








GROWING TIMES

Growing Places Garden Project, Inc.

THE WEATHER:

FROM WWW.WEATHER.COM

Monday	83° high/ 58° low	
Tuesday	76° high/ 51° low	
Wednesday	76 high/ 52° low	
Thursday	75° high/ 58° low	
Friday	79° high/ 63° low	
Saturday	79° high/ 64° low	
Sunday	82° high/ 63° low	

HELLO GARDENERS,

Well, late summer has arrived, so the beans, tomatoes, squashes and cucumbers that really like the heat are thriving! We hope you are enjoying the adventure of going to your gardens to see what might be ripe for the picking and eating – and stopping for a snack or two while there is certain to delight the taste buds! Maybe those trips will give you new ideas for lunch and suppertime meals.

Continue to pick and harvest your vegetables (we've included more hints in this newsletter) to make sure your gardens remain productive. Otherwise your plants will think they've done their job and stop making delicious things for you to eat. Got too much food to consume? Consider canning or freezing some as well as sharing with family, friends and neighbors. It's always a great feeling to share and also be able to say "...and I grew it myself!"

And please remember, if you are uncertain about whether or not something is ready to eat or what is going on in your garden, please give Cindy or Kate a call. We are here to help.

Cindy and Kate

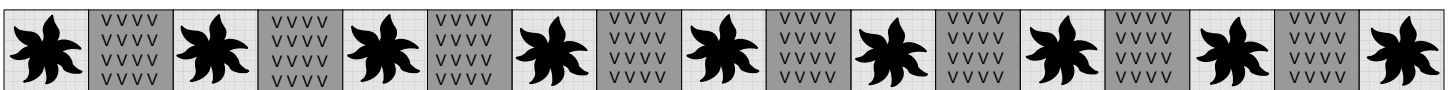
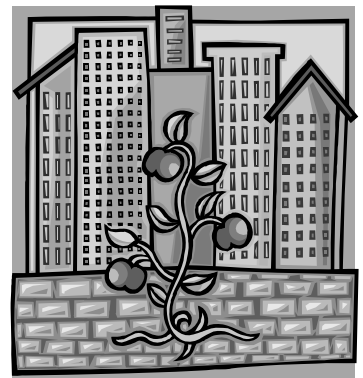
TO DO THIS WEEK:

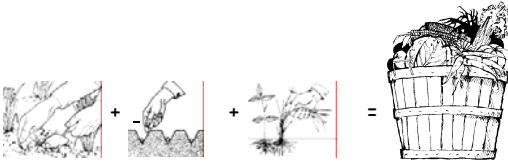
- ✓ Plant another square or two of lettuce, radishes, and spinach for fall crops
- ✓ Remove any rotting or decaying plants or vegetables from the garden - they will just attract pests and disease
- ✓ If squash plants have stopped producing, pull them out, place in trash bags and throw away – this will help to destroy any bugs on the plants so they can't hide in your garden this fall and eat your new crops next summer
- ✓ Make a list of what you liked to eat and grow so you can remember to plant it next year

GETTING YOUR TOMATOES TO RIPEN

Due to cooler temperatures, many of the tomatoes are taking a long time to ripen. Here are a few things you can do to help the plants focus their energy on ripening the fruit that is there:

- Pick some of the not yet totally ripe tomatoes and put them inside the house where they will continue to slowly ripen. The tomatoes remaining on the plants should ripen more quickly.
- Strip off the bottom leaves of the plants.
- Remove some or all of the flowers on the plant so that it focuses on ripening the fruits that are already there.
- In late September and early October, remove the hard small green fruits that will not have enough time to ripen before the first frost.





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Recipe: Ratatouille

Here we are at the high point of gardening season! But now that it's here, all the vegetables seem to ripen at once, and we can sometimes end up wondering just what to do with the glut of summer produce. Ratatouille to the rescue!

Ratatouille ("rat-a-too-y") comes from the Provence region of France. It's really just a fancy French word for a stew of vegetables (especially eggplant, tomato, and garlic, traditionally) cooked slowly together in a little bit of olive oil. You don't really need a recipe to make your own ratatouille. Here is the basic idea.

First, prepare your vegetables. If you're using a large eggplant, cut it into thick chunks first, sprinkle some salt on each chunk, and let it drain in a colander over the sink for about 45 minutes; this "sweats" any bitterness out of the eggplant. (A lot of people peel the tough skin, too — but neither of these steps is required with the smaller Japanese-style eggplants.) Now chop all the vegetables into 1" pieces. Use whatever you've harvested, but to give you an idea, you might try: 1 eggplant, 2 zucchini, 1 bell pepper, 1 large onion, 3 cloves of garlic, and 6 tomatoes. Sauté all but the tomatoes in 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-high heat for about 5 minutes; then add the tomatoes (along with some fresh basil and oregano from your herb garden) and simmer over low heat for about 20 minutes, or until all the vegetables are tender and the mixture thickens a bit.

Congratulations! You are now a fancy French cook! You can make a large batch of ratatouille and use it all week: serve over pasta with a little Parmesan; or dollop it on top of French bread slices, toasted under the broiler until bubbly (top with slices of sharp Cheddar cheese for a four-star grilled cheese sandwich); or use it as a bed for steak or pork chops. You get the idea — put it on anything but your ice cream! If by chance there is still some ratatouille left over, you can freeze it in containers for those winter months when we're only dreaming of gardens.

MORE HARVESTING HINTS

We gave you some hints on harvesting a few weeks ago, but other great crops are ready to eat now. Here are some more hints on when and how to harvest these!

- ◆ 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".
- ◆ When about half of the top of an **onion** falls over and is turning brown, it's time to harvest. Gently pull your onions from the soil and leave them to cure for about 1 week in the sun. When the tops and skin are dry and crinkly, clip the tops about 1" from the bulbs and store in a cool dry place.

- ◆ **Winter squash** can be harvested when the stems begin to shrivel and dry and the skin is hard enough so you can't cut it with your thumbnail (pumpkin skin can remain soft even when ripe, though). Cut the squash off the vine and be sure to leave at least 1-2 inches of stem on each squash so that it stores better. If possible, cure in the sun for about 10 days after picking. Store in cool dry place — they can keep for several months!
- ◆ Harvest **cauliflower** when the head is tight and regular and the curds have not begun to separate. Remove from the stem with a knife.
- ◆ Cut off **cabbage** head any time after it reaches the size of a softball; they can grow larger but are more tender and tasty at this stage. Cut with a knife (sometimes more heads will grow from the cut stem).

