



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 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. There are many good resources at your local library – *Ball's Blue Book* is one of these; the internet is another. 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 us a call. We are here to help.

Your Friends at Growing Places

What's Happening...



- Keep training those tomatoes! If they are taller than your trellis and higher than you can reach, you may want to make the executive decision, "Off with their heads!" They will make more branches and tomatoes.
- There's always something to make with zucchini! Check out our recipe section for a new idea.
- If you have an empty square (or one that should be), get something new in there. It's not too late to direct seed more salad greens, cooking greens, spinach, bush beans, radishes, beets (soak the seeds overnight to give them a "jump-start"), cilantro or carrots.
- Continue scouting for insects. You may see pale colored moths such as this fluttering over the garden.



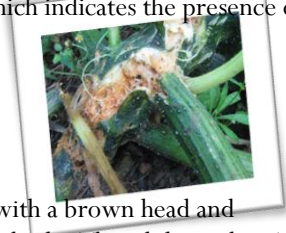
The moth is the adult form of the cabbage looper, a caterpillar. Keep your eyes peeled because those moths are looking for a place to lay their eggs, which when hatched become voracious eaters of YOUR beautiful produce. The cabbage looper feeds on a variety of crops, consuming the foliage and is considered one of the most destructive insect pests of vegetables.

(See your Growing Guide for solutions to this pest.)

Tips for a Better Garden...

- Keep watering the garden – a good deep watering three times a week is better than a little every day.
- Weeds... with all this sun and the recent rain (yay!!) the weeds are very happy. Your plants will reward you in a bountiful harvest if you continue removing the weeds from their growing spaces.
- Pick herbs for fresh use and for drying. Harvesting will keep them growing longer.
- Harvest cauliflower when the head is tight and regular and the curds have not begun to separate. Remove from the stem with a knife. 
- Harvest your garlic if you haven't done so yet (*see Issue 3 of the newsletter for details*) – think of a new space in your garden if you plan to plant more this fall.
- Make a list of what you liked to eat and grow so you can remember to plant it next year.
- 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. On sunny, breezy days, onions may be pulled and left in the garden for a day or two to dry before they are taken to a warm, well-ventilated area to thoroughly dry. When the tops and skin are dry and crinkly, clip the tops about 1" from the bulbs and store in a cool dry place. 

- The squash vine borer is another nasty insect you may encounter this time of year on pumpkins and squash. Evidence of the insect appears as wilting even if the plant has had enough water. Check the base of the plant for a hole that is filled with a yellowish material that resembles sawdust which indicates the presence of borers chewing.



The larva are 1 inch long with a brown head and wrinkled white worm-like body. The adult moth is 1 1/2 inches long and looks like a wasp with a red body and black wings. Tiny dull red eggs are laid in late spring on the base of the plant, on the underside of leaves or near the base of the stem, larva emerge and bore into the stem of the plant. With a sharp knife, slit the infested stems lengthwise above the hole, find and destroy the borers.



Cool as a Cucurbit

Did you know that squash, melons, pumpkins, and cucumbers are all in the same family – called cucurbits? Moreover, did you know that these plants produce two different kinds of blossoms? One, called the “male” produces pollen that fertilizes the “female” flower.



The male flowers appear at the end of a long stalk from the main stem and are the first flowers that you will see on the plant.

Female flowers build the fruit after fertilization. They usually fall off before the fruit is ripe.

Female blossoms are found close to the main stem and often have a recognizable “baby” squash (or melon or cucumber) at their bases.



There are many ways to eat cucurbit blossoms – stuffed, sliced in salad, or fried. Pick the males in the late morning after they open and leave the females to make cucurbit fruits.

Preserving Your Herbs

Drying is the easiest method of preserving herbs. Simply expose the leaves, flowers or seeds to warm, dry air. Leave the herbs in a well ventilated area until the moisture evaporates. Sun drying is not recommended because the herbs can lose flavor and color.

The best time to harvest most herbs for drying is just before the flowers first open when they are in the bursting bud stage. Gather the herbs in the early morning after the dew has evaporated to minimize wilting. Avoid bruising the leaves. They should not lie in the sun or unattended after harvesting. Rinse herbs in cool water and gently shake to remove excess moisture. Discard all bruised, soiled or imperfect leaves and stems.

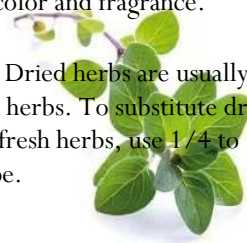
Gather 5 to 8 stems together and tie them into a bundle. Place them into a brown paper bag with the stems extending out of the open end. Hang the bag in a dark, warm place (70°F to 80°F). It will take from 2 to 4 weeks for your herbs to become completely dry, depending upon temperature and moisture.

Tray drying is another method used most often for short stemmed herbs or for individual herb leaves. An old window screen or smaller drying trays fashioned from 2” x 2” lumber and screening will work well. By placing spacers at the bottom of each tray, the trays can be stacked to allow good air circulation and to take up a minimum of space. Keep the trays in a warm, dark place until the herbs are thoroughly dry. Once emptied, store the trays in a clean place until the next time they are needed.

An ordinary gas or electric oven can be used for quicker drying of herbs. To oven dry, place the leaves or stems on a cookie sheet or shallow pan and warm at no more than 180°F for 3 to 4 hours with the oven door open.

When the leaves are crispy dry and crumple easily between the fingers, they are ready to be packaged and stored. Dried leaves may be left whole and crumpled as used, or coarsely crumpled before storage. Place herbs in airtight containers and store in a cool, dry, dark area to protect color and fragrance.

Dried herbs are usually 3 to 4 times stronger than the fresh herbs. To substitute dried herbs in a recipe that calls for fresh herbs, use 1/4 to 1/3 of the amount listed in the recipe.



(Excerpted from the National Center for Home Food Preservation and the Illinois Cooperative Extension Service)

Recipes...

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:

- You can 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.
- Prepare your vegetables. Wash and remove any stems (beans), or peels (onions) 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.
- Now chop all the vegetables into 1" pieces.
- 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.

Garden Spot Light



Our highlighted garden this week belongs to Bill in Stow. Earlier this growing season Bill's garden was pillaged by the repeated, uninvited visits of, not one, but two woodchucks! With the aid of a camera taking time lapse images and the installation of custom designed barrier fencing, Bill was able to cut off their access into the garden and rescue the remainder of his crops.



As you can see from the pictures, with all of Bill's hard work and dedicated care, the garden was able to rebound and he is enjoying a bountiful harvest. He has even planted a new crop of peas for the fall to replace what turned out to be the woodchucks' favorite!



Growing Places on the web

Our Website:

www.growingplaces.org

Friend us on Facebook



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[@GrowingPlaces](https://twitter.com/GrowingPlaces)

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you want to get more involved in Growing Places Garden Project? Contact us at staff@growingplaces.org to learn more about our volunteer opportunities.

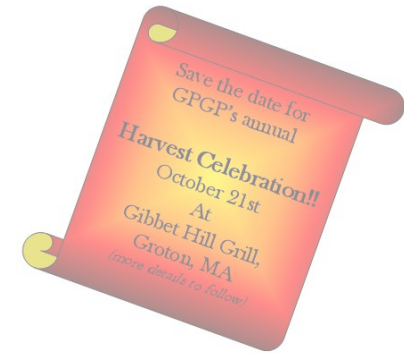
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Things to Remember



Canning Resources...

Interested in preserving your summer harvest for the long, cold winter ahead? Look for these informative books at your local library for details on preserving, freezing, pickling, curing and more...

- **Putting Food By**
by Greene, Hertzberg, and Vaughn
- **Preserving Summer's Bounty**
by Rodale Press



Home grown and preserved fruits and veggies make wonderful holiday gifts!



Don't Forget...

"The fair-weather gardener, who will do nothing except when the wind and weather and everything else are favorable, is never master of his craft."

Henry Ellacombe