
The Dirt: June Gardening Resources & Tips / Corrected Version

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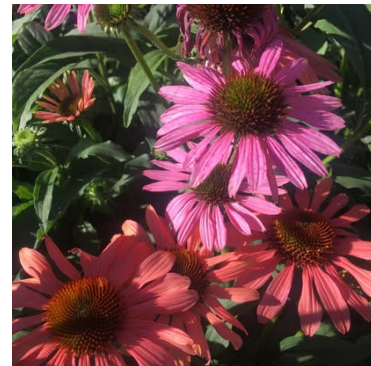


Gardening Resources & Tips from the MMGA

June 2025 ***Busy as Bees!***



While May is full of early promise, June shows up with gifts galore! June is the month we get to plant peppers, cucumbers, basil—all those warm weather items that we wanted in the ground but knew better. June means fireflies, pollinators, and budding flowers. Those fields of ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and buttercups (*Ranunculus arvensis*) give way to more cultivated gardens, and *Allium*, coneflower (*Echinacea*), daylilies (*Hemerocallis*), and peonies (*Paeonia*) bloom. As if that weren't enough, June also comes bearing strawberries! June means gardeners are busy as bees – and happy about it. For this issue, we explore some key June activities in a month chock full of gardening delights.



In this month's issue of The Dirt:

- Featured Garden: Tiny but mighty, Adam's Farm produces 800+lbs of food for the hungry!
- Featured How-To: Learn about companion planting for better results.
- Monthly Native Plant: *Amsonia hubrichtii*, beautiful & low-maintenance.

- Monthly Tip: Get organized and get all of those busy June jobs done.

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REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!



The **Massachusetts Gardening Symposium** is an annual, in-person event featuring presentations on best practices in sustainable, regenerative horticulture. Again this Symposium (our 9th!), we're delighted to bring you four acclaimed speakers who are master educators as well as experts on topics that present unique challenges and opportunities for New England gardeners.

The Symposium is open to all gardeners, novices to experts. There's always something new for everyone to learn!

2025 Massachusetts Gardening Symposium
Saturday, September 27, 2025, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM

Bentley University – LaCava Conference Center, Waltham, MA
Conveniently located 3.5 miles off Route 95/128

[CLICK HERE](#) to learn more and register

SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS



LECTURE TOPICS

- **“Beauty, Integrity, and Resilience: Can a Garden Have Everything?” (Burrell)** – LEARN HOW to meet your aesthetic goals with a mixture of native and favorite non-native plants ... while providing the structure and resources necessary to support biodiversity.
- **“EcoBeneficial Landscape Strategies for the Climate Crisis” (Eierman)**– LEARN HOW the plants you choose and the landscape practices you use can help reduce the impact of climate change in your own garden and improve the environment.
- **“Native Groundcovers for Northeast Gardens”(Himmelman)** – LEARN HOW you can replace traditional mulch with a tapestry of foliage and flowers that is more visually appealing and ecologically valuable.
- **“Herbs: Heroes of the Garden” (Shimizu)** – LEARN HOW herbs are chemical factories with countless uses from a former curator of the National Herb Garden at the US National Arboretum, Washington, DC.

For more information, visit our [web page](#). Registration includes presentations, lunch, book signings, Garden Marketplace, and ample time to visit with friends old and new. And speaking of friends, the Symposium is always more fun when you attend with a group: [Download and share our flyer](#).

Registration closes on September 17, 2025 at 5:00 PM or once we reach capacity. In past years we have filled up early, so sign up soon.

Early Bird pricing is open through August 5, 2025.
[Sign up now](#) to save \$ and beat the rush!

Questions? Email SympInfo@MassMasterGardeners.org

Note: A previous version of this essay mistakenly omitted an author.

Featured Monthly Garden
Plant-A-Row for the Hungry Project
Adams Farm
999 North St

North Walpole, MA 02081

Co-author Laura Vaites, CMG, is a biomedical scientist and gardening enthusiast, earning MG certification in 2023. She has been excited to serve as a co-project manager at Adams Farm since 2024 and sets ambitious goals for produce donation to the Norwood Food Pantry. As a member of the Norwood Evening Garden Club, Laura also takes an interest in sharing horticultural knowledge as the Horticulture Chair and tackles new gardening experiments to improve pollinator habitats and support organic gardening practices.

Co-author Debbie Wells, PMG, has been a Project Manager at Heritage Museums and Garden in Sandwich since 2022. For the past decade, Debbie has been a Project Manager at Adams Farm, featured in this issue. Working with the Pine Hills Garden Club, Plymouth Sustainability and Plymouth Pollinators, Debbie is starting native plant gardens to increase lost pollinator habitats. Debbie also participates in the Junior Gardeners program which educates third graders about the unique plant communities in Massachusetts Coastal Pine Barrens, one of only three Coastal Pine Barrens left in the world.

Tiny, but mighty! 800+ pounds of produce raised in less than 800 square feet of garden space? One might guess that would be a challenge—and that is exactly what we love most about the Adams Farm Plant-A-Row for the Hungry (PAR) project in Walpole, MA.



The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association in concert with the Norwood Evening Garden Club are the proud stewards of this community garden space at Adams Farm. We have maintained a 20' x 20' plot of four organic vegetable planting beds since 2009, the inaugural year for the community garden. Since its opening, the community garden has doubled in size to 64 plots maintained by local gardeners, and their enthusiasm is evidenced by their flourishing organic plots of vegetables, fruits, and flowers. Set in a picturesque setting of 365 acres of town-owned land including open pastures and forest, the Adams Farm Community Garden is a great place to hone vegetable gardening skills and to appreciate the beautiful nature of this area, only 20 miles south of Boston.



PAR is a national people-helping-people program that encourages gardeners to grow a little extra and donate the produce to local soup kitchens and food pantries serving their communities. In 2016, the PAR project became a project garden for MMGA participants and a learning environment for interns interested in vegetable gardening. Over the past few years, the MMGA project garden has taken on the tall order of amending and planting nearby vacant community garden plots to boost our crop production. Now in 2025, we have secured not only our original 20' x 20' project site but also a second 20' x 20' site that will be donated to the project yearly. We donate produce from our

project to the local Norwood Food Pantry. This includes a variety of vegetables that are organically grown from seed including cool season lettuces, kale, radish, as well as tomatoes, squash, snap peas, beans, peppers, carrots, and onions. Crops are harvested throughout the spring, summer, and fall for the benefit of our neighbors in need of help with their groceries. This plot also serves as a drop-off location for other community gardeners with excess produce to contribute to the weekly donations.

In 2023, our project donated over 600 pounds of produce, a 150 pound increase over 2022 after assisting with the maintenance and planting of a second garden plot. After a cold and rainy start to the 2024 growing season, we rallied with great support from the Master Gardener community and our interns to tackle critters sharing our harvest and to clear an overgrown second plot in late July. As our gardens took shape, the Norwood Evening Garden Club was awarded the Espoma Organic Plant America grant for \$250 in Espoma fertilizer and soil amendment products. This was a huge boost for amending our second plot that had been vacant for several years, and set the stage for a robust tomato, tomatillo, and squash harvest well into October.



In 2024, we hit a record at 824 pounds of donated produce! Over 200 pounds of squash, 240 pounds of tomatoes, 18 pounds of tomatillos, 75 pounds of Swiss chard, and 14 pounds of carrots were donated amongst other produce. We were incredibly thankful for the fantastic 2024 growing season and all the support our MMGA master gardeners and interns gave



to the project, along with the continued support of the NEGC PAR committee. The outstanding results for 2024 reflect the camaraderie, dedication, and resilience of our volunteers who garden rain-or-shine, cold or hot, to keep our

produce and harvest in top shape across the entire growing season. We not only look forward to reaching these high standards again in 2025, but with our second plot ready to go, we set a goal of 1,000 pounds of donated produce for 2025.

We were excited to learn that the PAR project was a recipient of an MMGA Gardening Grant, which enabled us to purchase some key “wishlist items” to improve our site(s), and to store and tote supplies and veggies. We are so thankful for this funding as we ramp up our gardens to meet our goal. Our first donation to the food pantry took place on



May 16, consisting of cold season crops started early this spring including leaf lettuce, radishes, herbs, and rhubarb. In preparation for summer harvest (and in light of rising costs for supplies, plants, etc.), we established a creative strategy for “deck farming” to raise tomatoes, tomatillos, and peppers. We sowed seeds indoors in sunny, south-facing windows, then conditioned seedlings to the full sun and windy outdoor environment in mini-greenhouses consisting of storage containers topped with screen material on a warm deck. Our hardy plants were transplanted into the second plot in late May.

Each year, our project reaches new heights both in produce harvested and knowledge shared among our MMGA and NEGC volunteers. It’s hard to put words on paper that capture the excitement and dedication the MMGA and NEGC members put into the plot. From wading in mud in early April to installing critter-preventative fencing to harvesting those final tomatoes in October, the energy and collegial nature of the project is always apparent, and we are humbled by the abundance of fresh vegetables shared with the Norwood Food Pantry. We invite you to visit our plot, pull a weed or two, or enjoy some leisure time at Adams Farm...a lovely setting!



MASSACHUSETTS MASTER
GARDENER ASSOCIATION PRESENTS

Fall Gardening Know-How

Join us ONLINE

August 6, 13, 20 & 27th 2025

7-8:30 PM

Topics include:

Peonies – Love of my Life

Invasives – What can Gardeners Do?

Forcing Bulbs

Lawns and Lawn Alternatives

Registration closes August 3, 2025

To learn more and sign up, use scan the
QR code or visit our website:

www.massmastergardeners.org

Questions? Email us at

KnowHow@MassMasterGardeners.org



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Featured Monthly How-To Companion Planting

Author Gretel Anspach is a Trustee of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, a Lifetime Master Gardener with the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association, and a retired systems engineer from Raytheon. She won the MMGA Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. Gretel established and

maintains a 10,000 square foot food production garden that has provided fresh produce to the Marlboro and Maynard Food Pantries since 2011.

When I mention Companion Planting, a common response is, “Oh, like the Three Sisters: the beans climb the corn, the corn gets nitrogen from the beans, and the squash shades the roots. Everyone wins!” Some tribes, like the Seneca and Iroquois [1], grew their crops that way, occasionally surrounded by tobacco to deter pests. Others, like the Hidatsa [2], grew the corn, beans and squash on separate mounds, and the tobacco in a separate field. Either way, three sisters gardening was a brilliant agricultural technique in that it provided a balanced diet for native people across this country, even when not supplemented by greens and the occasional white-tailed deer. It also meets some definitions of companion planting, but not others. That’s part of the problem when thinking about companion planting.



West Virginia University writes, “Companion planting is the practice of growing several types of crops near one another to enhance production.” It turns out that growing the Three Sisters as described above didn’t enhance production. A couple of studies [3][4] were done comparing the productivity of three traditional cultivars grown separately (monocrops) or together in mounds. The monocrops either matched or exceeded the productivity of the crops grown together in mounds. This doesn’t make it any less brilliant– just maybe not companion planting. Or maybe the Iroquois and Senecas practiced companion planting (corn-climbing beans) but the Hidatsa didn’t (separate mounds). Or maybe it’s all companion planting; maybe companion planting includes plants that can be grown very densely without either benefiting or inhibiting each other. Roommates rather than companions. A college dorm vs. a fraternity

If we include plants that don’t interfere with each other, a lot more combinations present themselves. Generally, you can plant two different plants near each other provided they don’t:

- Exude chemicals that inhibit the others (negative allelopathy). Even these are worth a second look. Alliums exude allicin which kill the bacteria that allows legumes to fix nitrogen. But if you provide the legumes enough nitrogen, they can grow quite well next to alliums.
- Compete directly with each other for light or nutrients. That suggests planting tall plants near short ones (e.g. pole beans next to radishes, carrots, and lettuce), or deep-rooted plants near shallow rooted ones. This source gives you an idea how deeply common crops are rooted [5].



- Draw exactly the same pests and diseases. If you're planting potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers, separate them to make it harder for pests to find and less likely for disease spores to build.

Examples of combinations that coexist without interacting (that we know of) include:

- Radishes, carrots, and lettuce. The radishes mature quickly and make room for the carrots and lettuce.
- Radishes, carrots, lettuce, and/or beets under trellised peas, tomatoes, or pole beans. The shorter plants may appreciate the shade cast by the taller ones.



There are companion planting possibilities that go beyond just planting densely, such as plants that deter each other's pests or enhance each other's growth (positive allelopathy). The tricky part is figuring out if it will work in your garden, and whether you'll pay a penalty in production.

A study [6] was conducted in Guatemala to see if marigolds could decrease the impact of early blight, soil-borne nematodes, or and whiteflies on tomatoes. The answer was yes... but. For it to work, he either had to plant the marigolds 60 days before the tomatoes (not feasible in Massachusetts) or spread the tomato spacing out. Each tomato plant then produced more tomatoes, but the field produced fewer because it could fit fewer tomato plants. The yield increase was not sufficient to make up for the decreased number of plants. And none of the results on total yield were statistically significant. Which is to say that there is no evidence that the difference was not just random chance.

Other studies produce a more hopeful result. This study [7] combined tomatoes with basil, fennel, peppermint, and rue. All of the combinations produced more total harvest per field than any of the monocrops, with peppermint and rue doing the best. I have no market for rue, and I'm NOT planting peppermint in the middle of my vegetables (I'll never get it out again!), but the basil seems worth trying. While his results weren't statistically significant, interplanting tomatoes and basil increased his tomato yield by 2.7x per plant, and his basil yield by 50% per plant!



Some examples of combinations that seem to increase yield include:

- Basil with tomatoes. Alternate rows of tomatoes and basil, or else interplant them in a row.
- Bush beans and squash. Planting 2 rows of beans to 1 row of squash increased yield of both crops 22%

- Onions and cucumbers. Decreased powdery mildew on cukes.

Other companion planting combinations work to repel or trap pests. Some farmers use both a repellent to push the pests off the plants, and an attractant (trap crop) to collect the pests in a known spot where they can be killed.

Examples of repellent plants are:

- marigolds against squash bugs and cucumber beetles,
- nasturtiums against cucumber beetles, and
- icicle radishes against squash bugs.

Examples of trap crops are:

- tobacco (ornamental nicotiana) for aphids, mites, whiteflies and beetles – but don't plant them near tomatoes since they share a disease,
- eggplant or okra for whiteflies,
- calendula or nasturtiums as aphid trap, and
- Blue Hubbard squash for squash bugs and cucumber beetles.



The best companion plants are those that attract pollinators and predators. This marvelous chart may give you some ideas of plants to try [8]. While you could argue whether these meet the criteria of companion planting, they will bring insects into your garden that will help make your garden more successful, and the flowers will be something to enjoy while waiting for your harvest to arrive.

Click [here](#) for the reference list.

Monthly Tip
June is busy!

June is a busy month. So many plants to get in the ground, so many garden tasks to perform, so many plant sales to attend.

There are many different jobs, little-to-big, to accomplish this month. Here are some of June's many tasks:



Deadhead larger bulbs, daffodils, and tulips. Leaves, however, need to go through the process of photosynthesis to make a simple carbohydrate to sustain the bulb for the next year. Don't cut them, don't braid them, don't bend them. If you do, the leaves cannot efficiently make their simple carbohydrate and restore energy to the bulb for the following year.



Prune early-spring blooming shrubs just after they flower. Many early blooming shrubs set their new buds a couple of weeks after blooming. Pruning before the shrubs have a chance to set buds is the perfect time to trim and shape shrubs. Shrubs like lilacs, forsythias, and rhododendron do well with this attention

Deadhead annuals to keep them producing flowers. Annuals' main mission is to reproduce, and they reproduce by flowering and going to seed. Deadheading keeps the flowers coming all season.

When planting new plants, add a little compost to the planting hole. Compost adds organic matter and helps retain moisture.

By now, the evening temperatures are warm enough to plant warm weather vegetable crops, like tomatoes, and summer flowers, like dahlias. Make sure your taller plants are staked and tied. This will help to prevent breaking or the snapping off of new, tender growth. The best time to stake or support a plant is before it needs it!



To help with weeding and water retention, make sure there is some sort of mulch, whether it be compost, a fine bark mulch, shredded leaves, or pine needles. Look into the benefits of the different types [here](#).

Water when necessary, although there has been quite a bit of rain lately. If you need to water, water in the morning. This will comply with Massachusetts state regulations, and it is most advantageous to the plants.

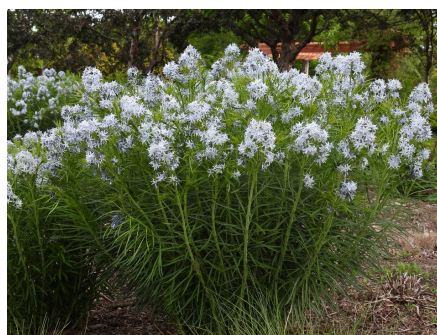
Monthly Native Plant

Amsonia hubrichtii



Among the many beautiful, low-maintenance members of the *Amsonia* genus, *Amsonia hubrichtii* stands out as a favorite for those seeking a beautiful and resilient perennial for their gardens. Native to the fields and meadows of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri, this Southern native has made a name for itself beyond its natural range thanks to its tough, adaptable nature and ornamental appeal.

Commonly known as threadleaf bluestar, *Amsonia hubrichtii* is tolerant of a wide range of soil types and prefers full sun to part shade. The plant displays clusters of blue star-shaped flowers in the spring that provide early-season nectar for native bees, bumblebees, carpenter bees, and ruby-throated hummingbirds, while also serving as host plants for the caterpillars of several butterfly and moth species. The hollow stems of *Amsonia* have the added benefit of providing habitat for native bees in the early spring. Bluestars are also reliably deer resistant thanks to their milky sap that deters browsing.



But it's the fine, thread-like foliage of this bluestar that steals the show throughout the growing season. The plant's airy texture creates a contrast with bolder-leaved plants, and adds movement and lightness to borders and naturalistic plantings.

As summer heat intensifies, this perennial thrives where others falter, requiring little water once established. In the fall, the foliage turns into a brilliant golden hue, providing a striking seasonal finale, especially when planted en masse. Tough, beautiful, and enduring, *Amsonia hubrichtii* is a testament to how native species can combine ecological value with year-round garden interest.

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association
presents a free community event

Paved Paradise: The Ecological Impacts of America's Highway System

Lecture by Ben Goldfarb



June 3rd, 2025 7-8:30PM, Virtual.
Click for more information

Seasonal MMGA Learning Resources

Ask us your questions in person! Trained volunteers staff **Ask-a-Master-Gardener (AAMG)** tables at dozens of events throughout the growing season.

- The AAMGA is coming to a community near you, so check our [AAMG Calendar](#) calendar for dates and times.
- Belong to a local organization that would like to host an AAMG? Contact Outreach@MassMasterGardeners.org.



Why guess? Test! Get your soil pH tested - for free!

- Visit a soil testing clinic near you: [Soil Testing Calendar](#).
- To request an MMGA Soil Testing event for your organization's event, contact SoilTesting@MassMasterGardeners.org.

Year-round MMGA Learning Resources

Have a plant problem? Email our volunteers your questions...and they'll get back to you. Please include your name, phone number, and as much detail as possible, including photos.

- **Massachusetts Horticultural Society**
MHSHelpline@MassMasterGardeners.org

- **New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill**
Hortline@NEBG.org

Speaker's Bureau: If you're a member of a garden club or other organization, check out our lecture topics [here](#). If you need information on how to schedule a talk for your group, contact our Speakers Bureau Manager at Speakers@MassMasterGardeners.org.

Credits

Featured Articles & Columns

- Featured Garden: Laura Vaites, Certified Master Gardener
- Featured Monthly How-To: Gretel Anpach, Lifetime Master Gardener
- Monthly Native Plant: Hadley Berkowitz, Principal Master Gardener
- Monthly Gardening Tip: Kathi Gariepy, Lifetime Master Gardener

Photos (in order of appearance)

- Coneflower, by Lynne Larson, PMG
- Symposium header, by Michele Feinsilver Hoye, PMG
- Adams Farm aerial view, by Friends of Adams Farm
- Adams Farm gardens and vegetables, by Laura Viates, CMG
- Three Sisters, by University of Connecticut Extension Master Gardener Facebook
- Companion planting, by Stark Bros Nursery
- Radishes and lettuce, by University of Minnesota Extension
- Tomatoes and basil, by University of West Virginia Extension
- Nasturtium, radish, marigold, by Swan Hose/Hillier Garden Center/Gardeners Path
- Young tomato plant, by Utah State University Extension
- Deadheading daffodils, rhododendron, geranium, by English Garden/Fine Gardening/Peterborough and area Master Gardeners
- Staking photo, by University of Maryland Extension
- *Amsonia hubrichtii* close-up, by Missouri Botanical Garden
- *Amsonia hubrichtii* upright, by Fine Gardening
- *Amsonia hubrichtii* fall, Homestead Gardens
- Peony, by Lynne Larson, PMG

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Who We Are

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to share research-based horticultural knowledge and experience with the public. We meet that goal through Master Gardener Certification, outreach, education, volunteering, and public gardening programs for the advancement of best practices in sustainable, regenerative horticulture.



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