

## What to do when your Garden Disappoints

By Heather Bryant, Agricultural Educator, UNH Cooperative Extension - Grafton County

Every year when I plant a garden the same thing happens. As soon as I finish planting I fast forward in my mind to the harvest; the salads, the nice buttery corn on the cob, the tomatoes that taste like tomatoes, yum. It brings back memories of picking treats out of my mother and grandfather's gardens.

But of course, I have to wait. It takes weeks and months to get to the final product. Worse, like most gardens, mine got off to a slow start this year. Between the late spring frost and the seemingly incessant rain, it does not promise to be an early harvest from the backyard. To top it off, many tomato and potato lovers have been hit by late blight. Late blight makes dark lesions appear on the leaves and stems of tomato and potato plants. The disease is caused by a fungus that thrives in rainy conditions like those we have dealt with lately. (To learn more visit <http://extension.unh.edu/>.)

Whatever the reason, if your garden is not performing the way you would like, turn to your local farmer. They struggle with the weather too, but by and large they are much closer to harvest than the rest of us. Local farm stands are either open already or will be soon. Most farmer's markets have been open for a while, and are phasing out the transplants and phasing in the early vegetables.

So far at the markets I have visited I have seen seemingly every variety of lettuce known to humankind, beet greens, radishes, zucchini, strawberries, garlic scapes and early tomatoes. The options aren't limited only to the vegetables you may (or may not) be able to grow yourself; I have also seen meat products from locally raised chickens, lambs, and cattle as well as fresh eggs, dairy products, jams, jellies, pickled fiddleheads and prepared items like pies, Danishes, kabobs and Jamaican dishes.

Half the fun of going to a farmer's market or stand is the chance you will discover a product you've never seen before. Garlic scapes were a new food item for me, so I did some research. Garlic scapes are the young flower stems of the garlic plant. Growers often pick them in order to force the plant to put more energy into producing the bulb that we are more used to eating. Recipes tell you to use garlic scapes much like you would use scallions; I also saw a couple of recipes for garlic scape pesto.

If you would like to try garlic scapes or any of the other locally produced food items out there, there are 11 farmers markets in Grafton County. To find the market closest to you visit our website <http://extension.unh.edu/Counties/Grafton/Grafton.htm>. If shopping farmer's markets does not fit your schedule, check out the on-line farmer's market <http://www.nhfarms.com/home> which allows you to choose your items on line and arrange to pick them up or have them delivered. Either way it's a good opportunity to treat yourself while you wait for your garden to catch up and to support your local farmers at the same time.

Look for next week's column by forester David Falkenham.