GROWING TIMES

Growing Places Garden Project, Inc.

THE WEATHER:
FROM WWW.WEATHER.COM

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TO DO THIS WEEK:

- Thin lettuce and radish seedlings. Toss washed thinnings into your salad.
- Grab and dispose of slugs, “the enemies of the garden.”
- Weed every day! Do a little at a time.
- Water towards the end of the week, earlier if rain doesn’t come.
- Direct sow spinach, lettuce, radish, and carrots for a continuous harvest. (See ‘Succession Planting’ on back.)

WELCOME TO THE NEW SEASON!

By now you have received your new garden and some seeds or seedlings are already planted. We have really enjoyed building them for you and hope that we can work together through the growing season to produce some really terrific vegetables and herbs for you to enjoy.

We will be stopping by regularly to check the progress of the beds and introduce new seeds and plants if necessary. We would like to work with you directly as much as possible and will make every effort to let you know when this will take place. After all, we want you to learn how to take care of your garden so that you will be able to do this for yourself in the future. We have both found raising food for our families to be very rewarding and hope that you will, too.

Because we can’t see every one of you each week, we’re sending you this newsletter to keep you up-to-date on what’s happening. We hope you’ll read it carefully and find the information useful. We also recommend that you hold onto each issue so you have something to refer to when you have questions later.

Please feel free to call us with any questions or concerns you have. There is no such thing as a stupid question. We are here to help you make a success of your garden. Here’s to a “fruitful” 2004!

Cindy and Kate

FIRST CROPS: SPINACH AND RADISHES

Hopefully it won’t come as too much of a shock that the tomatoes aren’t ready to pick yet. Tomatoes — as well as many other vegetables — need hot weather to thrive. We probably won’t even see tomato blossoms until the end of June, and they won’t be ready to pick until early August. Weather permitting, as always!

The first crops you’ll find are those that prefer cool weather. But don’t worry, there are plenty! Radishes grow fast, and you’ll be able to pick some about 30 days after you sow them. (Note that the green tops can be washed and stir-fried.) Also keep your eye on leafy greens: instead of pulling out the whole plant, you can trim off leaves for a fresh salad or stir-fry every day.
RECIPE: Sausage Soup with Kale

Kale is one of the leafy greens you’re likely to harvest from your garden this time of year. It likes to be cooked until tender (some people boil it for a minute before sautéing with onion and olive oil), and makes an ideal addition to soup.

1 pound Andouille sausage, cut into bite size pieces
1 small red onion, diced
1 small green bell pepper, diced
2 ribs of celery, diced
2 cloves of garlic, diced fine
1 tsp red chile flakes
6 stalks of kale, cut into 1” strips
2 quarts turkey or chicken stock
1 TBS olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat the oil in a saucepan over medium heat. Just as the oil starts to smoke, throw in the onion, bell pepper, celery and stir the pan, keep stirring for 2 minutes. Then add the Andouille sausage [or try some chorizo or other spicy sausage], and cook until the sausage starts to brown around the edges and give up some of its fat to the pan. Add the garlic and chile flakes and cook for 2 minutes more, stirring constantly. Add the kale and stir till coated by everything in the pan. Add the stock and bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer for 20 minutes. Check seasoning and adjust with salt and pepper. (Recipe from www.fooddownunder.com.)

Have another recipe you enjoyed using kale or any other garden vegetable? We’d love you to share it! Please e-mail us at staff@growingplaces.org.

Succession Planting Extends Your Harvest

Isn’t it such a treat to start harvesting those tasty vegetables? If you have the feeling that you’d like this harvest to never end, you can plant again in an empty square. Then in a few more weeks, you’ll have a new crop ready. This is known to gardeners as succession planting. Here’s how:

1. Start with an empty square. It’s okay if the square is empty because you’ve just harvested something from it.
2. Dig in a little compost — eggshells or old leaves are good if you don’t have any composted kitchen scraps at hand.
3. Plant more lettuce (for example) in an empty square. In fact, you could plant more lettuce every two weeks so that you could enjoy it throughout the summer.
4. Also try more spinach. (Although it prefers cooler weather, so you might want to wait until August.) Bush and pole beans are another good choice for June. Bush beans will give a good crop that lasts about two weeks — so if you plant a square (9 seeds) of bush beans every two weeks, by the time one crop is finished, another will be ready to harvest.
5. Remember, as the weather gets hotter, it will be more and more important to keep those tiny seedlings moist.
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KEEP UP THE WEEDING AND WATERING!

You have now all received plants and seeds from GPGP, and we suspect that your gardens are starting to look like something other than boxes of soil! We hope that many of your squares are filling up with green seedlings. If you planted seeds earlier in the spring and you have not seen them all come up, don’t worry; just plant new seeds in the vacant spots.

Now that warmer and sunnier weather has arrived, it’s very important to keep your plants watered and to remove weeds from the beds. Weeds take vital water and nutrients that your plants need to grow well. See below for information on the how-to’s of watering.

If you have any questions about what is happening in your garden, please give us a call. The sooner we know about your question, the sooner we can help to answer it. We may not have the answer right away, but we’ll do our best to find it quickly. Also, your questions can help us to figure out what to discuss in the next issue of the newsletter. If you have a question or a problem, it’s likely that other gardeners are concerned about the same problem.

Cindy and Kate

TO DO THIS WEEK:

✓ Plant another square or two of bush beans for a continuous crop.
✓ Thin carrot seedlings to about one inch apart.
✓ Keep picking your peas. Otherwise the plants will slow down production.
✓ Stake your tomatoes. (See article on back.)
✓ Keep up with your weeding – the more you do now the easier it will be later!
✓ Plant radishes around your squash, melon and cucumber plants. Radishes help to keep squash bugs away!

WATERING: WHEN, HOW...AND WHY

Your vegetables need sun and water in order to grow properly. You can’t control how much sunshine we’ll have this summer, but you can certainly help with the water. When a plant doesn’t get enough water it stops growing. The plant will begin to grow again once water is available, but the crop it produces may be smaller and less tasty.

- The best time of the day to water is early in the morning. Early evening is also a good time. If you water in the middle of the day when the sun is strongest and the temperature is hot, more water will evaporate and less will stay in the garden.
- Water at the base of the plant, not the leaves. Plants take up water through their roots. Also, wet leaves are likely to spread disease.
- Water your greens and root plants (for example broccoli, spinach, lettuce, carrots, radishes) frequently — every other day or so with ½ - 1 cup per root plant and ½-1 cup per greens plant.
- Water your fruiting plants (for example tomatoes, peppers, beans, squashes) deeply 2-3 times a week. We suggest 2 - 4 cups per fruiting plant.
Recipes: Dressing Up Those Fresh Salads

One joy of having your own vegetable garden is being able to prepare a unique salad for dinner almost every evening, with the absolutely freshest ingredients possible. Most people expect to find lettuce, carrots, and radishes in their salads, but you can also add your peas and green beans — so sweet when they come right from the garden. And with all that freshness happening, you might want to try making your own salad dressing, too. Here are two simple recipes from Country French Cooking, by Jerry Anne DiVecchio.

**Housewife’s Dressing:** Mix 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard, 1 tablespoon minced shallot or red onion, 3 tablespoons wine vinegar, and 1/2 cup olive oil until blended. Makes 3/4 cup.

**Dordogne Dressing:** Mix 3-4 tablespoons wine vinegar, 1/2 cup salad oil or walnut oil, and 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped walnuts until blended. Makes 3/4 cup.

Using these recipes as a base, you can experiment by substituting lemon juice or other flavored vinegars (such as cider or Balsamic) for the wine vinegar. But to let the fresh vegetables shine through, don’t “drown” your salad in dressing. Toss a few tablespoons into your salad just before serving. Leftover dressing can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days, as long as it’s brought back to room temperature before serving.

It’s not too early for: Staking Tomatoes

Those of you who have tomatoes should also have a set of stakes. Late in the season, tomato plants become so large and heavy that they fall over and their fruit is damaged. There’s nothing worse than seeing a tomato eaten away by bugs just because it was touching the ground. But tying the plants will help prevent that.

If you have metal spiral stakes, twist the center stem of the plant around the stake as it grows. You can also tie the plant to the stake if you want, but it’s not really necessary. If you have wooden stakes, you will want to tie the main stem of the tomato to the stake very loosely with strips of soft rags, old panty hose or very soft string. (If you tie the plant stem too tightly to the stake, the tomato will not be able to grow properly.) Those of you with tomato cages don’t need to worry about staking.

Your tomato plants also want a healthy main stem, which focuses the plant’s energy on growing big, juicy tomatoes. To make sure your plants don’t run wild, now is the time to start pinching suckers off each tomato plant. In warm weather, you’ll want to do this twice a week.

Suckers often form at the intersection between the main stem and a side branch. If they are less than 4 inches long, suckers can be pinched off by hand at the base, which helps produce larger tomatoes earlier. Do not use a knife as this can spread disease; use your fingers. If a sucker is more than 4 inches long, don’t remove it since it will leave a fairly large wound that the plant must heal. You can pinch the end of a long sucker back to the first two leaves (Missouri pruning, see the picture).
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SUMMER BOUNTY—AND TOO MANY SLUGS

We find that life in the garden speeds up in July. Crops start to grow more quickly in the warmer weather and water races down from the sky in bursts. When the rain comes down as fast as it did last week, it doesn’t always penetrate the soil very well. Check your garden soil with your finger; it should be slightly moist about 2 inches below the surface.

Several gardeners have reported that they have eaten their first heads of broccoli. Peas and scapes (see below) have been plentiful in our gardens. We also hope that you will be enjoying your first tomatoes and peppers by the end of the month.

We have found that the reports of pests in your gardens have sped up as well. You probably think that we are obsessed with slugs, but they are highly destructive in the garden. Slugs are hard to find during the day because they come out and eat at night but they do leave some clues: slimy trails on plants and relatively large holes with irregular edges on the leaves.

Here are some tricks to defeat slugs, from Oregon State University. **Beer traps:** Slugs are attracted to yeasty odors. To make a beer trap, cut a 2-inch hole about two-thirds up the side of an empty margarine tub, tuna can or plastic yogurt container. Bury the container so the hole is just above ground. Add 2-3 inches of beer (or a mixture of 1 tablespoon (Tbl) yeast, 1 Tbl flour, 1 Tbl sugar, and 1 cup water) and cover with a lid. Remove dead slugs daily — you might want to use a spoon.

**Trap crops:** Slugs love to eat marigolds. Plant marigolds along your garden’s border and hand pick slugs and dispose of them in late evening — aren’t you glad that there were gloves in your gardening kit?

_Cindy and Kate_

NEW CROP: GARLIC SCAPES

Like tulips and daffodils, garlic and onions are bulbs — but only garlic and onions are edible. There are two major types of garlic — hardneck and softneck. Only hardneck garlic makes a flower. When garlic is ready to bloom it produces a wonderful snake-like green shoot with a flower bud at the end. If you don’t remove this bud, the plant will put its energy into making the flower bloom, and the garlic bulb you pull from the ground in the autumn will be small, not plump like the ones you find in the grocery store.

Fortunately, garlic buds or “scapes” are tasty. They have a sweet, mild garlic taste. Just snip off the stalk with the bud and use it the way you would use a scallion or in a recipe in place of a clove of garlic. We have also provided a recipe for garlic scapes in this newsletter — enjoy!

If your garlic doesn’t make scapes, don’t worry — just snip a few leaves and use them like scallions. If you would like to grow garlic and eat scapes next year, just let Cindy and Kate know.
Recipe: Garlic Scape Pesto

Here’s a recipe that will help you use up all your garlic scapes (see front page for a description). “Pesto” is nothing fancier than “paste” in Italian. Once you make up a batch, you can use it all week.

Chop 1/4 pound of the scapes into chunks. (Approximately 10-14 scapes, depending on their length.) Blend them in a blender or food processor along with 1/2 cup of olive oil. Pour into a bowl and mix in 1 cup fresh grated parmesan cheese.

Spread this pesto on bread and broil to make garlic bread, or use it as a dip with fresh vegetables. Or toss on pasta along with other herbs from your garden. It’s also great spread on homemade pizza. (You can use a Boboli or refrigerated pizza dough from the grocery store if you don’t want to make your own dough.)

Garlic Scape Pesto also makes a base for a vinaigrette salad dressing, similar to the ones in last week’s newsletter. Combine 1 tablespoon pesto, 3 table spoons white wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon snipped fresh parsley, and 1/2 cup olive oil in a jar and shake to blend well. Serve over your own home-grown salad greens.

The Squash Bugs Are Coming!

Unfortunately, this is the time of the growing season when squash bugs and squash vine borers start laying their eggs on your squash plants: summer and winter squashes, pumpkins, and to a lesser extent cucumbers and melons. You want to destroy these as soon as you find them. Both these bugs can do damage to your plants, the vine borer being the most destructive of the two.

The eggs of both bugs are about the size of a pin head and are orange-brown in color. The squash bug eggs will be found in regular clusters on the underside of the leaves. The vine borer eggs are found individually on the stems near the base of the plant or on the tops and undersides of the leaves. Handpick or use a tweezers to remove the eggs; destroy them by crushing the eggs or collecting them in a jar and then flushing them down the toilet.

If you notice your squashes starting to wilt even if they’ve had enough water, check the base of the plant for a hole that is filled with a tan sawdust material. Call us, or you can do the following: slit the infested stems with a knife and destroy the borers (fat white worms about 1 inch long). Cover the damaged portion of the stem with soil and keep the soil moist to encourage new roots to grow.

If you don’t find the hole, be on the look out for squash bugs. Laying a board on the ground near your squash will cause them to congregate there overnight and they can be captured during the cooler part of the day and crushed, or drowned in a jar of water with a little cooking oil added to it.
Hello Gardeners,

Our next issue will come in two weeks, since Cindy will be visiting her family and Kate will be away next week. We hope that you won’t mind the gap. Remember that the Growing Guide we brought you at the beginning of the season is full of helpful information.

The crops we will discuss this week are chard, beets and beet greens. Picking the outside leaves of beets and chard will provide you with a continuous crop of delicious greens for steaming, frying or salads. See below for tips on harvesting beets.

Some of you have also said that insects are eating the leaves of your crops. We have included a recipe for a soap-based spray that you can use to protect your plants. Remember those spray bottles you use for keeping your seedlings moist? You can use it for the spray. Just remember to rinse it out afterward.

We apologize for the quality of the photos in our newsletters. It’s not the fault of Anna, our editor. It’s just that Cindy and I don’t have the right software on our computers yet. We promise to have the problem fixed soon. Meanwhile if you have any comments, questions, or recipes (!!!!) you want to share, please let us know.

Enjoy!

Cindy and Kate

New Crops: Chard and Beets

Chard and beets are like cousins and come from a large family of related plants. The major difference is that chard does not produce the bulbous root that beets do. Both of them have delicious, nutritious greens, carrying more than 100% of your daily requirement of Vitamin A. You can pick the outer leaves of beets or chard when they are 8 to 10 inches tall. You can also cut the entire chard plant at about 1½ inches above the ground. The chard will grow back. Don’t do this with the beets, however, or they won’t have the energy to produce a nice round root.

Sometimes beets will push themselves out of the ground a bit while they are growing. Just bring some of the surrounding soil up around them like a blanket. Beets are ready to harvest when they are about 1 to 2 inches across. For most adults that’s the width of 3 to 4 fingers held together. You can let beets grow bigger, but they won’t be as tender. To harvest, gently push away the soil from the base of the greens to expose the root. If it’s nice and round and it’s big enough, you can pull it out of the soil by using the base of the greens as a handle. If it’s still too small, just bring the soil back around it.

Now you can enjoy the beets and the greens. Just remember that they will both be tastier if you use them on the day of harvest. If they stay on the counter or in the refrigerator too long they will lose their crispness.
Recipe: Wilted Beet Greens Bruschetta

A lot of New Englanders don’t eat many greens — except maybe spinach — until they start growing them in their own gardens. Some people take to it right away, but for others, the idea takes a bit of getting used to. If that’s the case for you (or your kids) you can disguise the greens in egg dishes like quiche or omelettes, or on homemade pizza, smothered with lots of cheese. Even if it was “love at first sight” for you and greens, this is a fun recipe for piling up your garlic bread with greens and cheese.

Chopped beet greens or Swiss chard (about 12 leaves, depending on size)*
3 TBS oil
1 crushed garlic clove
1/2 tsp crushed red pepper flakes
Salt, to taste
2 tsp lemon juice
1/4 C thinly sliced onion
Shredded cheese to top — parmesan, cheddar, or asiago
1 sliced baguette or French bread loaf

Heat oil, add onions, and cook until soft. Add garlic, pepper flakes and greens. Cook until greens are thoroughly wilted. Sprinkle with lemon juice. Place warm greens on top of bread slice, top with cheese, and enjoy! (Adapted from a recipe on www.indianchild.com.)

*Remember to wash greens well by swishing them in a sinkful of cold water.

Last Resort for Bad Bugs: Insecticidal Soap

So just how do you keep those nasty chewing beasties off of your plants?! Handpicking and destroying is the most organic method, but here is a basic insecticidal soap recipe you can make to combat some of them:

**Basic Insecticidal Soap:**
1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon pure liquid soap
(Ivory is a good one – you want to make sure it has no additives that will damage the plants)
1 quart of water (size of your sprayer bottle)
Mix together and use. Start with lower amount of soap and adjust the strength to maximize pest control and minimize plant damage.

Soap has been used for centuries as an all-purpose pesticide. It disrupts insects’ cell membranes, and kills pests by dehydration. **The key is not to use too much soap, or you’ll also kill the vegetation near the pests.** If you follow the proportions given above, the vegetation should be fine.

**When spraying, follow these guidelines:**
♦ Test on a small area of the infested plant first to see if it affects the plant; if all is ok after a full day then continue using – if not, remix using less soap.
♦ Do not spray during the hottest and brightest time of the day – early morning and early evening are best; plants are more susceptible to damage when it’s hot and sunny.
♦ Spray all surfaces of the plant (stem, tops and bottoms of leaves).
♦ Reapply after rain (or watering if you get the leaves wet) since it will wash off. But don’t reapply more than 3 times.

As with anything, use this sparingly and only if you have a plant with a major problem. This will not be effective against all the bad bugs and it can destroy the beneficial bugs that eat the bad bugs – something you don’t want to do!
HELLO GARDENERS,

We enjoyed visiting your gardens these last few weeks. I don’t think that we’ll ever get over the joy of seeing the abundance of summer that emerges from the tiny seeds and seedlings of spring. This spring and summer have been cool, so many of the plants in our gardens are a bit “behind schedule.” We did notice that many of you are already seeing zucchini and beans. We suspect that tomatoes may have finally arrived also. Please see the crop report below on the summer squashes: zucchini, yellow and pattypan. Many people also eat their squash blossoms – but not the ones with the baby squashes attached.

For those of you with tomatoes, it’s important to keep track of your watering patterns. If tomato plants get too little water, they wilt. If they get too much, the ripe tomatoes will split. Also, slugs (yes, slugs again) love to eat tomatoes. If you notice ragged holes or tunnels in your ripening or ripe tomatoes, be sure to check your slug traps.

The days of late July and August are just wonderful times to be in your gardens and snacking. The ripe cherry tomatoes, freshly picked green beans, the last of the sugar snap peas, lettuce leaves, and broccoli florets are so delicious. We usually eat them before we can bring them inside.

Cindy and Kate

NEW CROPS: SUMMER SQUASH

Zucchini and summer squash (straight yellow, crookneck and pattypan) are wonderful vegetables that have many uses. It’s important to make sure to check the plants regularly; Kate has had zucchini grow into baseball bats seemingly overnight.

You can harvest zucchini and other summer squash pretty much at any time. For the very smallest squashes, it’s easiest to cut the stem with a knife. For larger vegetables just twist the squash or zucchini gently, the stem should break easily.

Several insects like to eat squash and plants, including slugs (yes, they’re everywhere), squash bugs and squash vine borers. There are descriptions of these pests in your previous newsletters, but here is a quick review.

Adult squash bugs are usually gray brown and have shield-shaped bodies. Young squash bugs are gray and teardrop-shaped. The adults lay clusters of shiny yellow-orange eggs on the undersides of the leaves. If you see these eggs, remove and crush them. The squash vine borer is a moth caterpillar. It often leaves damp sawdust-like material at the base of the squash stem and can cause most of the plant to wilt. If you see this, slit the stem lengthwise as gently as you can and look for plump white grub-like caterpillars inside the stem. Scoop them out and “squash” them. The stem will often heal itself if you gently cover it with soil and keep the soil moist.
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What To Do with All That Squash

What you do with your squash depends most on its size. The smaller they are, the more tender they will be. Tiny ones can be sliced and put into salads raw, or roasted or grilled whole. There are many ways to use medium-sized squash: cut into long slices and grilled, grated for quick breads, cut in chunks and steamed, pureed for soup…

Now, if you do end up with a “baseball bat,” don’t panic. Just remove it from the plant (cutting the stem with a serrated knife would be best), cut it in half long-way and remove the seeds. You now have a shell that you can rub with oil, stuff with tomatoes, corn, and grated cheese and bake at 350° for 35-45 minutes. Or you can grate the whole thing and make zucchini bread. Grated squash can also be frozen in bags for later use. (One of our clients last year had enough to make bread every week!) Or try this “Green and Gold Squash Casserole.”

1 medium onion, chopped
2 TBS olive oil
2 medium zucchini, grated
2 medium yellow summer squash, grated
2 TBS fresh parsley, chopped
1/2 tsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp ground black pepper
1/2 tsp salt
3 eggs, beaten (or egg substitute)
1 C cracker (or bread) crumbs

In a large skillet, sauté the onion in oil until soft. Add the squash and sauté until
much of the moisture disappears, about 15 min. Remove from heat and stir in
seasonings, eggs, and cracker crumbs. Blend well and place in a greased 9” casse-
role. Preheat oven to 325°. Top squash with grated cheese and bake in preheated
oven 45 minutes.

(From The Big Book of Preserving the Harvest, by Carol W. Costbender, 1997.)

Harvesting Hints

Harvesting is just what we are looking forward to when we do all this planting, but sometimes it’s hard to tell when something is ripe. Each fruit/vegetable is unique, but there are some basic guidelines that you can follow for telling when and how to pick:

♦ Try to harvest from the plants when they are dry – it reduces the spread of disease.
♦ For most vegetables, it is better to cut the vegetable from the plant with a sharp knife instead of pulling it off the plant – pulling can cause damage to other parts of the plant and possibly reduce production.
♦ Beets, radishes and carrots: check size with finger by gently digging around the top of the vegetable. Harvest when carrots and radishes are about 3/4-1” around and beets when 1½ - 2½” around.
♦ Lettuce, swiss chard, kale, collards, spinach:

harvest outer or lower leaves when they are a size you like to eat (smaller will be more tender).
♦ Beans should be about the thickness of a pencil and 4-6” in length.
♦ Broccoli: cut off head at the stalk when it is the size of your fist or bigger, harvest immediately if yellow flowers appear; side shoots will continue to grow but will be smaller.
♦ Cucumbers should be about 4-6” long. They grow quickly so check vines often.
♦ Peppers can be used green when they are the size you like, or you can wait until they are fully ripe and are red (or purple or yellow).
♦ Eggplant: harvest any time after they reach about half their mature size.
♦ Tomatoes: harvest when skin yields slightly to finger pressure and tomato twists off vine easily.
♦ Enjoy the bounty!!!
Hello Gardeners,

While out making garden visits, we have noticed that some vegetables grow really well in some gardens and not as well in others. This happens in our gardens also. We both live in the same town but Cindy’s broccoli grows much better than Kate’s does, and Cindy’s kale lasts well into December. Kate has better luck with eggplant and peppers. There will even be rain at one of our houses but not the other’s. Differences in light, dampness, wind, and temperature — also known as microclimates — occur everywhere. They can make a difference even within one garden.

Midsummer is a great time to observe microclimates when you are out in your garden. Shadows cast by trees and buildings will be easy to see. What is growing well and what isn’t? Are any of your plants leaning over trying to get more sunlight? Is it usually windy in your garden? Maybe there are ways to change your planting pattern next year so that your tomatoes will get more sun or your lettuce will get more moisture. You may want to try new crops next year or you may decide that you are satisfied with the way crops are growing. You are the experts on your own gardening conditions. If you can make a quick sketch (or take a photo) of your garden as it is now or as you would like it to be, try to do it this week. By next year, your memory of this year’s garden may be a bit blurry.

Newsletters next week and the week after will be devoted to pictures of your gardens and loads of recipes. We hope that you enjoy them.

Cindy and Kate

New Crops: Tomatoes and Beans

Tomatoes are starting to ripen — yummy! There is nothing like eating a tomato fresh off the vine. Try it! If you also like basil, just take a leaf off a plant, pop it and the tomato into your mouth — delightful! Tomatoes generally start ripening from the bottom up with the shoulders of the tomato being the last to ripen. Pick the fruit when the skin yields slightly to finger pressure (or when it falls off the vine into your hand when checking!). Tomatoes require a good amount of water during their growing season but once they start to ripen, you need to cut back on the amount. Too much water will cause your tomatoes to split. The key, however, is to be consistent with your watering and make sure your plants don’t suffer from major dry spells followed with a flood of water.

Beans are starting to flourish at this point. The warmer weather has given those crops that require it a shot in the arm and beans are one of them. The best thing you can do for your green (or wax or soy) beans is to keep them picked – that way they will continue to produce. Pick them when they are young and tender and before the seeds have begun to swell in the pod. Only pick them when the plants aren’t wet so disease doesn’t develop or spread. They can be stored in the refrigerator in plastic bags for about 1 week but you might want to share some with a friend or neighbor if you get inundated!
Beans are liked by a variety of bugs including cucumber beetles, Japanese beetles and Mexican bean beetles. These can all be hand-picked and drowned in a jar of soapy water. Try to do this in the early morning since they tend to be a bit sluggish at this time.

Tomato hornworms get very large – 3-4 inches long and about the size of your finger; they have excellent camouflage – a light green color with white and black markings and a horn on its bottom. You can find them hiding under the foliage or blending in to a stem. Once you find one it will be much easier to spot any others. Sometimes you can even hear them chewing if you listen closely. Pick them off the plant and drop into a jar of soapy water. If you find one with clusters of small white eggs on its back it’s best to leave it alone. Those eggs are from a parasitic wasp that will destroy the hornworm and then look for others to parasite.

TIME TO DO THE GARLIC

When ¾ of the tops of the garlic that you planted last year have yellowed, it’s time to harvest. Check a single bulb by digging gently around it to loosen the soil, and then remove the entire plant. Try not to bruise or nick the bulbs, as they will not store as well. Bulbs should be well segmented and cloves easy to separate – if not they need to grow a bit longer.

Once you have dug them up, brush off excess dirt and spread plants in a single layer on a screen or paper (or tie into bundles to hang) in a warm, dry, airy location out of the sun. After 2-3 weeks, when the bulbs are completely dry (outer skins are paperlike), remove roots and tops leaving 1” of stem. Be sure they are completely dry: improperly dried bulbs will sprout. Store in a mesh bag (old onion bags work well) in a cool, dry location and use them as needed – delicious!

Garlic is used in all kinds of cooking, from Italian to Asian, with vegetables, bread or meat. The smaller a clove of garlic is chopped, the stronger it will be; and the longer it’s cooked, the milder it will be. So crushed raw garlic is the strongest, and slow roasted whole cloves are the mildest. If you’re worried about “garlic breath,” chew some fresh parsley along with your meal. And a little lemon juice will get rid of the smell on the cook’s fingers. Here’s a quick and easy recipe from www.garlic-central.com. Use it on everything from bread to baked potatoes.

**Garlic Cheese Spread:** Whir in a food processor the following ingredients: 8 ounces feta cheese, 8 ounces soft cream cheese, 1-2 tablespoons plain yogurt (less for a thick spread, more for a vegetable or chip dip), 4 cloves of crushed garlic (adjust to your taste). That’s it! Store in an airtight container in the fridge.

**MEET THE BEETLES!**

These enemies of beans are (below, left to right): Mexican bean beetle, cucumber beetles — both spotted and striped, and the shiny Japanese beetle.
Hello Gardeners,
So many vegetables – so little time. We hope that you have been able to enjoy the summer’s garden goodies so far. Here are some of the ways we enjoy them best. As we have said before, please send us your own recipes too. We would love to share them with other GPGP gardeners.

Cindy and Kate

BLENDED BASIL PESTO FROM KATE’S MOTHER
This is wonderful on cooked pasta, grilled vegetables, or as a base sauce for homemade pizza. If you don’t like or can’t eat nuts, use pumpkin or sunflower seeds instead.

Ingredients:
- 2 cups fresh basil leaves (lightly packed)
- ½ cup olive or vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts or walnut pieces
- 2 cloves garlic (lightly crushed)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ cup parmesan cheese
- 3 tablespoons softened butter

Preparation:
1. Put basil, oil, nuts, garlic and salt in blender, blend until smooth; see Note below.
2. When blended, beat in the grated cheese by hand.
3. Beat in the softened butter

Before spooning over pasta, at about 1 tablespoon of the hot water in which the pasta was boiled.

Note: Pesto can be frozen! Just put the blended basil, oil, nuts, garlic and salt into ice cube trays and freeze for about 4 hours. The pesto cubes can be stored in plastic bags and kept until you need a taste of summer. Add the rest of the ingredients after thawing.

CARROT TOP SOUP
This recipe is for those of you who have trouble thinning your carrots. You can use the greens and baby carrots in this recipe in addition to fully-grown carrots. Anyway, this soup is delicious.

Serves 4, adapted from Local Flavors, Cooking and Eating from America’s Farmers’ Markets by Deborah Madison.

Ingredients:
- 1 bunch (6 small to medium) carrots, the tops and the roots
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter or oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped dill, parsley, or celery leaves
- 2 sprigs thyme
- Salt and pepper
- 6 cups vegetable stock, chicken stock or water

Preparation:
1. Pull or pluck the lacy leaves of the carrot greens off their stems. You should have between 2 and 3 cups, loosely packed. Wash, then chop the greens finely. Finely chop or grate the carrots.
2. Melt the butter (or heat the oil) in a soup pot. Add carrot tops and carrots, rice, leeks, thyme and dill. Cook for several minutes, turning everything a few times, then season with 1½ teaspoons salt and add the stock or water. Bring to a boil and simmer until the rice is cooked, 16 to 18 minutes.
3. Taste for salt, season with pepper, and serve.
Yankee Gardener’s Fresh Garden Zucchini Bread

Makes 1 large loaf or 2 small loaves

1 cup salad oil
2 cups granulated sugar (Use white sugar, not brown sugar)
2 cups fresh grated garden zucchini (Reserve some liquid)
3 fresh eggs
3 1/2 cups all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
2 cups brown raisins
1 cup fresh chopped nuts

Mix oil and sugar together in a large mixing bowl. Add the grated zucchini, then the eggs. In a separate bowl, sift the remaining ingredients together. Then add to zucchini mixture. Mix together very well. If batter is too thick, adjust with a little reserved zucchini liquid.

Pour into greased and floured bread pans. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Cool on bread racks. Serve with your favorite soup or stew.

Garlicky Pasta with Fresh Tomatoes and Basil

Adapted from Cooking Light

This recipe shows how simplicity is a virtue—particularly if you have good tomatoes. The garlic flavor is pronounced; reduce the amount to 2 cloves, if you prefer. If you can’t find campanella, try orecchiette, fusilli, or shells.

3 tablespoons olive oil
3 garlic cloves, minced
5 cups chopped plum tomatoes or other tomatoes (about 2 pounds)
6 cups hot cooked campanella (about 12 ounces uncooked pasta)
1 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
1/4 cup (1 ounce) grated fresh Parmesan cheese
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Heat olive oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add minced garlic; sauté 30 seconds. Add chopped tomatoes; cook for 2 minutes or until thoroughly heated, stirring occasionally. Add pasta, basil, cheese, salt, and pepper, tossing gently to combine.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size: 1 1/3 cups)

Ro's Zesty and Zippy Green Beans

Adapted from vegweb.com

Ingredients:
- 4 cup green beans, fresh or frozen
- 1/2-3/4 cup golden raisins
- 1/2 lemon
- 2 tablespoon olive oil
- sea salt or regular salt, generous pinch
- red pepper flakes, to desired temperature

Directions:

Wash and prepare green beans: To cut down on the cooking process, soak them in warm water for about ten minutes. Place beans in a pot over medium heat and add oil, raisins, spices, and the juice from the lemon. Toss and cook until the beans are hot. Less oil could be used, these have the whole spicy/sweet/salty/ and sour thing going on. Usually very well-received. Quite pretty as well.

Serves: 4
Preparation time: Five minutes
We are so excited about your gardens this year and hope you enjoy these images. If you don’t see your garden, send us a picture and we’ll put it in.  

Cindy and Kate  

P.S. Be alert for tomato hornworms!
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We’re on the Web!
www.growingplaces.org

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Printed on recycled paper.
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.
**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. 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.

**Recipe: Ratatouille**

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 sliced 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.
If you would like to save the fragrances and flavors of your herbs to use over the winter, now is the time to start. The best methods for preserving herbs are freezing and drying. See the lists below. Harvest your herbs on a sunny morning if possible—after the dew has dried but before the day gets hot. Remove the leaves from the stems (this will make your house smell great).

If you are freezing your herbs, chop them coarsely. Then label a bag with the herb’s name (all those bags with green stuff in them can be hard to tell apart) and the date. When you want to use your frozen herbs, take the bag out, cut off a piece and put the rest back in the freezer. Kate always has frozen dill in her freezer to use with fish or roasted vegetables.

If you are drying your herbs, place the leaves in paper bags with holes punched in them, in mesh onion bags or on window screens. You’ll know they are dry enough when they are just at the point of crumbling—it may take a few days. Save clean glass jars and put your dried herbs in them. Then store the jars in a cool dark place.

**These herbs are best when frozen:** basil, cilantro, dill, parsley, tarragon

**These herbs can be dried:** basil, dill, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme

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**THE WEATHER:**
FROM WWW.WEATHER.COM

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**HELLO GARDENERS,**

What a gorgeous week we just had!!!! Plenty of sunshine and warm temperatures to get those crops ripening! Hopefully your tomatoes, peppers, beans and squashes are responding properly and doing just that for you. We know that some of you have been experiencing slow yields which are probably due to the rather strange summer we’ve been having. Even though these 90+ degree-days with high humidity do not feel good to us, they are great for some vegetables. We are hoping that September will be a bit on the warm and sunny side to help those plants along.

Hopefully you’ve kept up with your succession planting and have some new bean, lettuce and possibly even squash plants peeking through and starting to grow. If not, toss in some more seeds for cool-weather crops to see if you can get some more mileage out of your garden. Check the “Seed Information Chart” in the back of your Growing Guide to see what likes to be planted in the fall. Warm crops (beans, squash, etc) should not be planted now since they will probably not have enough warm weather to reach maturity.

Cindy and Kate

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**STORING HERBS**

If you would like to save the fragrances and flavors of your herbs to use over the winter, now is the time to start. The best methods for preserving herbs are freezing and drying. See the lists below. Harvest your herbs on a sunny morning if possible—after the dew has dried but before the day gets hot. Remove the leaves from the stems (this will make your house smell great).

If you are freezing your herbs, chop them coarsely. Then label a bag with the herb’s name (all those bags with green stuff in them can be hard to tell apart) and the date. When you want to use your frozen herbs, take the bag out, cut off a piece and put the rest back in the freezer. Kate always has frozen dill in her freezer to use with fish or roasted vegetables.

If you are drying your herbs, place the leaves in paper bags with holes punched in them, in mesh onion bags or on window screens. You’ll know they are dry enough when they are just at the point of crumbling—it may take a few days. Save clean glass jars and put your dried herbs in them. Then store the jars in a cool dark place.

These herbs are best when frozen: basil, cilantro, dill, parsley, tarragon

These herbs can be dried: basil, dill, oregano, rosemary, sage, savory, thyme
Recipes: Tomatoes and Eggs

Although what we choose to plant and what we’re successful growing varies from garden to garden, chances are that you have a few spare tomatoes right now. They’re known as America’s favorite for the home garden, and even with this weird weather you should have harvested a few. If you’re getting tired of having them in salad or pasta sauce, try pairing them with eggs for a main course treat.

Eggs are a frugal alternative to meat — even the expensive “free range” eggs are cheaper than most cuts of meat. They’re loaded with protein and high in Vitamin K, and unless you have a problem with cholesterol (see your doctor), 3 or 4 eggs a week can be part of your healthy diet. Here is a recipe to get you started.

**Eggs in Tomato Nests**

*From Recipes from America’s Small Farms*

*Serves 1-2; multiply to serve more*

- 1 or 2 medium heirloom tomatoes
- 1 or 2 tsp unsalted butter
- 1 or 2 eggs
- Salt and pepper, and optional shredded cheese or parsley

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly oil a baking dish. Cut the top from each tomato and hollow out some of the center. Place 1 teaspoon butter in the cavity of each tomato. Crack 1 egg into the cavity. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Place in the baking dish; top with cheese and parsley, and bake for 15-20 minutes, until the eggs are firm.

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**GOT TOO MANY COFFEE GROUNDS?**

Nitrogen is important for healthy leaf growth; so many vegetables need a lot of nitrogen from the soil. Coffee grounds are a great way to give your soil a nitrogen boost!

Consider some of these possibilities:

- Sprinkle a thin dusting of used grounds around plants before rain or watering, for slow-release nitrogen.

- Add to compost piles to increase nitrogen balance. Coffee filters and tea bags break down rapidly during composting, so you can just toss the whole mess into your compost bucket.

- Dilute with water for a gentle, fast-acting liquid fertilizer. Use about a half-pound can of used grounds in a five-gallon bucket of water; let sit outdoors for a few hours so it reaches the same temperature as the outdoors. Pour the liquid into a watering can and apply it to the soil. You can spread the remaining grounds in another square.

- Mix into soil for houseplants or new vegetable beds.

- Encircle the base of the plant with a coffee and eggshell barrier to repel pests. (Slugs hate caffeine!)

So start saving your coffee grounds, or visit a nearby coffee shop and ask for the grounds — most shops will give them away). Then when you have an empty square that you won’t be planting in again this year, dig in about ½ cup coffee grounds to get a leg up on next year’s plants.

And remember, everything in moderation. Coffee grounds are also acidic and while most vegetables like acidic soil they don’t like too much.
Hello Gardeners,

There goes another incredibly beautiful week. Lots of sunshine and with the exception of Monday, not a lot of rain. Remember to continue to water your garden during these rather dry spells we are having. Your tomatoes should definitely be ripening and you might just be getting overloaded with them, as well as beans, squashes and cucumbers. Your neighbors are probably running at the sight of you coming toward them loaded down with extra veggies to share!

You can quickly freeze many vegetables for use later. Tomatoes can be frozen whole on a cookie sheet and then stored in a plastic bag in the freezer – great for soups and sauces. Summer squash and zucchini can be shredded and frozen in a plastic bag for use in soups and breads in the winter. Kale, collards and chard can be chopped and frozen in a plastic bag for addition to soups and stir frys. And if you’re feeling adventurous, you can always pick up a book at the library about canning and try your hand at that! Hopefully some of you can share your methods of storing food for the winter to help those of us with less experience.

Have any questions or anything unusual to relate about your garden (see Orange Cucumber Mystery on the other side)? Please remember to give us a call so that we can talk about it or come and take a look. We are here to help.

Cindy and Kate

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. See Issue 9 of our newsletter for hints on how to tell when you can harvest melons. Here are a few more tips:

- Don’t water melons as frequently as your other plants. Giving too much water now can cause cracking or a bland taste. They should be able to get by with just rain now.
- 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!
Recipe: Yellow Tomato and Golden Pepper Soup

This soup is beautiful to look at and delicious to eat. It freezes well, so make a double batch! Red tomatoes and peppers are just as good in this soup.

From Local Flavors by Deborah Madison
Serves 4: multiply to serve more

1 pound yellow or orange tomatoes
1/3 cup white rice
Salt and ground pepper
1 onion
2 garlic cloves
3 yellow or orange bell peppers
2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
1 bay leaf

1. Bring 2 quarts water to a boil. Slice an X at the base of each tomato. Plunge them, 2 at a time, into the water for 10 seconds, then remove and set aside. Add the rice and 1/2 teaspoon salt to the water, lower the heat to simmer and cook until rice is tender, about 12 minutes. Drain.

2. Chop the onion. Mince the garlic with a pinch of salt until mushy. Remove the seeds and membranes from peppers and dice them into small squares. You should have about 2 cups. Peel and remove the seeds from the tomatoes keeping the juice then dice the walls and mince the cores.

3. Warm the oil in a soup pot and add the onions, peppers, bay leaf, thyme and paprika. Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until the onion has begun to soften and turn light brown, about 6 minutes. Add the garlic, then stir in the tomato paste and 1 teaspoon salt. Give it a stir and add 1/4 cup water. Stew 5 minutes, then add tomatoes, their juice, and the stock. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered for 25 minutes.

4. When ready to serve, reheat to soup with the rice then ladle it in the bowls. Season with pepper and garnish with a little of the basil or parsley.

The Orange Cucumber Mystery

Kate received a call late last week from Rita in Lancaster. She wanted to know why her cucumbers were turning orange. Kate suggested that GPGP might have given her a variety of cucumbers known as “Lemon Cukes” but Rita said that she had planted Boston pickling cucumbers and could not understand what had happened to them. Kate asked if they had any kind of mold on them that was orange and if perhaps the skin were green underneath. Rita said “No” and that when she tasted them, they tasted like cucumbers.

Well, it was time to investigate, since Kate had never grown pickling cucumbers before nor had she seen an orange cucumber. So, she went to visit Rita’s garden. Indeed, the cucumbers were orange (see picture) and they were not some sort of mysterious squash—they tasted like and had the texture of cucumbers. When Kate went to the Clinton community garden there were orange cucumbers in it too.

So were they overripe? After some research, Kate learned that cucumbers turn a variety of colors when they move into the seed-making stage, including white, yellow and ORANGE. However, Kate also discovered that a local farm stand is also selling orange cucumbers. So, orange cucumbers may be overripe. However, they are edible enough to be sold! Anyway, we suggest picking and eating them as soon as possible. If you have planted pickling cucumbers, the remaining cucumbers may be small but they will probably taste good when green. Otherwise, you can wait until they turn orange and harvest them.

If you have no more small cucumbers on your vines and you do not see any flowers, it may be too late for new cucumbers this year. You can just remove the vines and plant peas for a fall crop - yum!
Shallots and onions are very similar. Start harvesting them when the foliage turns yellow and falls over – this indicates that the bulbs are fully mature. Garlic foliage stays greener but will develop dry-looking tan patches when it’s ready. Gently pull the bulbs from the ground (you may need to loosen the soil but be careful not to damage the bulb).

You must then prepare them for storage by allowing them to dry in a warm dry place for about a week (this is called curing). When the tops and skin are dry and crinkly, clip the tops off about one inch from the bulb and store them in mesh bags (old onion bags are perfect) in a dry cool location.

Do you cry when you peel onions? That’s because they contain sulfur. You can help reduce its effect by chilling onions in the refrigerator. When it’s time to chop an onion, first pour boiling water over the bulb; then after a few minutes you can peel it under cold running water. Cold suppresses the sulfur, and water helps to rinse it away. Then again, some people wear swimming goggles to keep the chemicals away from their tear ducts!
Recipes: Vegetable Casseroles

One great thing about late summer vegetables — onions, peppers, eggplant, corn, beans, tomatoes, summer squash — is that they all taste so good together. When your September garden gives you “a little of this and a little of that,” you can combine everything with some garden herbs in a fresh casserole. Here is a recipe to get you started. Once you get an idea of how it works, you can make as many substitutions as you like.

**Harvest Bounty Casserole**

- 1 1/2 C cut-up green beans, cooked and drained,
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium bell pepper, chopped
- 3 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 1 1/2 C shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1/2 C Bisquick or other baking mix
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1/2 C milk
- 3 eggs

Preheat oven to 350˚F. Grease an 8” square baking dish. Spread beans and onions in dish; sprinkle with tomatoes and cheese. Beat remaining ingredients with mixer until smooth. Pour over vegetables and cheese. Bake uncovered until golden brown, 45-50 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

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**HOW TO PLANT GARLIC**

The nice thing about planting garlic is that one single clove will give you a whole bulb. Therefore, if you plant enough, then you will not need to buy any for a very long time (possibly even until your next crop is ready, depending upon how much you use). Also, garlic is one of the first things to come up in the spring, a tasty hopeful sign of the new growing season.

Garlic is very simple to plant and the rewards are delicious.

- Garlic can be planted at 16 cloves per square.
- Make each hole about 2 inches deep.
- Insert clove into hole with the pointy side up, cover with dirt. Cover with a thick layer of straw, leaves or grass to protect bulbs and encourage worm activity — this can be done at planting time or later before the ground freezes.
- It is best to plant the largest cloves. They will produce the largest bulbs.

**FREE CANNING JARS!** A Lancaster resident contacted GPGP last week to offer jars for winter canning. Quart and Pint sizes available. Please call Kate or Cindy if you can use them!!!!
The winter squashes – acorn, butternut, pumpkins, etc – are starting to ripen. These are great sources of nutrition that last into the winter and possibly spring. They often store very well in a cool dry location for several months. Acorn, delicata and spaghetti squash should be eaten first, since they do not store as long as butternut and buttercup squash. So how do you know when to harvest these squashes? There are two characteristic signs that indicate that winter squash is ready to harvest:

• The stem starts to shrivel up and dry;
• The skin is so hard that you can’t cut it with your thumbnail. (Pumpkins are an exception as their skin tends to stay a bit soft even when ripe – the orange color is a good indicator, however.)

Cut squashes from vine with a sharp knife leaving 1-2 inches of stem. Store acorn, delicata and spaghetti squashes right away. Cure all other varieties in the sun for about 10 days to harden the skin for better storage. If there is a chance of frost, cover them or move them inside, then put them back outside to finish curing. Store when cured and eat at will!
**KALE — THE MISUNDERstood**

Just what is kale and why is it worth growing in the garden? Well, for one thing, kale is a powerhouse: it has slightly less iron than spinach, but 3 times more vitamin C, more vitamins A and B and more calcium, potassium and protein. Maybe Popeye should have eaten kale instead of spinach! It is also very easy to grow, produces continuously all season and can continue to produce into the fall and winter. In fact, frost actually improves the taste of this fine vegetable. It also can be stored in the refrigerator in a plastic storage bag from 2 weeks to a month or chopped up and stored in the freezer. Pretty good!

To harvest kale, simply use a sharp knife to cut the leaves from the plant near the stalk. Usually it’s best to take them from the bottom to keep the plant producing more at the top.

Since kale has a thicker leaf than spinach (more like cabbage and collards), it needs to cook longer to make it tender. It’s often best to remove the thick rib running down the center of the leaf since this is pretty tough. Kale cooks down a lot so what might look like tons is likely to shrink to a small amount. It is delicious stir-fried with a little olive oil and garlic, covering it with a lid for a while to “steam” it a bit. Kale is also great when added to soups and stews.
Last week we discussed kale; this week we will talk about one of kale’s cousins, cabbage. Cabbage has been a staple in New England for a long time and it is easy to store. It needs moist, cool conditions to grow well – this summer was both. Cabbage plants take up a fair amount of room in the garden – one per square foot. Nevertheless, red and pale green cabbage heads look particularly beautiful in the autumn garden. Try growing “savoy” varieties too – their crinkly heads have a nice texture and a sweet flavor.

Here are some cabbage tips and facts:

- Cabbages should be harvested before a hard frost – see our “frost” section in this issue — but a light frost makes them taste even better.
- The chemicals that give red cabbage its color are called anthocyanins and they change color depending on the other chemicals around them.
- For the sweetest, mildest cabbage flavor, use moderate heat to steam or sauté cabbage. High heat breaks down other chemicals in cabbage that release sulfur and cause a strong taste and smell.
- Cabbage leaves can be used to wrap patties made from meat, rice and herbs. These cabbage “rolls” are then cooked in some broth – an eastern European favorite.
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Recipe: Cabbage Soup With Apples and Thyme

Thyme really shines in this soup; sautéed apples are an interesting sweet garnish. This recipe is adapted from www.epicurious.com.

3 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon olive oil
8 cups thinly sliced cored green cabbage (about 1/2 large head)
1 large onion, chopped
8 large fresh thyme sprigs or ¼ teaspoon dried thyme leaves
6 cups low-salt chicken or vegetable broth
1 1/4 pounds Golden Delicious apples (2-3 apples), peeled, cored, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
Chopped fresh thyme

Melt 1 tablespoon butter with oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat. Add cabbage and onion; sauté until vegetables wilt and brown, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes. Add 8 thyme sprigs and sauté 1 minute longer. Add broth and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (Soup can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Rewarm before serving.)

Melt remaining 2 tablespoons butter in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat. Add apples and sauté until brown and tender, stirring occasionally, about 12 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Remove thyme sprigs from soup. Ladle soup into bowls; garnish with apples and chopped fresh thyme and serve.

Autumn Frost is on its Way

Autumn has arrived and you may have noticed that the days and nights have become cooler. You may also have noticed that the coolest nights have had very few clouds and little wind. Clear, windless nights are the ones most likely to produce frost. By now many of the plants in your garden have slowed or stopped their growth and some of the area’s trees are already shedding their leaves. Unlike the trees however, most of the vegetables and flowers in your garden are not built to survive Massachusetts’ winters. In fact, most of them will die sometime over the next month or two – probably after the first hard (or killing) frost – when the outside temperature drops to 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below.

Frost occurs when water in the air becomes cold enough to form ice crystals on the ground and on plants. Sometimes this won’t damage your vegetables. However, when it’s cold enough, the water inside a plant turns into ice and destroys the plant’s structure. Frost damage usually can’t be repaired and the plant usually dies. Warm weather crops like tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, melons, and eggplant are the most likely to be damaged first. Other crops like kale, carrots, spinach and cabbage resist frost damage and can even taste better after a frosty night.

In this area, there is a 50% chance that the first killing frost will occur between October 17th and 20th. The best way to beat frost damage is to be alert to weather forecasts in the autumn and then to protect your vegetables as well as you can. If a frost is forecast:

- Check your previous newsletters for storage tips and then harvest as many tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, squash, basil, etc. as you can – even your green tomatoes can be wrapped individually in newspaper and placed in a cool dark area to ripen slowly (not the refrigerator; it’s too cold).
- Cover your garden with large lightweight pieces of cloth, such as old bed sheets, in the evening before a frost is predicted and take them off the next morning.
- Put a mulch layer of hay over your root crops and leave it there until you are ready to harvest them.
Green tomatoes are a bonus for the home gardener, since you usually don’t see them available at the grocery store. After you’ve rushed out to the garden to collect all those almost-ripe and completely green tomatoes to protect them from frost, you might want to store a few for use in later weeks. If so, wrap them individually in newspaper (to keep them from rotting and enhance ripening) and store them in a room-temperature or cooler area. Many tomatoes, even if they’ve been touched by a light frost, will continue to ripen this way. However, green tomatoes have their own wonderful sweet-spicy taste, so you’ll probably want to eat most of them just as they are. The most popular way to eat them is fried. They are quick and fun to make and, as you can see, the seasonings can be varied easily.

Fried Green Tomatoes:

1. Remove the stems from the tomatoes and slice them crosswise about ¼ inch thick.
2. Make herbed cornmeal: take about ½ cup of cornmeal, add about 1 teaspoon of fresh chopped herbs (basil, oregano, thyme or marjoram), salt and pepper to taste.
3. Dredge the tomatoes in the herbed cornmeal.
4. Heat 1/8 inch of vegetable oil in a pan over medium high heat until it is hot but not smoking. Fry tomato slices in small batches until each side is crisp.
5. Drain on a paper bag or paper towel. Serve immediately.

Hello Gardeners,

Wow! Some of you have already sent surveys back. Many thanks for turning them around so quickly. This information is a great help. We try to do the best that we can while serving as many people as we can, but we cannot improve unless we know what worked well and what did not. If you have not had a chance to complete your survey yet, please take the time now to do so.

At this point you can put your hoses and watering cans away. Plenty of rain this week and the decidedly cooler temperatures mean that you should be able to rely on Mother Nature for any watering needs until your garden has been set for the winter.

By the way, do you have any extra green tomatoes? They can be our “new crop” for this week. We have tips for making fried green tomatoes and another recipe from Muriel in Westford for green tomato pie.

Finally, next week’s newsletter will be the last for a while. We will be back in touch by mail in the late winter or early spring. You can always reach us by phone or letter. We’d be delighted to hear from you.

Cindy and Kate
Garden Cleanup

Why bother with cleaning out your garden in the fall? Can’t it just all be done next spring? Sure it can; however there are some very good reasons why doing it in the fall is better than waiting until spring:

• The ground thaws from the top down and pulling out long roots from frozen soil is really hard. In addition, since the top thaws first, you can start planting sooner!

• Any bugs that are in your plants will return to the soil to hide over the winter. If you destroy these plants, you can help decrease the bug population and give your plants a better chance next year.

• Dead plants sticking out of the ground do not make a very pretty presentation even when covered with snow.

Spreading compost evenly on a clean bed is much easier than trying to toss it around plant bases.

So what is it that needs to be done?

• Remove all dead plants and any decaying fruits and vegetables, place them into garbage bags, and put them in the trash.

• Remove the string that divides your garden into squares — it will disintegrate over the winter anyhow and it’s easy to restring in the spring.

• Spread a nice thin layer of compost over each bed — 1 bag per bed.

• Mulch carrots, parsnips and root vegetables as well as any newly planted garlic with a thick layer of dried leaves, grass or straw.

And just when does this all need to get done? Well, you can certainly start now with the plants that are no longer producing anything. Once we have a hard frost, there will be a lot of things that simply turn black and die, so most of the work can be done at that time. The goal is to complete the clean-up before the ground freezes and the snow flies!

Recipe: Muriel’s Green Tomato Pie

This recipe looks long, but don’t be intimidated. Muriel has included many useful details. Enjoy! (Serves 6 to 8.)

(1) 9 inch pie shell and (1) top crust, both unbaked
(6) medium-size green tomatoes
(3/4) cup golden raisins
(1 ½) teaspoons grated lemon zest
(2) Tablespoons lemon juice
(1) Tablespoon cider vinegar

(1 ½) cups sugar
(3) Tablespoons cornstarch
¾-teaspoon salt, scant
¾-teaspoon cinnamon
¼-teaspoon ground ginger
(2) Tablespoons butter
Confectioner’s sugar (optional)

Line a 9-inch pie plate with pastry and chill. Preheat the oven to 425°F. Wash the tomatoes and cut them into 1/8-inch thick slices, and cut the slices into half-moons; discard the stem ends. Put the tomato slices in a large mixing bowl and add the raisins, lemon zest and juice, and the vinegar. Stir and set aside.

Combine the sugar, cornstarch, salt and spices in a small bowl. Sprinkle 2 TBS of this mixture over the chilled pie crust, and toss the rest with the sliced tomatoes. Put the tomato mixture into the piecrust and dot with butter. It will be runny.

Cut the remaining pastry into ten ½-inch strips and make a criss-cross design over the filling: place 5 of the strips evenly over the pie filling; place 5 more strips over them on the diagonal. Seal the edges of the pastry together by fluting or pressing with a fork. Place the pie on a pizza pan or rimmed baking sheet to catch the drips and bake the pie for 15 minutes.

Reduce the oven heat to 325˚ and bake for another 50 minutes, or until the filling is bubbling and the crust is golden brown. Let the pie cool completely before cutting; the hot filling is very runny. Dust the top of the pie with confectioner’s sugar immediately before serving.
GROWING TIMES

Growing Places Garden Project, Inc.

THE WEATHER:
FROM WWW.WEATHER.COM

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Hello gardeners,

This is our last newsletter of the growing season. Seems that we have timed it well with the frost many of us received this past week! We hope that you have found our newsletters useful. If you have suggestions for next year’s issues please include them in your survey replies, give us a call or write us a note. We decided to fill this issue with recipes and just a few tips and reminders.

We will be bringing compost bags to your gardens this month. Please take the time to clean up your gardens and spread the compost over the beds. Even though there won’t be much going on above ground in your garden this winter, organisms under the surface of the soil will be active throughout much of the winter season. When you “amend” the soil by adding goodies like compost, you will give them a boost of food. This means that your garden should be in great shape for planting season next spring.

Some of you have indicated in your surveys that you would like to try garlic this fall. We will include garlic with our compost delivery or soon afterward. Others had included it in their plant requests from this spring. We will be delivering yours as well.

We hope that you continue to harvest and eat wonderful vegetables from your gardens this fall. We also look forward to seeing and speaking with you during compost deliveries or in late winter or spring. Many thanks to those who have already turned in your surveys — if you haven’t yet done so, please do so soon so we can plan for next year! Finally, as always, if you have questions, concerns or good stories to tell please contact us. Thank you for all your hard work this year.

Cindy and Kate

Preparing Pumpkins and Winter Squash

This is an easy way to prepare pumpkin or other winter squash. It can be eaten as a side dish or used in the pancake recipe on the back page. Squash prepared this way can be easily frozen too. Freeze in 2/3-cup portions and have squash pancakes all winter! This puréed squash can also be used in breads, soups, and pies — any recipe calling for canned pumpkin.

2 medium size winter squash, such as butternut or acorn
1 tablespoon of vegetable oil

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Spread most of the oil evenly over a rimmed baking sheet. Rinse the squash and cut them in half with a sharp knife. Remove the seeds. Rub the cut sides of the squash with the remaining oil. Place the squash halves on the baking sheet with the cut side down. Place the pan in the oven and roast the squash for 45 minutes or until a fork penetrates the squash flesh easily. Let cool for 10 to 20 minutes. Scoop the cooked squash flesh out of the skin and mash with a fork or potato masher until the consistency is smooth. You can also use a blender or food processor.

TO DO THIS WEEK:

√ Harvest only the outer leaves of kale and collard greens; the plants will continue to produce more leaves from their centers.
√ Recheck your previous newsletters for other harvest tips!
√ Remove or cut tall weeds from outside your garden so that they do not drop their seeds into your growing soil.
√ Admire your garden, and pat yourself on the back for all your hard work this season!
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**Spicy Kale and Chick-Pea Stew**

This is a filling and easy stew. Kate loves to eat it served over rice or couscous. If you have a slow cooker, this stew cooks very well in it. Just use less oil — about 2 tablespoons. (Makes about 14 cups, serving 8 to 10. Recipe by Shel Talmy.)

1 ½ cups chickpeas -- dried or 2 ½ cups canned chick peas - drained
10 cups water
2 large onions -- chopped
3 large garlic cloves -- minced
¼ cup olive oil
2 green bell peppers -- coarsely chopped
1 ½ lb kale -- stems removed, leaves coarsely chopped
1 28 ounce can plum tomatoes -- undrained, coarsely chopped,
6 oz tomato paste
2 ½ Tablespoons chili powder
1 teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1 teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon sugar
1 bay leaf
Steamed couscous or rice as an accompaniment

If using dried chickpeas:
Chickpeas should be soaked overnight in enough water to cover them by 4 inches, drained, and rinsed. In a large saucepan simmer the chickpeas in the water, covered partially, for 1 1/2 hours, or until they are tender. Continue with recipe below.

If using canned chickpeas, start here:
In a heavy kettle cook the onions and the garlic in the oil over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are golden, add the bell peppers, and cook the mixture, stirring, for 10 minutes. Add the chickpeas with the cooking liquid, the kale, the tomatoes with the juice, the tomato paste, the chili powder, the thyme, the oregano, the red pepper flakes, the cumin, the sugar, and the bay leaf, bring the liquid to a boil, and simmer the stew, stirring occasionally, for 1 hour.

Discard the bay leaf, season the stew with salt. Serve the stew on the couscous or rice.

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**Recipe: Winter Squash/Pumpkin Pancakes**

Winter squash and pumpkin can be used interchangeably in most recipes, including these pancakes. Directions for cooking your winter squash are on the front page of the newsletter; or you can use canned when you run out. (This recipe is adapted from The Wilson Farm Country Cookbook, by Lynne C. Wilson, Addison- Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1985.)

2 eggs
2/3 cup cooked, mashed winter squash (canned pumpkin also works well)
3 tablespoons oil
1 cup milk
1 ½ cups flour (or ¼ cup unbleached + ¼ cup whole wheat flour)
¼ cup sugar
¾ teaspoon salt
2 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 ¼ teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg

Sift the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, cinnamon and nutmeg together. Beat the eggs in a large mixing bowl. Stir in the squash, oil and milk. Add the sifted flour mixture and stir thoroughly.

Heat a frying pan over medium high heat, grease it lightly and cook the pancakes, turning them once after bubbles form on top.

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