

Garden News

OCTOBER 2023

ANNUAL END OF SEASON CLEANUP AND FALL INSPECTION

FALL CLEANUP DAY

Come to the Garden on **Saturday, October 21**, 10–12 and 2–4, to help get the garden ready for winter.

COMMUNITY SERVICE CHORES

Have you fulfilled your two hours per plot service requirement? If not, this is a great time to help out. Garden Committee members will be on hand to suggest garden chores for you to tackle. Come out and get some exercise! If you want to complete your community service hours sooner, contact the Committee at NOHO-GARDEN@GOOGLEGROUPS.COM for suggestions about work projects.

SOIL TESTING

Master Gardeners will offer **SOIL pH TESTING*** on Cleanup Day. Find out if your soil needs amendments before the end of the season.

*(See “Soil Ph” article below..)

PLOT CLEANUP

Every gardener must clean up plot(s) in preparation for winter.

Fall Inspection is scheduled for **Sunday, October 29**.

If your plot does not meet the guidelines described below, you will receive an e-mail (or notice by mail) telling you what needs to be done. If your plot fails inspection, you will be unable to register for next season. There will be no extensions.

HOW TO PASS INSPECTION

On Sunday, **October 29**, teams of peer inspectors will check plots to make sure guidelines for fall cleanup have been met. They will be checking to see whether:

- ✓ You have removed all dead vegetable plants and vines and properly disposed of them. Compost healthy plant material in your own plot or in one of the community compost piles. Woody plant material goes into the brush pile. Do not leave old tomatoes, squashes, etc., lying in your plot uncovered, as this attracts animals. Put diseased plant material in plastic bags and toss into the dumpster.



Everybody pitches in!
Photo by Sandy Jaescke

- ✓ You have **cut down** tall grasses and weeds around your plot, to no more than 6” tall. (NOTE: if not cut, they will send unwanted seeds into your plot and others’ plots as well.)
- ✓ You have **cut back** perennials where appropriate so they don’t

NORTHAMPTON COMMUNITY GARDEN 2023 Calendar

FALL CLEANUP DAY

Sat, **October 21** / 10–2

FALL PEER INSPECTION

Oct 29

DUMPSTER LAST DAY

TBD

WATER TURN-OFF

DPW decides, based on weather

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

fall into paths or your neighbor’s plot.

- ✓ You have **disposed** of all paper and plastic debris, paper and plastic bags, and plastic plant pots. (Left in your plot, they blow all over the Garden and across the street into our neighbors’ yards.)

- ✓ You have **removed** all tools, watering cans, etc., if not in use; you have taken hoses home or coiled them and stored them flat; you have removed plastic furniture. (Some of these items will blow around the Garden and be lost to you and become a nuisance to someone else. All will deteriorate from being exposed to weather.)

- ✓ You have **laid flat and anchored** securely any stakes, tomato cages, etc., that you leave in your plot.

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



- ✓ You have **firmly anchored** any structures – arbors, trellises, birdhouses – that remain in your plot.
 - ✓ You have a **visible, legible sign(s)** displaying your plot number(s).
- Please remember that **failure to pass inspection means that you won't be able to renew your plot(s) for next year.** 🐦

SOIL pH TESTING
OCTOBER 21

by Western Massachusetts Master Gardeners

The best thing you can do for a bountiful garden next spring is to make sure your soil is at the proper pH this fall. The pH level of the soil (measurement of acidity) is one of the most important factors you can control in helping your plants thrive. If the soil is too acidic or basic, your plants will not be able to absorb vital nutrients and can struggle. Different plants have different soil pH optimums, so you need to match your soil to the plants you want to grow. The fall is a great time to learn your soil's pH and make any adjustments needed so that the additives will be fully absorbed over the winter, and you'll be ready for spring.

Master Gardeners will be at the Northampton Community Garden on Saturday, October 21, 10:00 A.M. to noon, to test soil samples and give recommendations about adjustments for a **\$2 donation**. Bring a sample (see preparation instructions below) and get

immediate information about your soil's pH and specific recommendations for remedies.

See you at the Garden!

HOW TO COLLECT A SOIL SAMPLE FOR pH TESTING.

[It helps to dry the sample for proper measurement.]

- Collect 4 – 6 samples per Community Garden plot.
- Take your sample 6-8" deep for flower or vegetable garden.
- Mix the samples together. You will need about a cup of soil.
- Sift to remove debris and place in a labeled zip-lock bag.
- Results and recommendations will be provided onsite. 🐦

MASTER GARDENERS IN OUR MIDST

—Arlene Avakian and Dale Melcher

Have you ever wondered about the tall raised beds at the north edge of the garden which are usually filled with a profusion of vegetables and flowers? We have — and Deb Jacobs, one of the Master Gardeners we interviewed, explained that it was a project of the interns of the Master Gardener Class of 2009, some of whom are still working at our Community Garden. A group of Master Gardeners very generously took time out during their work time one recent Monday morning to talk to us.

The group that works at the garden are members of the Western Massachusetts Master

Gardener Association which aims to support sustainable gardening. To become Master Gardeners, students must put in 60 volunteer hours and complete a rigorous course. They are also required to complete 15 hours of community service a year and earn three hours of Continuing Education credits.



Joan Coryat and Lois Zissell

The Master Gardeners have been working in our community garden since 2003, and one of those members, Lois Zissell, is still a part of the group that you might see if you are in the garden on a Monday morning. The raised beds were the project of the class of 2009 as a demonstration project



Deb Jacobs and Karen Smith-Emerson

for elderly gardeners and those with disabilities. The beds are high enough so that gardeners don't have to bend over, and they are far enough apart to accommodate wheelchairs. Three new plots are being developed this year for vegetable growing, are overseen by some of the interns of the 2022 Master Gardeners. All the produce from of these plots is donated to the Easthampton Community Center and the Northampton Survival Center. All the plots include many pollinators which benefit all of us.



Elaine Hyde

They were all very enthusiastic about gardening in general and being part of a gardening team, with its benefits and challenges. As Elaine said, when you garden with friends you have "to remember the other end of your shovel." Most of the gardeners who work at our garden live close by, but one has been coming regularly from Dalton! They love the camaraderie and the opportunity to share information and try new things, such as their recent attempt at growing a Three Sisters Garden, a Native American gardening prac-

tice that combines corn, squash, and beans; the corn provides the stakes for the beans, the squash leaves keep the soil moist, and the beans fix nitrogen in the soil. In addition to being companion plants, these three crops comprise a complete and balanced meal.

The Master Gardeners are working in our garden on Monday mornings between 9:00 and 11:00 and are available to answer questions; they will even come to your plot to help diagnose problems. They encourage gardeners to donate extra vegetables to contribute to the bounty for the centers they support. If you are going on vacation, they will even arrange with Larri Cochran to pick your ripe vegetables for donation as well. And you will come back to a garden that continues to produce.

For more information on the Western Massachusetts Master Gardeners, visit their website:

WMMGA.ORG.

A big thank you to Joan Coryat, Deb Jacobs, Elaine Hyde, Karen Smith-Emerson, and Lois Zissell.



IRRIGATION BARREL RESOURCES

FROM SEP 18 WORKSHOP

TIPS:

- Look for dripline/emitters, filters, and timers labeled "No-pressure" or "Gravity-fed"
- After assembly, TEST your system on dry dirt; then mulch over lines to extend life
- When planning your system:
- Choose driplines for plants in rows or emitters for widely-

spaced plants like shrubs

- Barrel placement: easily reached by hose, closer to thirstier plants
- Estimate gallons per week for your plants' water needs: (inches of water per week) x (garden area in sq ft) x (0.623 gal / inch / sq ft)
- Save money by skipping the timer – turn on/off manually while you weed :)
- Estimate runtime based on desired gallons per week: To get runtime, fill barrel, let run, and check water level every ~30 minutes for 1-2 hours
I used 90 minutes every 48 hours, or 45-60 minutes every 24 hours during heat waves.

Where I bought my supplies:

<https://www.bluebarrelsystems.com/order-tools-accessories/>

Cost for my system: ~\$210

No-Pressure Irrigation Timer \$39.95

Barrel

1 x 55 gal food-grade barrel (from Facebook marketplace) \$15-\$30

4 x Cinder blocks for elevation (from Home Depot) \$10

Window screen for barrel top (from Home Depot) ~\$10

Spigot

Threaded Insert Tap Seal \$3.49

High-Flow Spigot \$7.50

3/4" FHT x 1/2" (.700 OD) Compression Swivel Adapter \$2.25

Streamlined Drip Irrigation Filter \$16.99

Mainline

50' x 1/2" (.700 OD) Poly Tubing \$15.99

Figure-8 Hose End for 1/2" Tubing

(Pack of 5) \$2.49

Drip line

2 x 100' 1/4" Dripline for Gravity Feed, 12" Emitter Spacing \$38.98

2 x 1/4" Barbed Connectors (Pack of 10) \$5.78

2 x Goof Plugs (Strip of 10) — end plugs for driplines \$2.96

Palm Hole Punch Tool \$3.99

Shipping

\$27.94

Happy irrigating!

— Hannah Johlas / RO1

hjohlas@gmail.com 🐦

SUN TEA

— Margie Phillips

Recently a dear friend reminded me about sun tea — the tea that is made in a jar (preferably glass, since plastic components can be leached into the tea water) with either tea bags or loose tea (black or herbal tea can be used) and placed in the sun for a few hours. No boiling, so no fire or electricity required for brewing. She made the tea from hibiscus along with the Holy Basil I had given her from my garden, and I was inspired to make this new version of the refreshing drink I used to make regularly when my children were still living at home.

I was inspired to write about this rediscovery, but realized I didn't know any recipes, or "proper" proportions of tea to water, so I looked it up. I was very surprised to find mixed information about the benefits and dangers — yes dangers! — of sun tea, and not much about proportions.

I have never measured the herbs or the water, or timed the brewing of any sun tea I ever made. It was

always delicious, especially iced and with a bit of honey or other sweetener. I often used rose hips, hibiscus, or mint, and lately I use my home-grown Holy Basil, or Tulsi, which I recently learned has a lot of health benefits.

Opinions, and possibly facts, about sun tea are very divided, and range from "so delicious and good for you" to "very dangerous, never drink it!". I found this confusing, but worth consideration.

Benefits seem obvious to me; it tastes good (if you like it) and if you use herbs, it has all the benefits of the herb used. Black tea has its pros and cons as well, which the reader might know or can investigate.

I had never considered that this tea might be toxic! The reasons posted online were basically warnings about possible contamination. Leaving the tea or herbal-infused water in the sun, without boiling the water, some say, can encourage bacterial and mold growth, causing nausea and/or illness. Illness or nausea can also occur, they say, from sitting in the sun for more than 4 hours (which I often do!), as the warmth of the water might encourage growth of bacteria that might already be present on the teabags or in the herbs, especially if store bought — who knows how many hands, washed or unwashed — the tea has passed through? Boiling is purported to take care of this — even though the herbs or tea bags are not boiled! The predominant advice, if one must drink the tea, is to use black tea bags, as the caffeine in the black tea is said to have anti-bacterial

properties. We are also advised not to drink it after the first day. I actually do put it in the fridge and drink it for as long as it lasts — sometimes for several days! The CDC, incidentally, reports 0 instances of anyone getting ill from sun tea, and I have never gotten sick from drinking it, recently or years ago. No one I know has ever been wary of sun tea either! Little did we know...!!

Perhaps using home grown herbs decreases the odds of getting sick from sun tea, as handling is limited and known; maybe using filtered water does the same. Sweetening the tea with a bit of honey, or even sugar, might also provide some bacteria resistant properties, even though some swear that sugar increases the odds of toxicity!

Regardless of which perspective is "correct", I will continue to make sun tea, now that I have rediscovered it, with my home grown Tulsi, with wild mint, and with herbal tea bags — Red Zinger, and all the "zingers", are my favorites. While I do like black tea, I prefer it hot and decaffeinated, with boiled water — so not much concern for contaminants, maybe?

So, if using less electricity or gas, and enjoying refreshing, and possibly healthy, drinks appeal to you, and you are not put off by the scary reviews, I recommend trying some sun-brewed herbal or black tea! 🐦