

New to the Garden? Old Timer?

Good to know...and well to remember!

The Dirt. Nyack Community Garden has fertile soil and additional rich soil was added this year. The entire garden was rototilled. Your plants should grow very well. You don't have to supplement the soil, unless certain plants require special nutrients. However, evil weeds also thrive in the Garden's rich soil. They steal the nutrients and sunlight that your plants need. If you allow them to exist, they quickly spread into your neighbors' plots, which is unneighborly. So Job One is to decide how you will control them. Please remember that failure to faithfully observe **Rules 10 and 11** (you are obliged to control the weeds and harvest your plants, etc.) can result in the loss of membership, not to mention poor crops. See options for weed control in the March 2017 *Nyack Community Garden Newsletter*.

The Plan. Don't crowd your plants. Plan your garden to give each plant the space it needs for its variety. Typically, you will get more produce from one plant in the recommended space than from two crowded ones. Crowding promotes diseases as well as competition for nutrients and sunlight. A measuring tape and yardstick are helpful gardening tools. Graph paper helps to lay out where your plants will go. Do not plant too near the border of your plot as your plants must not grow onto your neighbors' plots. And don't forget that your plan needs to provide for paths or spaces so you can move around to tend and weed and admire and harvest.

What to grow? Plant what you like, but diversify. Some years are better for certain plants rather than others. The same can be said for varieties of the same plant. Growing different types of plants will give you a better chance of a good harvest. Seedlings become established faster than growing plants from seeds, but the process of growing from seeds is very rewarding and broadens plant variety choices. If your seeds don't come up within the time on the package for germination, replant. There are many reasons why seeds might not come up –improper watering and weather being two key ones. Free seeds from the Nyack Seed Exchange at Nyack Library (Saturdays from 10 to 2) allow you to easily replant. Note: corn, sunflowers, and very tall plants are not allowed in the garden.

When to plant? Your plot must be planted by May 31. Read your seed packets and instructions on purchased plants and follow the planting recommendations! They contain important info on how to space, how deep to plant, and when to plant. Don't plant until the weather is correct for the plant, recognizing that planting dates differ for varieties. Look at the charts for **Zone 7a**, see planting schedules in our May 2016 *Newsletter*, or rocklandcce.org/resources/vegetable-planting-guide. Also check the weather forecasts. If the soil is dry and workable, one can begin to plant cool weather spring vegetables such as snow peas and lettuces when the **garden opens on April 9**. Some plants (including most tomatoes) do not do well outside until temperatures at night do not drop below 55 degrees. For detailed information on the cultivation of a variety, Google its name with "cultivation" and check several webpages. If a plant variety has a later plant date than May 31, prepare the spot so that the seedling or seeds can be inserted at the correct time.

Water. New seedlings and newly planted seeds need regular, even daily, watering, but only a little bit of water. It's best to water gently with a watering can until the plants are established. Once established, it is much better to water them deeply, once or twice a week (if no rain), than to water daily. Pay attention to the weather. When it is hot and dry, water more frequently and wear a wide-brimmed hat.

Grow Hot and Cold. Replanting, also known as succession planting, is good. Planting dates and productive span for plants vary. For instance, lettuce, snow peas, radishes, kale, among other plants do well in cool weather so they can be planted soon after the **garden opens on Sunday, April 9**. When that crop is done, the same space can be used for traditional summer crops. And then, if you wish, cool weather plants can be replanted in late summer for a fall crop.

Show up! At a minimum, visit your plot once a week after you have planted. Going away on vacation? Ask another gardener to tend your plants and reciprocate when they are away. It is easiest to keep your plot well-maintained and productive by pulling up weeds when they are seedlings or as soon as you see them. Regular visits also allow you to check for pests and disease problems and cure them before they are severe. If problems arise, ask your cluster leader, a NCG board member, or any gardener for advice. Or email us at address below. Usually your problem has happened before and others can assist you with solutions.

Harvesting. Harvest regularly. Do not let food over-ripen or rot. Eat thinnings of greens, then harvest salad crops when they are large enough to make a serving. You may harvest the outer leaves of plants such as lettuce, kale, mustard and chard a few at a time, or you may pick the whole plant if you need to make room for later crops. Many crops require a regular harvest to stay productive. Snap beans, peas and summer squash will slow down or stop fruiting if their seeds begin to mature. Leafy crops and broccoli will also produce more if picked regularly. If you plan to take a vacation, avoid growing varieties that will mature or be at their peak while you're away unless you have someone to harvest for you. Rotting fruits and veggies in a plot will jeopardize your membership or advancement to a full plot, and is just plain wasteful. **Donation containers** in the Garden make it easy for you to donate surplus produce to the needy. Upon request, members of the Plant a Row for the Hungry food donation committee will pick your donations. Email or call committee members. More details about how and when to donate will be supplied when veggies are ready for eating.

Back issues of our newsletters at nyackcommunitygarden.info contain bushels of useful info so please check them out. Other useful websites with a local gardening focus include rocklandccc.org and piermontcommunitygarden.blogspot.com.

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