

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN



NEWS



SEPTEMBER 2016



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The Garden Committee is losing several members, and others are no longer able to devote as much time as previously to managing and maintaining the Garden.

When your registration forms for the 2017 season arrive, they will include a list of programs that require a manager and will specify what each calls for. **If no one volunteers for a program, that program will no longer exist.** As an example, someone (or ones) will be needed to coordinate the three yearly inspections.

Please look over the list that accompanies the registration forms and find something you would be willing to coordinate.

Also, **THE GARDEN COMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS.** The Committee is a congenial group; meetings are informal (no Robert's Rules of Order, and decisions are made by consensus. Meetings are on the third Monday of the month, 6:30-7:30 (no meetings in December or January). Members contribute what they can to the maintenance of the Garden; there are no formal requirements. Contact Mimi at MTEX4.NCG@GMAIL.COM if you're interested in joining now.

FALL CLEANUP DAY

Saturday, Oct. 8, 10 A.M.-1 P.M.

Here's a chance for those who are still looking for community service hours to get them in before the end of the season. Come to the picnic table to learn what tasks need doing. They will include:

- Cleaning abandoned plots
- Working on the compost piles
- Labelling and bringing in hoses
- Moving wood chips to areas needing mulch
- Moving material to the brush pile
- Collecting debris and taking it to the dumpster

Tools, yard carts, and wheelbarrows will be reserved on Saturday morning for gardeners working on general cleanup. 🌿

GARDEN NEWS

LAST ROUNDUP. Here are two dates to put on your calendar:

SATURDAY, OCT. 8:

Fall Cleanup Day

SUNDAY, OCT. 16: Fall Inspection

Check elsewhere in this Newsletter for details.

COMINGS AND GOINGS.

Two members of the Garden Committee — **Peggy Besht** and **Bob Burger** — are resigning. Peggy has been a fierce protector of birds in the Garden; Bob has redesigned and constructed a new and better version of the west-end compost pile and super-



2016 GARDEN CALENDAR

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)

vised the community service that keeps it going. Thanks to both of them for their contributions.

Anne Lafontaine, long-time gardener in F/G 24/25, won't be returning next season. She has been a friend and helper to her neighbors in the Garden, and she will be missed.

Devorah Levy, gardener in K17, is also leaving the Garden. She has been a Garden Neighbor, among her other community services. We're sorry to see her go.

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Liz Tiley, who continues to maintain our Web site even though she has given up her plot in the Garden. 🌿

GARDEN TIPS

The long drought has finally been broken by several days with significant amounts of rain. Our plants are all looking more sprightly, and perennials will do much better going into winter having been adequately watered.

We are waiting for the first frost. Ten years ago, we expected it to occur in the first week of October. More recently, it's at least a week later, and last year the killing frost came in November. You can extend the growing season by covering plants (I use a light blanket or a sheet) when a frost is predicted. Remove the covers the next morning and hope that, as often happens, there will be a week or more with no frost.

It's time to start thinking about **planting garlic**. There's no rush. The last two weeks of October or the first two weeks of November are soon enough. Garlic prefers soil close to neutral in pH, 6.5-7.0, with good drainage. Those are probably the conditions that prevail in your plot, but if you have tested and find the pH level too low, you could add some lime about a month before planting. I usually add compost at the same time.

You can buy garlic from local sources or by mail order (or cadge some from an obliging neighbor). When you harvest the garlic next year, save the head with the largest cloves to serve as seed for next year's crop.

Plant each clove, skin on, with the root end down (pointed end up), standing erect. Put the cloves 4 inches apart with the tip 1 inch under the soil surface. Some sources recommend putting rows 12 inches apart, but I find 6 inches

works just fine. Mulch heavily with straw or chopped leaves, 4- 6 inches deep. Next spring, you can move some of the mulch aside to let the soil warm up, then replace it when the weather is hot. It's not a bad idea to make a little map showing which cultivars you planted where, so you'll know which did well and which might be dropped from the rotation.

Next spring, once the snow melts, you can take a peek at your garlic. The sight of those little green sprouts poking up will make you

— A Happy Gardener



Heather McQueen

NOTES FROM THE DEMONSTRATION GARDEN: MONARCHS!

September 2016

As we've discussed drought, marauding critters, and dispiriting heat and humidity with our neighbors at the Garden, we've frequently heard the refrain that "there aren't many butterflies this year".

Maybe so. This weather has taken

its toll on everything, insects included. But we've had a wonderful discovery. So far, we've located six monarch caterpillars in various stages of development, all in our bed at N17. Monarchs, of course, need common field milkweed, and a lot of it, in order to complete their life cycle, from egg, through five larval stages (called instars), and finally to chrysalis, when the fifth instar may move up to 30 feet and attach vertically to a variety of supports, and transform itself. We are delighted that our decision to transplant milkweed plants as necessary and to keep them watered — thanks to a particularly dedicated Master Gardener — has paid off so handsomely.

Since monarchs are so heavily under pressure (there is discussion of classifying this beautiful butterfly as endangered), we were advised to move them inside where they can mature in safety. One pupated before we could intervene, but the others safely occupy repurposed plastic salad containers. One has formed its chrysalis, and the others are eating, pooping and growing rapidly. The full cycle for monarchs from egg to new butterfly is about 30 days.

Monarchs can't survive below about 28 degrees, so that cycle needs to be complete by about Columbus Day, so that the new migrant can be on its way.

A couple of thoughts from this story. First, nectar plants are important, but host plants are critical. And second, watch closely and weed judiciously. Early butterfly instars are small and easily missed. Chrysalises mimic wilting leaves and are hard to find. The monarch will migrate, but other beautiful garden butterflies will

overwinter in larval or chrysalis stages, using leaf litter or woody stems. Look carefully, and delay cleanup as long as possible.

For more information, go to the Western Massachusetts Master Gardener Association website at WWW.WMMGA.ORG. And think about host plantings for next year's garden.

— Carol Wasserloos
Western Massachusetts
Master Gardener Association 🍀



Heather McQueen



Heather McQueen

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.