

## Nyack Community Garden 2024 Summer Newsletter

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# The “Community” Issue

Welcome to our new gardeners, and welcome back to our returning gardeners. Each year, the Nyack Community Garden Newsletter Committee puts out a summer and a fall newsletter on a variety of garden-related topics, including reports on our garden happenings, local and national issues, and tips from the Board on maintaining our garden.

In this summer newsletter, we are focusing on the theme of “community”—this is, after all, a community garden! We have articles about the power of this community, sharing communities, our community partnership with the Nyack Pollinator Pathway, cultivating healthy soil, the Farm Bill, plant highlights from the garden, overviews of our community sharing efforts via plant-a-row, and other garden reminders. We hope you enjoy this issue, and happy gardening!

Liz Cherry, Newsletter Committee Chair



# Thank You and a Few Notes on Community

Lindsey Wahlstrom-Edwards

I received my plot in 2020 right at the start of the pandemic. That year we wore masks and alternated days in an effort to keep one another safe. I was lost that first year, and so many of you found a way to gently coach me from a safe distance during the season. It was a way of practicing being in community under the circumstances required by the “new normal”.

Over the past four years, I’ve come to know many of you, often aided by the gregariousness of my daughter, Rona, who spent summers exploring the plants and insects, jumping from stepping stone to stepping stone in our plot, and running around in the green space outside of the fence. When Rona became ill last year, you stepped in to help and welcomed my friend and now fellow NCG gardener, Lauren, who jumped in without hesitation to keep things moving.

Rona passed away from complications in September and you again did not hesitate to join us at her memorial and donate money in her name to the Nyack Homeless Project. Your kindness is feeding afterschool snacks to hundreds of under-privileged kids in Rockland County in Rona’s memory. In March, you rolled up your sleeves, quite literally, at the blood drive we hosted, helping us to save 282 lives in her honor.

When the executive board asked what they could do to honor Rona more formally this year, I channeled your energy with my response: Let’s create a way to teach other young, local kids about plants and pollinators and what it means to take care of our ecosystem and community. This season, we will be labeling plants in the butterfly garden and equipping local pre-school and after-school programs with materials to help teach children these important lessons early, just like you did for my child.

I asked for this space in the newsletter to issue a profound and sincere thank you for the magic you gave Rona during her too-few-six years and for the love and support you continue to give my husband and I as we find our way to our new normal. Gardens are great places to learn about life and death and the things that connect us all. NCG is a great place to learn about community.



# Sharing Communities

Kathy Schwarz

There is a growing movement called the “Sharing Community” – using collaborative efforts and sharing to build community. This is certainly not a new idea. And in some cultures, it has always been practiced. But in our culture we had moved away from that idea and it’s refreshing that many communities are moving back in that direction.

One example that has been around for many years in the US is the public library, using the theory that we can share books and not everyone needs to individually buy every book he/she/they want to read. In Nyack, it was Andrew Carnegie who shared \$15,000 in 1901 to help start up our amazing library. Now the library shares books, CDs, videos, computers, space for programs and, most recently seeds. Other libraries are starting to share tools, and toys, when they have space.

Other examples of sharing in Nyack: we have brought in the Repair Café, where people share their skills for free in repairing items brought in by the general public. And we now have Community Solar, where we can share a solar farm, rather than individually put solar panels on our roofs—especially helpful for some of us don’t even own our own house (Community Choice Aggregation). I think we could go even farther in this direction with what we could be sharing, for instance, if we brought in ZipCar as a model for car sharing or the Affordable Mobility Platform model using electric cars for sharing.

But, another great example of the Sharing Community in Nyack is our Community Garden. To begin with, the Robert Martin Company owns the land on which our garden is located, but they kindly share it with us. Not everyone in Nyack is part of the Community Garden, but it is open to anyone, so long as there are plots available. And within the garden, we share so much, and we are truly a beautiful community. We share space and water. We share tools. We share responsibilities. We share tips on how and what to plant. We often share seeds and seedlings. Some of us share walkways within our plots. I share my sweet potatoes if they wander underground into my neighbors’ plots. We share our pot-luck meals at the end of the season. And then, of course, we share with the greater community – 710 pounds of produce last year to People to People!

I think these ideas of the sharing community should be spread throughout the country. We started with public libraries. The next step would be community gardens! They truly build community! (By the way, if you write to our members of Congress about the Farm Bill, they could allocate more money for community gardens in the Farm Bill, too!)

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## **Cultivating Healthy Soil**

Crissie Bertone

“Soil is a Living Dynamic System that is Fragile and Perishable”

The foundation of a flourishing garden is the soil, a vibrant living system that, when properly cared for, can produce astounding results. In our region, one of the primary hurdles we encounter is the lack of aeration in our soil. However, armed with the right knowledge and techniques, we can turn our dense, waterlogged soil into a fertile haven for our plants to thrive.

Soil is a vital source of physical support, essential minerals, water, and oxygen for plants. It's composed of mineral particles (45%), organic matter, water (20-30%), and air (20-30%). In our gardens, one common issue is the high clay content, resulting in heavy soil that's not conducive to plant growth, especially for our most cultivated vegetables. To achieve 'good tilth', we aim for soil that's easy to work with, retains water, and allows air to circulate, creating an ideal environment for plants.

One way to improve the quality of our soil is by adding organic matter at the beginning of the season. This can be any form of compost, such as cow manure, mushroom compost, and any other type of humus-enhanced soil product found in garden centers. Also, no-till gardening keeps the structure of the soil healthy by supporting its living organisms, which are critical to supporting our plants. Some will argue that because our soils are so compact, particularly at the beginning of the season, we need to till to aerate them.

Limit tilling practice by adding another layer of compost or mulch and/or planting a cover crop at the end of the season. When planting cover crops, it is important to remember that we want one that uses the ones that will die in the winter, such as Austrian winter peas, crimson clover, or fava beans. Also, if planting any beans in your garden, when removing the plants, mix them into the soil. The whole plant will add nitrogen to the soil, enriching it for the next season.

Cultivating healthy soil has many advantages. These include improved nutrients, water, and minerals absorption, reduced need for watering, reduced weeds, and abundant crops.

Resources:

Oregon State University [Article on No-Till Gardening](#)

Cornell University [Article on Healthy Soil](#)

Cornell University [Article on Soil Secrets](#)

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## Our Nyack Pollinator Pathway Beds

Liz Cherry

One of the many examples of the Nyack Community Garden's community involvement in the local community is through our Nyack Pollinator Pathway beds, which were initially established in 2020. Back when we first teamed up with the Nyack Pollinator Pathway organization to create these beds, Kathy Schwarz wrote an article for the newsletter on the plants in the bed and the importance of pollinators. You can read up on that article in our [archives](#). Now, four years later, the plot has more than doubled in size, and this article presents a short update on where we started and where we are now.

I caught up on the history of the beds with Laura Pakaln, who chairs the Pollinator Pathway committee for the garden, and who worked with the Nyack Pollinator Pathway organization to establish the beds. The organization provided the plants, the village provides the mulch, and we maintain the beds through our garden committee work.

The first bed was planted on the northwest corner of the garden, just outside the fence, back in 2020. Standing in front of the resplendent garden with Laura, I hardly remembered what the area looked like before the beds were added, but thanks to Dana Harkrider of the Nyack Pollinator Pathway organization, we have these "before" photos:



And, look at the first bed now!



The second bed was established in spring 2023, in the northeast corner, on the outside of the fence by the shed. Again, feast your eyes upon the “before” photo courtesy of Dana Harkrider:



And look at the second bed now!



You can see other inspiring “before and after” photos of other beds around town on the Nyack Pollinator Pathway [website](#). Also on their website, they maintain a map of Nyack with markers for the participants in the project. Small native gardens are labeled a “pollinator pit stop,” larger ones a “pollinator B&B,” and the best spots for pollinators are labeled a “pollinator 5-star hotel.” We are a 5-star hotel [on the map!](#)

These enhancements to the community garden bring beauty to the community and utility for pollinators. As Dana Harkrider explained in a recent presentation, pollinators simply don’t recognize non-native plants as food. They evolved alongside the local, native plants, and they need these plants to complete their life cycles. On the south side of the garden, we have the Monarch Waystation, which is also a haven for pollinators. Laura said that the primary element that differentiates the Monarch Waystation from these other beds is the milkweed, which is the main host plant for Monarch butterflies.

The Pollinator Pathway and the Monarch Waystation are two of our most-requested committees, so if you requested to work on those committees and weren’t selected for it, you’re not alone. But, anyone who is interested in this work can make your own pollinator pathway at home! This is the entire goal of the pollinator pathway project—to spread native plants far and wide, beyond the community garden. Each of us can incorporate native plants into our spaces beyond the Nyack Community Garden. The Nyack Pollinator Pathway website has tips and links on their [website here](#), and Laura also shared some tips for anyone who wants to incorporate native plants at home: “Know what you’re putting in,” she said—“some plants are more aggressive than others.” For example, Woodland Aster spreads quickly and needs to be kept in check.

Also, Laura said, the more densely you have these native plants packed into an area, the fewer invasive plants and weeds you’ll get. You can get native plants for pollinators at the links below, but if you’re on a tight budget, you don’t necessarily need to spend money to plant native plants—ask around and see if you can get some plants from your friends and neighbors. As these are perennials, they’ll come back year after year, and will often need to be thinned out.

Here are a few local organizations and nurseries where you can purchase native plants, and you can find more on the Nyack Pollinator Pathway [website here](#).

Cottage Creek Gardens: <https://www.cottagecreekgardens.com>

Rockland Cornell Cooperative Extension Native Plant Sale (seasonal):  
<https://www.rocklandcceplantsale.com>

Westchester Community College Native Plant Center (spring and fall sale):  
<https://www.sunywcc.edu/about/npc/>

Wild Gardens Nursery, Cortlandt Manor (open spring and fall):  
<https://www.wildgardensnursery.com>



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# We Need to Change our Food System and What We Eat

Kathy Schwarz

Do you know that our food system accounts for around 30% of global greenhouse emissions on the planet? This is called “from farm to fork to garbage dump.” Do you know that, in order to help mitigate climate change, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization has recommended that food waste be cut in half and methane emissions from livestock be cut by 25%, both by 2030? (Internationally, about 30% of food is wasted; nationally the figure is closer to 40%!) And FAO recommends that we plant a more diverse range of crops than the staples that dominate global and domestic agriculture.

Do you know that this year’s international conference on climate change, COP28, addressed the food system for the first time, having neglected it for the preceding 27 years? So the 154 countries – including the US – who signed onto the Emirates Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action this year committed to return next year to COP29 having new climate targets that include changes in their food and agricultural systems.

So, it is imperative that Congress work some significant changes into the next Farm Bill, the biggest piece of legislation allocating money to the Department of Agriculture that can encourage some of these needed changes. Although Congress was supposed to pass the Farm Bill last year (allocating monies for 5 years), they postponed the vote on it until this fall.

I wrote about the Farm Bill in [last year’s newsletter](#). But since the bill hasn’t passed, it is not too late to contact our representatives again now. We have some new obligations, having signed onto that declaration, and there is further evidence of threats to the food system if we don’t make significant changes, such as the further spread of bird flu to cows and even to humans.

One piece of the Farm Bill that we could encourage that Congress pass would be the Farm System Reform Act (S271; HR797). This bill would stop the monopolistic practices of meatpackers and corporate integrators and place a moratorium on the

large confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Because the largest, corporate-run farms raise huge numbers of their livestock in gigantic, densely-populated spaces, if one animal gets infected with a virus such as bird flu, it will likely be spread to all of the animals in that space, and they will need to cull all of the animals. These monopolistic corporations receive crop insurance through the Farm Bill, so if they have to cull huge numbers of their animals, the insurance will reimburse them. This gives them no incentive to change their practices.

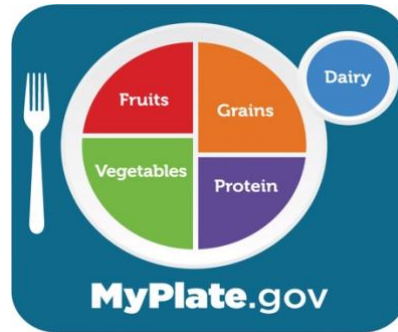
So, another component of the Farm Bill we could encourage that Congress pass would be the Industrial Agriculture Accountability Act (S272; HR805) which would require that instead of taxpayer-funded crop insurance, that the liability for responsible disaster mitigation be shifted to the corporations and industrial operators, providing them the incentive to make the necessary changes.

I encourage you to write to Senator Gillibrand, who sits on the Senate Agriculture Committee, at <https://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/email-me> And Senator Schumer and Representative Lawler will both be voting on the final version of the Farm Bill, even if they are not on Agriculture Committees. So you should let them know your thoughts, too. Their contact information is as follows: Senator Schumer: <https://www.schumer.senate.gov/contact/email-chuck> and Representative Lawler: <https://lawler.house.gov/contact/>. Both Senator Gillibrand and Representative Lawler are up for reelection this year. Remind them that food, the sustainability of the food system, and the cost of food should be among the most important issues of their campaigns, and that you will be paying attention to how they vote on this ALL IMPORTANT ISSUE.

Not insignificantly, the other component of the food system that we need to change is what we eat. And we make our own personal choices, of course, depending on what is available (or what we grow ourselves), but what is recommended by government that we eat takes the form of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. And that gets updated every 5 years, too, so this is also being worked on right now. But unlike the Farm Bill, where many of the decisions come from Congress and how they allocate the money, decisions around the Dietary Guidelines are made by “experts” pulled from the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration and a few others from outside government. The Dietary Guidelines need to change too, to consider the sustainability of the whole food system as well as the health of all of us. But there is no one to write to about this, to remind them about their obligations to all of us and to the planet. Toward

the end of the process of negotiations about the Guidelines, comments are accepted from the public, but seldom is this even publicized, so few people ever have a chance to submit their comments.

We need to move from this:



To this (from Eat Lancet Planetary Health, 2019):



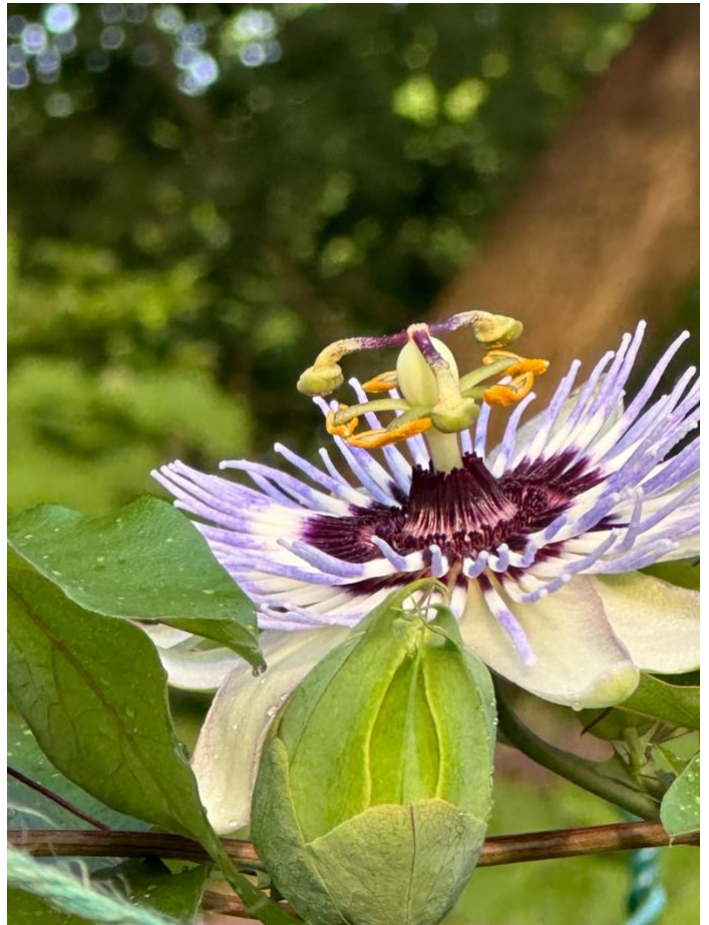
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## Passion Flower

Kathy Schwarz

Jayne Stuecklen in Plot 36 is growing this amazing passion flower. The plant also will produce the edible fruit – the passion fruit. But the flower itself is edible. There are many fascinating things about this flower. First of all, each flower blooms only for 1 day. So, if you grab it fast, it can be used for its medicinal value, and was used as such by Native Americans and then by European colonists. The fresh or

dried leaves can be used to make tea that is used as a dietary supplement. From *The Healing Power of Herbs* by Michael Murray it is listed as helpful for insomnia. Elsewhere, I have seen it stated that it can be used for insomnia, anxiety, inflammation from skin irritations and burns, menopause, ADHD, and even more serious conditions, such as seizures, high blood pressure and asthma, just to name a few.” It is not approved for any of these medicinal uses, but is generally recognized as safe to eat by the Food and Drug Administration. Then again, just looking at this gorgeous flower must have some psychological benefits!



Another fascinating thing about the passion flower is the history and symbolism of its name. It is connected with the passion of Jesus. According to Wikipedia: “the word *passion* comes from the Latin *passio*, meaning 'suffering'. In the 15th and 16th centuries, Spanish Christian missionaries adopted the unique physical structures of this plant, particularly the numbers of its various flower parts, as symbols of the last days of Jesus and especially his crucifixion:

- The pointed tips of the leaves were taken to represent the Holy Lance.
- The tendrils represent the whips used in the flagellation of Christ.
- The ten petals and sepals represent the ten faithful apostles (excluding St. Peter, who denied Jesus three times, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him).
- The flower's radial filaments, which can number more than a hundred and vary from flower to flower, represent the crown of thorns.
- The chalice-shaped ovary with its receptacle represents the Holy Grail.
- The three stigmas represent three nails and the five anthers below them five hammers or five wounds (four by the nails and one by the lance).
- The blue and white colors of many species' flowers represent Heaven and Purity.”

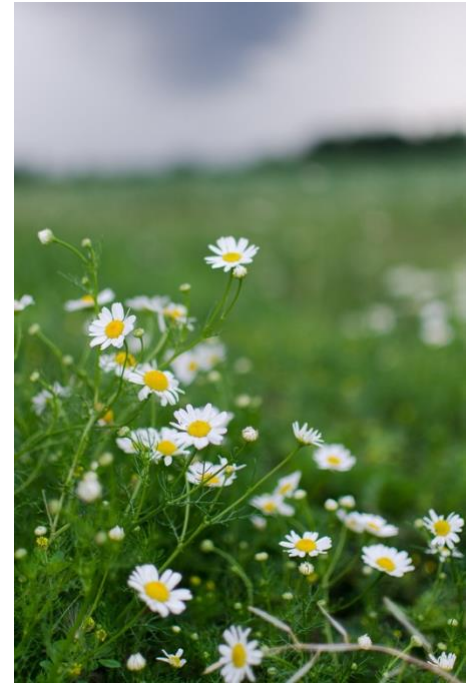
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# Chamomile

Kathy Schwarz

Last year, when I returned to the garden in the spring there was a plant growing there that I hadn't planted. Was it just another weed? I didn't know what it was until another gardener enlightened me – it was chamomile, and it was growing in a number of peoples' plots. How it got there, I had no idea. But when it started to flower, it had that distinct fragrance of chamomile.

So, I harvested some of it, dried it, and made it into tea! This year I plan to do the same. I did dig a lot of it out of my plot, for it had spread all over. After all, I needed to make room for my vegetables! But it is beautiful, smells great, and makes a wonderful tea.



I spoke to my neighbor in the garden, Lorenzo Tacadena, about it. He said another gardener had passed it along to him three years ago and it has come back every year. His formula for drying the flowers is to put them under the hot sun for 3 days and then store them in an airtight container. Then he puts some dried chamomile in a packet and crushes the packet before pouring hot water over it in a teacup. He serves it to his wife before bedtime to help her sleep.

Indeed, as traditional medicine, chamomile is known to help with insomnia. It could have some other medicinal uses, such as relieving stress and aiding indigestion. But avoid it if you are allergic to ragweed.

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## Plant-a-Row

Crissie Bertone

As another season begins, we must remember how fortunate we are to be part of such a wonderful group of gardeners. We all have beautiful and bountiful plots that oftentimes produce more than we need.

Plant-a-Row is a successful program for sharing our surplus produce with the local community. Last year, we donated 710 pounds of food to the Rockland community. We are grateful to all who contributed, as you made a difference in the lives of many.

As our gardens flourish and become abundant, the need for our continued support becomes more pressing. We would greatly appreciate your sharing of your excess produce with those in need. Starting July 8th, our dedicated group of volunteers will be on hand to gather all the donated produce and drive it to People to People for distribution weekly.



A few important things to remember:

- Coolers will be out every Sunday morning.
- Pick-up will happen on Mondays at 10 AM (Tuesday if Monday is a holiday.)
- Please do not donate lettuce. Refrigeration is not available, and the lettuce wilts. Therefore, it is not suitable to be shared,
- When considering what to donate, please remember the quality you would offer to your friends and family. If it's not something they would enjoy, it's best not to share it. This way, we can ensure that the produce we donate is of the highest quality and truly beneficial to those in need.
- Remove all dirt and wash all the produce before placing them in the coolers.

If you want to donate but cannot harvest, don't hesitate to contact Jill Remaly at [jillremaly217@gmail.com](mailto:jillremaly217@gmail.com) or via Facebook Messenger. She will then inform the volunteers, who will gladly harvest for you.

This program owes a huge part of its success to our faithful volunteers who show up every week, rain or shine. The committee always appreciates anyone willing to offer extra support to the program. So, please feel free to stop by Monday morning between 9 and 10 AM to help.

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## Garden Contest – July 25

Save the date! The annual Nyack Community Garden Contest will be held this year on Thursday, July 25, at 10am.

This contest always brings some fun at the height of the growing season, and it helps provide an added impetus to keep our plots nice and neat. Look out for a recap of the winners in our Fall newsletter.

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## Notes from the Board

- The board is very pleased with how nice the garden looks!
- There are 73 plots this year, 27 full plots and 46 half plots.
- There are 9 plots with new gardeners this year, which might be a record number (but we are not 100% sure).
- Thank you for paying attention to recycling our plastics - we haven't perfected it yet, but we are getting there.

Please notify the Executive Board at [membership@nyackcommunitygarden.info](mailto:membership@nyackcommunitygarden.info) if our garden information has incorrect information for you, such as wrong name spelling, email, phone number, plot number, committee assignment, or address, OR contact us if you change any of these.

While we do not email revised lists every time an update is made to all members, the up-to-date information is always posted on the bulletin board on the door of the shed.

### Nyack Community Garden Executive Board

Brian Osborne (plot 10)	co-president, acting secretary	<a href="mailto:zbio.oibz@gmail.com">zbio.oibz@gmail.com</a>
Michelle Morales (plot 22)	co-president	<a href="mailto:mzmichelle@gmail.com">mzmichelle@gmail.com</a>
Marie Dilluvio (plot 15)	treasurer	<a href="mailto:mvenus1220@aol.com">mvenus1220@aol.com</a>
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Alice Kintisch (plot 47)	member	<a href="mailto:amkintisch@verizon.net">amkintisch@verizon.net</a>

NYACK COMMUNITY GARDEN - East side of South Franklin Street - between Hudson & Depew Avenues / PO Box 864, Nyack, NY 10960

Email: [membership@nyackcommunitygarden.info](mailto:membership@nyackcommunitygarden.info)

Website: [nyackcommunitygarden.info](http://nyackcommunitygarden.info)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nyackgarden>

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## 2024 Dates to Remember

**Mondays by 10am** – Plant-A-Row veggies in cooler will be given to food bank (pickup begins July 8)

**Sunday, July 14** – Summer Clean-up

**Thursday, July 25, 10am** – Garden Contest Judging

**Thursday, September 19** – Pot Luck Dinner with prizes awarded to attending contest winners and free raffle for all attendees

**Saturday, October 19** – Fall Clean-up

**Sunday, November 10** – Garden closes, gardeners must fully clear plots

**Saturday, November 16** – 9:00am: Winter prep and clean-up **[Please take note of the new date!]**

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A message from your newsletter team:

Please send us your garden stories, questions, or tips on what you'd like to hear more about in the newsletter. We'd love to hear from you.



Newsletter photos courtesy of members our newsletter committee, Dana Harkrider, and Pixabay.

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