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Editor: Sarah Chappelow



# ***Green Thumb Gazette***

## ***Scenes from the Garden: September***

Thanks to Ann LaCroix for snapping these photos at the garden.



## *Preparing Gardens for Winter– by Ann LaCroix*



As the night temperatures dip into the 40's, the active gardening season is drawing to a close. Soils have been depleted of nutrients and Fall is the best time to lime and add vital soil amendments such as compost or manure to gardens and lawns before the snow flies. Here are some chores which need to be completed now to help make next year's garden a success.

### **Clean up and compost healthy plant matter:**

Remove and destroy any diseased plant matter from the garden site. Many diseases are harbored in unhealthy stems, leaves, and fruit and only await warm spring weather to be released. When in doubt, discard to the dump. Insects may also over winter in above ground plant parts. For example, the tobacco-tomato hornworm develops pupae under the tomato plants, European corn borer larvae overwinter in corn stalks and striped cucumber beetles lay eggs in plant debris. Remove any spoiled or diseased fruit which can house fungus that will reoccur next spring. By practicing good sanitation practices in your garden and around your home for lawn, trees, shrubs and perennials, good plant health can be maintained.

Compost piles are an ideal spot for disease-free old plant material such as grass clippings, spent annuals, fallen leaves, fallen fruits not diseased, spent perennial tops, and any other non-diseased leaf material. Chopped up material decomposes faster. Many gardeners prefer to till the leaves directly into the garden soil. While the leaves will not totally decompose this fall, the leaf matter will be present and begin the process next spring.



**Help us make more compost: We need your leaves!** Calling all garden members to help produce next year's compost that you all use **by bringing up your bagged or loose leaves to Bin#4 at the garden.**

A summer of coffee grounds piled in Bin #2, amounting to over a ton of grounds collected three times a week from Starbucks Coffee have had **no** brown matter to begin converting nitrogen in the coffee into rich soil.

**Without** the donations of leaves, the coffee grounds will just sit in a pile and not be decomposed for next year's garden plots. So as the leaves start to fall and you are the raking them into garbage cans or bins to haul over the banking, we **need** truck loads of leaves brought up to the garden to fill both bin #4 and bin #1.

**Thank you for your help!** The more leaves we get, the **better** the compost will be for Spring, 2017!

Ann LaCroix-Manager of the compost project and herb garden

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## *Preparing Gardens for Winter, cont.*

### **Know Your pH for Lime Application:**

Lime should be applied in the fall to gardens and lawns to maintain a pH above 6.0. Leaves are naturally acidic and over time, soils drop their pH below a 6.0 pH. Most vegetables like a pH range of 6.0-7.0 for optimal growth. Lime requires months to make a noticeable change in soil acidity levels, so the best time to apply lime is when the garden is cleaned and vacant. Application rate: 50lbs/ 1000 square feet. If the pH hasn't been tested within the last two years, fall is a great time to send in a soil sample to check if lime needs to be applied. The community garden pH is high, so do not apply any lime to your plots this year, but assess areas around your home that could use lime. Evergreens with needles or acid loving plants such as hydrangea or blueberries never require lime as they are adapted to low acid levels. However, most other plants do not have the ability to convert fertilizers into soluble form for their growth so lime must be added to maintain pH levels. There are some cheap one time pH tests that can be purchased at a garden store to easily measure the acidity of an area of concern.

For precise readings to improve an area, UNH Extension soil forms can be downloaded at: <http://extension.unh.edu>. At the top menu bar click on Agriculture, then ->Diagnosis & Soil Testing->Soil Test Form->Download forms which has the soil collection instructions included. The cost is \$17 per sample. Other tests are available as well. Test results are usually emailed within 2 weeks.

### **Disinfect and sharpen garden tools before storing for winter:**

Once tools are no longer used for the season, using an old rag, clean the blades and head with turpentine and sharpen with a sharpening stone. To access a professional sharpening service, Blue Seal in Bow has a send out service for cleaning and sharpening your favorite tools.

### **Apply a cover crop to boost the soil's nutrient ability and retention moisture in the soil:**

Cover crops are extremely beneficial in any garden especially those prone to erosion. Cover crops improve soil **fertility** and add **significant** organic matter, especially to sandy or clay soil structures. Winter hardy rye should be planted wherever the garden has been cleaned and can be seeded any time from August 20 to October 15 at a rate of 1-2 pounds per 395 square feet or 400 sq.ft. For better germination, rake the area well, seed with rye and then using the back of the rake, cover the seed slightly with soil. Water regularly to get the seed germinated. Winter rye will grow from now through Winter until Spring. Rye is best turned over when it reaches knee high growth and is left to rot three weeks before Spring planting.

### **Rotate Crops to improve overall soil health:**

Draw a garden map of this year's plant locations to keep a record for crop rotation next spring. Be sure not to plant crops in spots with those of the same plant families that contract the same plant insects and diseases. These vegetables (e.g. tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant, pepper, cabbage, broccoli, or cauliflower) are susceptible to host specific insects or fungus within these plant groups. Crop rotate leafy greens or root crops in that area for three years before returning to the location with these vegetables. Insects lay eggs in the soil and fungal spores winter over in the soil ready for spring to resurface.

**Reminder: Please have your plots completely cleaned out no later than Monday, September 26.**

## Preparing Gardens for Winter, cont.

### Saving seeds for next year:

Store unused seeds in the refrigerator or in a paper bag in a cool, dry location. Many vegetable plants that have internal seeds at the core of the fruit can be removed, dried, and kept over the winter for spring planting can be saved and dried using screens or paper bags until thoroughly dried. Seeds like tomato, pepper, cucumber, squash, eggplant and flowers such as sunflower and marigolds can be collected and saved.

**Herb garden:** Despite extreme drought this summer, the herb garden maintained good growth this year, and more folks are stopping by and cutting herbs to use at home which is great. Using the scissors and bags provided, please harvest herbs of basil or dill or cut sections of herbs such as winter savory, thyme, or sage to dry for winter. The new herb sign designed by Louise Jacob, co- manager of the herb garden, was very much appreciated. Thank you, Louise!



The summer of 2016 produced good harvest with exception to farmers growing corn or apples due to the drought and excessive days of 90+ temperatures and high humidity.

Here is the garden's rainfall chart kept by Jeff Abbe.

May rainfall total .75 inches

June rainfall total 3.35 inches

July rainfall total .50 inches

August rainfall 3.0 inches

September (9<sup>th</sup>) .6 inches

Total summer rainfall= 8.2 inches of rain.



Chart by Jeff Abbe			
Month	Amount/Date	Month	Total
5/13	.40		
5/18	Trace		
5/28	.25		
5/31	.10	Total May	.75
June			
6-7	0.50"		
6-21	0.95"		
7-2	0.75"		
7-18	1.10"	Total June	3.35"
July 29	0.50"	8/21	1.05"
Aug 1	0.25"	8/28	0.20
8/10	0.10"	9/1	0.60
8/13	0.45		
8/16	0.15		

Thank you, Jeff, for monitoring the rainfall for us!

## ***Harvest Suppah Highlights***

Garden friends gathered at Jeff and Judi Abbe's house on September 14th to share stories, feast, and dance to the Homegrown Tomatoes song. A fun time was had by all. Thank you for hosting, Jeff and Judi!



## ***Wrapping Up the Season— by Sarah Chappelow***

You may have heard the saying "It takes a village." That is no truer than here at the Community Garden. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time, talents, and resources to make the Garden a fun and fruitful place. Special thanks go out to the Boscawen Agricultural Commission, Penacook Boscawen Water Precinct, the Garden Committee members, Town Office staff, Roger Sanborn, Derek Mills, Charlie Jaworski, Louise Jacob, Amy Papineau, Dee Blake, Joe Colby and Colby Lumber, Starbucks (240 Loudon Rd, Concord), and all our gardeners.

Have ideas for how to improve the garden for 2017, or items you would like to read about in the newsletter? Email Sarah Chappelow with your thoughts at [Sarah.Chappelow@gmail.com](mailto:Sarah.Chappelow@gmail.com).

## ***Parting Words— Submitted by Jeff Abbe***

"Used to be anybody could farm, all you needed was a strong back... But nowadays you need a good education to understand all the advice you get, so you can pick out what'll do you the least harm."

-Vermont saying - mid 1900's-

**See You Next Year!**