



Hello Gardeners!

What wonderful rain with which to start off the weekend! Not only are vegetable plants looking refreshed and rejuvenated, but the birds are as well, twittering songs of delight at all the fresh puddles. It is a nice respite from the heat of the week.

We hope you are enjoying all the wonderful produce from your garden and maybe even trying some of our recipes to share with friends and family. In this issue you will find some unexpected recipes that can help control pests and other problems with your plants. Be sure to check them out and have fun experimenting!

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...

- Eat what's ready now!! Be on the lookout for these crops that might be ready to harvest - peas, swiss chard, broccoli, lettuce, kale, and collards. Refer to the *Growing Guide* for the specifics on harvesting each type of vegetable.
- Use those herbs! The more you harvest, the more they will produce.
- Remove tomato suckers from your salad tomato plants. Now that your tomatoes are established and growing, you should look for tomato suckers growing at a 45 degree angle above a branch from the stem. These suckers can grow out to be additional main stems and if you are staking your plants, you should remove these suckers so only one main stem remains with all the plant growth going into fruit production. Just pinch them between your thumb and forefinger, and discard them.



Tomato "sucker" that needs to be pinched off!

Tips for a Better Garden...

- Remember to thin plants to the appropriate number per square. Try snipping at the base of the plant with scissors or fingernails, or transplanting a plant that is too close into a different location with more space. Crops that have enough space grow correctly and will produce more vegetables. If you clip seedlings, be sure to add those clippings to your salad or use in cooking!
- Keep up with the weeding for happy, healthy plants.
- Remove any plants that are done producing and put them in your compost pile. Don't forget to plant a new square of something else!
- Water early and water deep...don't just wet the top of the soil on these hot days of summer. The roots will begin to reach up instead of down and will exhaust the plant. Also try to focus water to the soil, not the tops of the plants.
- Pinch back the top stem and leaves of herb plants to encourage fuller, bushier leaf production. Also always pinch off any blossoms!

What is Bolting?

You may have been reading an article that said to watch out for a plant bolting. But, if you are unfamiliar with the term, bolting may seem like an odd term. After all, plants don't generally run away, which is the typical definition of bolt outside the gardening world.

But, while plants do not "run away" physically, their growth may run away rapidly, and this is basically what the phrase means in the gardening world. Plants, mostly vegetable or herbs, are said to bolt when their growth goes rapidly from being mostly leaf based to being mostly flower and seed based.

Why do plants bolt

Bolting is a survival mechanism and is primarily due to hot weather. When the ground temperature reaches a certain high, this flips a switch in the plant to produce flowers and seeds very rapidly and to abandon leaf growth almost completely. The plant is simply trying to produce the next generation (seeds) as quickly as possible. Some plants that are known for bolting are broccoli, cilantro, basil, cabbage and lettuce.



Can you eat a plant after it bolts?

Once a plant has fully bolted, the plant is normally inedible. The plant's entire energy reserve is focused on producing the seeds, so the rest of the plant tends to become tough and woody as well as tasteless or even bitter.

Occasionally, if you catch a plant in the very early stages of bolting, you can temporarily reverse the process of bolting by snipping off the flowers and flower buds. In some plants, like basil, the plant will resume producing leaves and will stop bolting. In many plants though, such as broccoli and lettuce, this step only allows you some extra time to harvest the crop before it becomes inedible.

Preventing bolting


Planting some crops late in the summer so that they do most of their growing during the cool, early fall helps prevent bolting. This works especially well with lettuce and spinach. You can also add mulch and ground cover to the ground, as well as watering regularly, in order to keep the soil temperature down.


(Excerpted from www.gardeningknowhow.com)


Gardening Prescriptions


Do-It-Yourself remedies for common challenges in the garden


(from Diane, a seasoned Growing Places mentor)

 Epsom Salts are great for increasing the magnesium levels in the soil that aid in the production of fruit, specifically tomatoes and pepper. Using 1 Tbs per plant, scatter the salts around the base and scratch into the soil. You can do this before a rain, or water it into the soil yourself. You can also use this as a liquid fertilizer spray for the leaves of the plant by mixing 1 Tbs per gallon of water. I prefer the scratch method, as it is much faster! Epsom salts are also very good to use on rose bushes! Greens up the leaves and assists in a longer bloom time.

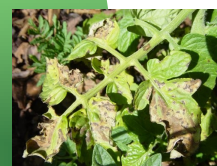
 In this heat, you may see some whitefly, aphids or spider mites on beans, cukes, and eggplant. Mix 1 Tbs dish liquid with 1 gallon of water and spray the leaves early in the morning or in the shade. Make sure to spray under the leaves as well as on the tops.

 If you see powdery mildew (a whitish powder on the leaves of plants) try this: Mix 3 Tbs baking soda and 1 tsp. dish liquid with 1 gallon of water and spray. Repeat in a couple of days.

 If you have cabbage worms, flea beetles, caterpillars, even japanese beetles...make up a batch of BUG JUICE!

In a container, add 6 cloves of garlic, 1 Tbs cayenne pepper, 1 onion (minced), and 1 tsp dish liquid into 1 gallon of  HOT water. Let this sit for two days. Strain and spray this on the leaves when they are slightly damp; early AM is best.

Diane also recommends watching your tomato plants for any lower leaves that are yellowed and black spotted. She says remove them immediately and dispose of in the trash, NOT in your compost pile. "This is a fungus and you don't want to spread it."



Recipes...

Brown-Buttered Broccoli

(From Vegetarian Planet, by Didi Emmons)

- 1 small bunch broccoli, cut into long-stemmed florets
- 1/4 cup butter
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice (from about 1/2 lemon)
- Salt and black pepper to taste

- Steam the broccoli until it is just tender, about 7 to 9 minutes
- While the broccoli steams, heat the butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Let the butter bubble until it turns a dark golden color, then promptly take it off the heat and add the lemon juice.
- When the broccoli is tender, transfer it to a bowl, and add the butter-lemon mixture. Toss the broccoli, and season it with salt and pepper. Serve right away.

Serves 4

Did you know that broccoli is a '2-for-1' vegetable? Not only can you eat the flower heads, but you can also harvest and eat the young, beautiful, deep green broccoli leaves! Two crops for the effort of only growing one!!



Cooking with leaves

(Adapted from an article by Chef Nancy Berkoff, RD, EdD, CCE)

Before fine china or paper plates, there were leaves. Edible leaves have long been used as containers and wrappers for sweet and savory fillings. Green cabbage, kale, swiss chard and romaine leaves are a culinary tradition.



Edible leaves make a wonderful insulator for cooking food. Leaves seal in moisture and nutrients, yielding hot, flavorful dishes. Some leaves, such as cabbage, kale, and romaine influence the flavor of the food cooking in them, while others remain neutral.

The secret to cooking with leaves is to soften the leaves sufficiently so they are pliable and can be rolled. However, they shouldn't be so soft that they don't hold up to cooking. Cabbage leaves, kale, and Swiss chard can be frozen or steamed to achieve roll-ability.

Rolled, filled leaves can be cooked in stovetop steamers, requiring little attention. If you prefer to steam them in the oven, add enough sauce or broth to keep them covered while cooking, or the leaves will become dry and the filling will not cook evenly. If you feel the need to fasten your rolled leaves, use uncoated kitchen string or colored toothpicks.

Garden Spotlight

A Sensational Selection of Salad greens
in Fitchburg!



Look at all that Ismael has done with his garden!

Not only are his raised beds overflowing with
beans, beets,
tomatoes, herbs and
more...



But he has
built a
wonderful
gate for his
garden.