

# NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



## NEWS



JULY 2014



### GARDEN NEWS

#### RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH.

**Sunday, July 13** (one day later than originally advertised), volunteer inspection teams will walk through the Garden and check

1) that there is no ragweed in your plot(s), and tag ragweed that is there with red marking tape, and 2) that your plot is not excessively weedy (more weeds than things you've planted). See the article in the next column...

#### SURVIVAL CENTER DELIVERIES.

There is a signup sheet on the bulletin board for Survival Center deliveries. If you would like to do this, check the sheet for times of delivery and dates when you are needed, and then sign up for as many times as you wish.

#### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

► **Johanna Halbeisen**, for setting up schedules for tool shed and cart/wheelbarrow maintenance, and gas refills. ► **Jim Ferguson**, for painting the tool shed door and putting in locks top and bottom. And to **Amy Woolf** for selecting the great color. ► **Molly Hale**, for taking care of problems with our water system — malfunctioning spigots and hoses. (Be in touch with her at [HELLOMOLLY@COMCAST.NET](mailto:HELLOMOLLY@COMCAST.NET) to report problems at your spigot; please include the number of the spigot.)

#### COMMUNITY SERVICE

**OPPORTUNITIES.** Please check the bulletin board for community service opportunities. There are



Ragweed – *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*

signup sheets for a variety of activities, as well as a list of special projects that you might wish to take on.

**COMPOST PILES.** Please remember that the compost pile beside the dumpster is closed until further notice. Put nothing on that pile. Use the pile at the west end of the Garden for compostable material.

**BARERROOTS FARM.** Anna Maunz and her partner have started an edible plant nursery in Worthington this season, and have some beautiful plants ready for planting. She wonders if any community garden members would be interested in placing an order; they could deliver to the garden if there were enough interest. Here is their website, which has all of their plants/ prices listed:

[BARERROOTSFARM.COM](http://BARERROOTSFARM.COM).

#### SOJOURNER TRUTH GARDEN.

The Sojourner Truth Garden in Florence is looking for volunteers to help maintain the garden. It's planted with perennials but sometimes requires weeding, deadheading, and other



### 2014 GARDEN CALENDAR

#### RAGWEED/WEED WALKTHROUGH

Sunday, July 13

#### FALL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday, October 11

#### FALL INSPECTION

Sunday, October 19

#### GARDEN COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Third Monday each month @ 6:00 P.M. at the Rec. Dept. (or in the Garden during nice weather; call to confirm)

maintenance work. If you would like to contribute, contact Wendy Sinton ([JWSINTON@COMCAST.NET](mailto:JWSINTON@COMCAST.NET)) for more information and to schedule a time to work. 🍀

### RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH

**July 13** is the date for our annual **Ragweed /Weed Walkthrough.**

Why do we worry about ragweed in the Garden? Many gardeners are mildly or seriously allergic to the pollen of *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, common ragweed; it can spoil their pleasure of being in and working in the garden.

Our goal is to get rid of as much ragweed as possible before it flowers. Please pull up any ragweed

plants 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, its seeds will continue to ripen 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. If you don't know what ragweed looks like, see the photo (above), or look at the sample plant near the shed.

On **Sunday, July 13**, 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!

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

## GARDEN TIPS

We all know that we need to water our plants if Mother Nature doesn't do it for us. An unwatered plant will eventually enter the terminal-wilt stage and cannot recover. Ever wonder why plants need water? Well, there's a long and complicated, though extremely interesting, answer — but you'd rather be gardening. The short answer is that the process of photosynthesis uses carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and water (H<sub>2</sub>O) to form a carbohydrate that provides energy to the plant. So when we water, we are feeding our plants. How much should we water? It's useful to remember the two-part

### ONE-INCH RULE OF WATERING

**THUMB:** roughly one inch of water per week; water when the soil at a one-inch depth is dry.

**PART 1: One inch of water per week.** That means from any source; if there is a downpour of rain — an inch or more — you do not need to water for about another week. If there is no rain at all for a week, you need to supply that inch yourself.

Note that plants do differ in their water needs. Some are water-thirsty (for example, cucumbers); others are, if not tee-totalers, at least moderate in their consumption. Consult a good reference book or the Web to find the particular needs of your plants.

Weather also governs water needs. Photosynthesis is speeded by heat and light, slowed by cool and cloudy. So you need to water more when the temperature is 85° and the days are long.

How much you need to water depends on how retentive your soil is. The soil at the Garden is rather sandy and drains quickly. The more organic matter you incorporate, the less water you will need.

If you mulch your plants, they will need less water.

Finally, when you water, one long deep watering is better than frequent short waterings. The latter keep just the very top layer of soil damp, so that's where the roots will go; they will be less able to withstand hot dry weather. The former puts the water deeper in the soil and induces roots to grow down to the moist layer; they can take dry weather better.

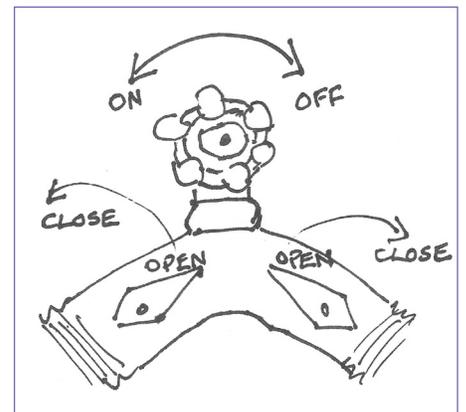
**PART 2:** Suppose you don't know how much it's rained. Check the

dampness of the soil at a depth of one inch. If it's damp, you needn't water. If it's dry, it's time to water.

### Some additional thoughts:

It's best to keep the water source closed to the earth where the plant emerges from the ground. Standing with the hose at shoulder height and sending a plume of water through the air wastes water; best to put it close to where it will be used.

If your plants look wilted, apply Part 2 of the Rule of Watering Thumb. If the soil is damp at one inch, your plants don't need water; they are responding to the hot weather. They'll recover when the sun goes down.



Please turn off **BOTH** the handle and the little lever.

**EVERY faucet! EVERY time!**

Finally, please consult the diagram on shutting off a spigot that occurs in every issue of the Newsletter. You must 1) turn off the faucet (clockwise) and 2) shut the valve on the splitter (parallel to the splitter is On, perpendicular is Off).

So water when needed only. Save water and money, have healthier, more productive plants, and be — like me...

—The Happy Gardener 🍀

Illustration by Frankie Dack

## WESTERN MASS. MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

### NOTES FROM THE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

We are looking at our beds with some satisfaction these days! Our “celebrity vegetables” project has come together well, with the early plantings like peas, spinach and lettuce ready for harvest. The blue pod shelling peas are especially beautiful, with magenta and pink blossoms giving way to reddish blue pods. In appearance, flashy trout back lettuce and bloody sorrel are living up to their names. Our row of fava beans has produced lovely white blossoms. Still maturing are asparagus peas (which is neither asparagus nor a pea) and strawberry spinach (likewise, neither strawberry nor spinach). We even have a small row of amaranth, which looks almost exactly like its close relative, pigweed. For those who have wondered, the feathery green shoots growing up the sides of the beds are, as you may have thought, dill, self seeded and growing happily.

We’ve returned to a couple of successes from last year. A single husk (or ground) cherry provided ample snacks for the garden crew, and is back again this summer. Husk cherries are good right out of the hand, and they also make a great salsa! The small potato pot has also returned, this time at the north end of the raised beds, to help protect the plants from the afternoon sun.

This year, the upside down tomato — a Celebrity tomato plant inverted in a pot supported from

above — is part of a continuing experiment. We’ve matched it with a Celebrity tomato plant “right side up” in a pot, and one planted the old fashioned way, right in the ground. So far, the potted tomato leads the group.

Visitors to our plots may have noticed our other summer experiment. Led by an intrepid Master Gardener, we’ve launched an offensive against a section of the vigorous Japanese Knotweed that lines the access road. Conventional wisdom for knotweed eradication involves cutting and application of herbicides. We have already established that even when cut back, knotweed just laughs at one “internet recipe” — a solution of vinegar, epsom salt and dish detergent had no effect at all. We are continuing to cut back new shoots, weekly, and we’ve planted spiderwort, perennial sunflower and winter squash as competitor plants. For now, we’re staying ahead of it!

Please feel free to visit our gardens! Someone is there Monday mornings, and as the season develops, on Thursday evenings as well. If no one is around, we have a mailbox — leave us your questions, and a way to get back to you, and we’ll do our best to answer! 🍀

— Carol Wasserloos

### BEGINNER’S CORNER: EASY-GROW ANNUALS YIELD MONTHS OF SUMMER BOUQUETS

Mexican Sunflower (tithonia)

Zinnia (zinnia)

Cosmos (cosmos)

Dahlia (dahlia)

Sunflowers (helianthus)

All five flowers require low maintenance: basic weeding, watering and perhaps mulching will produce more and larger blooms, but even if you neglect these plants they will perform anyway! Tithonia, zinnia and sunflowers especially love hot, dry weather and don’t seem to care much about weeds.

All but dahlias are easily grown from inexpensive seed planted directly in your garden plot after the danger of frost has passed. Dahlias propagate from tubers, which can be dug up and overwintered. I do not overwinter mine; I buy bulk bags of tubers in late winter at a garden center or big box store (Costco has good ones).

10-15 dahlia tubers will provide hundreds of cut flower stems on knee-height bushy plants, with large, showy, blooms in pink, purple, white, yellow and multi-colored varieties.

Tithonia can grow as tall as 5’ and may need to be lightly staked. Your reward is a vivid, fleshy, red-orange sunflower-like bloom with a pale orange-yellow center.

The simple zinnia is the essential filler in a country garden bouquet. Zinnias are available in many colors, heights and blossom sizes. Typical colors are scarlet, white, yellow, magenta, pink, and orange. Easy to grow and fast to germinate, you can’t have too many pretty zinnias. They may last until a hard frost, extending your bouquet season.

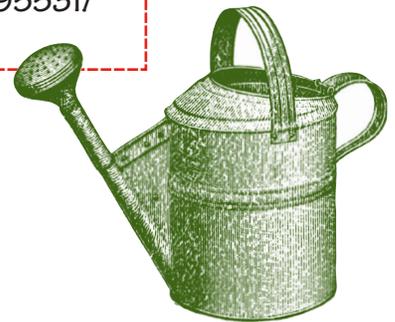
While tithonia, zinnia, dahlia and sunflower have robust leaves, the cosmos has delicate, threadlike foliage, providing a nice contrast. Cosmos also come in various colors — I like the white/pink/red seed mixes.

## NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

Northampton Recreation Department  
90 Locust Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

### WE'RE ON FACEBOOK!

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



Finally, sunflowers also come in a wide variety of sizes, heights and colors, although I have found that the hybrids don't hold up well to drought and weeds. I stick with the familiar varieties such as the basic elegance, which volunteers so prodigiously every season so that I haven't bought seed in years. 🍀

—Julie Zuckman

### A FEW REMINDERS

#### ▶ PLEASE CUT TALL GRASS AT THE EDGE OF YOUR PLOT

A hand mower works well for this.

#### ▶ HELP US CONSERVE WATER

If it rained yesterday, there's no need to water today; feel the soil for moisture.

Please turn off the handle AND both levers on each water spigot.

When we save water, we save money!

#### ▶ KEEP THE GARDEN ENJOYABLE

Use headphones to listen to your radio. And please keep phone conversations short and quiet.

#### ▶ THE COMPOST PILE NEAR THE DUMPSTER IS CLOSED;

Use the compost pile at the west end of the garden. 🍀