



Hello Gardeners!

The growing season is well under way and you should be harvesting lots of greens (lettuce and spinach) and radishes. Several new crops may be ready also; some that you are familiar with and some that may be a new delight for your table. Be sure to read the rest of the newsletter for all the details! Think of your garden as a treasure trove of surprises! Every week, your garden will provide you with yummy goodies that can be made into entire meals, side dishes or used as seasonings. These surprises only last for a limited time, so use them while you can. If your harvest is too bountiful, many items can be frozen, dried, canned, or given to friends.

Don't forget, please give us a call if you have questions, concerns, successes or funny stories.

Your Friends at Growing Places

What's Happening...

- Pull out spinach, mustard and arugula that is going to seed and plant something else.
- Did you know that plants will often look wilted during the heat of the day? This is their protection mechanism to keep from losing too much water through their leaves. The smaller the surface area, the less water lost. The plants should look fine in the cool of the morning or evening. If not, they need to be watered.
- Weeds are plants and love this weather too! Don't forget to rid your garden of them a little each day.

MIND YOUR PEAS

- Estimate a generous pound of peas in the pod to yield a cup of shelled peas.
- Look for smooth, taut pods that sound hollow when tapped.
- Shell the peas only at the last minute.
- Eat them raw!

(Excerpted from Vermont Life, Summer 2011)

Tips for a Better Garden...

- Plant another square or two of bush beans for a continuous crop.
- Thin carrot seedlings to about 1 inch apart.
- Keep picking your peas to ensure the plants do not slow down their production.
- Continue to harvest greens and radishes.
- Be sure tomatoes are supported with stakes or cages (*see Issue 2 of the newsletter for details on staking tomatoes*).
- Plant radishes around your squash, melon and cucumber plants. Radishes help to keep the squash bugs away.
- Fill your watering can and leave it in your garden. Tomatoes and peppers like to be given water that is the same temperature as the air.
- Many studies have shown that stressed plants actually give off chemical signals that attract pests to them.
- After all this rain, be on the lookout for slugs in your garden. Remove any you find as they love to eat tender leaves and can destroy crops.



Watering the garden in the summer

Watering is an important part of vegetable gardening. When to water, how much and how are commonly asked questions. Plants need water to transport nutrients and to keep the plant from wilting. Plant roots need oxygen to grow and be able to absorb water and nutrients. Roots will die if they are exposed to waterlogged soils (yellow plants) or very dry soils (wilting plants). There needs to be a balance and experience will be the best teacher.

Fewer deep waterings are better for the plants than many shallow ones. Roots will seek out the moisture—if water is only in the first 1/2 inch of soil that's where the roots will be. This makes them more vulnerable to drying and insects. An efficient, water saving method of watering is with a cup (cottage cheese or yogurt container will work) and a pail. Build up a ring of soil around individual plants leaving a depression large enough to hold a cup of water or in case of smaller plants, a 1/4 cup. If you have rows of plants or many close together, you can build up the depression on either side of the row. Pour the required amount of water slowly into the depression keeping it within the depression and off the foliage. The amount and frequency of watering in the summer appears in the table below. Deciding when to water can be determined by pressing your finger into the soil an inch. If it seems moist, no water is needed; if it seems dry, you need to water. Often if there is a good soaking rain during the week, there will be no need to water.

What does that mean for my garden?

Crop	Qty of water in cups / mature plant	Times / week
Beans	1 / 2	2
Broccoli	1 / 2	2
Cabbage	2	2
Carrots	1 / 4	1 (never let dry)
Swiss chard	2	2
Cucumbers	2	2
Eggplant	2	2
Lettuce	1	2
Peas	10-12 / four foot row	2
Peppers	2	1
Spinach	1 / 2	2
Squash	4	2
Tomatoes	8	1

New Crop... Garlic Scapes



If the garlic that you planted last fall has not already done so, it will soon be sending up a long thin curving stalk. On that stalk you will find a bulge which is the seedpod that forms on hard-neck garlic plants in June. The stalk and the seedpod are called a "scape". It is best to remove the scape with a sharp knife or scissors so that the plant puts its energy into growing a nice fat garlic bulb instead of the scape.

But don't throw out your scapes! With mild garlic flavor and aroma they are wonderful additions to stew, roasts, marinade, salads, sandwiches, sauces, bread, pasta, pesto, stir-fry, roasted, or even steamed and eaten as a vegetable. The possibilities are endless!

When the scapes are newly-budded and still in full curl, they are tender and provide a delightfully subtle garlic flavor. Cut them when they curl between 1/2 and 3/4 turn. After the scapes have straightened and the flower top is maturing, they will be tough.

Garlic scapes store well. You can keep batches in the refrigerator for upwards of three weeks, though fresh cut is always the best. Remove all of the stalk tip above the pod [umbel] before cooking.

(This information is adapted from www.dakotagarlic.com)



Another reason to garden!

Getting down to earth burns 162 calories per half hour, boosts bone density – (strenuous yard work is equal to weight training) and may even make you smarter (a bacteria in soil stimulates the release of a neurotransmitter involved in learning). A Texas A&M study shows gardeners have a greater zest for life. Gardeners are also more energetic and optimistic than those who don't have a green thumb.

(Excerpted from Shape magazine)

Beneficial Insects

Not all insects that you will find in your garden are harmful to your plants. Two nocturnal insects deserve more recognition as gardening allies. Crickets have a healthy appetite for protein-rich seed seeds, while ground beetles devour slugs and many other common garden pests, including squash bugs and spotted cucumber beetles.



Recipes...

Garlic Scape Soup

(From Super Natural Cooking, by Heidi Swanson)

- 2 tablespoons clarified butter or extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 dozen garlic scapes, flower buds discarded and green shoots chopped
- 3 large russet potatoes, unpeeled and cut into ½ inch dice
- 5 cups vegetable stock or water
- 2 large handfuls spinach leaves, stemmed
- Juice of ½ lemon
- ½ teaspoon fine-grain sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup heavy cream (optional)
- Chive blossoms, for garnish (optional)

Heat the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat, then add the scapes and sauté for 2 minutes.

Add the potatoes and stock, cover, and simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the potatoes are cooked through and beginning to break down.

Remove from the heat, allow to cool slightly, add the spinach, and puree using a blender. (Season with the lemon juice, salt, and a few grinds of pepper.

Whisk in the cream for a silkier texture.

Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve garnished with the chive blossoms.

Serves 4 to 6.



Spring Peas with Mint

(Recipe from Molto Gusto by Mario Batali)

- 2 pounds peas in the pod, shelled or 2 cups fresh
- 1 medium red onion, cut into dice about the same
- 1/2 Bunch fresh mint, leaves removed and torn into 2
- 1/4 Cup Red Wine vinaigrette (*recipe below*)



Combine the peas, onion, and mint in a medium bowl and toss with the vinaigrette. Season with salt and pepper and let stand at room temperature for 1 hour to bring out the flavors.

Garden Spotlight

Look at the 'growings' on in this Berlin garden!



A wonderful mix of herbs and vegetables grace this raised bed overlooking adjacent fields.



Plump tomatoes ripening on the vine...



Neighboring, young beets



This gardener's hard work includes succession planting, to ensure fresh crisp lettuce all season long!



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Things to Remember

Local area Farmer's Markets

Several farmer's markets have already started for this growing season. They are a great place to meet your neighbors, chat with others who are passionate about gardening and a place for trying something new that you might not have in your garden. Many also accept food stamps and WIC. For a complete list visit www.massfarmersmarkets.org (also available in Spanish and Portuguese)

Name	Address	Hours
Fitchburg-Burbank Campus Farmers Market	275 Nichols Rd	Mon. and Wed. 11:00—4:00 07/11—10/26
Fitchburg Farmers Market at Riverfront Park	Riverfront Park, 40 Commercial	Thu. 3:00—7:00 07/7—10/28
Sterling Farmers Market	Town Hall, 1 Park Street, Rte 12, Sterling Common	Fri. 3:00—6:30 05/27-10/30
Gardener Farmers Market	Monument Park along Park St.	Thu. 8:30 - 12:00 Fri. 3:00-6:00 05/05-10/28
Lancaster Farmers Market	Lancaster Fairgrounds, Rte. 117	Thu. 3:00-6:00 07/07-09/29