are Always with Us") for a general discussion of weeds. Meanwhile, get out there and start weeding if you wish to be...

—The Happy Gardener 

LOVE YOUR HOSES!

In an effort to make the garden experience more enjoyable and effective for everyone, I've volunteered again this year to make sure all the hoses are in good working order. On Spring Cleanup Day, hoses were distributed to all the spigots and were checked for leaks. As of Tuesday, May 1, all spigots have Y valves and at least 100 ft. of leak-free hose with functional ends. (It's BYO when it comes to hose sprayers and attachments.)

Hoses are expensive, but careful use will extend their life. Please baby the hoses as follows:

- Some hoses are naturally kinky, but try (as best you can) to avoid kinking them.
- Attach the hose to the side of the Y valve that points toward your garden. To face it the right way, rotate the Y valve around without loosening it. This avoids making a sharp bend in the hose where it attaches to the spigot.
- The last person using the hose should turn the spigot off by the main knob rather than just turning off the little diverter valves.
- Treat the hoses with TLC, and wind them up when you're done.

I will do my best to keep the hoses working all season, so please let me know of any of the following problems – and be sure to tell me

the number marked on the spigot:

- a leak in the hose
- a broken or leaky hose end
- a leaky spigot (we will try to get DPW to fix spigot #12.)
- if you have a garden plot that can't be reached by any hose

Have a great gardening season!

—Molly Hale (C-7, D-7) | 585-0791

HELLOMOLLY@COMCAST.NET 

THE COMPOST PILE

The community compost piles are great resources for the gardens. They provide a way to get rid of organic material that would otherwise end up in a landfill, and they turn that organic waste into valuable compost for use in the garden. However, there can be a number of problems, so let's go over a few basic rules:

- 1) **The compost pile is NOT a junk pile.** Don't throw any inorganic material in the compost. Inorganic waste must go in the dumpster; better yet, take it with you, and throw it away at home. Also, do not add large pieces of wood to the pile; they take too long to break down.
- 2) **NEVER block the aisles.** If an aisle is blocked, other people can't get in to pile new stuff on top, and people trying to dig finished compost to use in their plots can't get in to dig.
- 3) **Be courteous.** Gardeners have plots next to the piles. Don't dump stuff outside the marked boundaries of the piles.
- 4) **Compost takes time.** This means we have different piles in different stages; some are finished or nearly finished, and some are for new stuff. You should add new organic matter only to the side of

the back pile farthest away from the tree (toward the east side of the garden). We will install signs eventually, but for now, pile new stuff on the east side pile.

5) **Compost is not fertilizer.** Adding compost will improve the organic material balance of your garden (your soil will hold onto water better and your plants will be happier), but the large compost piles are not hot enough or turned quickly enough to generate compost high in nitrogen. You will likely need to add some kind of organic fertilizer to your garden, especially if you are raising food crops.

6) **Compost is not dirt.** Compost is much too valuable to use to build hills or structures in your garden; use it as a soil amendment. Your plants will thank you, and other gardeners who would also like to use the compost will thank you.

— Eric Howard 

COMMUNITY GARDENERS IN THE “CLOUD” – SECOND YEAR

RECORDING COMMUNITY SERVICE HOURS

Hello Fellow Gardeners,

First let me thank all of you who successfully used either e-mail or the Excel spreadsheet to send me your community service hours. It made the process of recording community service hours much easier, used less paper, and streamlined the process.

This year, based on your feedback, we have made some changes. There are still three options for submitting your community service hours. To try to cut down

on the use of paper and thereby save a few trees, if you use option #1 (e-mail) or option #2 (Google docs), you will receive a one-time 15-minute community service credit for this year (Yeah)!

Here are the options explained:

- 1) **E-MAIL:** Send me a message at GLORIANOHOOG@GMAIL.COM, stating the following information:
 - a. The name of the person the plot is registered to (which may not be your name);
 - b. Your plot numbers;
 - c. The date and amount of time of community service;
 - d. A brief description of the work you did.

2) **GOOGLE DOCS:** Here are the directions regarding Google Docs:

- a. Please use the link to access the Excel 97 spreadsheet;
- b. You will have to download the spreadsheet as an Excel document to input your information;
- c. Keep a copy for your future use to send me community service updates;
- d. Here is the link: <https://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=OAhnt5CObzSQAAdFo2azZ1cVpDWVZsemIGQnhCZzk2MOE&hl=en&authkey=CMenqfQ>

3) **PAPER:** This is the least preferred option.

I know that a few of you do not use e-mail; therefore I have created a paper form. There are spaces for you to write all the information needed to properly credit your community service (same as 1 a-d). Please, please write legibly! I'm sorry, but we cannot accept those teeny tiny pieces of paper – it makes it very difficult to properly credit the correct people.

I will keep the mailbox stocked up – but please feel free to take one and copy it for your use.

As with last year, I will keep the records on an Excel spreadsheet. This form will also allow me to post the community service hours with your balances (hours owed), twice a season on our community board behind the shed. I will post the listing by garden plots only to protect people's privacy. Thank you in advance for embracing this new way. This new system has already cut down on confusion about community service hours served, and, we hope, has saved a few trees in the process.

—Gloria A. Santa Anna | T5, S5, R5
GLORIANOHOOG@GMAIL.COM 

THE GARDEN ON FACEBOOK!

We now have a page on Facebook which we hope will become a more frequent means of communicating about the Community Garden, as well as a place to get answers to gardening questions from other gardeners.

We'd like to build connections between gardeners who are interested, and build our community bonds; we thought we'd see if Facebook could help.

If you are a Facebook user, please go to the link below and click “Join Group” at the top of the page to join the conversation, or just read along for fun.

[HTTP://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/183723795531/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/183723795531/)

—Amy Woolf 

THEFT IN THE GARDEN

There have been sporadic reports of theft in the Garden over the past few years, and in an effort to determine whether or not we have a larger problem, we are asking gardeners to report all incidents so that we can compile a list, assess the problem, look for patterns, etc. We also know that there have been “repeat offenders” in the past – people who think it is okay to forage in our plots on an ongoing basis. If you see those people and feel safe taking a photo of them, it could be helpful in getting the behavior under control. Please report any information to Amy Woolf. (AMYWOOLF@YAHOO.COM) 🍀

PARKING MANNERS

For those who find it more convenient to reach their gardens by parking beside Burt's Pit Road, please bear in mind that there is limited space. Where the verge is narrow, at the dog-walk end, the cars must, understandably, park parallel to the road, but beyond that the area is wider; it would therefore be helpful if gardeners would share the space by parking “nose in” or “nose out.” Thanks. 🍀



Where possible, please park at an angle (not parallel) to Burt's Pit Road. More cars will fit this way.



DON'T BE A TOOL HOARDER!

Please limit the number of tools you take to your garden so that everyone has access to them! If you are not going to be using a tool in relatively short order, please do not take it to your plot. There are often no tools of one or another kind available. This happens, not as a result of not enough tools, but of too many tools being with one gardener! Let's all ensure that our fellow gardeners have access to tools too! If we all follow this principle, then we'll all have the tools we need! 🍀

*Don't forget to make a sign that clearly displays your plot number.



EDITOR'S CHOICE

Watch the Cornell Ornithology Lab's Red-tailed Hawk cam!

The three eyasses (chicks) are about two weeks old and are enjoying meals of chipmunk, squirrel, pigeon, and other delicacies brought to the nest by their parents, Big Red (mother) and Ezra (father).

WWW.LIVESTREAM.COM/CORNELL-HAWKS

GUIDELINES FOR HAPPY GARDENING

- ▶ **MOW ON PATHS ONLY** – NOT IN PLOTS
- ▶ **HOLD THE HOSE WHILE YOU WATER; DON'T LAY IT ON THE GROUND AND WALK AWAY**
- ▶ **COIL THE HOSE AFTER YOU'VE FINISHED USING IT**
- ▶ **TURN OFF THE FAUCET** (with the handle) – NOT JUST THE SPLITTER
- ▶ **DON'T HOARD TOOLS**
- ▶ **CATS DO NOT BELONG IN THE GARDEN;** cat manure should never be added to garden compost or left to decompose in vegetable beds; cat feces often carries parasites that can infect humans, and you certainly don't want it near your growing vegetables!



LIKE TO SHOP LOCALLY?

Garden Centers Near the Northampton Community Garden

Ordering on-line or driving over the bridge to buy plants and gardening materials? Did you know there are four garden centers and one mini-Agway on this side of the river? This chart details just a few of the useful products available at garden retailers, all five miles or less from the Northampton Community Garden. From tools to plants to bat guano and worm castings, these locally owned businesses are in high gear for this year's gardening season. All shops recommend calling to check hours and for availability of specific items.

— Julie Zuckman

Garden Retailer	Recommended Plant(s)	Non-Plant Material	Best Value	Shop Owner's Pick
ANGELO'S GOLDEN HARVEST 391 Damon Road, Northampton 586-6246 2.2 miles from NCG	Multiple varieties of heirloom tomatoes	Coast of Maine Dark Chocolate Aged Enriching Mulch	Herb collection (Including eight types of basil)	Mole plant – said to deter moles
DAVE'S / AGWAY 140 N. King Street, Northampton 585-1170 www.davessodaandpetcity.com 2.7 miles from NCG	This Dave's location does not carry plants	Dr. Earth's Bat Guano	Water wigglers for birdbaths – prevents larvae development	Gro-Well Soil mix for raised beds – includes worm castings, bat guano & mushroom compost
HICKORY DELL FARM 245 West Farms Road, Florence 586-0031 www.hickorydell.com 4.3 miles from NCG	Vegetable starts	Damminix Tick Tubes for yard and garden tick control	Free "Llama-bean" fertilizer (bring your own shovel & container)	\$1.99 gardening gloves that last forever
NORTH COUNTRY GARDEN CTR. 1 Main Street, Westhampton (Northampton/Westhampton line, Route 66) 527-6718 www.northcountrygarden.com 5 miles from NCG	Pink Lemonade Blueberry bush	Their own loam-compost mix (bulk) for raised or regular garden beds	Apache hoe – stand up weeding tool	Paper weed barrier/ water conservation material – organic, biodegradable, recycled, with matching stakes
RAVENWOLD GREENHOUSES 1095 Florence Road, Florence 586-1416 www.ravenwoldgreenhouses.com 2.2 miles from NCG	Defiant Tomato – late blight resistant, superior taste	Black Gold Earthworm Castings Organic Soil Conditioner	Strawberry plants	Sungold Cherry Tomatoes and 18 varieties of heirloom tomatoes

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