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Hello Gardeners!

Is something eating your vegetables besides you? Are you finding chewed leaves, tiny holes and other signs of unwanted visitors in your garden? In this issue you will find information about who it might be and what you can do about it.

We hope you are continuing to harvest and enjoy all sorts of delicious produce from your garden. You are all doing your part to be environmentally conscious citizens! By growing your own food (or buying locally), you are helping to save resources, promote healthier lifestyles and become more self-reliant. Keep up the good work!

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!! Watch for these **new** crops that might be ready to harvest - carrots, green beans, cucumbers, onions and summer squash. Refer to the *Growing Guide* for the specifics on harvesting each type of vegetable.

- Be on the lookout for these pests in your garden!
Cabbage Looper - A green caterpillar with 2 white lines down its back. The can get up to 1.5 inches long and are found primarily on plants that are members of the cabbage family (broccoli, cabbage, kale, collards). They chew holes in the leaves of plants. Hand-pick them off the plants and drown in soapy water.



- **Cucumber Beetle** - This bug is about 1/5" in length, yellow with a black head and 3 black stripes on its back. The spotted version is about 1/4 inch long, yellow with a black head and 12 black spots on its back. They are found mostly on cucumber, squash and melon plants. They chew on the flowers, foliage and rinds of ripening fruit. They can also transmit bacteria that cause the plant to wilt and die. Hand-pick them off the plants and crush.



Look in your *Growing Guide* for more information on **Pest Control!**

Tips for a Better Garden...

- Make sure tomatoes are safely supported in the event of a summer thunderstorm. (see Issue 2 of the newsletter for the article about staking tomatoes)
- Keep up with the weeding for a disease and pest free garden.
- Pull out bolting lettuce plants and plant more under tomato plants
- Plant a fall crop of broccoli from seed.
- Mulch around the base of your plants with a thin layer of grass clippings, leaves or straw to help retain moisture and keep the soil cool.
- Remove plants that have finished producing to discourage yucky pests and disease. Plant something else in the newly vacant square!
- Did your spinach bolt along the stem like this one? Heat, dry soil and lengthening days encourage bolting. This variety of spinach (called 'Matador') has medium-large, smooth green leaves, perfect for salad mix or young greens. Sow later in the summer for a fall crop.



Powdery Mildew

Powdery mildew is a fungal disease that results in a powdery gray or white coating on the leaves and stems of infected plants. It starts out as a few spores on the leaves, and quickly spreads, eventually yellowing the leaves and causing premature leaf drop. Besides being unattractive, powdery mildew results in leaf yellowing and droppage, stunted plant growth, distortion of buds, blooms, and fruit, and eventual overall weakening of the plant.



Prevention is the best medicine

The best way to take care of powdery mildew is by preventing it. Follows these simple steps:

- Be sure to start with healthy plants.
- Prune back any dead plant material. Inspect plants regularly during warm, dry conditions, and remove any leaves that show signs of infection. Destroy (*do not compost!*) infected plant parts.
- Don't plant things too close together to allow ample air circulation around the plants.
- Avoid using sprinklers in the evening, so the water doesn't stand on the leaves too long. The water itself doesn't cause more mildew, but it does allow it to be transported to other leaves on the plant more easily.



Keep your earthworms happy!

Earthworms feed during the cool of the night and a light sprinkling of corn meal on the surface of the soil can promote rapid reproduction. Organic items such as coffee grinds and well-chopped vegetable and fruit scraps that come from preparing a typical meal, lettuce stems, potato and banana peels, apple cores, melon rinds, would be welcome nutrients for earthworms. Please remember to cut scraps into small pieces or put them through your composter first.



Check it out! You can read more about earthworms and compost at the local library!

What Makes Tomatoes Turn Red

It can be a frustrating thing to have a tomato plant full of green tomatoes with no sign that they will ever turn red. As frustrating as the waiting may be, you will be glad to know that there are a few things that can either speed up or slow down how fast a tomato turns red.

The main determiner in how fast a tomato turns red is the variety. Smaller fruited varieties will turn red faster than large fruited varieties. This means that a cherry tomato will not take nearly as long to turn red as a beefsteak tomato. The variety will determine how long it takes for a tomato to reach the mature green stage. Tomatoes can not turn red, even forced by modern technology, unless they have first reached the mature green stage.

Another factor in determining how long it takes for a tomato to turn red is the outside temperature. Tomatoes will only produce lycopene and carotene, two substances that help a tomato turn red, between the temperatures of 50F and 85F. If it is any cooler than 50F, those tomatoes will stay a stubborn green. Any warmer than 85F and the process that produces lycopene and carotene comes to a screeching halt.

Tomatoes are triggered to turn red by a chemical called ethylene. Ethylene is odorless, tasteless and invisible to the naked eye. When the tomato reaches the proper green mature stage, it starts to produce ethylene. The ethylene then interacts with the tomato fruit to start the ripening process. Consistent winds can carry the ethylene gas away from the fruit and slow the ripening process.

If you find that your tomatoes fall off the vine, either knocked off or due to frost, before they turn red, you can place the unripe tomatoes in a paper bag. Provided that the green tomatoes have reached the mature green stage, the paper bag will trap the ethylene and will help to ripen the tomatoes.

(Excerpted from www.gardeningknowhow.com)

Why are my bean blossoms falling off with no pods?

High temperatures – When the temperatures are high (normally above 85F), bean flowers will fall off. The high heat makes it difficult for the bean plants to survive and it will drop its blossoms in an effort to keep itself alive.

Not enough water – Much like when the temperatures are too high, bean plants that receive too little water are stressed and will drop their blossoms because they must focus on keeping the mother plant alive.

Not enough sunlight – Bean plants need 5-7 hours of light to produce pods and 8-10 hours to be able to produce pods well. A lack of sunlight could be caused by improperly locating the plants or by planting the bean plants too close together.



Recipes...

Broccoli with Pine Nuts and Raisins

(From Debra's Natural Gourmet, Blue Ribbon Edition)

4 C broccoli florets, green	1/4 C raisins
beans or zucchini, or any combination of these	3 T apple cider vinegar
	1 T chopped garlic
1/4 C pine nuts	1/2 tsp salt
3 T extra virgin olive oil	1/2 tsp black pepper

- Cook the veggies so they are bright green and still crisp by steaming or blanching. When vegetables are done, place in a colander and run under cold water to stop cooking. Set aside.
- Heat a large skillet and toast pine nuts for a couple minutes, stirring to prevent burnt bottoms. Add oil and toast nuts to a medium brown, another 2 minutes. Add the raisins, cider vinegar, and garlic. Stir while cooking yet another 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and season with salt and pepper. Spoon contents of skillet onto your cooked veggies and toss. Serve immediately. *(Serves 4-6)*



Glowing Salad

(From Debra's Natural Gourmet, Blue Ribbon Edition)

1 fresh pineapple, cubed	1 C juice like orange or mango
1-2 large carrots	
1 apple, halved and	1 C raisins
1 medium red beet, trimmed and halved	4 romaine lettuce leaves

- Cut pineapple and put in bowl. Scrub carrots, apple, and beet. Trim but don't peel. You want the vitamins contained in the peel in you and not in the compost pile!
- Coarsely grate the carrots, apple and beet. Add to pineapple in bowl together with juice. Using a rubber spatula, mix salad well so you don't have clumps and so the whole salad is rosy. Chill, covered, in the refrigerator about 1 hour before serving. Spoon onto romaine leaf to serve.

Note: Beets are high in iron. They not only enrich blood, they cleanse the system!

Garden Spotlight



In Fitchburg, first and second year gardeners work side by side, to grow fresh, healthy vegetables.



They have complemented their raised beds by planting additional crops in containers, lining the walkways with newspaper and mulch, and even experimenting with unique planting arrangements!



Working Together

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Things to Remember

Before leaving for vacation, be sure to visit

<http://www.massfarmstands.com/>

for information on where to find roadside stands, pick-your-own farms, and local produce in the area where you will be.

Think LOCAL!



Summer 2011
Canning Seminar
Schedule

Peggy Corbett, a competitive canner who provides canned goods to local shops will put on a number of canning classes at Central Mass Agway this the summer.

All classes are 4-6pm.

Chelmsford	July 22nd & August 19th
Gardner	July 14th & August 4th
Lancaster	July 21st & August 8th
Littleton	July 11th & August 18th

Visit <http://www.centralmassagway.com> for store directions.

A cauliflower is a cabbage with a college education.

~ Mark Twain