

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



MAY 2014



GARDEN NEWS

The next date to remember is... **SATURDAY, MAY 31**, for the **"IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED?" INSPECTION**. What do you need to do before then? Read on to learn what the inspection teams (your fellow gardeners who have volunteered for the task) will be looking for...

IS YOUR PLOT PLANTED?

On Saturday, May 31, 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.

COMMUNITY SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Please check the bulletin board for community service opportunities.

MOWING AS COMMUNITY SERVICE

The scheme for mowing described in the March Newsletter is going into effect. Those who



2014 GARDEN CALENDAR

IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED? INSPECTION

May 31

RAGWEED/WEED WALKTHROUGH

July 12

FALL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday, October 11

FALL INSPECTION

Sunday, October 19

GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Third Monday each month @ 6:30 P.M. at the Rec. Dept. (or in the Garden during nice weather; call to confirm)

volunteered to mow specific areas for specific periods should have received a schedule on which to indicate their availability. Please remember that only those people who sign up in this way will receive credit for community service. This is a change from previous years, when any gardener who mowed could count that activity as community service.

We ask other gardeners to use the push mowers if they should need to mow.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

► **BOB BURGER, JIM FERGUSON,**

ERIC HOWARD, ART LARSON, and the crew of **VOLUNTEERS** who worked on compost piles before and during Spring Cleanup. They moved mountains.

► **MANDY MCLEOD** and **ALEX WENGER** for providing chocolate chip cookies (you had to get there early because they were soon devoured) and iced tea to refresh hard-working volunteers on Spring Cleanup Day.

► The **MASTER GARDENERS OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS** who provided soil testing and answers to an assortment of gardening questions on Spring Cleanup Day.

► **PATTY RYAN**, for her help with New Gardener Registration – as she helps every year, with efficiency and cheerfulness.

NORTHEAST COMPOST PILE CLOSED TO NEW MATERIAL

That's the compost pile beside the dumpster. Please do not put any material into that pile until further notice. You may remove finished compost. 🍀

GARDEN TIPS

WHAT SHOULD THE DILIGENT GARDENER BE DOING AT THIS TIME OF YEAR?

FERTILIZING. Because growing plants may exhaust certain soil elements, it becomes necessary to replace them. The big three minerals are nitrogen, phosphate, and potash (N, P, and K) and it is easy to find fertilizers both

organic and synthetic with varying proportions of these. To know what your soil needs, you can either send samples to a soil-testing laboratory (UMass maintains such a facility) or buy a kit for about \$20 that allows you to do your own testing. Generally speaking, synthetic fertilizers act rapidly, releasing nutrients over a short time period, and are quickly exhausted, whereas organic fertilizers are slow-acting and long-lasting. If your neighbor chooses to use Miracle-Gro, a synthetic fertilizer, don't fret—his fertilizer won't harm your soil.

ROCK DUSTING. The big pile of gray stuff under tarps that sits beside the wood chips is rock dust. It contains a much greater variety of minerals than N-P-K fertilizer. The remineralization movement points out that crops remove these minerals and believes we can improve the soil by replacing them. There is evidence that rock dust will improve the productivity of your soil. The dust is there for all gardeners to use. You can apply it at the rate of one 5-gallon pail of dust for a 20' x 20' plot, either tilling it in or sprinkling it on the surface.

MULCHING. Mulch (straw, chopped leaves, compost, grass clippings, seaweed, pine needles, sawdust) can be laid on top of your soil, where it protects the soil from rain, wind, and sun; it helps to keep down weeds; and it holds in water (which will be much more important in the heat of August). Mulch material will decompose and add organic matter to your soil.

WEEDING. Weeds are easy to pull when they're small. Let them get large and you'll have a struggle.

What you should be on the lookout for right now are three pernicious plants. The first is **bitter** (or winter) **cress**, *Cardamine hirsuta*. It grows from a basal rosette, has white flowers, is rather pretty—but! Its seed pods are long and needle-like and, when touched, explode and send many tiny seeds in every direction. Best to get it now or it will be too late.

The second is **henbit**, *Lamium amplexicaule*. It has hairy lower leaves, and pink-purple two-lipped flowers that form on the upper leaves. If left, it will spread into an ever-larger plant. Fortunately, it's easy to pull up.

The third plant very much in evidence now is **ground ivy** (also known as Gill-over-the-ground and creeping Charlie), botanically *Glechoma hederacea*. 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 spreads by stolons (shoots that grow horizontally above the ground and produce roots and shoots at the nodes). If left unchecked, it will form dense mats which can take over large areas.

WHAT SHOULD THE DILIGENT GARDENER NOT BE DOING AT THIS TIME OF YEAR?

COMPACTING THE SOIL.

Establish paths within your plot and walk there and not in planting beds. Compacted soil does not absorb water easily and plants will struggle there.

PLANTING TOO EARLY. In our eagerness to have an early harvest, we sometimes plant too soon and lose our plants to a late

frost. By the time in mid-May when you're reading this, we should be into the frost-free season (but remember to check the predictions and plan to cover tender plants if there is a late frost). Hold off on tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and basil until it's warm day and night.

Not too complicated a set of rules, and if you follow them, you will be — like me,

—The Happy Gardener 🍀

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO WITH UNWANTED STUFF FROM YOUR PLOT?

You may put some things in the dumpster, some things in the compost pile, and some things in the brush pile. Some gardeners seem to be confused about what goes where, so to clarify...

COMPOST PILE

YES: Plant material (most stems, leaves, roots). Please cut long stuff (grasses, sunflower stems) into shorter pieces to help decomposition.

NO: Wood (sticks, branches, tree trunks); plastic; glass; metal.

NO, NO, NO! Branches with thorns (e.g., raspberry and blackberry prunings, rose prunings, hawthorn or locust branches).

DUMPSTER

Please note that material placed outside the dumpster will not be picked up.

YES: Plastic, paper, glass, metal. Diseased plant material only.

Branches with thorns (see above).

NO: Plant material that can go in the compost pile. Branches and

tree trunks that can go in the brush pile.

BRUSH PILE (at the back of the wood chip area).

YES: Branches and tree trunks only.

NO: Branches with thorns (see above). Plant material that can go in the compost pile.

If you have any question about what goes where, ask your Garden Neighbor. And please make life easier for the folks who manage the compost piles by putting in only compostable material. 🍀

NEW NORTHAMPTON FARM — SHARING THE ABUNDANCE

Take a small Jewish day school; a synagogue with an acre of open land, which from the early 1800s until 1952 was the site of Northampton's Alms House and connected "City Poor Farm;" and an organization whose mission is to respectfully provide food and essential resources to low income families and individuals — add seeds, rain, elbow grease, and a lot of meetings — and you get ABUNDANCE FARM.

After sharing a parking lot for over a decade, Congregation B'nai Israel, the Northampton Survival Center, and Lander-Grinspoon Academy have embarked on a project to return a highly visible, roughly one acre piece of land on Prospect Street in Northampton to a small working farm which will produce fresh fruits and vegetables and serve as an outdoor classroom and community gathering place. The vision of growing community, promoting food justice

and using the farm as a place for all ages to learn will start to become a reality this season.

The farm's first fund raising campaign, "100 Bowls of Abundance" will kick off at the May 18th ground-breaking celebration. Local potter Emmett Leader will be throwing 100 "Abundance Bowls" made from clay found in a vein that runs through Northampton. Each handcrafted bowl will be gifted to individuals making a \$100 donation to the farm. Emmett's contribution to this effort is in line with the themes of justice, Jewish living, and agriculture that run through his art work. Emmett's work in natural materials can be found locally gracing the entryways of the River Valley Market Food Coop and Congregation B'nai Israel.

More information about Abundance Farm and the "100 Bowls of Abundance" Campaign is at WWW.ABUNDANCEFARM.ORG and by contacting Rabbi Jacob Fine, Director of Abundance Farm, at RABBIJACOB@ABUNDANCEFARM.ORG or 413-584-3593 x203 🍀

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

NOTES FROM THE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

Despite the lingering cold, our garden is off to a great start. We have installed our new sign, and we have sugar and shelling peas up and ready to climb our new trellis, constructed by Elaine Hyde from invasive grape and oriental bitter-sweet vines. Blueberries and

raspberries, newly planted last season, survived the hard winter without missing a beat, and the strawberries in the smaller raised bed required only minimal renovation to get them ready for the new season. In the next weeks, we'll be lifting and dividing many of the perennials in the pollinator beds, and enjoying the dianthus, which budded beneath their straw covers this spring.

In addition to maintaining and adding to our pollinator friendly plantings, this year we'll be focusing on "celebrity vegetables" in our raised beds. We'll be growing vegetables that are unusual varieties of old favorites, disease resistant, and/or nutritional powerhouses. Early plantings include blue pod shelling pea, sugar and snap pea, flashy trout back lettuce, easter egg radish, and New Zealand spinach. To our disappointment, cosmic purple carrot and crapandine beet (said to be the oldest beet in existence) didn't germinate, discouraged no doubt by the last snowstorm, and will have to be replanted.

Our plot is located in the north-east corner of the Community Garden, right by the compost pile.

Please feel free to come see what else we are growing: we love to talk about our gardens and we love to hear about yours. Someone is usually there Monday morning and Thursday evening, and often at other times by chance. If you can't find us, we also maintain a mailbox, at the back of the plot. There you will find cards, and pencils; leave us a question or a comment, and contact information, and someone will get back to you. 🍀

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

Northampton Recreation Department
90 Locust Street
Northampton, MA 01060

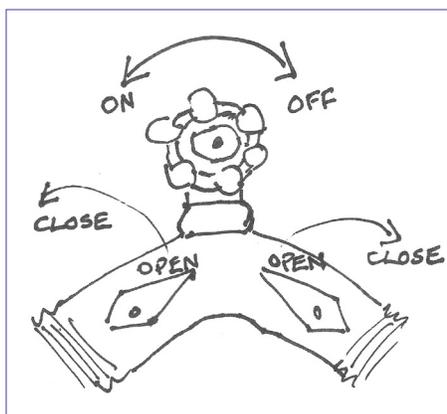


Illustration by Frankie Dack

Please turn off BOTH the handle and the little lever.

EVERY faucet!

EVERY time!

WE'RE ON FACEBOOK!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/183723795531/>