

# LATE SPRING

**W**e got off to a slow start in Central MA this spring. We may still be wearing sweatshirts in the garden on some days, but take heart because the cooler temperatures will keep our cold crops happy. In particular, our lettuces, peas and greens will likely produce a better crop.

We have had a couple of days where the temperatures spiked suddenly; however, we have had less rainfall than usual. So keep careful watch over your new transplants and, when watering, check to see that at least the top few inches of soil are wet. I usually pull up one of my wooden labels to check that I am watering deeply enough. This can take a few minutes, but be patient, be consistent and get your garden off to a good start. Remember also to water gently. If you are using a hose to water your raised beds, make certain that you are using a showerhead attachment or, if you don't have one, place your thumb over the end of the hose to make a gentle spray. You should not be drilling holes into the soil!

Remember to take your Growing Guide out to the garden with you. Each vegetable has its own page of helpful information and there are also blank pages at the back to jot down questions for your Mentor or notes to yourself. We recommend that you use the blank square foot grid to plan your garden so that you remember to place tall plants, like tomatoes, or climbing plants, like beans and peas, where they will not shade your other vegetables. As your garden grows, try to think about using each square effectively. For instance, you can sow lettuce seeds near your already growing lettuce so that as you harvest leaves, a new lettuce can grow in its shadow. Remember also, that on page 53 of the Growing Guide, there is a plant compatibility chart which will help you to choose good neighbors for each raised bed.

If you have recently planted your seeds, it's vital to keep those squares moist at all times. On hot days this means watering them morning and early evening. Seeds last for months, sometimes years, before planting, but the moment they become wet, swell enough to split their skin and begin to send out roots and shoots, they are vulnerable. If they dry out once they have sprouted they will die. If you're nervous about the soil drying out, don't be afraid to get creative. One gardener came up with an ingenious system using a coffee can with a small hole drilled into the bottom. He made several of these cans and raised one above each square on three little rocks and filled them with water so that they dripped water all day! Submitted by Gaynor Bigelbach

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**Companion Planting** | 53

**Vegetable Guide** | 22

## IN THE GP LENDING LIBRARY

Square Foot Gardening | Mel Bartholomew

High-Yield Gardening: How to get more from your garden space and more from your gardening season | Marjorie Hunt & Brenda Bortz

## MORE ON WATER CONSERVATION

[WaterUseItWisely.com](http://WaterUseItWisely.com) | [100 Ways to Conserve](#)

[Golden Harvest Organics](#) | [Companion Planting](#)