RCCG NEWS

President Note | RCCG Water | Community Garden Studies | Companion Planting

RCCG Contact Information

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Important Dates

Sunday July 19- Fieldtrip to Kenilworth Aquatic Garden

Saturday, October 4 - Garden Potluck

Sunday, Ocober 5, Rain Date for Garden Potluck

October 18 - Saturday - Fall Clean up

October 19 - Sunday - Final Inspection



President's Corner

By Joe Nelson, RCCG President

Happy midsummer fellow gardeners.

By now I think we've all come to appreciate our in-home supply (or lack thereof) of gallon jugs, buckets, and other containers that can survive sloshing in vehicles and hand carrying in treks back in forth to the garden.











RCCG July 2025

For me we started with a bucket that while able to carry over two gallons, ended up being useless to pour and distribute and evolved to a mishmash set of 4 -5 gallons of mixed containers for two person carry to our plot each non rainy evening. I saw others with small but numerous personal water bottles, trying to ensure plants managed in the 100 degree days. I'm hoping that everyone is surviving and also understanding the fragile nature of how we are able in better times more easily garden in the heat. We've again been mostly blessed by frequent rain which despite the intense heat has lessened the burden for everyone including or current and future bounty. Despite the situation, many of us have still been harvesting. In my family's garden, kale, mustard, lettuce, arugula, and chard have gone home and been the complement to many delicious meals. Beets were harvested starting this week and onions (thanks to Judy R for the sets) are set to be soon. Tomatoes are just on the cusp as well. Hope your garden is producing well and the weeds are getting beat back. We've also been graced by youthful and enthusiastic students from George Mason University who've been observing and interviewing us. They have been overwhelmed by the graciousness many of you have shown and I appreciate all who have taken time to chat, give produce samples, and otherwise make them welcome. The study has culminated and some of us have seen their presentation but for those who missed it's recorded HERE. Passcode: Gj4pt6?@

Now that the water is back on - stay safe, cool, and happy this summer.

RCCG Water + Second Point of Order

by Rima

Our water is provided for FREE (to date; who knows about the future) by the NPS. We believe the water main, which goes through the garden, and allows for our garden distribution system, services the horse stables at the top of the hill. Since the horses are not there right now, the NPS can actually see how much water WE are costing them.

In the spring, when the weather and ground warm up, we route a hose from the NPS owned hydrants, orange one in the interior meadow and the bib on the west side by the asphalt trail (blue), to our garden pipe system, allowing the water to run to individual spigots spread throughout the garden. Over the growing season, the NPS hydrants (bibs/faucets) should (or will) have their handles UP ALL THE TIME, so the water may flow into our pipes. During the growing season, water flow is controlled at the individual spigots spread throughout the garden.

The new orange hydrant has a sprocket lock. If the handle doesn't fully open or close, check for the sprocket and turn it until the handle is fully down or fully up, as needed. Some folks "lock" the handle with the sprocket at all times of year. Don't be confused by it. The blue bib on the west side is a simple up and down.

The blue NPS bib on the west side of the garden services the paths to the west of the garden and the orange NPS bib services the plots to the east. The row division is AA to C; and D to G. The map for where the lines are is located inside the tool shed on the door. It's not 100% accurate, but as much as we have in the records right now. Useful if you need a visual where we believe the pipes run and if you're path digging, keep an eye out for the pipes (i.e. don't break them; but if you do, please notify rockcreekgarden@gmail.com).

The consequence of our system is, periodically, the main hose bibs get their handles pushed down, which leads to a water shut off. Consequently, if YOU have to raise the handle, because during the handle-up season someone pushed it down, go check to make sure no outlying garden distribution spigots are

open. It's been so that I or others have come into the garden to find water pouring out of an outlying spigot. This happens when someone frustrated by no water in the hose by their garden, hasn't gone to turn the water on at the hydrant or hasn't known to do that, and has left the outlying spigot wide open. Check on the water flow throughout the garden if you pull the handle up!

In the fall, when the ground starts frosting, we turn off the garden distribution system and drain the pipes to protect our polyethylene plastic tubing investment. Historically, the NPS has left their own frost-free spigots on allowing for watering of plots over the winter via watering cans.



New spiggot installed in the garden.

Occasionally, we sometimes have floods in the interior meadow (different from our current issue) because someone hasn't turned off the water at the interior meadow orange spigot. Especially when the distribution system is shut down for the winter. Perhaps this is the fault of passers-by, as water is free to anyone who walks through, but perhaps it's our community. It's on all of us to check the interior meadow and make sure the water is fully shut off when we leave the area. Even if you haven't used it, please, if you're going past, check! (Just the way you might check to make sure the tool sheds are locked.)

Going forward, we anticipate the garden water distribution system is going to need more care and replacement as the pipes age. The system has been at work for almost thirty years. Generally speaking, it's anticipated we will replace sections a bit at a time as they break down. But there is also potential we might try to do sections regularly over the course of the coming years. It depends on many things—cash flow of the garden budget, volunteers to do the work. Frank, who directed the original install of the garden water distribution system is back in charge of the water team and has great ideas to improve bits. I encourage anyone willing to join the water team to do so. There are opportunities to excel.

Second Point of Order:

There are no prohibitions on growing types of mint or garlic chives. HOWEVER!!! Both of these items and their relations tend to spread invasively. When they do they become a problem to you and others in the community, so Inspections will make note. You are STRONGLY encouraged to grow those items, if you want them, in a containment system to insure they do not spread, either in your plot or into your neighbors' plots. [I love peppermint, but I'm fighting an invasion of same in my plot, even as I write; which is how I was reminded to let you know same as well.]

Two Community Garden Studies This Summer Include Rock Creek Community Garden

Written up by Susan Galbraith with survey assistance and pictures from Rima Silenas and note of gratitude by President Joe.

There has been a lot of interest paid lately to community gardening in the area and the communities themselves. This year, both George Mason University and Georgetown University led programs in which students participated conducting interviews and surveys in two separate studies.

To start us off, this came in from Joe Nelson: "We've also been graced by youthful and enthusiastic students from George Mason University who've been observing and interviewing us. They have been overwhelmed by the graciousness many of you have shown, and I appreciate all who have taken time to chat, give produce samples, and otherwise make them welcome. The study has culminated and some of us have seen their presentation, but for those who missed it's recorded HERE.

THE GARDEN AS A TEMPORAL VILLAGE COCK

• A temporal village—a place where people come and go. yet leave traces behind.

• People are not always together. but they are connected.

• The garden is lived in moments: in a shared harvest. a kind word. a repaired fence. a gifted herb.

Passcode: Gj4pt6?@

In late June, Rima, Duane and I attended a gathering sponsored by the Field School Program out of George Mason University, which partnered with the National Park Service on their study. Led by Dr Debra Lattanzi Shutika, students in the program divided themselves into groups of twos and threes and selected a focused topic culminating in a final oral report presentation on either the Glover Park or Rock Creek Community Garden.

Students Maddox, Cam, and Sophia (Sullivan) reported on our Rock Creek community, and, in particular, how the Inspection Team functions and communicates through notices (seen as reminders) and the more serious citations. This student group made a list of recommendations for improvement, which apparently was gleaned from talking with members. Suggestions included giving more positive feedback to gardeners in the communication process, setting up more regular community gatherings, more coaching on identifying weeds and other inspection training, the ecological impact of our gardening practices, and cultivating a philosophy of stewardship and seeing our space as a green sanctuary.

A report from Carli, who spoke to some 20 of our gardeners, found valuable our commitment to organic gardening practices and saw our community as, above all, a place to share kindness. The student team would like to see a greater focus on cultivating soil health and for us to find ways of becoming involved with the larger community.

Cayla Parsons took an artistic approach as a framework to look at our community using words like 'Rhythm' for the leadership team, and "Harmony" for the way the 130+ members interact. "Musical arrangement" is how she would describe our bringing together multiple perspectives. She particularly admired how our garneners show up for each other.

Many thanks to Sonya Sutton, Nancy Nickels, Judy Reiter, Camilla Gagliolo, and Rima Silenas for making themselves available to the GMU students.

I believe that we continue to grow, and over time we do review and update best practices. But this is done carefully and usually change comes reflecting a sea change rather than radical mandates. We also acknowledge that our gardeners join for a variety of reasons, and we lift up our cultural diversity and honor individual approaches to gardening practices when they do not interfere with being "good neighbors." Ours is a community where many come to connect with others, make friendships, and have opportunities to be enlivened by inter-generational gatherings.

In a second study out of Georgetown University, Rima responded to a questionnaire, while Anita, Joe and others added to and signed off on the survey, which focused on how we were organized. This then is a summary for gardeners wanting to know our history:

RCCG is a community garden operated under a permit with the National Park Service. We are one of 10 gardens in their program. An additional 30 community gardens or so fall under a separate network overseen by DC Parks and Recreation (DPR.)

Though we do not have an exact date, we were originally established as a Victory Garden during WWII and therefore have been in operation for about 80 years.

We govern ourselves through an association with by-laws and additional rules, which sets standards and operating procedures in alignment with the Park Service. Members pay annual dues and may be asked to pitch in extra funds for a particular repair (e.g. a new gate.) We work with an executive Committee made up of a President (Joe Nelson,) Vice-President (Lena Heron,) Secretary (Bruce Jacobs) and Co-Treasurers (Jaq Nelson and Steve Erickson.) We are happily served by a Garden Manager, Rima Silenas, and leads of various committees such as:

- Inspections(Stephanie Bruce)
- Communications (co-leads Camilla Gagliolo and Susan Galbraith)
- Welcome to New Members (Pam Ross)
- Fencing & Gates Repairs (Rima Silenas)
- Water Committee (Frank Carlman)
- Communal Flower & Herb Garden (Peggy Cloherty)
- Amendments Ordering (Susan Davis)
- Weed Warrior" Patrol & Assistance (Anita Albertson)

All are volunteer positions, and, as Garden Manager Rima reported, "We're doing ok. As long as there are folks willing to work, the garden will go on."

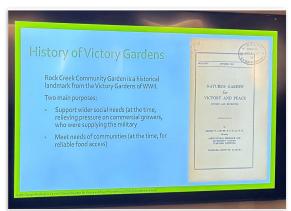
We have always been a community whose shared primary interest is to grow vegetables and which follows organic farming principles. We absolutely forbid harsh pesticides and discourage the use of plastic (ground covers, etc.)

In recent years, there has been growing interest to include practices which support ecological balance and local biodiversity. That translates to our discouraging mono-cultural gardening, encouraging more flowering plants among the vegetables grown, specifically native pollinators, and a growing sense that we all need to see ourselves as good stewards of the land.

Several years ago, we installed and continue to maintain tall deer fencing – to the envy of some other community gardens in the area—at least around outer perimeters and quadrants. This has proved effective. We have been less effective with our bunny fencing campaign. We encourage black rat snakes to live amongst us to deal with the voles and mice. Former gardener Michael Sullivan, dubbed RCCG 'carpenter,' built bird houses which he installed in several plots, and which serve as a much-loved legacy, enjoyed by gardeners and our avian friends alike.

Several gardeners past and present have shared produce with friends, neighbors, and their church and civic communities. In past years, Pam Ross and Yvonne Davis Smith have brought students to the garden to help nurture future gardeners and, in Yvonne's case, made sure her DCPS students received some nutritional afterschool snacks from her garden plot. Master Gardener Lauren Ackil works with a team at UDC to grow seedlings for nearly two dozen DC school gardens. While there have been no specific formal partnerships and programs that have grown out of our RCCG community thus far, interest has been expressed to find ways of sharing both excess produce and knowledge from the vast collective experience of our gardeners through a local food bank, gardening network, or an environmental group. We acknowledge this would take a commitment and dedicated service hours.

Members of our Rock Creek Community Garden feel privileged and grateful we are an integrated part of an urban green space, and many of our gardeners cherish the moments of sighting a hawk, a fox, our favorite black rat snake guardian, and the many small birds, butterflies and beneficial insects that share their home with us.





Companion Co-planting -

By Joe Nelson

Here is a quick guide to companion/ co planting. Often called garden friends and enemies for planning your garden. We'd love to hear other co-planting success and failures gardeners have had.

Tomatoes

- Good companions:
 - Carrots Loosen soil, don't compete much
 - **Basil** Repels tomato hornworm and improves flavor
 - Onions/Garlic Pest deterrents
 - **Lettuce** Grows in tomato shade
 - **Marigolds** Repel nematodes and aphids
- Avoid: Corn, fennel, potatoes (blight risk)

Cucumbers

- Good companions:
 - Korn Natural trellis, shares pollinators
 - **Vill** Attracts beneficial insects
 - Seans Fix nitrogen
 - Sunflowers Trellis and pollinator draw
- **Avoid:** Potatoes, aromatic herbs (can stunt cucumber growth)

Potatoes

- Good companions:
 - o **Beans** Fix nitrogen
 - Zabbage family (e.g., kale, broccoli)
 - Marigolds Repel beetles
- Avoid: Tomatoes, cucumbers, squash (disease/pest overlap), Onions, garlic



- Good companions:
 - **Beans** Fix nitrogen
 - Squash Ground cover, reduces weeds
 - Cucumbers
- **Avoid:** Tomatoes (compete and attract similar pests)

Lettuce & Leafy Greens

- Good companions:
 - o / Carrots
 - o 🧅 Garlic
 - **Mint** Repels aphids (use in containers)
 - **Tomatoes** Provide partial shade
- **Avoid:** Strong aromatic herbs (can compete)

Carrots

- Good companions:
 - **Chives**, **leeks**, **onions** Deter carrot fly
 - **Lettuce** Doesn't compete below ground
 - Garlic Repels aphids and fungus
- Avoid: Dill, parsnips (can attract similar pests)

Onions & Garlic

- Good companions:
 - / Carrots
 - Serassicas (broccoli, cabbage)
 - 🚳 Lettuce

• Avoid: Beans and peas (onions stunt legume growth)

Cabbage Family (Brassicas)

Includes kale, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower

- Good companions:
 - Garlic, onions, dill Repel cabbage moths
 - **Resturtiums** Trap pests
 - o 💊 **Beans** Improve soil nitrogen
- **Avoid:** Strawberries, tomatoes

🍫 Beans (Pole & Bush)

- · Good companions:
 - **Corn** Classic "Three Sisters" combo
 - Cucumbers
 - Zabbage family
- Avoid: Onions, garlic

Bonus Helpers: Flowers & Herbs

Marigold: Repels nematodes, aphids, beetles

Basil: Enhances tomato flavor, repels flies

Nasturtium: Attracts aphids away (trap crop)

Chamomile: Antifungal, attracts pollinators

Dill: Attracts beneficial wasps, hoverflies

Chives: Deter aphids, carrot fly

The NPS has restored water to the Garden! Our Water Committee members stabilized the new spigot so it remains in place for the next 30 years.



What's Bugging You?

Different insects make themselves known in different parts of the community garden every year. It's hard to keep up with them all, so I thought I'd share some tips on a not-so-beneficial insect that's been making a home in my garden for the last two or three years.

Culprit: the allium leaf miner

Crops affected: onions, scallions, leeks, shallots and garlic

Signs of infestation:

- * 1/a small series of marks on allium leaf stems, created when an adult allium moth lays eggs in the stems
- 2/larval tunneling in stems or bulbs
- 3/wilted, twisted stems. If you look around the garden, you'll see people growing onions or other alliums that look healthy and strong. Mine did not look that way (see below).
- 4/bulbs that are soft and show signs of damage. When the larvae eat through the allium pathogens and bacteria can enter the plant, causing bulb rot.
- ❖ 5/finding tiny yellow or brown larvae (caterpillars) in your plant stalks or bulbs.

When to look for signs of leaf miners and the adult flies: This pest has two life cycles every growing season! Adult leaf miners lay their eggs in mid spring, so you could be seeing signs of infestation now. The second cycle starts in September, so Fall plantings should be monitored.

<u>The good news</u>: If this has helped you identify something you've observed in your alliums, at least you know what you're fighting.

<u>The bad news</u>: In addition to *digg ing up and destroying your entire crop* you're going to need to do the following:

- remove any remaining roots, bulbs or stems from the garden (do not compost anything). Larvae can overwinter in the soil.
- solarize your soil by covering the affected area with clear plastic for about a month.
- avoid planting any alliums for two-three years.
- when you do start trying to grow alliums again, practice crop rotation. Keep the beds where you've planted alliums in the past as far away as possible from the next year's crop.
- cover your seedlings with a row cover or agricultural cloth. Currently the only organic means of controlling or preventing damage from allium leaf miners is to use row covers or cloth that is tightly secured so that the adult leaf miners cannot reach the alliums to lay their eggs.
- For more information visit: https://cals.cornell.edu/integrated-pest-management/outreach-education/fact-sheets/allium-leafminer

Spotted Lanternfly in the garden

By Rima Silenas

The spotted lanternfly has invaded the garden. With no time to do any in-depth research, let me just say, kill, kill, kill, The nymphs might like your vegetables. The flies will likely do more damage to the trees in the woods.

A quick review provided this information:

To combat these pests naturally, a spray can be made by mixing water with a few drops of essential oils such as tea tree, peppermint, or lavender. The strong aromas of these oils serve to repel and kill spotted lanternflies upon direct application.

Other effective deterrents include apple cider vinegar and neem oil, both of which emit scents that these insects find repulsive.

Additionally, a potent soap [Dr. Bronner's peppermint is recommended per Glover Park garden] and water solution can be used to suffocate lanternflies, as high concentrations of soap will block their airways, leading to quick death.

The Tree-of-heaven plant, favored by the spotted lanternfly, contains unpalatable chemicals that deter regional predators.

For more information, visit https://flowergardennews.com/do-lantern-flies-eat-tomato-plants.html

Field Trip to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens for the annual Lotus and Waterlily Festival

By Pam Ross

Saturday, July 19th at 9:00 a.m.

Meet at the community garden at 9:00 and we'll drive over to Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens to enjoy peak bloom! We'll arrive before 10 and you'll have a choice of simply walking through the gardens or joining one of the 10 a.m. creative activities the garden is hosting during the festival:

- Reiki-inspired jewelry making
- Pause and Bloom: Movement and nature journaling
- Forest Bathing Walk (trails)

Bring a picnic lunch if you'd like to find a cool spot for a midday break.

Please RSVP to Pam Ross at <u>paross@starpower.net</u> if you'd plan to join us. If you have room in your car for others, please let me know.

If you're not able to join but are interested in visiting Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens during the festival, check out the special events they'll be hosting on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. There's live music on Friday and Saturday as well as yoga and painting classes.

Recipe Corner

Tomatoe cream cheese spread

by Rima

Ingredients:

Cream cheese pesto and cherry/grape tomatoes:

Cooking Directions:

Spread in a pie pan, one 80z package of cream cheese. Cover with half cup basil pesto. Decorate surface with sliced grape or cherry tomatoes. Bake at 350F for around 25-30 min.

It was served cooled, but it might be good hot too. I ate it with flavored and unflavored water crackers, as well as those crackers with nuts and fruit. All excellent and enhanced by it.

Basil-Walnut Pesto Recipe

Shared by Alice Doyle

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is one of the most popular herbs you can grow, and it's easy to take care of. There are many different types, but they all love warm weather and plenty of sunshine. Originally from India, basil has made its way into all kinds of dishes, especially in Italian cooking with tomatoes and in Thai recipes. It's part of the mint family and is great in things like pesto, tomato sauce, or even for adding flavor to oils, vinegars, and tea.

Looking for a tasty way to use up fresh basil? Try this simple and flavorful basil-walnut pesto!

Ingredients

- 2 medium garlic cloves, peeled-
- ½ cup walnut pieces
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 4 cups fresh basil leaves, packed
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Cooking Directions:

Start by tossing the garlic cloves into a food processor and giving them a quick chop. Next, add the walnuts and blend until everything's finely ground. Mix in the Parmesan cheese just until combined. Then, add half of the basil (about 2 cups) and pour in half the olive oil. Pulse until the basil is chopped up. Add the rest of the basil and oil, and continue pulsing until everything forms a smooth, green paste.

Boil about half a pound of pasta—angel hair or rotini work especially well—and drain it thoroughly. While it's still hot, return the pasta to the pot and stir in half of the pesto until it's evenly coated. Serve warm.

Saving the rest:

Spoon the remaining pesto into a quart-sized freezer bag, label it with the date, and pop it in the freezer.

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Blueberry Crisp

By Anita Albertson

Ingredients

For the Filling

- 4 cups blueberries (2 pints)
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon coarse salt

For the Topping

- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup rolled oats
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 ounces (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted
- ¹/₃ cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup pecans

Cooking Directions:

Put berry mixture in a 8 or 9 inch pan.

- -Top with topping mixture
- -Bake 350° for 30 to 45 minutes until golden brown.
- -Serve with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.



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