

WTCG



Washington Township Community Garden

NEWSLETTER: Birth Of A Garden

April 27th, 2013 was an extraordinary day. Something really wonderful happened and it happened right before our eyes. A group of people in Long Valley came out to volunteer at the Washington Township Community Garden. Some of these people met for the first time. They shook hands, introduced themselves to each other and set to work. And that is when the something wonderful took shape. Seventy-one raised bed plots were built. All in ONE day, all by people working together. On April 27th, I learned what the “community” part of Community Garden is all about. It’s not just a garden; it’s a group of people, sharing a common goal, a dream come true, a COMMUNITY! Did you feel the magic? - Diane Muenzen

WOO HOO!

Thanks to Kevin Fleming and John Harrington we were able to make this day happen. Thanks to all the plot gardeners and their families who continue to do more than their share of the work to help this garden come together. You are wonderful!



“My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant’s point of view.” ~H. Fred Dale

Tomato Growing FAQ’s

By Margaret Roach

Q. What is the difference between a determinate and an indeterminate tomato?

A. The terms refer to the growth habit of a particular variety (and there are also semi-determinates). Think of determinate and indeterminate like bush types and vine types.

Q. If I am buying tomato transplants, are big ones better?

A. The garden center can be a confusing place, and prices can vary from less than \$2 for a 6-pack of something to many more dollars for a single large plant. I say buy smaller, but select ones that are stocky and tough. Start with dark green, stout transplants equally high and wide, preferably about 4 inches in each direction.

Q. Do I mulch my tomato plants?

High-quality woven polypropylene landscape fabric, such as is used on greenhouse floors, is an excellent, porous, weed-preventive measure for a tomato patch. It can be reused for many years. Staple it to the ground with earth staples. On top of that, a layer of clean straw or some other organic mulch will further reduce splashing of spores and other woes up from the soil onto the plants. Just have a few plants or a single row and the straw or equivalent alone will suffice.

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Q. Should I cage, stake or trellis my tomato plants?

A. I recommend that you decide on one of these methods to support the plants, to keep them up off the ground, for best health. There are pros and cons to each style.

- Staked plants will ripen faster crops of generally larger fruit. Stakes must be at least 1 inch thick and 6 feet high, inserted a foot into the ground. Remember: Staked plants require a commitment to ongoing pruning, keeping the plant to one or two main stems of vine-like, not bush, habit. All small suckers that develop in the crotches between the leaves and the main stem must be removed. I do not have the energy for this, so I cage my plants.

- Caged plants are easier to care for, and in the longterm may produce heavier yields (because they have more branches and stems). I bought myself a set of lifetime cages that also fold; you can make excellent cages from concrete reinforcing wire (6 feet of it makes a 22-inch cage). Stabilize each cage with a stake and twist-ties, unless the cage has inground legs.

Q. Do tomato plants need pruning?

A. Staked plants do need pruning. Some gardeners who do not



Easy to grow, nutritious and delicious!
Grow lettuce in the vegetable garden, tuck it into flowerbeds, or cultivate it in containers.

stake prune anyway. Though this is more pinching than pruning, snip off any flowerbuds that set until the plant is settled in and growing strong, after it reaches perhaps a foot tall or so.

Q. When and how much do I water tomato plants?

A. Ideal is the equivalent of an inch of water throughout the entire growing area; half again as much in the heat of summer. Remember: an inch of rain (which is what you are simulating) is a lot of rain, and takes a long time to apply.

Q. Do tomatoes need to be fed; I have read that they are "heavy feeders"?

A. Douse each plant's root zone with a liquid feed twice during the growing season. Some growers swear by doing this at transplant time and again when the first flowers appear; others say transplant and first fruit. Just remember to do it while they are in their run-up to adulthood and you will be fine. Powdered seaweed fertilizer or fish emulsion diluted in water according to label directions are two non-chemical possibilities, and compost (though not technically a fertilizer) is always welcome.

The Super Sturdy Tomato Cage

The ultimate tomato support is strong enough to stand up to summer storms and bumper crops. Constructed from livestock panels sold at farm supply stores make a super durable cage. Instructions can be found at www.organicgardening.com in the learn and grow section.



First WTCG Educational Session Well Attended

Planning Your Vegetable Garden, an educational program presented by Master Gardener Wing-Yee Pavlosky, was attended by 31 new gardeners at the Washington Township Library on Monday, May 13th. Wing-Yee's enthusiasm spread rapidly through the crowd as she gave us strategies and helpful tips for our gardens. We enjoyed the many photos of her garden, and who didn't love her berry patch?

Wing-Yee explained that as a Master Gardener in the Rutgers Program, she is required to give back to the community and speak to various groups throughout Northern NJ. We hope to have several additional programs throughout the year on garden topics via this program. Watch for information in future newsletters. - Diane Muenzen



New Sponsorship Program

Because we have a few needs that are pressing we've started a sponsorship program so those that want to help, can. We need to: reimburse committee members that have loaned the garden funds when funding didn't cover expenses, help fund scout projects that are costly, buy some tools & supplies and build a shed and a couple sturdy long lasting compost bins. There are many people in our community who would like to help give the garden support at this important time of start up. Please reach out to your family, friends & businesses and share our website page where a sponsorship application can be downloaded. <http://wtcommunitygarden.jimdo.com/sponsorship/>

Business & Personal Sponsorships

With your help we will be able to have the basics every garden needs.

For your sponsorship we will plant bulbs, place pavers & stepping stones or plant a fruit tree in your name. Please see our sponsor form below.

 <p>Fruit Tree</p> <p>Large logo featured on website. A Fruit Tree planted in WTCG with dedication plaque.</p> <p>\$500 +</p>	<p>Sponsored by Luigi's Pizza Joe & Maria</p> <p>Stepping Stone</p> <p>Medium logo featured on website. Engraved Bluestone Stepping Stone placed in WTCG.</p> <p>\$250 - \$499</p>	<p>Joe & Maria Santos</p> <p>Brick Paver</p> <p>Small logo featured on website. Engraved Paver placed in WTCG.</p> <p>\$100 - \$249</p>	 <p>1 DOZ. Bulbs</p> <p>Name featured on website. One dozen bulbs planted in WTCG.</p> <p>\$50</p>
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Pests & Problems - Powdery Mildew

- Joe Lamp'1

Powdery mildew is one of the most widespread and easily identifiable plant fungal diseases. From vegetable gardens to rose gardens, ornamental trees and shrubs, almost no type of plant is immune.

If you find that some of your plants or trees have powdery mildew, don't worry. This fungus is host specific, meaning just because you find it on one plant species, does not make it a threat to other type plants in your landscape. Although there are many different species of powdery mildew, the symptoms all look about the same from one to another.

What to look for: You've likely seen it many times. White or gray powdery spots appear, often times covering most if not the entire leaf surface. It's also found on plant stems, flowers and even fruit. Fortunately, the symptoms of powdery mildew are usually worse than the actual damage. Rarely is it fatal to the plant. Advanced stages can cause plant foliage to yellow, curl or turn brown and eventually cause the plant to defoliate prematurely. On flowering plants and trees, the fungus can lead to early bud drop or reduce the flower quality.

So Now What? Conditions that favor mildew formation include dry foliage, high humidity, low light and moderate temperatures. Proactive steps to avoid or minimize this risk include:

- Look for disease resistant varieties. Contact your local county extension service for named varieties and cultivars.
- Provide adequate air circulation by not crowding plants.
- Site plants where they will get sufficient light of six hours or more each day. Minimize shade and trim trees and shrubs that block the light.
- Avoid over fertilization. New growth is more susceptible. Instead, apply a slow-release fertilizer that provides more controlled growth.

Controlling an existing problem:

Should you find the need to react to an existing condition of powdery mildew, early detection provides the best way to contain and potentially eliminate the problem. Most conventional products are made for prevention and control, not elimination of an existing infection. That's why it's important to start a control program before powdery mildew occurs or at least at the earliest sign of detection.

Lesser know options include:

Neem oil - This is a readily available organic option to disease and pest control. Neem oil is extracted from the neem tree, native to India. This is an effective disease control and a broad spectrum, natural insecticide that is kinder to beneficial insects and mammals.

Water - Ironically, dry conditions and high humidity are the most favorable conditions for powdery mildew to form. But straight water is its enemy because it washes off the spores before they have time to embed. However, water isn't something that I promote for control because wet foliage is friend to many other plant diseases.

Baking Soda (sodium bicarbonate) - This is possibly the best known of the home-made, organic solutions for powdery mildew. Although studies indicate that baking soda alone is not all that effective, when combined with horticultural grade or dormant oil and liquid soap, efficacy is very good if applied in the early stages or before an outbreak occurs. Use this recipe to make your own solution—mix one tablespoon of baking soda with a teaspoon of dormant oil and one teaspoon of insecticidal or liquid soap (not detergent) to a gallon of water. Spray on plants every one to two weeks.

Potassium bicarbonate - Similar to baking soda, this has the unique advantage of actually eliminating powdery mildew once it's there. Potassium bicarbonate is a contact fungicide which kills the powdery mildew spores quickly. In addition, it's approved for use in organic growing.

Mouthwash - If it can kill the germs in your mouth, certainly the fungal spores of powdery mildew are no match. And that's the premise. Generic, ethanol based mouthwash can be very effective at control. Tests using one part mouthwash to three parts water worked for well for Jeff Gillman, Ph.D and Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota, Department of Horticulture. Just be careful when mixing and applying mouthwash as new foliage can be damaged.

Vinegar - Similar to mouthwash, the acetic acid of vinegar can control powdery mildew. A mixture of 2-3 tablespoons of common apple cider vinegar, containing 5% acetic acid mixed with a gallon of water does job. However, too much vinegar can burn plants but at the same time, higher concentrations (above 5%) are more effective.

Milk - The latest player in the fight against powdery mildew is milk. It's not clear yet why it works so well, but it is believed that naturally occurring compounds in the milk are at work to combat the disease while also boosting the plant's immune system. One experiment showed good results by applying a weekly dose of one part milk to nine parts water. This is yet another case when more is not better. Concentrations above three parts water had adverse side effects.

