

# Growing with GPGP

2003 Spring Newsletter

Welcome to your very first edition of the Growing Places Garden Project client newsletter! By now most of you have received your new garden and some seeds and seedlings are already planted. We have really enjoyed building them for you and hope that we can work together through the growing season to produce some really terrific vegetables and herbs for you to enjoy. The main things to keep in mind right now are **watering your plants and seeds** on a regular basis and keeping your beds **free of weeds**. Mother Nature has been helping a lot with the watering part of this over the last week, but you need to keep up your end of the bargain in order for your plants to grow. There are some tips on these topics later in the letter.

We will be stopping by to check the progress of the beds and introduce new seeds and plants at the appropriate times. We would like to work with you directly as much as possible and will make every effort to let you know when this will take place. After all, we want you to learn how to take care of your garden so that you will be able to do this for yourself in the future. We have both found raising food for our families to be very rewarding and hope that you will too.

Given that, the last frost date is rapidly approaching (approximately May 31) and it will be time to start planting those warm weather crops. Beans and tomatoes immediately come to mind along with the squashes and peppers – yum! Unfortunately, the coolness and dampness we have experienced this year might cause a bit of a delay for the warm crop planting. We will watch how things develop and when the time is right, will be setting up a time with you to plant.

If you notice that something seems to be eating or chewing away at the plants in your beds, check out your Growing Places Growing Guide. It's full of great information to help you with your gardening. Or if your plants are just not looking good at all (we did have some frosts after planting some of your gardens) let us know and we'll be around to replace them. I've been waging a slug battle myself (they love this damp cloudy weather) and a few of my plants got nipped by the frost. It's best to stay on top of any potential problems so that you can obtain the maximum harvest.

And please feel free to call us with **any** questions or concerns you have. There is no such thing as a stupid question – we'll do our best to answer you right away, but many times we'll have to do some digging ourselves to find an answer! We are here to help you make a success of your garden.

Best regards from your fans at GPGP,

Cindy and Kate

# Gardening Tidbits

*Never step on  
the soil in your  
raised beds*

*Compost is  
the best thing  
for your soil*

## **What's all this stuff about a bed?**

Each of you has received a set of raised-bed vegetable gardens. The beds are framed with kiln-dried untreated spruce and are generally 8 feet long by 4 feet wide by 8 inches deep. This is a pretty convenient size since you can reach the middle of the bed from either side. The wood on these beds should last 4-6 years before they need replacing. However, the good news is you really don't need to replace the timbers. Many raised beds do not use frames and are simply raised mounds of dirt. Once your timbers are no longer useful, they can either be replaced or removed and gardening can continue apace. We opted not to use pressure-treated lumber since the chemicals used for pressure treating can leach into the soil and also into your produce.

Why did we decide to use raised beds? They are much easier to maintain than traditional in ground gardens. The soil does not compact, you get better drainage and the overall depth of that good fluffy soil is likely to be deeper than with a conventional garden. Another benefit is that they are higher so the bending distance for weeding and maintenance is less. You can also put them closer together than your typical rows of a garden since you don't need to get large cultivating tools in between the beds. This makes raised beds ideal for those with limited space.

Now that you understand what a raised bed is, here is the most important thing to remember about your raised beds: ***Do not to step on the soil in the beds!*** This will compact the soil, creating less air space for the roots to grow in to and minimize the ability of the plant to grow and produce yummy stuff for you to eat.

## **The dirt on dirt**

We have added a mixture of soil, compost and vermiculite to your raised beds. Why the latter two? Soil (also known as dirt) needs nutrients, air and moisture to help plants grow. Soil can be classified into 3 basic categories: sandy, loamy or clayey. Sandy soil contains lots of air holes and drains quickly and hence doesn't hold water or nutrients very well. Clayey soil has very few air holes and does not drain quickly which makes it difficult for air, water and plant roots to penetrate. Loamy soil is the best and falls between the two. Adding compost to any of the soil types is a major boost to the soil's ability to support plant growth. Compost, also called humus, is the decayed remains of plant and animal matter. It adds many nutrients to the soil, lightens up heavy soil, adds great moisture retention abilities (very important at this point with our current drought potential) and is in fact the single most important item you can add to your garden over the ensuing years. Since compost does break down over time, it is necessary to replenish it on a fairly regular basis

Vermiculite is actually mica rock heated until it explodes (very much like popcorn) into the little white pieces you can see in your soil. It has a marvelous water retention capability also and will help to loosen up heavy soils. It does not break down over time so adding more vermiculite is not usually necessary.

# Gardening Tidbits

*Use a gentle mist for seeds*

*Water seedlings at the bottom near the roots*

*Never let your garden dry out!*

*Weed only if you recognize it*

*Square foot gardening saves time and money*

## **Watering tips**

For seeds, it's best to use a gentle mist so as not to disturb seeds with heavy drops (this is sometimes unavoidable when it rains and you end up with something growing a little distance from where you planted it!). Spray bottles or a spray head on the hose that has a gentle mist are good to use for seeds. Moisten the soil, it doesn't need to be soaking wet. It's very important to keep the soil moist for seeds since seeds require moisture and heat to germinate.

For transplants and plants, it is always best to water at the bottom near the roots. Getting water on the leaves of plants can cause rot and fungus growth, especially on bean plants. If you have no other way to water, then by all means do so. Watering from the top via a sprinkler or hose is better than no water at all. Soaker hoses or a simple cup and bucket are good methods for watering at the bottom. Less water is wasted and more can be directed where the plant needs the water, which is at the roots. Transplants and plants should also be watered in the early morning so that the water has a chance to help the plant during the heat of the day and if any does get on the leaves, it has a chance to evaporate and decrease the possibility of disease. It's important to make sure your plants have enough water otherwise the growth cycle of that plant can be interrupted causing either a poor harvest or potentially killing the plant.

The bottom line, however and whenever you can, **water your garden.**

## **Help! I just weeded my seedlings!**

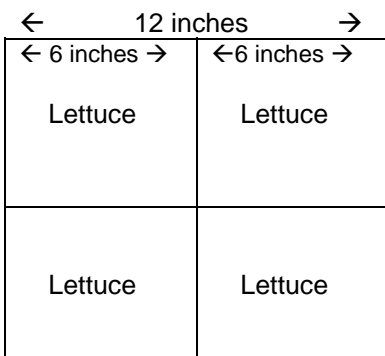
How can you tell the difference??? Not very easily, as far as I'm concerned. I tend to wait until I see a lot of the same looking plant in what I believe to be the location that I planted the seeds. Small "weedlings" can be readily pulled once you have identified the seedlings and will not take up too much of the seedling's nutrients in that short a time. Once your seedlings begin to grow, it is important to keep your squares weed-free since weeds can crowd out your plants, steal their water and nutrients and pretty much ruin your crop.

## **And just why are my beds divided up into squares?**

Mel Bartholomew developed the square foot method of gardening in the late 1970's. The goal is to produce more harvest in less space with less work. The basic principle is to plant your crops in 1 foot by 1 foot "squares". Each square contains a different vegetable, herb or flower (or several squares can contain the same item if it is something you want a lot of). How many seeds or plants are placed in each square depends on several factors: how big the plant gets, how far apart they need to be to develop properly and the particular variety of plant you are growing. In general, the seeds are planted at the spacing that is stated on the seed packet for you to thin to. In other words, if you sow a row of lettuce every ½ inch or so, you are supposed to thin them out to 6 inches between plants. That means if you have 12 plants in 6 inches of space, you need to remove 10 of them between the two outer plants so they may grow to the proper size. This translates into lots of wasted seed and it's often hard to take out all those lovely little plants.

# Gardening Tidbits

If instead you only planted the 2 seeds at 6 inches apart to begin with, you have more seeds to plant later plus you don't have to go through the thinning process. And you have also optimized the usage of your garden space. For example, in a square of lettuce you can put 4 plants equally spaced at 6 inches apart as follows:



Rows of lettuce would require more room. This process can be applied to virtually all of your crops and is why we have marked off "squares" in your beds. You can follow the progress of a single square pretty easily, see when weeds invade and remove them, water individual plants and see any potential pest problems quickly. We hope that, by using this method, we can help you grow a large amount of produce in a fairly compact garden space and to save time on garden maintenance.

### What is our last frost date and what does it mean?

Many times on a seed packet or a plant tag you see the words "plant after all danger of frost". Well just what does that mean?? In this area, that date is approximately May 31. This varies by a week or two depending upon the weather for the spring, but for the most part using May 31 as a guideline for planting will work well. Generally this means that your cool crops (spinach, lettuce, swiss chard, peas, etc) will be planted before this time while your warm crops (melons, beans, tomatoes, squashes, etc) will be planted after this date. Warm crops are not able to withstand the potentially devastating affects a freeze could have on them which is why we wait to plant them.

### Some Gardening References:

Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew  
The Vegetable Gardener's Bible by Ed Smith  
The Moosewood Restaurant Kitchen Garden by David Hirsch

*Wait until after  
May 31 to  
plant tender  
crops*

# Growing with GPGP

2003 Summer Newsletter

Hello everyone!

We hope you all are enjoying your gardens and have been able to harvest some of the produce from it. This news letter is just chock full of good information on all sorts topics such as watering, pest control, harvesting and cooking with your harvest. We are trying to provide as much information as we can in the hope that you'll keep these newsletters for reference over the years that you work with your gardens. If you think of a topic that you'd like to see addressed, please let us know. If you have a seasonal recipe to share, that would be great too!

This has been a tough spring for the crops that need a bit more sun than we've been getting but at least you haven't really had to worry about watering your gardens. Now that we seem to have suddenly shifted into summer, water will become more important and we provide some information about that in this newsletter. In the next few weeks, we will be bringing around straw to mulch your beds - this helps keep the weeds down and also helps to conserve the moisture in the ground so that you don't have to water as much or as frequently. But remember to never let your garden beds dry out!

Have you noticed that a lot of your lettuces and spinach have changed over from making leaves to making flowers? It's time to pull them out of the garden now because the leaves will taste bitter but take heart! With the exception of spinach which really doesn't do well in the hot summer, you can still plant lettuce and get another crop. In fact, you can also plant more beets, carrots, radishes and beans. This is called **succession planting** where you continually replant so that you will have a continuous supply throughout the growing season. Find a blank square and put in some seeds. Carrots and beets can be planted in the squares surrounding the tomatoes. Radishes can go around the squash plants. Lettuce and beans can go pretty much wherever there is a blank square.

If you notice that something seems to be eating or chewing away at the plants in your beds and you can't figure out what to do about it, please let us know as soon as possible. We want to stay on top of any potential problems so that you can obtain the maximum harvest.

And please feel free to call us with **any** questions or concerns you have. There is no such thing as a stupid question – we'll do our best to answer you right away, but many times we'll have to do some digging ourselves to find an answer! We are here to help you make a success of your garden.

Enjoy!

*Cindy and Kate*

# Watering

*Consistency in watering is key. Lack of water can cause a break in the growth cycle – the plant will restart growing once water is available, but the crop produced won't be as tasty or yield as much.*

## **I know my garden needs water, but just how much?**

Crops in the summer garden generally fall into 2 categories: those that we eat as greens or roots before they flower and those whose fruits we eat after flowering. Examples of the first category are basil, parsley, lettuce, spinach, chard, kale, cabbage, broccoli, beets, carrots, onions, and radishes. Examples of the second category are cucumbers, squash, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, etc.

The “greens and roots” category requires a nearly continuous source of water to produce the best eating. Thus, in the dry heat of summer (July and August), it's important to water them every other day or so.

The “fruits” category needs deep less frequent watering, about 1-2 times per week. If they get too much water, they'll just keep making leaves and spend less time making the flowers that turn into the goodies you'd like to harvest.

So what does all this mean for you as a gardener? It means striving for a balance between getting the plants the water they need while using as little water and time as possible. If you can, try to water your garden in the morning. When the air is cool, less water will evaporate and more will make it down through the soil to the roots of your plants. If you can only water in the afternoon, please make sure to run water through your hose for a few minutes until the water coming out the end is cool. When hoses sit in the sun for too long the water inside them gets very hot and will harm your plants. This is especially important for those of you using soaker hoses. Watering at night also lessens the amount lost to evaporation but tends to encourage other pests such as fungus and slugs.

How much water does your garden need? Most people say that a vegetable garden needs about an inch of rain per week to grow well. You can make a simple rain gauge out of a tuna can. If the can is filled by rain over the span of one week then you don't need to add any water to the garden unless a particular plant is wilting in the sun. Just be sure to empty out your can once a week. It is also important to know the watering regulations for your town. There may be outdoor watering bans. If so, then you should still be able to use your watering cans to keep your plants alive. Below there is a table with some guidelines for watering. If you use these guidelines remember that the capacity of your GPGP watering can is about 1 gallon or 16 cups. Therefore, according to our table, you can water 32 bean plants (about 3 squares worth) or 4 tomato plants with a full watering can.

For those of you who can use soaker hoses, you can use the tuna can gauge by placing a section of your soaker over the can and running water through the hose until the can is full. This will probably take about an hour.

## Watering (continued)

*Keep leaves of cukes, melons, beans and squashes dry to prevent fungal diseases.*

*Withhold water when tops of onions begin to fall over.*

*When melons are almost ripe, water them less to keep them from splitting.*

### Watering Chart

Plant	Volume per plant	Hot Weather Frequency (Times per week)
Beans	1/2 cup	2
Beets	1/2 cup	2
Cabbage	1-2 cups	2
Carrots	1/4 cup	3
Chard	1-2 cups	2
Cucumbers	2 cups	2
Eggplant	2 cups	2
Lettuce	1 cup	2
Melons	2 cups	2
Onions	1/4 cup	1
Parsley and other herbs	1 cup	1
Peppers	2 cups	1
Radishes	1/4 cup	2
Spinach	1/2 cup	2
Summer Squash	2 to 4 cups	2
Winter Squash	3 to 4 cups	2
Tomatoes	1 quart	2

This watering chart is adapted from Mel Bartholomew's book Square Foot Gardening.

# Garden Wildlife

*Destroying pests can be broadly defined as squashing them, drowning in soapy or salty water or whatever it takes to get rid of them!*

## **Ewwwww!!! What's that thing crawling in my garden???**

Unfortunately, there are a number of garden pests that you may find on your crops. Most will cause some damage but not destroy your crop – some can simply devastate your entire crop. Here are some descriptions of a few of them and what you can do about them:

**Colorado potato beetles:** These are fingernail-sized beetles whose dome-shaped shells are brightly colored with black and orange stripes. They can affect eggplant, peppers, potatoes and tomatoes. They also like to hang out in the flowers of squashes, cucumbers and melons where they can spread disease. Handpicking and destroying is effective.

**Striped and spotted cucumber beetles:** Yellowish beetles about ¼” long with either 11 black spots on the wings or 3 wide black stripes. They can be found on squash, beans, peas and obviously cucumbers and feed on their leaves, stems and flowers and can spread diseases. Handpicking and destroying is effective.

**Cabbage worms:** These are medium green caterpillars with subtle yellow or white stripes along their sides and can be up to 1” in length. They are often found on the underside of many cabbage family crops (includes cabbage, broccoli, kale, etc). The leaves develop ragged-shaped holes. Cabbage and broccoli heads are great hiding places. They can be handpicked and destroyed. Kate's children love to go on “broccoli worm” hunts.

**Tomato hornworms:** Now here is one really interesting caterpillar and, despite its size, really hard to spot due to its coloring. These caterpillars are pale to medium green with chalky white streaks across their body. Small eyelike spots are found along their sides and their backside has a red or black spiky tail. They can grow up to 4” in length and be as thick as your pinky finger. They can do major damage to a tomato plant, devouring leaves, stems and fruit. If you see tomatoes with that look like they have been cut off or simply mostly devoured, start looking for these guys. Handpick and destroy **UNLESS** they have clusters of small white eggs on their backs. These eggs belong to a parasitic wasp, which will destroy the worm and make more of the parasitic wasps to boot.

**Japanese beetles:** Approximately ½” long, this beetle is a shiny metallic green with brown wings. If the foliage on some plants looks like a leaf skeleton, suspect these beetles. You can purchase a pheromone trap and place it 15-30 feet away from your garden or you can handpick and destroy the beetles. It's often best to pick them in the morning when they are still covered with morning dew and have a hard time flying (tapping them into a bag or jar filled with soapy water will work well). You will mostly find them on your bean crops.



## Garden Wildlife (continued)

**Slugs:** Slugs are basically slimy snails without a shell. They are brownish in color and feed on the soft tissue of pretty much any plant. They leave rough-edged holes and slime trails and can generally be found hiding under something in the garden during the day (they usually do their destruction at night). You can handpick them at night using a flashlight and dropping them into a can of soapy or salty water. Or you can set traps such as boards, stones or overturned pots in the garden and then check them in the morning when the slugs go there to hide.

**Squash vine borer:** If your squash vine suddenly starts to wilt then you probably have one or more of these. Look for moist sawdust-like debris piled outside of a small hole. Slit the stem lengthwise above the hole with a sharp knife and search for fat white 1" long caterpillars with dark brown heads. Destroy the borers and cover the cut stems with moist soil so they will grow new roots. These borers can affect cucumber, melon, pumpkin and squash plants.

**Squash bugs:** As if the previous squash problem weren't enough! These are about ½ to 1" long, brown to black in color, with a very flat back and shield shaped body. They feed on the juices from the leaves causing the leaves to wilt, dry up and turn black. If your leaves are starting to get yellow or brown spots on them, suspect this bug. They will affect cucumber, melon, pumpkin and (of course) squash. You can lay traps of boards or something for them to hide under (similar to slugs) and collect and destroy in the morning. Look for reddish-brown egg masses on the underside of the leaves and remove and destroy these by crushing between two flat surfaces.

### **Aren't there any good bugs out there????**

Yes, indeed there are – lucky for our plants and us!

**Ladybugs:** Small orangey red in color with zero to many black spots, these wonderful bugs are a gardener's delight. They feed on many nasty pests such as aphids, Colorado potato beetle larvae, chinch bugs, bean thripes, mites and numerous other soft-bodied insects. If you see these in your garden, be happy!

**Parasitic wasps:** The adult wasps feed on nectar, but they lay their eggs on or within the grubs or caterpillars that they use to host their young. These wasps are non-stinging.

There are many others as well, but we figure that you're pretty tired of reading about bugs at this point. Unfortunately, the good guys tend to reproduce more slowly than the pests. Thus, we strongly recommend **against** using pesticides, which kill the "good" bugs as well as the "bad". Most of the time, if you are patient, the predators will find your pests and the garden's ecosystem will balance itself out. In addition, plants have their own ways of defending against pests, so it's important to keep them as healthy as possible. So, please let us know if you are seeing any problems with your garden and we'll try to help.

# Harvesting

*Harvesting most vegetables and fruits frequently will lead to the plants producing more harvest – yummy!*

*Don't forget to sample while harvesting – one of the best things about having an organic garden!!!*

## **So just how do I know when to harvest this stuff?**

Sometimes is hard to know when to pick and when not to pick. Here are some basic guidelines for vegetables that many of you have. If you have questions about something you have that isn't listed here, please give us a call.

**Beans:** Pick when the diameter of the pod is about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch or about the thickness of a pencil. Use a knife or simply snap them off from the stem with your fingers. Keep beans picked for a more continuous production. Try not to harvest in the morning when the leaves are damp as that may cause the spread of fungal disease.

**Beets:** Pull or dig roots and remove tops (by twisting off, not cutting) when beets are about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter or the size of a ping-pong ball (dig around the root with your finger to check the size).

**Broccoli:** Main head should be dark green, buds tight and fully formed. Cut head off stalk with a knife – small side shoot heads often will form continually into the fall and should be harvested.

**Cabbage:** Cut off the head any time after it reaches the size of a softball, they can grow larger but are more tender and tasty at this stage. Cut with a knife (sometimes more heads will grow from the cut stem).

**Carrots:** Pull carrots from the ground by their tops and clip the foliage about 1" from the root. Pull up the ones with the largest tops first (you can dig around the plant with your finger to test the size). Picking earlier rather than later will yield a sweeter, tenderer carrot.

**Cauliflower:** Harvest when the head is tight and fairly regular and the curd have not begun to separate. Remove from the stem with a knife

**Swiss chard:** Begin harvesting when leaves are 6-8" long. You can harvest chard by any of these methods: picking individual outer leaves (the center leaves will continue to produce); cutting the entire plant off at soil level when the leaves are large and full; cut the entire plant 1" above the ground to encourage regrowth.

**Cucumbers:** Cucumbers can be harvested whenever they are big enough to use, though the smaller ones tend to be more flavorful (3-5 inches). Fruits grow quickly so check vines often. Cut from stem, don't pull.

**Eggplant:** Harvest any time after they have reached half their mature size. Younger fruit is generally tenderer and continuous picking stimulates further production.

**Lettuce:** Gather outer leaves from all lettuces except iceberg when they are big enough for a salad bowl (or a size you like to eat). Leaf lettuces can be cut about 1" above the soil when most leaves are salad sized and the plant will continue to grow another harvest or two. Or you can harvest the entire plant after it has matured but before it bolts (grows a central stalk which means it's going to flower and the leaves will now be bitter). Harvest the entire plant by removing its roots and all.

**Kale:** Kale can be harvested at any time – when the leaves are small and tender or when they are large – it's pretty much up to you. Just leave enough leaves so that the plant can continue to grow and produce more. Cut off the leaves from the bottom of the plant and work your way towards the top.

## Harvesting (continued)

*Use a sharp knife for harvesting items with large stems such as chard, broccoli, kale, squashes, etc. A small pair of sharp scissors can be used for harvesting items with small tender stems/leaves such as lettuce and spinach.*

**Muskmelons:** For most melons except watermelon, the fruit is ripe when the rind changes from gray-green to yellow-buff. The fruit is still firm, but can be fairly easily separated from the stem with gentle thumb pressure. Watermelons are a bit more difficult though the following 3 methods are pretty popular: the tendril nearest to the fruit turns from green to brown; the underside of the melon where it sits on the ground is yellow; tapping it lightly produces a low-pitched “thump” instead of a high-pitched “ping”.

**Onions:** When about half of the tops of the onions fall over and are turning brown, it's time to harvest. Gently pull them from the soil and leave them to cure for about 1 week in the sun. When the tops and skin are dry and crinkly, clip the tops about 1” from the bulbs and store in a cool dry place.

**Peas:** Pick snow peas when the pod is the mature length (about 2½ inches) but before the seeds inside begin to mature. Sugar peas are best when both pea and pod are plump and the pods snap. Garden peas should be picked when the pods have filled out but aren't overfilled with peas.

**Peppers:** Most sweet and hot peppers are actually completely ripe when they turn from green to red. Picking the peppers when they are green will actually signal to the plant to produce more peppers so you might want to pick and enjoy some green ones and let the new ones turn red.

**Radishes:** Harvest radishes when mature by pulling them out of the soil and storing in the refrigerator. Don't leave in the ground too long after maturity or they will get pithy and bitter.

**Spinach:** Similar to lettuce, harvest spinach by any of these methods: picking individual outer leaves; cutting the entire plant off at soil level when the leaves are large and full; cut the entire plant 1” above the ground to encourage regrowth.

**Summer Squash:** Harvest straight neck yellow squash and zucchini when they are 4-5” in length, harvest crookneck when they are slightly smaller. Harvest patty pan squash when they are about 4” in diameter or less. Harvesting often will encourage more production.

**Winter Squash:** Generally, these are harvestable when the stems begin to shrivel and dry and the skin is hard enough so you can't cut it with your thumbnail (pumpkin skin can remain soft even when ripe, though). But make sure you get them harvested before any frost since that will damage the squash (you can cover them with a sheet if it's not going to be a hard frost). Leave at least 1-2” of stem on the fruit so that they store better. If possible, cure in the sun for about 10 days after picking. If there are any predictions of frost while they are curing, bring the squash inside overnight and put them out again the next day.

**Tomatoes:** Pick tomatoes when the skin yields slightly to finger pressure. Before a hard frost pick any tomatoes that show a light yellowing at the shoulders as these will most likely ripen indoors. As the fall frost date approaches, remove the bottom leaves, flowers and any fruits that are small, solid green and hard as rocks (they will not ripen in time). This will direct the energy of the plant towards ripening the fruit that is left.

# Recipes

*Do you have a favorite recipe for your fresh vegetables? Would you like to share it with Growing Places? We'd love to include it in our newsletter.*

*Consider planting garlic in your garden this fall. It will come up in spring and grow all summer. Then you'll be partway to a tomato sauce garden by next April.*

Remember, cooking your veggies doesn't have to be complicated. Many of your vegetables and greens can be sautéed in oil, maybe with a touch (or more!) of garlic, a touch of salt or seasonings. Or you could steam them, and then add oil and seasonings. The taste is already great because it came from your garden.

## **Kate's Mom's Blender Pesto**

(This is wonderful on cooked pasta or as a base sauce for homemade pizza)

Ingredients:

- 2 cups fresh basil (lightly packed)
- ½ cup olive or vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts or walnut pieces
- 2 cloves garlic (lightly crushed)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons pecorino cheese (optional)
- 3 tablespoons softened butter

Preparation:

1. Put basil, oil nuts, garlic and salt in blender, blend until smooth; see Note below.
2. When blended, beat in the grated cheese by hand.
3. Beat in the softened butter.
4. Before spooning over pasta, at about 1 tablespoon of the hot water in which the pasta was boiled.

Note: Pesto can be frozen! Just put the blended basil, oil, nuts, garlic and salt into ice cube trays and freeze for about 4 hours. The pesto cubes can be stored in plastic bags and kept until you need a taste of summer. Add the rest of the ingredients after thawing.

## **Peeled Tomatoes – a fast and easy way to prepare fresh tomatoes for pasta sauces, salsas, and other recipes, like the Tabbouleh Salad below.**

You will need:

1. 1 large pot (3-4) qt filled halfway with water. Bring to a simmer on medium low heat on the stove.
2. 1 large bowl filled halfway with ice water
3. As many fresh ripe tomatoes from your garden as you want to use

Preparation:

1. Working in batches of 3 or so tomatoes at a time, gently lower the tomatoes into the simmering water and let them stay there for about 1 minute.

(Technique continued on next page)

## More Recipes

*Squash flowers are delicious when sautéed in butter. Just pick off the male ones in the morning (they don't have any tiny squashes attached to them), refrigerate them and then cook them for lunch or dinner.*

2. Using a slotted spoon, transfer tomatoes into the ice water. You should notice that the skin has begun to split.
3. After about two minutes in the ice water, transfer the tomatoes to a bowl or plate. The tomato skin should peel easily away from the flesh.
4. If you want to remove the seeds. Just split open the tomatoes and scoop the seeds out with a spoon.

### **Tabbouleh Salad with Tomatoes (adapted from the New York Times Cookbook)**

#### Ingredients:

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup med-fine cracked bulgur wheat (available in the rice/ethnic food section of most grocery stores)  
4 tablespoons olive or other oil  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chicken or vegetable broth  
3 cups lettuce cut into bite-size pieces  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup peeled tomatoes, seeds removed, cut into small cubes  
1 cup coarsely chopped parsley  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup finely chopped mint  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup chopped scallions  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
Fresh ground pepper to taste

#### Preparation:

1. Put cracked wheat into small sauce pan and add 2 tablespoons of oil; stir to coat grains; set aside and let stand 5-10 minutes.
2. Add broth to cracked wheat and cook over very low heat for about 1 minute, stirring.
3. Remove sauce pan from heat and set aside to cool
4. Put cracked wheat into a 2 quart mixing bowl and, using your fingers, break up the lumps.
5. Add the chopped greens and vegetables and stir to combine thoroughly.
6. Add the lemon juice and pepper and stir to combine.

Serves 6-8 as a side dish.

### **We'd like to acknowledge the following gardening books as sources for the information we share with you:**

Square Foot Gardening by Mel Bartholomew  
The Vegetable Gardener's Bible by Ed Smith  
The Moosewood Restaurant Kitchen Garden by David Hirsch  
Rodale's Garden Problem Solver by Jeff Ball  
The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control by Barbara W. Ellis and Fern Marshall Bradley

# Growing with GPGP

2003 Fall Newsletter

Greetings!

At this time of year we should probably change the name of this newsletter to "Harvesting with GPGP". We hope that you are enjoying your fall – it's amazing how things suddenly changed from warm to cool and snappy! You may have also noticed that your gardens have also undergone a similar change – from being full and green to rather droopy and a sad shade of brownish-green. Well, that's what cooling weather and frost will do to those heat-loving vegetables. However, if you are lucky enough to have some of those cool weather crops such as cabbage, kale, spinach, lettuce, chard and carrots in your garden, they should all be doing fairly well and will continue to do so for a while, though growth will be at a much slower rate.

When the first hard frost has arrived, you should plan to put your gardens to bed for the winter. This means that you should begin to remove dead vegetable plants from your gardens. Sometimes dead plants can provide hiding places for diseases or insect pests. They should be put into a compost pile (if you have one) or the trash. We'll be delivering bags of compost or manure to nourish the garden soil over the winter and make sure that your garden is in great shape for planting next spring. After the garden is cleaned out, spread a bag of the compost we provide over each bed. If you requested garlic, we'll be bringing some by for you to plant this fall and harvest next year.

Finally, you all did an amazing job this year. We congratulate and thank you for your willingness to try out these gardens with us. They were beautiful and productive due to your efforts.

Best regards from your fans at GPGP, Cindy and Kate

## Gardening Tidbits

*Recheck your summer newsletter for harvest tips!*

*Please let us know if you are interested in planting garlic and we'll bring some to put in after the fall cleanup.*

### **Greenish Tomatoes**

Cooler temperatures prevent tomato flavor from developing. Harvest them when they are just starting to change color and ripen them at room temperature. Don't put them in a window. They need warmth not light.

### **Garden Underground**

Even though there won't be much going on above ground in your garden this winter, organisms under the surface of the soil will be active throughout much of the winter season. When you "amend" the soil by adding goodies like compost, you will give them a boost of food. This means that your garden should be in great shape for next spring's planting season.

Speaking of activity below the ground, fall is a great time to plant garlic. The garlic will establish some roots now and will put up brave little shoots in early spring. It's wonderful to see something green in there in April!

# Recipes

*Harvest only the outer leaves of kale and collard greens, the plant will continue to produce more leaves from it's center.*

*Try pan-frying these greens in a bit of oil that's been seasoned with garlic. It's delicious!*

## **Roasted, Mashed Winter Squash**

Note: This is an easy way to prepare squash that can be eaten as a side dish or used in the pancake recipe below. Squash prepared this way can be easily frozen too.

### Ingredients:

- 1) 2 medium size winter squash, such as butternut or acorn
- 2) 1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

### Preparation:

- 1) Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- 2) Spread most of the oil evenly over a rimmed baking sheet
- 3) Rinse the squash and cut them in half with a sharp knife.
- 4) Remove the seeds.
- 5) Rub the cut sides of the squash with the remaining oil.
- 6) Place the squash halves on the baking sheet with the cut side down.
- 7) Place the pan in the oven and roast the squash for 45 minutes or until a fork penetrates the squash flesh easily.
- 8) Let cool for 10 to 20 minutes
- 9) Scoop the cooked squash flesh out of the skin and mash with a fork or potato masher until the consistency is smooth. You can also use a blender or food processor.

## **Winter Squash Pumpkin Pancakes**

Note: This recipe is adapted from The Wilson Farm Country Cookbook, by Lynne C. Wilson, Addison- Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1985.

### Ingredients:

- 1) 2 eggs
- 2) 2/3 cup cooked, mashed winter squash (canned pumpkin also works well)
- 3) 3 tablespoons oil
- 4) 1 cup milk
- 5) 1 ½ cups flour (or ¾ cup unbleached + ¾ cup whole wheat flour)
- 6) ¼ cup sugar
- 7) ¾ teaspoon salt
- 8) 2 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 9) 1 ¼ teaspoons cinnamon
- 10) 1 teaspoon nutmeg

### Preparation:

- 1) Sift the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and nutmeg together.
- 2) Beat the eggs in a large mixing bowl.
- 3) Stir in the squash, oil and milk.
- 4) Add the sifted flour mixture and stir thoroughly.
- 5) Heat a frying pan over medium high heat, grease it lightly and cook the pancakes, turning them once after bubbles form on top.