

THE GARDEN GATE

A Community Newsletter by the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners

JULY/AUGUST 2021



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Summer Garden Tips, p. 2
- Root Vegetables, p. 3
- Tomato Problems, p. 4-5
- Alternate Ways to Water, p. 6
- Heartflame Garden, p. 7-8

Welcome, everyone, to the Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners brand-new community newsletter.

Each month we will be bringing you relevant seasonal horticultural information for Rockbridge County. If you enjoy this newsletter, please pass it on. Subscription information is on the last page of this newsletter.

LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS

- **Lexington Farmers Market**, behind the Southern Inn, Weds., 8am – 12:30pm
 - **Rockbridge Baths Farmers Market**, Rockbridge Baths Fire Station, Sat., 9am – 11am
 - **Glasgow Farmers Market**, corner of 10th St. and Kanawha, Fri, 10am – 2pm and Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Kerrs Creek Community Market**, 27766 West Midland Trail, Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Fairfield Farmers Market**, 5613 North Lee Highway, Sat., 9am – noon
 - **Seasons' Yield Farm Market**, 165 Oakland Circle, Raphine, 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 10am – 2pm
-

SUMMER GARDEN TIPS

By Donna Campagna

Wow, it's July already! Where has the time gone? It's time to start thinking about preparing for a fall garden in earnest and if you just keep planting you will be surprised at how much of your own food you can grow.

In the June article I talked about starting seeds in trays under indoor lights or on a sheltered porch. Some of those vegetables should be broccoli, brussels sprouts, celery and cabbage. Other vegetables that can be directed seeded around mid-July are beets, carrots, kale, spinach, lettuce, radishes and collards. Most of these can be harvested right up to Thanksgiving. If there is a chance that the ground may freeze in late November, you may want to dig up your carrots and beets.



NETTING TO COVER CROPS

When setting out broccoli and cabbage plants, you should cover them with a floating row cover or netting with small openings to deter the butterfly that lays eggs which hatch into cabbageworms. You will need to purchase some hoops to keep the netting off the plants as they mature. The netting recommended by Nancy Johnston of Dirty Knees is called Plurima. It's available from Southern Exposure Seed Exchange and it is called Bio-Agricultural Netting in their catalog. Make sure to secure the edges of the netting/row cover with rocks or wire u-shaped stakes. Last winter I was able to get my kale to winter overusing a floating row cover and I had the most wonderful kale in the spring.

WATER

Some years there is plenty of rain to supply your water needs in July and August but more often than not it's a dry time of year so be prepared to water as needed. If your water supply is limited you may want to reduce the size of your garden, set up a soaker hose system, or install rain barrels to catch rain water for later use when the dry days come.

Happy gardening, harvesting and canning!!

References:

Johnston, N., (1995), Dirty Knees, Nancy Johnston Books

Ziegler, L, (2018), Vegetables Love Flowers, Quarto Publishing Group USA, Inc.

VEGETABLE OF THE MONTH – ROOT CROPS (CARROTS, RADISHES, BEETS)

All three of these vegetables can be planted now for a fall crop. Flavor is often better as roots mature under cooler conditions.

CARROTS: Carrots like a well-drained soil free of rocks. Lots of rocks = crooked carrots. Carrot seeds are tiny and difficult to space normally. Mixing the seeds with fine soil or sand and scattering them in the row or bed will help with overcrowding. Allow for at least 12" between rows. Germination can take place between 14 and 21 days. Clever gardeners may throw a few radish seeds when seeding carrots as the radish seeds germinate quickly and will mark the row.

Water frequently until the shoots appear. If the soil is dry and crusty, the tiny seedlings will have a hard time pushing through. As the tops begin to develop, they will still need water but less frequently. This induces the roots to grow longer.

Seedlings should be thinned at 1" high and 1" apart. Be careful when cultivated as the seedlings are weak and slow to grow.

There are many varieties of carrots available in several colors. Carrots don't always have to be orange. In fact, the earliest carrots were a purple black color. Try 'Rainbow' and you will have orange, yellow and cream carrots in the same row. 'Purple Haze' is an All America Select winner. 'White Satin', 'Yellowstone' and 'Dragon' (magenta purple) are all popular varieties.



RADISHES: Radishes can take partial shade but do best in bright sun. They do not do well in hot dry weather and can often become pithy and unpleasantly hot in taste. Plant seeds about $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1" apart. Harvest beginning at about 3-4 weeks when roots are the size of a large marble.

There are other types of radishes available other than the round ones found in the grocery store. French Breakfast radishes are oblong with white tips. Eat them as the French do, sliced on a buttered baguette. Daikon radishes are often found in kimchi and can be 5-8" long.

When you've tired of eating radishes, let the remaining plants go to seed. Pollinators love the flowers.

BEETS: As with all the root crops, beets like a well-drained friable soil. Beets are grown for both their greens and their roots. Cool temperatures produce the best color. The vegetable can be grown as transplants.



A beet seed is actually a fruit with one to four seeds enclosed. A trick for getting better germination is to crush the seed lightly with a rolling pin to allow individual seeds to separate. Soaking the seed may also help. Sow 15 seeds per foot, ½" deep. Beets sometimes take a long time to germinate especially in cooler weather, so be patient. Thin plants to 1 plant per 2" unless you are growing beets for the greens only and then you can plant more closely. Beets are ready to harvest when they are 1-3" in diameter. Any larger, and the taste will be woody.

There are several colors of beets available, red being the most common. Golden and white beets are a bit sweeter. Try 'Chiogga' with pretty rings of red and white.

Resources: Johnny's Select Seed catalog, Virginia Tech Extension Publication, 426-422, "Root Crops"

FROM THE HELP DESK

Common Tomato Problems

By Katherine Smith

Tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*) are tropical fruits. In their home range, they're perennials. Here in Rockbridge County, we grow them as annuals. For us, they require lots of TLC to produce abundantly. We coddle them in hopes of the first red one by July 4th. Our help desk gets lots of calls about tomatoes. Over the years our file at the Extension Office has grown. Here's a list with upfront suggestions for prevention of the diseases first.

Recognize that our weather patterns are ideal for fungal diseases: Early morning fogs give way to humid conditions mid-day, followed by T-storms later on. Choosing varieties with as much disease resistance as possible without sacrificing flavors is a good start. Garden catalogs code these now, usually giving a code guide. Pay attention to that as you decide what seed or plant to buy. Be aware that many heirloom varieties will not have codes. Growing conditions help. So, plan to either stake the plants 5 ft apart or 1 plant to a cage when caging. Plants can also be trellised. This provides air flow around and through the plants.

Of the wilts, Verticillium is the worst, followed by Fusarium. Bacterial wilt comes in third.

Moving on to blights: Early blight overwinters in soil and on seeds.

Late blight arrives later on, starting on mature foliage & fruit. Then there are the "spots". Two of these are fungal related and a third is bacterial. In general, spots appear on surfaces, expand there, causing holes that open the way for other diseases.



We suggest watering tomatoes with a drip system where possible. Alternatively, water

Early Blight (<https://extension.umn.edu/diseases/early-blight->)

standard garden sprinkler on a sunny, breezy day, early in the morning, so that leaves and fruit surfaces will dry.

Mulch helps a lot. We suggest either an organic mulch, or an artificial one- plastic or landscape fabric are acceptable. When setting plants, remove lower leaves, or parts of leaves, so that they do not come into contact with any surface. Plan to clean up the tomato area in the fall, and to plant next year's crop in another location.

As we move further along into summer, we have regular calls about insects. Fortunately for us, there is only one causing real problems here. This one is a leaf-chewer having a large appetite and larger yuck factor: The tomato hornworm (aka *Manduca quinquemaculata*) is the larva of a rather small sphinx moth. Yuck factors include the large feces it produces, and the pest that loves it as habitat for its eggs. A small braconid wasp lays its eggs on the hornworm whose insides shelter them from predators and provide food. Control is easy. Just pick off the hornworms as you find them, and if you do find one with "white" eggy things on the outside, leave it alone so that the wasps will live on and "infect" the second crop of hornworms we have here in August. Additionally, we advise planting a sacrificial tomato elsewhere in the garden. The "infected" hornworm can be carefully placed on its leaves to live out the remainder of its life in comfort.



Parasitized hornworm



There are abiotic problems with tomatoes, too. Blossom-end rot is the most common of these. There are now sprays to provide the quick fix. Early fruiting varieties of tomatoes frequently cannot "harvest" enough calcium from the soil to form a perfect fruit. Softer skin on the nether end of the fruit gets a fungal infection. The spray allows the plant to bypass the root system and incorporate calcium.

Blossom End Rot

https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/blossom_end_rot_tip_sheet

Alternate Ways to Irrigate Your Garden

By Karen Carlton

The weather now is getting hotter, and our gardens are getting drier with summer heat in full swing. I thought I would write about the different ways you could keep your plants and vegetables from becoming too thirsty. Yes, there is always the trusty hose, but who wants to drag that around to water one's garden. There are soaker hoses, which can be found in gardening centers. But this hose would still have to be hooked up to a water source.

I would like to introduce some new and old ideas about how to water your garden. Your goal would be using water that is also in line with water conservation. The first way to keep your garden well-watered is to use an OLLA pot. This is an unglazed terracotta pot that you bury in the ground with the neck protruding out of the ground. You only have to fill it with water about every five to ten days. I have three in my three raised bed gardens, and it is such a time saver for me. The plants have water available to them and I'm not breaking my back hauling a hose around.

The OLLA pot does have to be unburied and stored in a shed, garage or basement for the fall and winter, but come spring and summer it can be buried in your garden to water your plants all over again.



Have you heard of rain barrels? These barrels hold rainwater caught from roof run off or wherever rain can be caught and stored for when it is dry weather. There are a couple of ways to use rain barrels. You could have it near your garden site and then have water readily available. Some people have the rain barrels on a raised platform near their garden and attach soaker hoses to the outlet and that is how they water their gardens.

Additional resources for rain barrels:

“Stormwater Management for Homeowners Fact Sheet 2: Rain Barrels”, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Publication SPES-10P

“Rain Barrels: Information and Guide”. <https://extension.psu.edu/rain-barrels-information-and-guide>
Haberland, Michael, Bakacs, Michele, and Boyajian, Amy. “Rain barrels Part 1: How to Build a Rain Barrel”. <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/E329/>

HEARTFLAME GARDEN

By Faith Vosburgh

Do you feel the need to take a break from weeding and watering? I suggest a field trip to **Heartflame Garden** near Elkton, Virginia to appreciate someone else’s hard work.

Heartflame is a gorgeous private three-season 2-acre garden with several more acres in strolling areas created by Inanna and Gabriel Garretson and open to the public. The 2021 Open Garden Days are October 10 and October 17, but visitors are welcome by appointment from April 17 through October 31st. To make an appointment (24 hours in advance) e-mail Gabriel, gcreative@hughes.net. The gardens are free of charge. Weddings, school class visits, photo shoots and pets are not allowed.

Some friends and I visited recently and were blown away - so many different kinds of coneflowers, all blooming and the daylilies were spectacular. We were very impressed even by the grass which looked and felt like a golf green. And I think we all know how difficult it is to grow nice grass in Virginia! Perennials, annuals, trees and shrubs abound, and all are beautifully pruned, maintained, and most amazing of all, weed-free.



The Garretsons are wonderful generous hosts. The garden is obviously a labor of love.

The address is 650 Sandy Bottom Rd., Elkton, Virginia. Check it out.



To subscribe to this newsletter, click
<https://www.ramga.org/what-s-happening>

EDITOR: FAITH VOSBURGH, fvosburgh@gmail.com

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg

