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 being 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 fries. And if you’re feeling adventuresome, 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!
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!