Hello Gardeners,

Isn’t it great to be greeted with an abundance of fresh, homegrown vegetables each day? Growing Places’ staff take a morning walk around their veg. patches before work each day, harvesting produce and getting ideas for family dinnertime. It’s so much more fun than grocery shopping, don’t you think? Their teenagers, and college students, have been seen out there too, snacking on tomatoes, beans and cukes to their heart’s content! Happy harvesting!

Your Friends at Growing Places

If you like the look of this harvest table, wait until you see what we will be serving up at our Garden Harvest celebration on October 4th, at The Barn at Gibbet Hill, Groton!

A Picture Paints 1,000 Words!

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What’s Happening…

Gardening in Massachusetts sometimes feels like training for a triathlon, doesn’t it? For weeks, we were all out watering our gardens every morning, and evening too, on the hottest days. Then, the skies opened and we had rain barrelfuls of rain in a few days. Our Garden Program Coordinator, Gaynor, recorded 9 inches of rainfall in her rain gauge. She even had an explosion of fungi throughout her garden. Perhaps you have too, and rest assured that it won’t harm your plants but take care not to gather up any little mushrooms when you harvest leafy greens etc.

The squash and cucumber families, little water hogs that they are, still need a good soaking at least once a week. Aim to soak the soil to a depth of at least an inch to ensure that moisture doesn’t evaporate too quickly. If, like us, you have huge, runaway squash plants threatening to take over your neighbor’s garden too, you can snip off the growing tip, at the end of the vine. This will encourage your squash plant to pour all its energy into the squash already developing along the vine. If your squash vines suddenly begin wilting, and turning yellow, take a look at page 3 where we give instructions on eradicating the likely culprit—the horrible Squash Vine Borer!
From our gardeners…

Gardening is definitely a “get back to nature” activity. I feel silly in that I never knew broccoli was a flower that hasn’t opened. After growing fresh Basil, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme, I don’t think I’ll ever use the powdered version from the supermarket again. Picking beans, tomatoes, peppers, and such, is like a game—the more you look, the more you find! And an unexpected benefit of gardening in a community setting is that I get out of the house and meet neighbors I would otherwise not run into.

Bob C., Fitchburg

What’s Happening…from Page 1

As always, it is important to keep picking, and continue to feed your garden, in order to keep your plants producing until the end of the growing season. Just like us, they need good nutrition to give their best.

Several gardeners have asked us questions about using brand name chemical fertilizers on their gardens. We don’t recommend this because the short term gains are far outweighed by the long term damage to the soil. Most chemical fertilizers are heavy on nitrogen which may make your plants look great but it does not aid fruit and vegetable production. Chemical fertilizers also use large amounts of potash which contains chlorine, as well as high levels of zinc and copper which are toxic to soil life. Chemical fertilizers do not break down naturally and the chemicals remain in the soil. This interferes with the way the soil accumulates and uses nutrients. Over a short period of time, your beautiful compost will become salty and unbalanced, and the lush plants you grew this year will be replaced by lanky and mottled plants that do not thrive. Eventually, the soil will be dead and useless and will need to be replaced. We want our gardeners to be successful year after year, which is why we provide you good quality compost and natural fertilizers at the beginning and end of the growing season.

Recipes Using the Harvest

This is a lovely alternative to the popular Eggplant Parmesan and a great way to introduce your family to the summer squashes, as well as a chance to use your fresh herbs.

Baked Summer Squash
makes 6 servings

1 1/2 - 2 pounds summer squash (such as zucchini, patty-pan squash, yellow crookneck squash)
1/4 cup olive oil
1/3 cup bread crumbs
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/4 cup chopped mixed fresh herbs such as basil, thyme, parsley and oregano

Preheat oven to 350° F. Remove stem ends and slice squash cross-wise in 1/4”-thick rounds. Toss with olive oil. In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs, Parmesan, salt and pepper. Arrange half the squash rounds in bottom of a 9” by 12” rectangular baking dish, or similar. Sprinkle with half the bread crumb mixture. Arrange remaining squash on top and sprinkle remaining bread crumb mixture. Cover baking dish with foil and bake in oven for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another five minutes. Top with chopped herbs and serve.

Roasted Beets and Carrots

6 medium beets (2 1/2 lb with greens), trimmed, leaving 1 inch of stems attached
2 1/2 lb carrots, cut diagonally into 3/4-inch-thick slices
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and Pepper

Preheat oven to 425°F. Wrap beets tightly in foil, making 2 packages, and roast in middle of oven until tender, about 1 1/4 hours. Toss carrots with oil and salt and pepper to taste in a shallow baking pan. Remove beets from oven and roast carrots in middle of oven until tender, about 20 minutes. While carrots are roasting, unwrap beets and, when just cool enough to handle, slip off skins and remove stems. Cut each beet into 6 wedges. Add beets to carrots, tossing to combine, and roast until beets are hot and carrots are very tender, about 15 minutes more.
Bugs Behaving Badly!

The pesky bugs are out in force now. Every time GP staff go out to tend our gardens, we find them at work. One of the worst of the bunch is the Squash Vine Borer whose handiwork you can see on the right.

If you notice orange “slush” or grains along your vines, along with cracking, or holes, you have borers. The vines wilt and become limp as all the goodness is sucked out from within. All of the vine’s energy is drawn away from your growing squash and the plant will soon die. There is any one remedy and it takes patience, a steady hand and a sharp knife, so adults only please!

Start at the hole, usually towards the base of the vine, and carefully cut into it, gently opening the incision inch by inch. Do not sever the vine. You will notice that the vine is empty and usually filled with more orange “frass”. Continue to gently slice along the vine until you find one or more white grubs. (See photo below). Use your knife blade to remove the grub from the vine and discard it. If the remainder of the vine is filled with vegetative fibers, you have successfully removed your borer.

If not, there are more inside and you will need to continue the process. Finally, bury the slit section of the vine under several scoops of compost.

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

This Ichneumon Wasp (below) is garden law enforcement and she may look scary but she won’t harm us. She lays her eggs on those leaf eating caterpillars that like to munch their way through gardens so she is definitely a good garden visitor.

Not so this pretty little Green Stinkbug nymph. This one has been chomping its way through one of our gardener’s ripe tomatoes and is about to take a bath. Early morning is a good time to find these pests and knock them into a jar or carton of soapy water.

It will eventually look like the adult on the right so don’t be fooled. Don’t forget not to squish them because there is a reason they are called “stinkbugs”! Yuk.

This ugly little critter is a Squash Bug nymph. They are dancing all over Gaynor’s summer and winter squash and she is not happy about it! She has laid down cardboard around her squash plants as a lure and can be found in her garden every morning, lifting up the cardboard and squashing Squash Bugs as fast as she can! This is the best non chemical control, but it is a bit ikky!
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