

# NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



# NEWS



MAY 2015



## GARDEN NEWS

Is-Your-Plot-Planted? The next date to remember is Sunday, 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.

They will check that plots have been worked. That doesn't mean that every weed must be gone or that every square foot has been planted. Teams will look to see whether plots have been tilled and/or weeded, and that seeds or plants are in place. Perfection is not expected; evidence of gardening work is.

The inspection teams will also look for a clearly visible sign with the plot number.

Plots that have not been worked will be reassigned to people on the waiting list.

**SPRING CLEANUP DAY.** Lots of you turned out for spring cleanup and were rewarded with a perfect day. Many necessary tasks were performed and the Garden is in better shape now.

Please remember that if you helped with cleanup, you must log in your time to get credit for community service. Look elsewhere in this Newsletter for info on how to do that.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO

**Julie Abramson**, who—besides being

a Garden Neighbor—offers her "Getting Started" workshop every spring.

**Johanna Halbeisen**, who arranged the schedule for the tool shed this year, as every year.

The volunteers who helped reconstruct the compost area at the western end of the garden:

**Peter Payne, Kate Sumner, Jason Merritt, Michael Sustick, Erin Hawkins, Deb Chesser, Tony Crimmins, George Cosmo, Skip Soper, Brandon McMahon, Caleb Overgaard, and Katherine Wiley.** A job well done!

**Betsy Yount**, who manages the herb garden behind the tool shed. (Gardeners are free to help themselves to herbs from that garden.)

## GOOD SOURCES FOR PLANTS

In the last Newsletter, we failed to mention **Laurenitis Farm** (Route 116, between Amherst and Sunderland); they always have an extensive and interesting selection of vegetable and flower plants.

In addition to the Saturday Northampton Farmers' Market, there is a Tuesday Market behind Thorne's, 1:30–6:30, and a Wednesday Market in Florence behind Lilly Library, 2:00–6:00. 🍀

## GARDEN TIPS

You're staring at a 20 x 20 foot plot (that's 400 square feet!) with nothing in it except a weed or two. Now what?



## 2015 GARDEN CALENDAR

### IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED? INSPECTION

Sunday, May 31

### RAGWEED/WEED WALKTHROUGH

Sunday, July 12

### FALL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday, October 10

### FALL INSPECTION

Sunday, October 18

### 2ND INSPECTION

Sunday, November 1

### 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)

Here's some advice: Start with plants that are easy and will be successful. Award yourself one plant that requires more work but that you would really love. Avoid the plants that are labor-intensive and may fail.

### EASY AND ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

Start with **radishes**. In a week you'll have little leaves poking up, and three weeks later you should be able to start harvesting. If you

plant every two weeks, you can extend the harvest. (As the weather heats up, plant the seeds deeper—1 inch instead of ½ inch.) I favor French breakfast radishes, long and thin, red tops and white tails, and delicious with fresh bread and butter.

**Lettuce** is pretty much never-fail. Broadcast seed over a patch 2 x 2 feet, cover it lightly with soil, keep it watered. Thin it out to provide an eventual 6 x 6 inch space for a full head; use the thinnings for salad. Later in the season, you'll need to go for varieties that tolerate hot weather.

There are two herbs you can count on—**chives** and **cilantro**. Get a chive plant from a neighbor; they are easy to separate and most everyone will share. Plant cilantro seeds once, let one plant go to seed, and you'll have as much cilantro as you could possibly want.

Go for **Swiss chard**. Seeds sprout readily and a few plants will produce all the chard you can eat all summer long. Chard comes in great colors—the stems can be deep red, orange, or yellow—and it's good for you.

**Beets** and **turnips** come readily from seed.

Don't turn up your nose at **zucchini**. Two plants will provide a reasonable number of zukes, and when they're small and fresh, they're great. Wait until July 1 to plant them and you'll avoid infestation by the squash borer.

### A GREAT VEGGIE BUT MORE WORK.

What gardener doesn't want to grow **tomatoes**? They require more preparation and attention than the easy vegetables, but you may

decide they're worth it.

1) They require support. They're vines, and although you can let them sprawl, that takes up a lot of room and makes easy picking for chipmunks. The easiest support is a wooden stake driven into the ground. Don't bother with the 4-foot stakes that are sometimes sold for tomatoes—they're way too short. Your stakes should be at least 6 feet tall, and driven 1 foot into the ground. Then, as the plants grow, they need to be attached at intervals to the stake; any soft material (cloth, twine) will do.

2) Tomatoes need a regular supply of water. They don't like to dry out and then be flooded.

3) Tomatoes develop blight—early and late. Brown spots appear on the leaves, which dry up and eventually fall off. You will need to spray with a fungicide—consult your garden store. In short, you need to work for those delicious tomatoes.

### LONG SHOTS.

**Beans**—both green and shell, both bush and vine—will be attacked by bean beetles in the Garden. If you really want to grow beans, be prepared for a constant battle with the beetles, and be prepared to lose.

**Squashes**, except for zucchini, will be attacked by squash beetles and borers in the Garden. You can lose a squash plant to them overnight.

**Corn** is irresistible to raccoons. In some mysterious way, they sense that you are going to harvest your corn tomorrow and attack it tonight—and they wreak havoc, taking a few bites out of each ear you have so carefully tended.

This is not to say that you should avoid the long shots forever. But wait until you've had a year or two of gardening before you try them, and you will be, like me—

—The Happy Gardener 

## COMMUNITY SERVICE REPORTING

Hello, Fellow Gardeners,



Thank you for making each year of our reporting system run even better. The streamlined process of recording community service time is now faster, easier, and less confusing; it also uses less paper.

If you're a continuing gardener, this is the same system we've used for the past several years. New gardeners — please read on...

There are two options for sending me your community service hours. Because I want to encourage you to use the e-mail method, I will automatically add to your hours a **one-time 15-minute community service credit!** when you send me an e-mail detailing your community service.

Here are the **TWO OPTIONS** explained:

1) **E-MAIL:** Send me an message at [GLORIANOHOCC@GMAIL.COM](mailto:GLORIANOHOCC@GMAIL.COM), with the following information:

- A. The **name** of the person to whom the plot is registered (which may not be your name)
- B. Your plots **number(s)** (**vital** information!)
- C. The date and **amount** of time of service
- D. A brief **description** of the community service

2) **PAPER:** This is the less preferred option. I realize that some of you do not use e-mail, so

I've created a paper form that may be filled out. There is space for you to write in all the information needed to properly credit your time (same as 1 a-d). **PLEASE, PLEASE** write legibly!

I **cannot** accept teeny tiny pieces of paper; they make it impossible for me to properly credit hours to the correct people. I will keep the mailbox stocked with forms, but please feel free to take one and copy it a few times for your use. Expect the first batch to be in the mailbox by April.

Missing information makes it difficult to give you full credit, so please supply **all the information** requested. Thanks.

As I did last year, I will keep the records on an Excel spreadsheet. This allows me to post the community service hours with your balance (hours owed) on our bulletin board behind the shed. To protect your privacy, I'll list plot numbers only.

Thank you for embracing this way of recording community service. It has reduced confusion about hours worked. And I hope we've saved a few trees in the process. Your patience and cooperation is appreciated. 🍀

—Gloria A. Santa Anna  
T5, S5, R5, Q6

GLORIANOHOOG@GMAIL.COM

## WHAT WEED IS THAT?

Every weed has its season, and early spring is time for a trio of nasties.

Often first to appear in the spring is a small plant with a basal rosette of leaves, from which rises a stem with tiny white flowers on alternate sides; it's delicate in

appearance and rather pretty. It may completely cover a plot that was clear in the fall. My neighbor in the Garden says it's called bittercress, and is one of the spring greens that can be eaten; its botanical moniker is *Cardamine hirsuta*. If you watch it develop, you'll see that each flower gives rise to a long thin seed, which turns from 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; one plant may produce up to 50,000 seeds! 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 — and advisable — to pull it 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 that can take over large areas. Control is by hand-weeding, but persistence is required, since any portion of stolon left will survive and reproduce.

If you want to know more in a general way about weeds, check out the article in the March 2011 Newsletter, "Weeds Are Always with Us." 🍀

—Mimi Teghtsoonian

## COWPEA

I had been looking at a copy of The Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Catalogue, with curiosity. A category little known to me, cowpeas (*Vigna unguiculata*) drew my attention. The peas are small, some quite small; I wondered if I would get anything for a crop at Hospital Hill. I chose a variety noted for use in the North. It was Gray-Speckled Palapye, a variety from Botswana.

I had been, of course, familiar with blackeyed peas, one of the types of Southern pea; apparently they had been grown by Thomas Jefferson in the late eighteenth century. The names of the varieties of cowpeas are astounding — Lady Pea, Red Ripper, Black Crowder, Purple Hull Pinkeye.

Southern peas, crowder peas, or field peas, as they are also known, must be planted after the danger of frost has passed and the soil has warmed to a consistent 65° F.

The seeds germinated very well, and the plants were vigorous and beautiful. No insect predation! A very nice crop of pods formed, held high above the foliage so they were easy to see and pick. Each pod is long, and easy to open. A quick steam, and the cowpeas were on the plate and gone in a flash. Delicious! You can find seeds at Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds ([RARESEEDS.COM](http://RARESEEDS.COM)). 

— Lisa Bertoldi

## GARDENING FOR THE SURVIVAL CENTER

Hello fellow gardeners! My name is **MAGDALENA FRIEL**, and I am a 15-year-old student at Northampton High School, starting a hunger relief garden at the Northampton Community Garden (#G-15), to benefit the Northampton Survival Center. Last summer, while delivering food donations from the Community Gardens to the Survival Center with my mom, I was surprised by the unpredictability of donations. One week there would be pounds and pounds of food to donate, but the next week I'd be shocked by how few gardens had donated the veggies and fruits they had grown. I wondered what I could do to change this, and came up with the idea to start a food insecurity and hunger relief plot that could regularly supply the Survival Center with crops the Center identified as essential. I applied for a \$1000 grant from the Keds Brave Life Foundation, and in early October of 2014, found out that I had received the grant. I am just getting started on the garden, and I can't wait to continue!

The Northampton Survival Center

provides healthy food for low income and food insecure families and individuals across Hampshire County, distributing close to 650,000 pounds of food per year. It's my mission to help them help others even more than they already do, and by creating sustainable access to food for those who need it, I hope my garden project can do its part to relieve food insecurity and hunger in Hampshire County. 

— Magdalena Friel, G15

## NOTES FROM THE MASTER GARDENER DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

It was so long in coming, we've all taken exceptional delight in watching the Community Gardens return to life this spring.

Our soil testing project, offered on spring clean-up day, gave us the opportunity to interact with many of our fellow gardeners. We performed some thirty tests for Ph and soil type, and we were able to talk with both new and veteran community gardeners. There is nothing like a good reason to get your hands into the soil again!

Our big project this year, however, is the reconstruction of our raised beds at the demonstration garden.

They were first built in 2009, and though we reinforced them two years ago, by last fall, it was clear that all three of our beds had reached the end of their natural life span. So we're rebuilding, one at a time, using the existing locations and dimensions. As of this writing, we've temporarily

relocated the perennial herbs, removed most of the soil from the first bed, and reset new corner posts.

The growing season is likely to be well underway by the time our volunteer crews finish, so much of our real gardening for the next few weeks will be focused on the two plots that we maintain for the benefit of the Northampton Survival Center. We've got two kinds of peas, some radishes, and lettuces in the ground at N-17, and we moved some surviving kale plants there too, just to see what will happen.

We're in the Garden Monday mornings, and as the weather warms, Thursday evenings, and hit or miss at other times. We hope to have posted information about the raised-bed building project available soon, and we're always glad to answer questions left in our mailbox at the rear of the plot. We're located right by the compost pile on the northeast part of the garden, so stop by and see us! 

— Carol Wasserloos  
Western Massachusetts  
Master Gardener Association



### JUST A REMINDER...

If you use paper or cardboard for mulch, please **weigh it down** with rocks, and water it in. We don't want it to blow around the neighborhood.