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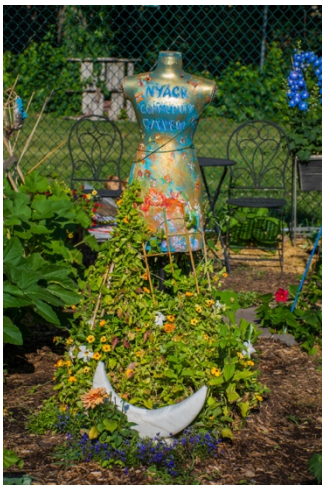
# ***NYACK COMMUNITY GARDEN***

***July-August 2018***

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## **A Short History of Community Gardening**

Do you remember the first time you heard the term “community garden”? What images did the term conjure? Maybe it sounded like a relatively new practice to you, or maybe you’re from a long line of community gardeners and you were already steeped in its history. In any case, we’re all community gardeners now, so let’s learn more about what community gardening means.



Many historians point to the economic recession of the 1890s as the beginning of community gardens in the United States, though Native Americans were already gardening with a community approach long before then. But before getting to the United States, let’s begin our story in 1700s England. In England, community gardens are called “allotments,” and the allotments in Sheffield, England, date back to the 1730s, when Sheffield estates leased out some of their land to make rental income. Those who rented the land used it to grow food to eat themselves, rather than to sell. Historian N. Flavell says that the popularity of Sheffield’s allotments may have grown thanks to the new 18th century “fad” of eating vegetables, popularized in London.

Moving to the 19th century in the United States, “vacant lot” gardening began in the 1890s as a way of dealing with hunger in the country’s economic recession. The city of Detroit sponsored an urban gardening program using vacant lots in the city, as a way to help feed the city’s now unemployed industrial workers. Named for Mayor Hazen Pingree, “Pingree’s Potato Patches” provided the land, the seeds, the tools, and the instructions, written in three languages to accommodate the city’s immigrant population. Other cities copied the plan, though most cities stopped their vacant lot garden programs by 1900, when the economy began to improve.

During World War I, Americans began growing “victory gardens” to help with food production, which had fallen dramatically during that time, as many farmers were in military service. The practice continued in World War II, when one-third of the vegetables grown in the United States came from victory gardens. However, at the war’s end, and with the rise of U.S. consumer culture as we know it, victory gardens fell by the wayside.





The community garden movement as we know it began during another period of economic crisis in the 1970s, and it coincided with a renewed interest in environmental protection. In 1973, the Green Guerillas, a nonprofit environmental group dedicated to preserving urban gardens in New York City, began throwing “seed bombs”—clods of dirt, fertilizer, seeds, and water—over fences surrounding vacant lots as a way to beautify the eyesores. They also spent an entire year cleaning up a lot on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, before finally getting approval from the city to lease it for \$1 a month. The “Bowery Houston Community Farm and Garden” became the first community garden in New York City, where volunteers built 60 vegetable beds. In 1985, it was renamed the “Liz Christy Bowery Houston Garden” to honor one of its co-founders. It still exists today and is open to visitors.

Since the 1970s, many community groups have taken over vacant lots or leased land from cities to provide residents with more access to green space and spots to grow flowers, fruits, and vegetables. In these ways, community gardens contribute to environmental justice, food sovereignty, and food security, all while helping community members get to know one another.



This has been a broad brushstroke over centuries of community gardening practices and history. Nyack Community Garden member Robin Brown is working on a history of the NCG, so keep an eye out for that in the future!

*--Liz Cherry*

## Our Shed Has A New Coat of Paint



By now, Nyack Community Garden members have seen and admired our newly-painted shed. And everyone has been wondering who offered us this labor of love and talent. Well, we have to thank the co-gardeners of plot 45B - Betsy Turk and Nancy Howard Gray. It was the idea of Executive Board member Marie Dilluvio that the shed needed to be spiffed up. After receiving the enthusiastic support of the Executive Committee, she asked Betsy, knowing that she was a house painter, and Betsy involved Nancy, an artist in her own right, and the ideas grew and flourished, just as the vegetables in their garden were growing and flourishing. (They're the plot with the raccoon and the moose hiding among the zucchini leaves, the purple peppers and the bamboo path that they built themselves.) They spoke to me on speaker phone from the garden.

Both have art backgrounds. Betsy, a lifelong Nyack resident, doesn't simply roll white paint onto walls, her business is interior design, including decorative floors as well as signage. Nancy says she was "born with a paintbrush in her hand" – she is the daughter of a folk artist. She graduated from the School of Visual Arts, but she paints more often using clothing as her canvas rather than walls. Obviously, both are extremely creative and full of enthusiasm for the creative possibilities of gardening and being part of our community. It's amazing to see how their sharing their spirit through their art contributes to the feeling of community we all experience now, when we enter through the northern gate of our shared treasure. Thank you Betsy and Nancy!



In case you were wondering, Betsy grew up with chickens, so couldn't resist adding a chicken to the door of the shed. This chicken will be our mascot. We should find a name for her!

--Kathy Schwarz



## The Farm Bill

We in the Community Garden, all care about our food – doesn't everybody? We grow some of our own, but not all of it. So the rest comes through the larger food/agricultural system in this country. So we need to be paying attention to the Farm Bill.



The Farm Bill is a **huge** and hugely **important** piece of legislation. It controls nearly 9 billion dollars of our taxpayer money, **nearly everything we eat**, and, for some Americans, whether they eat at all! It is so complex that few people in the public pay much attention to it. The media barely covers it. Plus, the Agriculture Committees of the House and Senate meet behind closed doors and their colleagues who are not on the committees are barely given a chance to read the legislation after it comes out of the committees before it is voted on. **BUT WE NEED TO BE PAYING ATTENTION TO IT**

**AS MUCH AS WE CAN!** And we could demand a little more transparency if we reach out to our Senator Gillibrand, who sits on the Senate Agriculture Committee.



The Farm Bill is reauthorized every 5 years and its reauthorization has to take place this year, supposedly by September 30. About 80% of the Farm Bill is funding for SNAP (Food Stamps). Large cuts have been proposed for SNAP, in the form of work requirements for eligibility that could throw millions of people off of these essential benefits. And, as the Trump Administration is proposing a reorganization of the federal government it could be that the SNAP program is taken away from the Agriculture Department altogether, and perhaps even removed from the Farm Bill.

The next biggest chunk of money in the bill goes to subsidies and insurance payments to farmers, (but mostly for the largest and most profitable of the farms), and then much less money is allocated for other important programs like land conservation, endangered species, agricultural research, water resources, national forests, organic food, and more.

Urban Agriculture (which could include community gardens) has never gotten much attention or money in past Farm Bills. But it could be incorporated into this year's Farm Bill if Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) gets her way – she is the ranking Democrat on the Senate Ag Committee and had introduced a bill 2 years ago called the Urban Agriculture Act, which she hoped could be incorporated into this year's Farm Bill. We could be encouraging this, again, by contacting Senator Gillibrand, at the same time, we need to insist that they include monies for research into how to best build a more sustainable agriculture system, given the threat of a changing climate – community gardening should be part of that solution!

You can write to Senator Gillibrand at: <https://kirstengillibrand.com/contact/>

Senator Schumer and Representative Lowey will both be voting on the final pieces of legislation.

Their contact information is as follows:

Senator Schumer: <https://www.schumer.senate.gov/contact/email-chuck>

Representative Lowey: <https://lowey.house.gov/contact>



--Kathy Schwarz

# Plant-a-Row Loves What You Grow

*Please help us fill the cooler near the shed! Pickups Mondays at 10am.*



## The Plant-a-Row for the Hungry Project

Please join us in this great national effort! Now that our gardens are producing more than just lettuce, you will notice a green cooler in the garden near the shed as well as a crate inside the shed. The cooler and crate are an invitation to every Nyack Community Garden member to share our bounty with hungry families in Rockland. Plant-a-Row for the Hungry is a national organization founded in 1995 to encourage gardeners to donate produce to local food banks. Our local committee is led by Jill

Remaly and an enthusiastic team of our fellow gardeners. Jill reports, "Several of the new gardeners have eagerly asked when they can begin to donate and that's so encouraging to hear."

## There is Real Need

You may think that Rockland County is an affluent county with few hunger problems, but one in five children in Rockland County lives in poverty, and about 45,000 Rocklanders are "food insecure," meaning they do not know where their next meal is coming from. People to People -- and our donations from the Nyack Community Garden -- help to fill that gap. People to People feeds about 1,400 families each month, and garden donations help ensure that neighbors in need receive healthy, fresh vegetables.



## Food Deserts in Rockland

According to the US Department of Agriculture, several areas in Rockland County are "food deserts," which does not mean that the soil is too sandy and won't grow food. The term "food desert" refers to an area where people do not have access to affordable fresh food. Food deserts are often found in very urban and very rural areas, but they can also be found in suburban areas like Rockland County. Sometimes this means there is no grocery store in the area, or the only fruits and

vegetables are expensive and of poor quality. This means the fresh produce we donate is all the more important and useful to families who lack access to healthy foods.

## Nyack Garden Club Volunteer Growers

Did you know that the Nyack Garden Club has an entire plot dedicated to growing food for People to People? It is tended by members of the Garden Club, and we can multiply the plot's good impact by giving some of our extra vegetables to the cause. Jill Remaly, says: "All of the produce grown in the Nyack Garden Club plot will be donated to People to People and we hope that other garden members will give as much as they can. A community garden is all about community, and our community extends well beyond our gates."

## How You Can Help

“Tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, squash, as well as more robust greens such as Swiss chard and kale are all great,” says Jill. “Lettuce is not ideal for collection as it suffers pretty quickly without refrigeration.” The committee purchased the cooler and ice packs so the produce can withstand the heat. Jill reminds us that there is also **a donation crate in the shed** for your less fragile veggies. When selecting produce from your garden to donate, please consider donating only what you would eat yourselves. If it’s not appealing to you, then it’s probably better off going in the compost instead of the donation bin.



## When to Give – Sunday Evenings or Monday Mornings before 10am

Sunday evenings or Monday mornings are good times to put some veggies in the cooler, because a Plant-a-Row team member will pick up donations around 10am every Monday morning and deliver it straight to the food pantry. But please donate anytime you can during the week. And if the cooler is full, that’s fine: there is also a crate in the shed for weekday and weekend donations and overflow.



## Going on Vacation? Please Email Jill

If for any reason you cannot make it to the garden for a period of time, please don’t let your produce go to waste. The Plant-a-Row committee will harvest and donate for you! If you will be out of town, just send an email to Jill -- **jillremaly217@gmail.com** -- with your name, plot number, and the dates that you will be away. The Plant-a-Row team will be happy to harvest your ready produce so it is not wasted while you are away.

## Our Middle Name is Community

“Plant a Row is all about sharing,” says John Dunnigan, co-president of the garden. We feel good when we share. So let’s all help fill the cooler and give our Plant-a-Row Project its most bountiful year ever! Last year, we donated over 350 pounds of produce, so let’s aim for 500 this year! Jill Remaly and the Plant-a-Row team thank you in advance for your generous help in making this effort a healthy success for neighbors in need.

*--Liz Cherry*

## 2018 Dates to Remember

**Mondays, around 10am** Plant A Row veggies in cooler will be given to food bank

**Thursday, July 26** Garden Contest Judging

**Thursday, Oct. 18** Pot Luck Dinner with prizes awarded to attending contest winners and free raffle for all attendees

**Saturday, Nov. 3** Garden closes, all items removed and plots restored to state as of April 8

**Saturday, Nov. 10** 8:00 AM sharp: Winter prep clean-up



# Nyack Community Garden Contest - July 26

Stay ahead of the weeds, gardeners! The annual garden contest is approaching! The date is Thursday, July 26<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM, rain or shine. The categories up for awards this year are:

- Best Vegetable and/or Flower Garden
- Best Maintained Garden
- Most Creative Garden
- And the Grand Prize for Best Overall Garden

There will be 5 judges – these will include our Mayor Don Hammond and one of the Village Trustees plus 3 others. Guest judges will inspect and evaluate all plots and choose the best overall best plot, as well as winners for maintenance, creativity and horticulture. There is also an award for best cluster. The contest winners receive spectacular ribbons which will appear in the winning plots soon after the contest. The Potluck Dinner on October 18 will also have the presentation of prizes to contest winners.



The competition will be fierce, since there are so many plots that look so fantastic. Good luck to all!  
--Kathy Schwarz

## Save the Date for the Pot-Luck Dinner!

*See you on Thursday, October 18*



The annual Pot-luck Dinner of the Nyack Community Garden always has great food. Gardeners each bring a dish of their choosing that will serve ten or more. There is an abundance of tasty items ranging from soups to desserts. Typically, both meat-eaters and vegetarians have delicious options. Many dishes include produce grown at our garden, but store-brought items are welcome, too. The Dinner is a time of great conversations, including terrific gardening discussions. What's new this year to make our evening even better?

- Awards ceremony with gifts to the winners of the Garden Contest in attendance.
- An opportunity for all gardeners in attendance to win a special gift. You will receive a raffle ticket and there will be a drawing.
- A “more the merrier” invitation to gardeners to bring spouse, a friend and/or children. Please bring a larger “pot” if your contingency is large.

Drinks are provided and the event takes place in the evening at the Nyack Senior Center. Adrienne Alarco ([adriennealcaro@rocketmail.com](mailto:adriennealcaro@rocketmail.com)) is the chair of the Pot-Luck Dinner committee, and she and several other committee members will be organizing this year's event. We look forward to seeing you there!

--Robin Brown