



Hello Gardeners!

This week I think we are all breathing a sigh of relief; Hurricane Irene has passed and thankfully most of us remained relatively unscathed. With it, though, seems to have arrived the winds of change. There's a taste of Autumn in the air, a reminder of things shifting, changing direction. With the arrival of new routines and schedules, there comes that period of adjusting as we prepare to begin a new journey.

We're pleased to announce that Joanne Foster has joined Growing Places Garden Project as executive director. Joanne brings more than 20 years of leadership and management expertise and has helped advance several important missions in North Central Massachusetts. We believe Joanne is a great choice to lead Growing Places through a new period of growth at a time when our mission is critical to so many families in need. Please join me in welcoming Joanne to the organization!

Your Friends at Growing Places

What's Happening...

- Be sure to check daily for produce that is ready to harvest. Watch for carrots, green beans, cucumbers, onions, summer squash, tomatoes, kale, cauliflower, beets and more!
- Continue to water garden though not as much as in August. Cooler weather means less water—but not no water!
- **Squash bug nymphs** can be found running around your squash plants at this time of the year. They are small grayish insects that are often found on the leaves of squash, pumpkins, cucumbers and melons. You can handpick them and destroy them. Place a board on the ground near your plants and check underneath in the morning. Dump nymphs into soapy water.
- Be on the lookout for slugs in the garden! Slugs will eat any kind of vegetation but prefer tender leaves. They thrive in a high moisture environment and can be found hiding under almost anything in your garden including tall weeds and rotting plants! Remove from the garden and destroy.



Tips for a Better Garden...

- Pull out plants that have stopped producing to discourage rotting and prevent pests from making a home.
- Plant another square or two of lettuce, radishes, and spinach for fall crops.
- Weed, weed, weed - Yes, it is still important to weed. Right now the crabgrass seed heads are maturing and just waiting to toss themselves all over your garden so they can grow next year.
- Continue to harvest kale, collards, Swiss chard. They become sweeter as the weather cools. Roughly chop and freeze to add to soups and stews during the winter for extra vitamins.

Don't know what to do with extra leeks or onions that won't keep? Donna's aunt says - "simmer them in chicken broth, cool, and freeze. Use the broth later for leek and potato soup, or strain for a delicious stock."



Melons!

Oh so delicious! Oh so hard to wait for! And oh so tough to tell when they are ready to pick. Melons create a mystery all their own with their small globes that become huge sometimes overnight. We know it's hard to wait for them to be perfectly ripe, but they taste best that way.

Here are some growing tips:

- Don't water melons as frequently as your other plants. Giving too much water now can cause cracking or a bland taste.
- Remove any flowers from the vines. This will redirect the plants' energy towards ripening the remaining fruits instead of trying to grow new ones (there aren't enough days left in the season for these flowers to mature fully into melons).
- If you have melons growing up a trellis and are concerned about them falling off, you can create a sling for them from old pantyhose or socks.
- All the melons on a single plant will ripen at about the same time
- After harvest, refrigerate muskmelons (such as cantaloupe) to preserve sweetness. Honeydew and watermelon can be stored in a cool humid spot out of direct light. But remember, they won't keep long so eat as soon as possible and enjoy!

And some harvesting tips:

For most melons (except watermelon), the fruit is ripe when the rind changes from gray-green to yellow-tan. The fruit is still firm, but can be fairly easily separated from the stem with gentle thumb pressure.

It's a bit harder to tell when **watermelons** are ripe.

The following 3 methods are pretty popular:

- 1) the tendril nearest to the fruit turns from green to brown;
- 2) the underside of the melon where it sits on the ground is yellow;
- 3) tapping it lightly produces a low-pitched "thump" instead of a high-pitched "ping".



A few tidbits...

You can grill most summer vegetables (even tomatoes). Just cut them and brush them with a little oil and grill them while you grill other things.



Here are some tips for preparing:

- Slice squashes lengthwise about ½ inch thick, 1-2 minutes per side.
- Cut large tomatoes crosswise in the middle and grill cut side down until outside is wilted.
- Cut sweet peppers into quarters or grill sweet or chili peppers whole. Turn them until the skins are blackened all the way around.

Put peppers in a paper bag for 5-10 minutes and then peel off the skin. Remove seeds and stems and enjoy the meaty, smoky walls in salads and sandwiches



Did you know?... Some fruits and vegetables emit ethylene gas as they ripen. This gas accelerates the ripening of other fruits and vegetables stored in the same place.

Produce that emits ethylene:

Apples, Avocados, Bananas, Melons, Peaches, Pears,
Plums, Tomatoes

Produce that absorbs ethylene:

Beans, Carrots, Cucumbers, Eggplant, Leafy Greens,
Peas, Peppers, Potatoes



Don't lose your tools!

We all know that we should put our tools away each time we use them, but sometimes we don't and they end up lost. You will be less likely to lose track of your tools outside in the yard or inside your house if you wrap a strip of brightly colored cloth or plastic tape around their handles.

Recipes...

Chocolate Beet Cake

3 medium beets	1 tsp vanilla extract
1 C light olive oil, plus extra for coating the pan	2 C all-purpose flour
3/4 C maple syrup	3/4 C cocoa powder
3/4 C honey	2 tsp baking soda
3 eggs	1/3 tsp salt

- Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat a 10-cup bundt pan with oil and dust with flour.
- Wash the unpeeled beets thoroughly and cut into quarters. Steam them until tender, then grate with a cheese grater. Grate each quarter down to the peel, then discard the peel. You should have about 2 C of grated beets. Place in a colander and allow the beets to drip while preparing everything else.
- Combine the oil, maple syrup and honey. Stir until well blended. Add the eggs, one at a time, and beat until fluffy. Add the vanilla extract.
- Sift the flour into a large bowl. Whisk in the cocoa, baking soda, and salt. Gently stir the flour mixture into the batter, until it is just mixed. Don't overmix or the batter will start to rise before it is in the oven.
- Squeeze the beets to get out as much moisture as possible then fold into the batter mixing gently.
- Pour into pan and bake for about 45 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool for 30 minutes before removing from pan.



Dried Plum Tomatoes

1 C olive oil	1 tsp salt
6 plum tomatoes	3-4 sprigs fresh basil

- Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Coat the bottom of a baking sheet with olive oil. Place a wire rack on top.
- Cut tomatoes in half lengthwise. Place pieces, skin side down, on the rack. Be sure pieces do not touch. Sprinkle with salt and bake for about 6 hours (until deep red color—do not allow them to crisp).
- Remove from oven and allow to cool. Place in jar with basil, cover with oil and store in refrigerator.

Garden Spotlight



A hard working group of seniors in Sterling has created an abundant "Garden of Latin"!



Towering bean plants



And so much more!!



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Growing Places Garden Project, Inc.

P.O. Box 17

Clinton, MA 01510

(978) 598-3723



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P.O. Box 17
Clinton, MA 01510

Things to Remember

Guided Hikes: Fruitlands Museum
Every Saturday @ 3 pm

Knitting Night: Harvest Café, Hudson
1st and 3rd Thurs. 7 pm

Join Growing Places, local farmers, and local businesses at the Riverfront Park Farmer's Market in Fitchburg. Activities for kids, music, and fun! Thursdays, 3 - 7 pm



Farmer's Markets:

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
Gardner 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