Hello Gardeners!

Summer is just around the corner and the alternating rain and sunshine we’ve been having are sure to send your garden into a growth spurt. As your warm crops start to take off, help your tomatoes to be strong and productive by following our instructions for staking and tying them.

As you follow our cool crop harvesting how-tos and find yourself with empty squares in the garden, remember that one of the advantages of square-foot gardening is how easy it is to plant in succession. This is the practice of staggering your plantings to extend the harvest period. Late June is an excellent time to sow additional plantings of carrots, lettuce and beans. Check your Growing Guide for other suggestions.

You may also be noticing a number of pests among your vegetable plants. In this issue, we highlight common culprits in our Squish List that you’ll want to keep in check. Don’t forget to look for them on the undersides of leaves as well as on the tops.

And, as always, if you have any questions or problems, be sure to give your mentor or one of us in the office a call.

Happy Gardening!

Your Friends at Growing Places

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Garden Spotlight: Darlene’s Backyard Garden

When Darlene, a second-year GP gardener, received her garden last spring she says she felt “like I won the lottery.” But at the end of her first growing season, she was hit by a gardener’s worst nightmare – a groundhog that devoured her bountiful crops not once, but twice. Although she was devastated, Darlene persevered and took action exactly as she should have – she called Growing Places. With our resources and Darlene’s determination, she filled nylon socks with human hair, hung them on the fence with clothespins and secured the bottom of the fence to keep out the hungry creatures. She now has a beautiful strawberry patch, flowering tomatoes, and a lush garden soon to bear fruit. Here’s a warning to all the groundhogs out there: KEEP OUT! —Nominated by Anna F.

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Vegetable Wrap-Up

- Stake and tie your tomatoes to support and direct them as they produce fruit.
- Check plants thoroughly for aster leafhoppers, cucumber beetles, flea beetles and thrips.
- Harvest cool crops now, being mindful of temperature spikes that might prompt bolting.
Focus: Staking and Tying Tomatoes

To keep indeterminate tomato plants from gobbling up too much garden space and to ensure cleaner, healthier tomatoes, it is a good idea to support your plants, training them to grow a particular way. Staking is one popular way of supporting tomatoes.

**Advantages of Staking:**

- It saves space. You can grow more plants in a given area.
- It keeps vines and tomatoes off the ground. Fruit is cleaner with less rotting.
- You'll get an earlier harvest. The pruning that staked tomatoes require forces more of the plant's energy into ripening fruit.
- It's easier to pick tomatoes and to work around plants.

When you stake a tomato plant, try to put the stake on the prevailing downwind side so the plant will lean against it when the wind is blowing hard.

Put the stakes in the ground right after you've set out the plants. Drive them about a foot into the soil, three to five inches away from the plant. Since staked tomato plants are held up and exposed to the sun and drying winds, they actually need more water than unstaked plants. You can compensate for this by mulching around the staked tomato plants with materials such as hay or grass clippings. The mulch helps retain moisture in the soil.

Once your stakes are in place you can tie the tomato vines to their supports. Cloth strips work very well for this. There are two types of ties. Training ties direct plant growth upward and supporting ties keep it there. The top (12 inches) of a tomato stem is very succulent and easily snapped; it needs to be directed upwards, gently. Wrap a short piece of cloth around the upper portion of the stem, cross it over on itself, and loosely tie it to the support. The resulting figure-eight tie reduces the chance the tender stem will rub against the support and get bruised.

Fruit will form along this stem. As the stem matures, it toughens; by the time fruit develops, the stem can tolerate a tighter tie. To support a fruit cluster as it fills and gains weight, loop a longer piece of cloth, 12 to 18 inches, around the stem just above the fruit cluster, creating a sling. Then gently pull it up to take the weight off the stem. Wrap the cloth twice around the stake, and firmly tie it to the stake 6 to 10 inches higher than the point of attachment to the vine. To keep the tie from slipping, knot it underneath the point where the sling meets the stake.

—Contributed by Donna M.

**Fitchburg Farmer’s Market Update**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fitchburg Art Museum and Lowe Park</td>
<td>Thursdays, 3-7 p.m.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.massfarmersmarkets.org">www.massfarmersmarkets.org</a></td>
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<td>July 11—October 31</td>
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**Pasta with Snap Peas, basil and Spinach**

3/4 pound gemelli  
3 garlic cloves, halved  
8 ounces snap peas, halved  
10 ounces baby spinach  
1/2 cup fresh basil leaves  
5 ounces goat cheese, crumbled  
Coarse salt and ground pepper  
Parmesan cheese, if desired

In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta and garlic 1 minute less than package instructions. Add snap peas and cook 30 seconds. Add spinach and basil and stir once to wilt. Reserve 1/2 cup pasta water, then drain.

Return pasta mixture to pot. Add goat cheese and 1/4 cup pasta water, stirring until cheese creates a light sauce that coats pasta. Add remaining pasta water if necessary. Season with salt and pepper. Top with parmesan if desired.

—Contributed by Janet O., adapted from Everyday Food, May 2012

Have a great seasonal produce recipe you’d like to share? Send submissions to 500 Main St., Clinton, MA 01510 or to janet@growingplaces.org.
In the Garden: Knowing When to Harvest

Cool days and plentiful rainfall might spoil our plan for a cookout, but cold crops like peas, broccoli and lettuce thrive on them. The key to enjoying these early vegetables at their very best is to pick them when they are young and tender. Remember, in this case, bigger is not better! Early morning is the ideal time to harvest as the vegetables will be crisp and sweet. Lettuce, in particular, becomes bitter in the heat of the day. So grab your coffee and a dish and head out into your garden.

Sugar Snap Peas should be picked when they are 2 ½ - 4 inches long. Grasp the vine just above the pea stalk and snap off the pea with the other hand. This ensures that the pea vines (tendrils) don’t break, and will continue to produce flowers and peas for many weeks to come. Check them every day because peas are prolific!

Harvest leafy veg like spinach, kale, collards, and lettuce on a daily basis too. It’s better to harvest individual leaves from several plants rather than pulling out one whole plant. This way the plants will continue to grow and provide you with fresh greens for several weeks. Begin at the bottom of the plant, or the outer edges for rosettes like spinach and lettuce, and clip off the older leaves with scissors. Collard plants will

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Pest Report: The Squish List

Striped Cucumber Beetles are active! These beetles are our most serious early-season pest in vine crops. They spend the winter in plant debris in field edges and with the onset of warm days and emergence of cucurbit crops they move rapidly into the field. Adult feeding on young leaves can cause delayed plant growth and reduced yield. The striped cucumber beetle also spreads bacterial wilt, and this can be more damaging than direct feeding injury.

Eggplant flea beetle can cause rapid defoliation of new transplants. They leave foliage riddled with holes, the edges of which turn brown giving plants a diseased appearance. Though older leaves often withstand this injury, younger leaves may be killed. Flea beetle larvae feed on roots and may cause damage to tuber crops such as beet and potato.

Both larvae and adults feed on the foliage of potatoes and, if left untreated, can completely defoliate plants. In addition to potato, they may also feed on eggplant, tomato, pepper, and other plants in the nightshade family.

Watch for thrips in onion! Thrips feed in the tender, moist center of young onions, and they are wasting no time in getting established this season. Scout by parting the leaf blades and looking for tiny yellow-white nymphs and brown adults hiding between.

Cutworms feed at night by encircling the lower stalk of a seedling and gnawing through. If you find a plant cut off at soil level, gently dig down about an inch in the soil surrounding the plant, turning the soil over as you work. The cutworm will curl up to evade capture; show no mercy. Remove it from the garden bed and crush it underfoot.

Protect seedlings by placing cardboard collars around each new plant. Save the tubes from paper towels or bath tissue and cut them to size. Slide the tube over a recent transplant and bury it one inch below ground, three inches above to create a physical barrier.

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Too squeamish to squish bugs? Keep a lidded jar of soapy water at hand as you garden and try the other organic option: drown them.
continue to grow upwards and look like a little tree when clipped. They may need support when they get very top heavy so that they don’t fall over and become a slug picnic.

Home grown broccoli won’t look like the mammoth heads you see in the store. The heads are usually about the size of a clementine. Harvest your broccoli by cutting a few inches down the stalk. This encourages the plant to produce more heads for a second harvest. Don’t wait too long to harvest, or you will end up with yellow flower heads and no dinner! Broccoli bolts so quickly, it deserves an Olympic Gold.

Herbs also respond very well to regular cutting. Trimming an inch off the tips of rosemary, thyme, marjoram and oregano with scissors provides you with some seasoning and encourages the herb to stay bushy and compact. Marjoram and thyme can become long and “woody” and sprawl all over your garden. Trimming gives you both flavor and beauty all season long!

- Contributed by Gaynor B.

Agway Canning Seminar

Want to learn how to preserve some of those great fruits and vegetables you’re growing so you can enjoy them even in the winter months? Agway is hosting a Canning Seminar with Peg Corbett, an experienced and competitive canner, at their Lancaster, Gardner and Littleton locations. Call ahead to reserve your seat!

**Lancaster** | 1340 Lunenburg Rd. (Rte. 70) | 978-466-1811
Monday, July 22, 4-6 p.m.
Wednesday, August 7, 4-6 p.m.

**Gardner** | 633 West Broadway (Rte. 2A) | 978-632-0991
Monday, July 29, 4-6 p.m.
Monday, August 5, 4-6 p.m.

**Littleton** | 687 Great Rd. | 978-486-9200
Monday, July 15, 4-6 p.m.
Monday, August 19, 4-6 p.m.

Know of an upcoming event? Let us know so we can share it!
Send submissions to 500 Main St., Clinton, MA 01510 or to janet@growingplaces.org.