

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



JULY 2016



GARDEN NEWS

RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH.

We goofed! Previous issues of the Newsletter put the date of the Walkthrough as June 19. Wrong! — it's this coming **Sunday, July 17**. See the article on page 2 for details about what the inspection teams will look for.



Ragweed – *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*

CITY WATERING BAN. Gardeners should be aware that the Garden is zoned agricultural and is exempt from the watering ban. We may water at any time during the day. However, as always, we should use no more water than we need to keep our plants healthy. Frivolous uses are inappropriate: Please don't wash your dog or let your children use the hose to play in the spray.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

OPPORTUNITIES. Please check the bulletin board for tasks that

need doing. There are signup sheets for a variety of activities, as well as a list of special projects that you might wish to undertake.

TAKE-IT-OR-LEAVE-IT AREA.

The southwest wall of the tool shed (around the corner to your left if you are facing the tool shed door) is the take-it-or-leave-it area. If you have garden supplies that you don't need but someone else might want, leave them beside that wall. If you see something there you could use, feel free to take it. **NOTE:** This is not a trash area. Put useless items in the dumpster. 🍀

GARDEN TIPS

June and July (so far) have been unusually dry: In the thirty days up to July 8, the normal amount of rain is about 3.5 inches and the actual rain this year has been about .75 inches. As we've all been aware, the soil in the Garden is dry and plants are suffering. Plants require water for photosynthesis, using carbon dioxide and water to form a carbohydrate that provides energy to the plant. So when we water, we are feeding our plants.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO CONSERVE WATER, SPEND LESS TIME WATERING, AND MAKE OUR PLANTS HAPPIER?

First, mulch. A loose layer of organic matter (chopped leaves, straw, Mainely Mulch or similar products [chopped, heated, and



2016 GARDEN CALENDAR

RAGWEED/WEED WALKTHROUGH
Sunday, July 17

FALL CLEANUP DAY
Saturday, October 8,
10–noon / 2–4 P.M.

FALL INSPECTION
Sunday, October 16

LAST-CHANCE INSPECTION
Sunday, October 30

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)

compacted straw and hay], weeds) will help to keep the soil from drying out.

Second, water deeply. If you spray your plants briefly every day, you encourage the roots to stay in the top layer of soil, which dries out most quickly. If you water less frequently but more deeply, the roots will go down to the deeper moist layer.

Third, water regularly. Plants do not like to dry out and then be drenched with water. Try to keep the soil evenly moist all the time. If it is hot and sunny, plants need more water than when it is cool or cloudy.

Fourth, wilt doesn't necessarily mean your plants need more



Caitlin Goudreau

water. Plants will look wilted at the end of a hot day even when there is enough water in the soil; it's their way of reducing water loss by evaporation. Check the soil by putting in a finger to the depth of an inch; if the soil is moist there, no need to water.

Fifth, shade helps keep plants happy. Plants that are particularly prone to wilt can benefit from some shade. Seedlings can be protected by one of the perforated plastic plant carriers you get from garden centers to carry home your plants; larger plants can be sheltered by shade cloth or by large plastic plant pots.

Follow these guidelines, and both you and your plants will be — like this gardener — happy. 🍀

RAGWEED WALKTHROUGH

Sunday, July 17 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 on the cover page.

On **Sunday, July 17**, 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. 🍀

NOTES FROM THE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN

JUNE 2016

These days it seems that all our conversations at the garden take place with hose or watering can in hand. Our long dry spell has generated a lot of interest in the subject of garden irrigation, and in our new raised bed drip system. We're often asked where we got it and how we like it.

So let's start with a disclaimer: Western Massachusetts Master Gardeners aren't in the business



Laura Dintino

of recommending commercial products. Drip irrigation can be accomplished with a simple soaker hose. More complicated systems are readily available from Home Depot, and Ace Hardware, to name a couple of local sources. These can range from connected hoses with holes to systems that will maintain water pressure, turn corners and follow rows, adapt to hanging baskets, and water in a circular pattern. Any of these will meet a variety of needs and budgets.

We purchased a system on line specifically adapted to raised beds. Drip Depot (WWW.DRIPDEPOT.COM) markets our system as a



Laura Dintino

“Standard Irrigation Kit for Raised Bed Gardening”. It will water up to 320 square feet (we have 144), so we can use it to reach our berry



Eliza Dagostino

patches also. The system claims a flow capacity of 200 gallons per hour, at a pressure of 5–25 pounds per inch, with a tubing flow of a half gallon per hour. Regular price: \$126.99. Drip Depot also markets systems for row crops, and for small farms.

It seems to work well, though our opinions vary somewhat. It is slow, not surprisingly, and it can be a problem if the garden's hose is in use already, as it has been these days. That said, it does the job, and it doesn't require supervision

JOIN THE GARDEN COMMITTEE!

The Community Garden is run by volunteers. Can you lend a few hours to make it possible?

The Committee meets once a month, either at the Recreation Department or in the Garden.

Contact Mimi: MTEX4.NCG@GMAIL.COM.

— we can turn it on and turn to other tasks.

Drip irrigation is also conservation friendly — estimates are that a drip system uses 30-50% less water than watering with a hose or an overhead sprinkler system. The later makes it hard to water evenly, or to know when you've watered enough, and a lot of water is wasted on pathways and borders or lost to evaporation. Overhead systems might seem to mimic rainfall, but they can also leave garden plants with wet foliage as darkness arrives, leaving them vulnerable to fungal and insect borne pathogens.

Nevertheless, you'll see some of us hand watering with a sprinkler attached to a hose. But we're encouraging ourselves and others to consider some adaptations... a 30" sprinkler wand, for instance, which allows one to water at the root and closely along a bed or row of plants. While watering, the wand encourages a close look at our plants. It takes less time, there is less waste, and less possibility of disease. And there's always the watering can, which has similar advantages, although heavier and more taxing physically.

No matter what you use, remember that it is better to water thoroughly and less frequently.

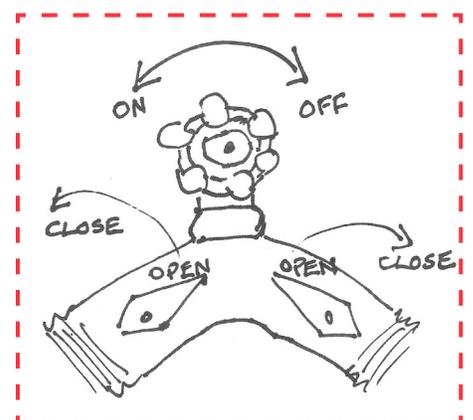
The target for most garden plants is an inch of water a week. We've barely seen that much this month. Let's all hope for rain!

— Carol Wasserloos
Western Massachusetts Master
Gardener Association 🌿

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM GARDENERS

Thank you to Laura Dintino, Eliza Dagostino, and Caitlin Goudreau.

PLEASE HELP CONSERVE WATER



Please turn off BOTH the handle and the little lever.

EVERY faucet! EVERY time!