



# GROWING TIMES

## HELLO GARDENERS!

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Clean as You Harvest	2
Tips for Weeding and Harvesting	2
Planting for a Fall Harvest	2
Chris' Eggplant Stacks	3
Heat, Weeds and Mulch, Mulch More	3
Tower Hill Veggie Competition	4

The back-to-school commercials would have you believe that summer is already over, but we'd encourage you to look to your lush, mature garden as a more reliable gauge of the season.

We're in the midst of high summer here in planting zone 6a, and this is when some of the heaviest gardening work needs to be done. Now that your warm crops have reached their maturity, they need regular harvesting, weeding and inspection for pests and diseases in order to keep the garden clean and healthy.

Of course, while there is always plenty to do, there's no sense

in doing more than you have to, so in this issue we bring you tips with an eye toward prevention.

Thorough mulching, as recommended in *Mulch, Mulch More* will save you time weeding. The good garden hygiene prescribed in *Clean as You Harvest* will prevent the spread of disease and save you the effort of some urgent garden first aid.

It is our hope that in saving yourself a little work, you'll earn yourself a little time to appreciate the benefits of your garden, maybe by cooking up some of *Chris' Eggplant Stacks*.

As always, if you have



*Sunflowers at Sundial Community Garden*

questions, especially about fall plantings or pest ID, ask your mentor or call one of us in the office. We're here to help.

Happy Gardening!

**YOUR FRIENDS AT GROWING PLACES**

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### VEGGIE WRAP-UP

- DECAYING PLANT MATERIAL FOSTERS DISEASE, SO CLEANING AS YOU GO WILL KEEP YOUR GARDEN HEALTHY.
- TO PRACTICE SUCCESSIVE PLANTING, SOW SEEDS OR PLANT TRANSPLANTS NOW FOR A FALL HARVEST.
- MULCH, SUCH AS NEWSPAPER, GRASS CLIPPINGS, OR STRAW, IS AN EASY, INEXPENSIVE WAY TO CUT DOWN ON WEEDS

## GARDEN SPOTLIGHT: DONNA AND JACKIE

Riverside Community Garden in Leominster has a dynamic mother-daughter gardening duo in Donna and Jackie! Donna came to Growing Places out of a desire not only to garden for herself, but to share the experience with her children. This season she's found her partner-in-crime in her 8-year-old daughter, Jackie, who has been enjoying helping mom harvest plenty of broccoli, summer squash,

zucchini, cucumbers, and tomatoes.

Although Donna came into the GP program with some gardening experience of her own, her mentor Karen praises her willingness to learn new skills and tackle challenges, like squash vine borers, which she successfully removed from her squash plants with Karen's guidance.

Keep up the great work!



*Donna's daughter Jackie, showing off their fresh summer squash!*

## CLEANING AS YOU HARVEST



*Has your first crop of peas or beans finished producing and begun to dry? Remove them from your garden and replant now for a fall harvest.*

**"A CLEAN GARDEN IS A HAPPY GARDEN!"**

As harvest season gathers speed it is sheer delight to spend a morning in the garden gathering the day's sun warmed bounty. As you collect each mature vegetable and herb it is also important to consider what you are leaving behind – is the plant done producing for the season, does it look healthy, is there any reason to leave it in the garden?

If the plant is done producing for the season, remove it in its entirety from your garden. Place the plant material in your compost pile or other location, as far from the garden as possible so as not to attract critters to the garden. By cleaning up spent plants, weeds, and other garden debris, you eliminate hiding places for many pests and diseases. In addition, this will make room for the succession

planting of new crops such as lettuce, radishes or greens.

If there are still more yummy vegetables to be harvested from the plant, inspect it for signs of disease or pest damage. If it looks healthy, leave it there to bask in the sun and continue to grow and mature. If it shows signs of being damaged by pests or plagued by sickness refer to your Growing Guide or contact your mentor for details for each individual vegetable. If it is not salvageable, remove it from your garden and dispose of it in the trash (not your compost pile!).

A clean garden is a happy garden!

*- Contributed by Donna M.*

### HARVESTING

- After harvesting tomatoes, store them for up to a week at room temperature. Refrigeration will ruin their flavor.
- Harvest your eggplant when it is 6-8" long. Larger fruit will get overripe and seedy.
- Cucumber vines will continue to produce if harvested regularly, but pick the fruit in the morning to avoid bitterness.
- Select male squash blossoms just about to open, found on the end of stems, not on the end of the squash.

## PLANTING FOR A FALL HARVEST



*Sugar Snap Pea blossoms*

Cooler weather and shorter days of fall make it a more ideal planting season than spring, as long as an early frost doesn't spoil everything. Peas, spinach, broccoli, cauliflower and greens can all be planted in August for harvest in September and October. Harvesting can even extend

into winter with root crops.

When seeding in late summer, plant your seeds a little deeper than you would in the spring, to take advantage of cooler soil and moisture. Shading the newly planted seeds and seedlings will help protect them from the summer sun.

Mulch, row covers and taller plants, like your mature tomatoes, can be used for this.

Thinking about starting some fall crops? Prepare the soil now that was previously used by another crop. Add a couple tablespoons of bone meal or

(continued on page 4)

## CHRIS' EGGPLANT STACKS

1 eggplant, peeled and cut into 1" thick slices  
 1 egg, beaten  
 1/2 cup milk  
 bread crumbs, seasoned  
 3 tbsps. olive oil  
 2 tomatoes, thickly sliced  
 1 red onion, thinly sliced  
 2 cups mozzarella cheese

Can be served with angel hair pasta and a salad or as an open-faced sandwich with French bread.

*Traditional Cooking Method:*  
 Preheat oven to 350°. Combine egg and milk in a shallow bowl. Dip eggplant slices in beaten egg and milk mixture and then into seasoned bread crumbs. Heat olive oil in frying pan. Brown eggplant lightly on both sides. Drain on paper towels. Then place on cookie sheet and bake for 3-5 minutes in a 350° oven. This completes cooking.

*Low Fat Cooking Method:*  
 Using stove-top grill or outdoor grill, brush each eggplant slice lightly with oil. Place on grill and brown lightly on both sides.  
*To Assemble Stacks:* With the eggplant slices arranged on a cookie sheet, layer each slice with tomato first and then with red onion. Top with cheese. Place in oven to heat and melt the cheese.  
 — Contributed by Chris L.



*Janet's first eggplant! At about 7" long it was perfect for picking.*

## HEAT, WEEDS, AND MULCH, MULCH MORE

This summer's heat and humidity may have wilted your plantings and kept you out of the garden long enough for the weeds to get a step ahead of you, but there's still time to save the season and even prepare for your fall plantings. The answer? Mulch.

Mulch is a thick covering of material used around plants to block weeds and help hold moisture in the soil. It comes in many forms, including biodegradable black plastic sold by many garden centers, along with assorted kinds of wood chips. But mulch doesn't have to be expensive. An inexpensive, effective mulch barrier can start with something as simple as newspaper—yes, newspaper!

Today's newspapers (black-and-white pages only) use soy inks, and as such are safe to use in your garden. You can usually get stacks of them for free at newspaper outlets, which are often eager to get rid of outdated issues. Organic toppings for a newspaper base can include a thick layer of leaves, hay, or straw. If mulch hay is an option for your site, there are many local farms that sell it quite inexpensively—for as little as \$4 a bale.

Before applying any mulch, you do need to tackle those weeds. Be sure to pull them from all around the plants you want to protect, clearing a generous 8 to 10 inches around each one. Water well before applying mulch.

To use the newspaper option:

- Separate the paper into quantities of two to four pages each.
- Soak each section well with water.
- Place soaked papers around plants, leaving a 1-inch gap all around the base of the plant for water to get easily through.
- Immediately cover with a thick layer of organic matter to hold the paper in place after it dries.

- Contributed by Lynda K.

**TRY MULCHING WITH DRIED GRASS CLIPPINGS – A CHEAP, EASY, AND ORGANIC OPTION. LAYER THINLY TO PREVENT THE GRASS FROM GETTING MATTED OR SLIMY.**



*Cover a lightweight newspaper base with an additional layer of organic material to hold it in place.*

*Photo credit: Bloominthyme.com*

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## PLANTING FOR FALL (CONT'D)

a vegetable fertilizer such as Espoma Organic. Turn the top three to four inches of soil. Reseed with any of these fall crops:

- Arugula
- Beans
- Beets
- Broccoli (Transplants)
- Brussels sprouts (Transplants)
- Cabbage (Transplants)
- Carrots
- Cauliflower (Transplants)
- Kale (Transplants)
- Leeks (Transplants)
- Lettuce
- Mustard greens
- Peas
- Radishes
- Spinach
- Turnips



*Broccoli grown by our newest staff member, Mo!*

— Contributed by Gaynor B.

## TOWER HILL BOTANIC GARDEN

We know our Growing Places gardeners are harvesting some **great** vegetables this season. Why not show them

off at Tower Hill's *Summer Flower and Vegetable Show*? Cash prizes are being awarded for the top entries and amateur gardeners are encouraged to participate.

Don't feel like competing? Take advantage of Tower Hill's current Groupon and enjoy the show with a friend at a discounted rate (\$13 for admission and beverages for two, \$27 for admission and beverages for four).

For details about the show, visit: [www.towerhillbg.org](http://www.towerhillbg.org) or call 508.869.6111. The gardens are located at 11 French Drive in Boylston, MA.

