

Garden News

MAY 2023



WATCH FOR MESSAGES FROM "NORTHAMPTON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT" WITH NEWS FROM THE GARDEN

MAY INSPECTION

Sunday, May 28, is the date for our annual **IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED? INSPECTION**. Volunteer inspection crews will be checking that you've been working in your plot this season: i.e., seeds planted or starter plants in place; weeds under control; and grass at the edges of the plot trimmed.

Perfection is not required, but evidence that you have worked on your plot — is. No one wants weed seeds blowing from another gardener's plot. If your plot is a sea of weeds, it will fail.

Inspection crews will also check to make sure there is a **permanent, visible, legible plot sign** that displays your **plot letter and number**. Please make the letters at least 1 1/2" tall, and set the sign 18" off the ground. You may wish to write your first name somewhere on your sign, so neighbors can greet you.

If you would like to be part of a volunteer inspection crew, please e-mail Inspection Manager, Donna Cuipylo, DCUIPYLO@GMAIL.COM

COMMUNITY SERVICE

All gardeners at the Northampton Community Garden are responsible for contributing volunteer Community Service hours to help

keep the Garden operating smoothly. The number of CS hours is based on the number of plots you have. For your first plot, each gardener owes two hours; for each additional plot, add one hour.

CS hours could include working with other gardeners to keep out invasive weeds, cleaning overgrown plots, assisting with the opening or closing of the Garden, helping with Garden inspections, mowing with the mowing team, writing articles/taking photos for the newsletter, etc.

Watch for upcoming e-mails about volunteer opportunities in the Garden — and volunteer for them.

In addition to performing work in our Garden, there are opportunities to receive CS credit for helping other local organizations, such as the Northampton Survival Center and Abundance Farm, Easthampton Community Center, and the Pioneer Valley Workers Council. 🐦



by Marci Linker

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN 2023 Calendar

IS-YOUR-PLOT-PLANTED? INSPECTION
Sun, May 28

RAGWEED / MID-SEASON INSPECTION
Sun, July 16

STRAW DELIVERY (FALL)
(e-mail orders taken ahead)
Sat, **October 21** / 10:00-ish

COMPOST DELIVERY (FALL)
(e-mail orders taken ahead)
Sat, **October 21** / morning

FALL CLEANUP DAY
Sat, **October 21** / 10-2

FALL INSPECTION
To Be Announced

DUMPSTER LAST DAY
TBD

WATER TURN-OFF
DPW decides, based on weather

Please check Garden e-mails and nohogarden.org for updates.

BE TICK AWARE!

Ticks are tiny bugs most likely found in shady, damp, brushy, wooded, or grassy areas (especially in tall grass), including your own backyard.

Different kinds of ticks feed on the blood of mammals (including people, dogs, cats, deer, and mice), birds, or reptiles (snakes and

SCIENCE BEHIND GARDENING

— by six year old Emile

I like planting because I like to grow food to eat. I wondered what the other gardeners do ?

I made a survey with questions. I thought about the other plots to come up with my questions. My favorite question was, "Do you need any gardening tips?"

I walked around the garden with a clipboard and a penci, and I asked other gardeners the questions.

It was hard to start a conversation, but after I started, it felt good to talk to other gardeners and gather data.

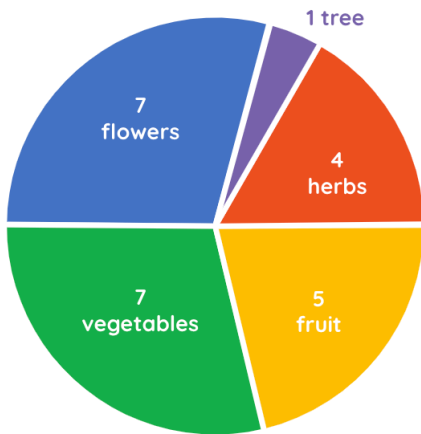
I found that my question about how much do you water was hard to answer.

Here is what I found out...

WHAT DO YOU PLANT IN YOUR GARDEN?

Flowers and vegetables are planted the most.

The thing planted the least are trees.



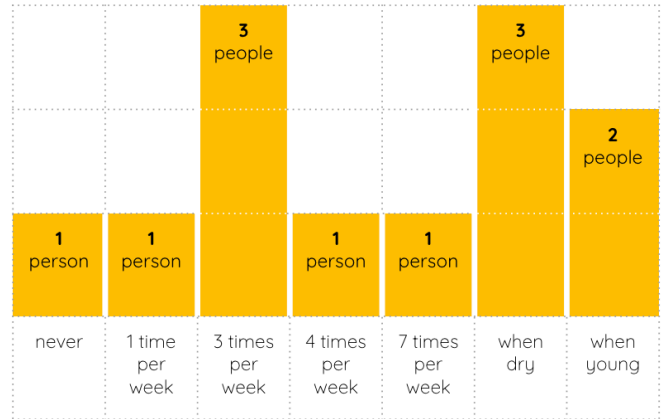
HOW OFTEN DO YOU WATER?

Most people water 3 times a week or when the plants are dry.



WHAT TOOLS DO YOU USE?

Gardeners use shovels the most. But everyone uses different tools! There were 14 different tools!! I was extremely surprised.

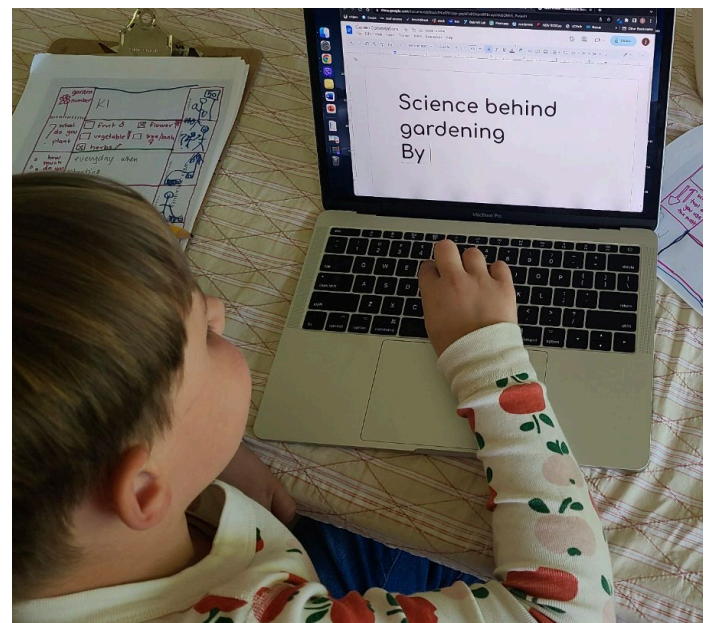


Now I wonder how other gardeners I didn't talk to would answer my questions. And I wonder if the tools they use the most will change later in the season. I'm excited to find out.

Thank you to the gardeners in E22, G22, H22, I7, J11, K1, K15, L1, L2, and P1 for taking the time to answer my questions.

I had fun. I hope the gardeners like reading my science behind gardening. 🐦

Emile gardens with his parents Stéphanie and Jared



turtles, for example). In Massachusetts, certain kinds of ticks can bite you and spread diseases like Lyme disease, babesiosis, anaplasmosis, tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, *Borrelia miyamotoi*, and Powassan virus.

Ticks do not fly or jump. They attach to animals or people that come into direct contact with them. Deer ticks and dog ticks are found throughout Massachusetts; Lone Star ticks are also found in some places in Massachusetts.

Because deer ticks have a two-year life cycle from egg to adult, last fall's nymphal ticks that have survived their first winter as unfed nymphs are beginning to emerge. Nymph emergence peaks around May and June, but it's not uncommon to find them much earlier. Significantly, nymphs pose the greatest risk to humans, being both small and capable of spreading many diseases. Adult deer ticks become active in the fall and remain active into the following spring.

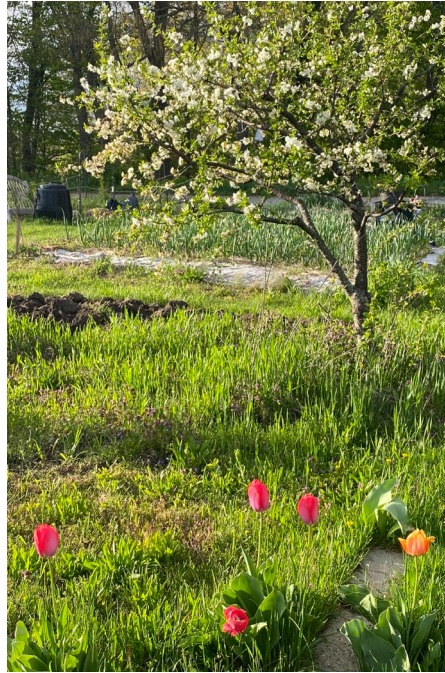
Nymph stage deer ticks are active from early May through early August. They are about **the size of a poppy seed**.



by Marci Linker

Due to their small size, this life stage poses the highest risk of getting a tick-borne disease.

About 1 in 4 nymph stage deer ticks carry Lyme disease. 🐦



by Marci Linker

TICK SEASON IS HERE. PROTECT YOURSELF!

Apply tick repellent (as well as flea prevention for pets) whenever working or playing outdoors.

Perform tick checks after going outside.

Check your pets for ticks after they come indoors.

Be cautious around piled leaves along yard edges and alongside trails.

— Excerpted from WWW.MASS.GOV/INFO-DETAILS/TICK-BORNE-DISEASE-PREVENTION 🐦

EXPERIMENTS IN REGENERATIVE GARDENING

— Karen Lombard and Nan Childs

Regenerative gardening is a style of gardening that is conscious of emissions and waste. It is focused on nourishing the soil using natural processes and reducing reliance on fertilizers. It reuses natural materials close at hand and minimizes non-local inputs. Many of these techniques actually have Indigenous origins as these cultures successfully maintained fertility of their agricultural lands for thousands of years with only local inputs.

Some folks may be concerned that regenerative gardening takes more work, but in our experience, it can reduce work, making gardening both more enjoyable and more feasible given busy work schedules. Regenerative gardening also addresses several concerns we have had about gardening.

— As gardeners, while we aspire to grow our own food and eat locally, how do we encourage a closed loop system where outside garden inputs do not have to be mined, chemically created, or travel long distances to get to our gardens? Covid also showed us that supply chains are vulnerable.

— How can we keep the labor required manageable? For example, how can we reduce both digging and then later hauling of plant material to the distance compost (and avoid managing a compost bin)?

— How can we reduce our costs so we get the maximum return on our time and resources?

— And finally, how do we keep gardening regenerative and

inspiring for ourselves too as part of our busy lives?

Over the last few years, we have been experimenting with several aspects of regenerative gardening to address these issues. We have two garden plots in the community garden where we focus mostly on storage crops including potatoes, squash, sweet potatoes and onions.

HEALTHY SOIL: No-till gardening has been recommended as part of a regenerative agricultural system as it has many benefits. Tilling causes soil erosion and releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. It also reduces soil biodiversity by impacting the beneficial micro-organisms that live in soil. Not tilling also reduces both the amount of weed seeds that are turned up every year and the amount of work to get our garden ready to plant. We do hill our potatoes, but if we wanted to grow our potatoes in straw, we could reduce that tilling even further. After we finish our potato crop for the year, we also plant a cover crop which both protects soil moisture and feeds soil micro-organisms. We started with winter rye, but found it a bit aggressive and hard to turn under in the spring when it is time to plant potatoes. We are now using buckwheat, which is much easier, but can be susceptible to an early frost.

MULCH: Mulch is critical to both reducing weed growth and holding in critical soil moisture. There are multiple kinds of natural mulches such as straw, leaves, compost, or green cover crops. Given the lack of trees producing leaves near our plot and the price of compost, we

have chosen local straw and cover crops (see healthy soil above). In addition, rather than clear away non-edible plant parts or haul weeds to the compost area, we just pull up weeds that have not gone to seed and drop them in place and chop up spent (non-diseased) vegetable plant parts. The weeds and plant parts become part of the mulch and recycle their nutrients back into our garden. We have used cardboard and newspaper (particularly when we inherited our weedy plots to initially kill the weeds), but found they eventually broke up and started blowing around.

FERTILITY: As we are unable to use animals to produce manure at the community garden and the amount of compost we would need is cost prohibitive we have to use other techniques to maintain fertility if we do not want to buy fertilizer. Cover crops, as mentioned above, assist with fertility, however, we also use a Korean natural farming* technique that takes advantage of indigenous micro-organisms to strengthen plants. It also limits external inputs and enables the use of very local ingredients. *The Regenerative Grower's Guide to Garden Amendments** by Nigel Palmer is a helpful resource on this topic. Karen has experimented with the Fermented Plant Juice recipe which involves layering plant parts with brown sugar and fermenting it for about a week (she last used mugwort for the plant). We then mix a splash of the end result with a lot of water and water our vegetables (about once every two weeks). The Rich Earth Institute* in Southern VT advocates for the use of human urine as a free fertilizer which

Karen has experimented with by also mixing with water (**NOTE:** Please read up on this before trying; it's important to do it right). We do love our Maine Potato Lady fertilizer,* however, so we have not completely given up on buying amendments!

LOCALLY GROWN STARTS AND SEEDS/SAVING SEED:

We support our local farmers by purchasing local organic starts and mostly New England grown seeds. We aspire to save our own seed someday, but that might be a retirement project! One of us also learned to grow our own vegetable starts (COVID project!).

NATURAL PEST CONTROL: This is one of the most labor-intensive parts of our summer – when we squish potato beetles endlessly by hand! Maybe this should be re-considered as a meditative practice!

HABITAT FOR POLLINATORS: We leave a strip in one of our gardens with flowering perennial plants so that pollinators have a place in our garden.

SOURCES:

* en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_natural_farming

* www.chelseagreen.com/product/the-regenerative-growers-guide-to-garden-amendments/

* richearthinstitute.org/

* www.mainepotatolady.com/ 

RAGWEED AND THISTLE

— Margie Phillips



Ragweed



Flowering ragweed



Thistle



More thistle

It seems that in many community gardens, thistle and ragweed flourish, even when there are attempts to control them. In the Northampton Community Garden, most ragweed within the plots is addressed and pulled, but not everywhere, and not always along the back road. If it is allowed to flourish here, the seeds will eventually reach our plots, especially those nearest the back road. I have been pulling ragweed from this area for a few years, and there is much less than when I began, but it still seems to thrive in certain spots.

If you see ragweed, **please pull it up and put it in the trash** or let it dry out on the pavement; don't toss it into the woods, as it will likely continue its life cycle and keep spreading.

Thistle is a weed that is often not seen as a particular threat, maybe because some find the flowers beautiful, but if allowed to grow unchecked, it can dominate. It is very difficult to pull out with the entire root intact once it is mature, as the roots go very deep, so **pulling when young** is ideal.

Wear gloves when pulling thistle, as the leaves can irritate the skin, and it is possible to develop an allergy to it, which manifests as more irritation, and possibly more swelling and itchiness than usual.

I recently learned that both ragweed and thistle have medicinal and nutritional value, so consider researching their uses if you do pull them up!

If all gardeners keep an eye out for ragweed and thistle, it will benefit everyone, especially those who, like me, are highly allergic to ragweed.

Thanks, and happy gardening! 🐦

COURTESY AND CONSIDERATION

— Dawn Dobson, J21

I have often gone into the shed to get a tool to find shovels, rakes, and pitchforks caked in a lot of dried mud all the way down to the handles. They were shedding the dry dirt every time you picked one up so the tool shed was getting very dirty and dusty.

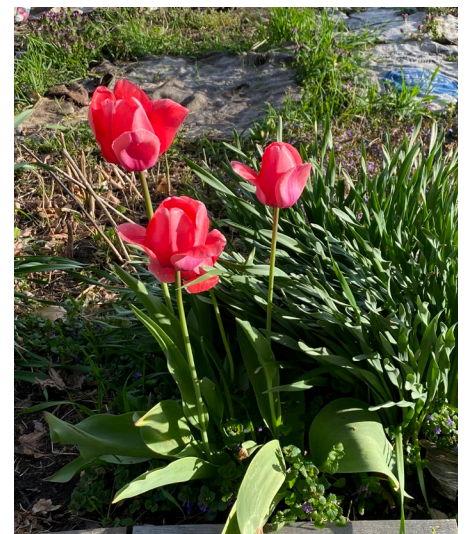
I took the dirty tools that I found outside and used the brush hanging to the left of the door to clean them. Then I swept out all of the dirt that had gathered on the floor.

Please remember to clean tools before returning them to the shed for the next gardener to use.

Cleaner tools and a tidy shed are better for all the equipment stored there, especially the lawn mowers. 🐦

EDITOR'S NOTE

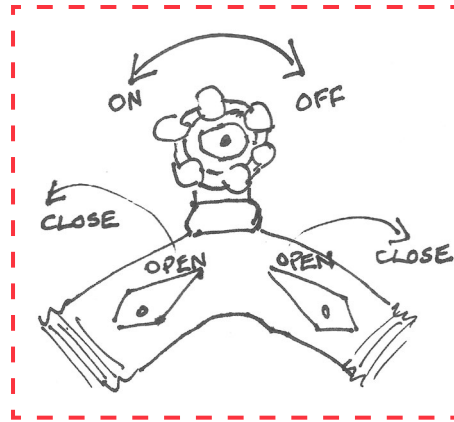
This is a community garden. We operate on the assumption that gardeners will be courteous and considerate of each other. But



by Marci Linker

everyone can get busy and frazzled at times.

- Please take only the tools you're going to use right away; return them (cleaned) as soon as you're finished.
- Lock the shed door! Hand tools have a habit of walking off if we are not vigilant.
- Don't hog the wheelbarrow! Do your weeding first, then go get a wheelbarrow to transport weeds to the compost pile.
- Coil the hoses neatly. As you would like to find them.
- If you think you see someone stealing from another gardener's plot, please politely ask the person what's up. (It could be a friend harvesting for someone who's away.) Tell them we all watch out for each other, because we work so hard on our gardens. If possible, take a photograph of the person or their car. If it's truly a theft, report them to the police. 🐦



TURN OFF BOTH THE HANDLE AND THE LITTLE LEVERS. EVERY TIME!

PLEASE BE MINDFUL OF WATER USE

Although we may no longer be in a drought, water is still the largest expense we share in the Community Garden.

Use water wisely and sparingly.

Let us know when spigots and hoses are leaking, so we can get them repaired quickly.

Turn off **both** the main spigot handle and the smaller levers each time you're done watering. With 415 plots and 250 gardeners, small leaks add up quickly. 🐦

E-mail the Garden Committee at NOHO-GARDEN@GOOGLE-GROUPS.COM 🐦🐦🐦

HORT NOTES

UMass Amherst Center for Agriculture, Food, and the Environment publishes **Hort Notes**, a monthly e-newsletter for landscapers, arborists, and other Green Industry professionals, including monthly tips for **home gardeners**. Read the latest issue or subscribe here: <https://ag.umass.edu/landscape/newsletters/hort-notes/hort-notes-2023-vol-343> 🐦

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

Northampton Parks and Recreation Department
100A Bridge Road
Florence, MA 01062

nohogarden.org

