

The Garden Gazette June 2009



A newsletter for Grafton County 4-H Garden Program Gardeners

Upcoming Deadlines and Events

Friday, June 5th—**Garden Plans** are due to the office and **Thank you notes** are due to the sponsors by 3:30 pm. Along with your garden plans, please include a map to your location with street names, 911 address, and phone number.

Wednesday, July 1st—Fair Entries are due to the 4-H office by 3:30pm.

Friday, July 10th—Garden Evaluation completed by Club/Garden Leader; lists are due to the office by 3:30 pm.

Wednesday, July 22nd to Sunday, July 26th—North Haverhill Fair!

Hello 4-H Gardeners—

In this issue you will find information about watering, spacing and thinning, how to transplant, the benefits of mulching, and much more.

Remember to contact us if you have any questions, or call the Family, Home & Garden Education Center at 1-877-398-4769. Our aim is to help you grow!



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It Makes Sense to Mulch!

Mulching is a relatively easy way to:

- help control weeds
- minimize water run-off and evaporation
- increases soil temperature (your tomato plants will *love* you for this!)
- keep your soil loose and nutrient rich



You can use:

Grass clippings—allow 2-3 days to dry and apply 2-3 inches thick

Hay—apply 6-8 inches thick, may contain weed seeds

Leaves—chop them up first and apply 3-4 inches thick

Newspaper—use several thicknesses and weight down with rocks or wood.

Black plastic—plants that like this best include vine plants like cucumbers, melons and squash, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.

Other possibilities include *woodchips, bark mulch, shavings, seaweed, and crushed corn cobs.*



All natural mulches should be applied after your crop has begun to grow and after the soil has warmed up. Don't let mulch materials touch plant stems because this can increase the risk of disease. It's a little different for black plastic. For best results, lay the plastic tightly and evenly over moist, fertilized soil **before planting** your seeds or transplants. Cut slits or holes for your plants, and remove the plastic after crop is finished. The most convenient size to use is 1 ½ mil. thick and 3 or 4 feet wide.

Give Em' Some Space!



Don't underestimate the importance of **spacing**. Every seed packet has spacing instructions—follow them! Bring a ruler out to the garden or measure out and mark the distance on a stick. Left to our own devices we tend to plant things too close because seeds are very tiny and most gardeners feel pressed for garden space. But your plants will grow! And they will grow bigger and produce more fruit if they have enough room. Crowded plants are also more susceptible to disease and insect damage, especially in a wet, rainy summer.

Some plants like carrots and lettuce have seeds that are so small it would be frustrating to plant them one by one. These seeds are planted very close at first, using a few different methods. One option is to make a shallow trench (use your seed packet to find out the recommended depth) and gently shake the seeds out along the bottom of the trench. A few weeks later, when the new plants are big enough to be distinguished from weeds and other plants, these rows will need to be **thinned**. This means that you will uproot the plants in between the properly spaced ones. This might seem like a murderous thing to do, but rest assured that the remaining plants will be much healthier because of it.



Water



Most gardens like about one inch of rain every week. You can make a simple rain gauge out of a clean soup can with the top cut off. After each rain storm, use a ruler to measure how deep the water is. If it's less than 1 inch, you will need to water.

Here are some tips for effective watering:

- A slow, thorough watering is better than a light sprinkling. Deep watering will encourage your roots to grow down further.
- Mulch not only helps keep weeds out, it helps keep water in. Even using a plastic, newspaper, or grass clipping mulch on your pathways will help your soil retain moisture.
- Morning is the best time of day to water, unless you are trying to protect your plants from frost (see article below). This prevents evaporation from the hot afternoon sun, and gives plants the time to dry off before nightfall, reducing their risk of disease.

Frost Warning!



There is no sure-fire protection against frost, especially a hard frost, but here are a few ideas that might help in the event of a late spring frost.

- Water your garden thoroughly before nightfall. The soil will release moisture into the air and keep your plants slightly warmer.
- Cover plants up before dusk. By the time it gets dark, much of your garden's stored heat is already lost. You can use blankets, tarps, newspapers or other light materials. If time allows, build a rough frame to protect your plant's delicate foliage—sometimes even a single stake is enough.
- To cover individual plants you might use jars, milk jugs, or upside down flower pots.

Be sure to uncover your plants the next morning!

"There are no gardening mistakes, only experiments."

Janet Kilburn Phillips

Transplanting Your Seedlings



Plants moved directly outdoors aren't used to the wind, sunlight or temperature extremes and must go through a gradual transition period called "hardening off". Two weeks before outdoor transplanting you should stop all fertilization and slow down on your watering. This will decrease your plant's dependence on these things. One week before outdoor planting you should place your seedlings outdoors in a sheltered area, out of wind and direct sunlight. Start by leaving your plants outdoors for 1 hour, then gradually increase the outside time each day until they are used to being out all day. Because of increased exposure to sun and wind, you can water frequently during this period.

Transplant on a cloudy or drizzly day, or in early evening to avoid the heat and drying of direct sun. Make sure plants are watered before you begin transplanting. After planting you can use cut out plastic jugs, berry baskets or a floating row cover to protect the transplants from sun, wind and cold. If the weather is dry and sunny, water plants several times during their first week outdoors until their roots are able to take hold. If they wilt, water and cover to protect them from direct sunlight for a few days until they recover.

This information was adapted from an article by UNH Extension Educator Tina Savage. To view a full-text version, visit <http://extension.unh.edu/counties/Carroll/docs/Mar2007.pdf>.

Grow Big! It may seem early to be thinking about pumpkins, but the practices that will help you grow a prize winner start now.



1. **Planting**—Choose a spot with good sunlight that holds moisture well, like at the

bottom of a hill or a rise. Prepare a large area by tilling it with compost or manure. Plant seeds in groups of three. Once they have sprouted, keep only the strongest looking one.

2. **Fruit Selection**—Let all the fruit grow until they are about the size of a grapefruit, then remove all but one. Make your choice carefully, looking at color, shape, and thickness of the stem. After this, you should pick off all the female flowers as they form. These flowers are usually closer to the vine and always have a tiny, baby pumpkin located between the blossom and the vine.

3. **Watering**—Pumpkins need lots of water to get big; this means a big drink at least once a day. A fertilizer high in nitrogen is also helpful for strengthening the vine. If enough water and compost are added, your pumpkin could grow 7-10 pounds per day.

4. **Harvest**—Pick your pumpkin when frost has filled the vine, but before severe freezing damages the fruit. GOOD LUCK!

NORTH HAVERHILL FAIR JULY 22-26, 2009



You are eligible to enter the categories listed below.
Entries due to the 4-H office by July 1st. See your leader for details.

SECTION K - FOOD PRESERVATION - Follow USDA Canning Recommendations. Exhibit should include canning techniques & timing used. Item must be made by an individual – each club member needs to make a separate batch. **Labels required** - available at the 4-H Office. **(No paraffin)**

- Class 1 Dried foods: herbs, apples, apricots, etc. **Limit 3 entries.**
- Class 2 **Canning Alone - jar exhibit** of fruits or vegetables, meat, or pickles. **Standard canning Jelly jars** to be used for jellies, jams, marmalade, . **Limit 3 entries.**
- Class 3 **1 collection of 5 jars** to be used in a meal. Menu card must accompany this collection.

SECTION L - FORESTRY - LIMIT 2 ENTRIES PER LEVEL

- Class 1 Twig, leaf, and/or wood collection of at least 5 specimens, mounted and properly labeled. (Cloverbud and ages 8-10)
- Class 2 Twig, leaf, and/or wood collection of at least 10 specimens; wildflower or cone collection of 5 specimens each, mounted and properly labeled.
One jar maple syrup (**1 pint new canning jar**); 1/4 pound maple sugar, cakes, or candy.
- Class 3 Set of mounted pictures showing fuelwood cut and/or woodlot improvement done by the member. Minimum of 6 picture taken by exhibitor.

SECTION M - GARDENING & BERRIES - LIMIT 4 Class 1C; LIMIT 2 Class 1; LIMIT 1 Class 2, 3

Leave stems on tomatoes, 1 1/4' -1 1/2" tops on beets, carrots, and onions, do not remove roots, wash thoroughly. Corn should not be husked. **Spinach, Swiss chard, leaf lettuce or other greens are not acceptable for exhibit.**

- Class 1C Single vegetable entries - limit 4 varieties. Display must contain 3 specimens.
- Class 1 Berries - one-half pint of cultivated berries from member's own garden - Limit 2 entries.
- Class 2 Individual Garden - open to any 4-H member growing their own vegetables. Enter a collection of garden vegetables that includes 3 varieties of vegetables. To be exhibited attractively in a BOX, BASKET, OR BOWL of suitable size. Quantity to exhibit: 3 each of the following: beets, radishes, carrots, onions, turnips, peppers, potatoes, sweet corn, tomatoes; 2 cucumbers; 1 each of the following: zucchini, summer squash, broccoli, cauliflower, head cabbage, celery stalk, eggplant, melon, pumpkin, winter squash, head lettuce, watermelon; 5 each of the following: lime, shell, or string beans, peas in pods.
- Class 3 Advance Individual Garden - same as level 2 but must include 5 varieties of vegetables.

SECTION P - PLAN AND PLANT FOR BEAUTY - LIMIT 3 ENTRIES PER LEVEL - All plants/flowers must be grown by exhibitors

- Class 1 Cut flowers, corsages (fresh or dried), simple arrangement, house plants, or gourds (2).
- Class 2 Notebook, drawings, or photographs of landscaping or lawn care accomplished. Terrarium, dish garden with 5 or more types of plants, or bonsai, Christmas greens, wreaths, swag. Advanced arrangement or centerpiece.
- Class 2A Container Gardens – container can be no smaller than 7 square inches of space. The plants selected for the container should be of proper size in comparison to the container. Weeds should be removed and plants should be healthy. The container should be arranged attractively, use color and include more than one variety of plant. Props and garden ornaments are allowed/encouraged.



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