

RCCCG NEWS

April 2023 RCCG Newsletter

RCCG Contact Information

Email: rockcreekgarden@gmail.com

Website:

www.rockcreekcommunitygarden.org

Important Dates:

Spring Cleaning

Saturday, April 15 at 10 a.m.

Join us at anytime to help set up the garden for the 2023 gardening season.

Plant Swap

Saturday, May 7 starting at 9 a.m.

After you have planted your seedlings and you have left over plants, come meet old and new friends and share plantings.

Inspection Open House

June 25 at 10 a.m.

Please join us to learn more about invasive plants and Garden Do's and Don'ts.



RCCG Spring Clean Up Day

Do's and Don'ts for community garden clean up

***Do come!** Rain or shine we'll have some tasks to get done. Especially amendment distribution needs many hands. If you can only do one or two hauls, that's just fine! I did a few recovering from hip replacements last year. Then you rest and press on with something easier, but you lessen the burden for the strong backs.

***Do bring gloves and water** (if you don't drink through the spigots)

***Bring a wheelbarrow**—if you have a good wheelbarrow, please bring it to assist with amendment distribution, just for the day.

1
SPRING
CLEANUP
Saturday, April 15

2
INSPECTION
AND WEED
TEAM NOTES

3
VOLUNTEER
AND
COMMUNITY

7
FEATURED
GARDENER
Pam Ross

9
POETRY
CORNER

We have a goodly amount in the garden, but the more, the better and quicker the task.

- * **Do take some time to clean up your own garden** on a day of collegiality.
- * **Do bring a snack** if you like, or have coffee or drinks and a snack with folks in the interior meadow and say hi, meeting your fellows. Garden manager usually brings a carton of coffee and some bagels and cream cheese. Fruit, baked goods, juices, stuff you like for brunch, are all good to bring.
- * **Do NOT park up the road** on both sides blocking the right of way for the park police to go to the stables. **Do NOT park on the grass** or areas that are not intended for parking.
- * If you come early, **do not block the drive into the horse meadow area**, since we have one amendment delivery at an unspecified time earlier in the morning.
- * **Do have a good time!** It's always a very satisfactory day. We have a right to be proud of having one of the best cared for gardens in the system.

Inspection team notes

Inspections begin May 7th and will run roughly bi-weekly on Sunday throughout the summer. The complete schedule will be posted on the bulletin board and on the website.

Inspections are a "peer review" of your plot by your fellow gardeners. Notices are intended as a way for you to proactively address issues before they become a problem. Unaddressed notices, or egregious violation of RCCG rules can result in a citation. Unaddressed citations can lead to eviction from the garden.

We will hold an **Inspections Open House on June 25th**. Everyone is welcome. Please join us to learn more about invasive plants and Garden Do's and Don'ts.

Inspection Co-Chairs are Lena Heron and Stephanie Bruce

Email Address is Inspections.RCCG@gmail.com

Please reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns about inspection

Inspection Open House

We will hold an Inspections Open House on June 25th. Everyone is welcome. Please join us to learn more about invasive plants and Garden Do's and Don'ts.

Invasive Weed Team Update

By Anita Albertson Cozab

Our Invasive Weed Team is a group of volunteers that mostly focus on the pervasive, pernicious, invasive weeds: pinellia ternata, bindweed, mugwort, crab grass, dichondra repens, and anything gone to seed that might spread to other gardens.

Our purpose is to help the gardener learn about the weeds and educate on how to remove them - we are volunteers and are continually learning. In addition, we try to share in keeping the invasive weeds in check in the shared public areas.

In the early season weeds - seeds and roots - begin to emerge. While some aren't all bad (they can add nitrogen to your soil or be edible), others are incredibly challenging. **Now is the time to get ahead of them** so that the rest of the gardening year is manageable.

Weeds can also tell you about the quality of your soil - see [this link](#) from the Farmers' Almanac:

Each gardener is responsible for the public paths surrounding their garden. For the AA and G gardens that means the garden exterior that borders on their plot as well as the path shared with the A and F gardens.

Throughout the season, we will try to help you if you ask. I can't emphasize enough - if you dig up the invasive weeds as they emerge - it'll take a few minutes of your time each visit, AND if you let them take over - you are asking for hours and hours of work to reclaim your garden.

The Maryland Cooperative Extension has a [helpful website](#) to identify and learn more about the weeds that have volunteered to appear in your garden: This includes many of weeds that you will meet in your garden - but there are others too.

- * Pinellia Ternata is an irksome one - cow dipper or here at uniquely at RCCG we call it Lilyweed. Here is an excellent 5 minute [video](#) on Pinella Ternata.
- * Dichondra Repens is a commercial ground covering sold by landscaping companies. Dichondra thrives in the garden and is crowding out intentional plantings. It prefers wet soil and spreads resiliently. This link is an ad which is pro dichondra - but all the things they state as pro - mean that they are successful and challenging in your garden.....resilient and expansive: Link can be found [here](#).



Starting your garden:

By There are many different and successful ways to start a garden - I will share what I do which is one of many ways.

I use a pitchfork and hand trowel to get up all the weeds especially on the edges of any wooden defined beds and mix the soil down to about a foot which I typically add some leaf mold and sand into. I especially work to get as many of the weeds and their roots around the fencing and wooden bed frames.

The beginning of the garden season is an excellent time to meet up with your neighboring gardeners and address the issues on the shared fence line.



** It is easy to assume all the weeds coming into your garden are the fault of your neighbor - but I find that the birds and the little mammals are just as complicit.

I prefer using cardboard as a barrier to keep down the weeds rather than black plastic or fabric cloth. Over time, whatever you use will break down into the soil. Cardboard enriches and aerates the soil - worms like it. It provides a sunlight barrier, you can lift it up and get the remaining weeds that are emerging and it breaks down and feed your soil. I periodically will remove the rich soil in my interior paths and add it to my beds, then I will bury cardboard in layers to keep down new weeds.

In the short term plastic is both a barrier and a way to heat up the soil and kill weeds - the problem is that over time it also can heat up and kill the healthy organisms and nutrients that are beneficial in the soil. In addition - weeds love to wrap their roots and hide their corms, bulbs, rhizomes and tubers into the folds of the fabric cloth which over time becomes more of a problem to remove from your garden. Plastic that has deteriorated leaves chemicals in your soil. Link to article [here](#). I can be reached at brownhouse22@verizon.net

Volunteering & Building Community

v Especially for those who began during the Pandemic - you will meet fellow gardeners and learn the standards we aim to achieve in the garden. {Concerns: Contact Anita Albertson }

We are looking for the following to support the Rock Creek Community Garden:

- * Communications team - welcoming committee, newsletter, website and an archive about the RCCG.
- * Welcoming team new gardeners and hosting membership activities.
- * Water/Irrigation Team - learn about and help with any issues that come up concerning our irrigation system
- * Inspections Team
- * Back up gardening team.
- * If you have a skill set that you think might be useful in one capacity or another for the RCCG that we might not have considered, please share your your talents and let either Rima Silenas (garden manager) and/or Joe Nelson (President) know.

As of March 19, 2023, we have the following volunteers

- 128 primary gardeners
- 94 secondary gardeners
- 222 full association membership
- 38 who have not yet communicated their volunteer preference

TO SIGN UP AND BE COUNTED FOR ONE OF OUR TEAMS.

Please contact Anita at brownhouse22@verizon.net

Early Spring Wildflowers in RCCG Plots

By Tom Geary

Waiting gardeners to remove from their plots are the earliest flowering wildflowers in the area. All are non-native, but naturalized species. As of March 1, four obvious ones were:

- * Gill-Over-The-Ground, AKA Ground Ivy, AKA Creeping Charlie (*Glechoma hederacea*) - Mint Family
Violet blue flowers, tubular with flaring lips, square stems, creeping
- * Common Chickweed (*Stellaria Media*) - Pink Family
White flowers, small, 5 petals divided, so looks like 10, sepals as long as or longer than petals
- * Bird's-Eye Speedwell - (*Veronica chamadrys*) - Snapdragon Family
Violet blue flowers, small, 4 petals, lowest petal liplike

* Hairy Bittercress - (*Cardamine hirsute*)- Mustard Family

White flowers, tiny, 4 petals, and on long stalk. leaves mainly basal and pinnate, long, narrow seed pods Note: provisional identification as not distinctly hairy. Is edible

The other prominent wildflower near the plots on March 1, was the non-native, but naturalized:

* Lesser Celandine - (*Ranunculus ficaria*) - Buttercup Family:

Yellow flowers on long stalks, 8 glossy petals, heart-shaped leaves

Common along old road between Horstable Rd and Bingham Drive, spectacular patch on Ridge Rd at intersection of Grant Rd. On March 24, 2023 was flowering in grass between garden plots and Horstable Rd. and was easily spotted along other park roads.



The only obvious native wildflower that was flowering on March 1, was a fair distance away, on Ridge Rd near the intersection of Grant Rd was a spectacular patch of Trailing Arbutus. Epigaea repens of the Heath Family. Has white to pink flowers, short tubed with flaring petals, and trailing stems with leathery leaves.

Vegetables to Plant in April in the Garden

By Camilla Gagliolo

April is a great time to start planting vegetables in Washington D.C. With the arrival of warmer temperatures and more sunlight, it is an ideal time to get your garden started.

Here are some of the best cool weather vegetables to plant in April in Washington D.C.

- * Lettuce. They require full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil. Lettuce can be harvested in about 30 days.
- * Kale: It is a nutrient-dense leafy green that requires full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil. Kale can be harvested in about 50 to 60 days.



- *Spinach: They require full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil. Spinach can be harvested in about 30 days.
- *Broccoli: It prefers full sun and well-drained soil. Broccoli can be harvested in about 60 to 100 days.
- *Carrots: They prefer full sun and well-drained soil. Carrots can be harvested in about 60 to 80 days.
- *Beets: They prefer full sun to partial shade and well-drained soil. Beets can be harvested in about 50 to 60 days.

*Radishes: They prefer full sun and well-drained soil. Radishes can be harvested in about 30 days.

- * Peas: They prefer full sun and well-drained soil. Peas can be harvested in about 60 to 90 days.

One of the best references is the guide produced by the University of Maryland Home and Garden Center [planting guide](#)

Crop	February				March				April				May				June				July				August				September				October				November				December			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Asparagus																																												
Beans, Lima																																												
Beans, Snap																																												
Beets																																												
Broadbean																																												
Brussels sprouts																																												
Cauliflower																																												
Cauliflower, Broccoli																																												
Corn																																												
Cucumbers																																												
Eggplant																																												
Kale																																												
Peas																																												
Pumpkin																																												
Squash																																												
Tomatoes																																												
Zucchini																																												

Vegetables to Keep for the Month of May

While April is a great time to start planting vegetables in Washington D.C., there are some vegetables that are best planted later in the season when the soil has warmed up.. Here are some vegetables that you should avoid planting outside in April in Washington D.C.:

- * **Tomatoes:** While tomatoes are a popular vegetable to grow in our area. Tomatoes are a warm-season crop that require warm soil and air temperatures to grow successfully. It is best to wait until after the last frost to plant tomatoes outside, which is generally around mid to late May in our area.
- * **Peppers:** Peppers are another warm-season crop that should not be planted outside yet. They require warm soil and air temperatures to grow successfully. It is best to wait until after the last frost to plant peppers outside.
- * **Eggplant:** Eggplant is a warm-season crop as well. It requires warm soil and air temperatures to grow successfully. It is best to wait until after the last frost to plant eggplant outside.
- * **Sweet Potatoes:** Sweet potatoes are a warm-season crop that require warm soil temperatures to grow successfully. It is best to wait until late May or early June to plant sweet potatoes outside.
- * **Pumpkins:** They require warm soil and air temperatures to grow successfully. It is best to wait until late May or early June to plant pumpkins outside.
- * **Squash:** While summer squash can be planted in May, winter squash should not be planted outside too early. They require warm soil and air temperatures to grow successfully. It is best to wait until late May or early June to plant winter squash outside.
- * **Basil.** Basil is a warm weather herb. It is excellent as a companion to Tomatoes and Peppers and keeps some best at bay. It requires warm soil and air temperatures.

By avoiding planting these warm-season vegetables before the soil is warm, you can ensure that they have the best chance of growing and producing a bountiful harvest.

Featured Gardener - Pam Ross

Interview with Pam Ross by Susan Galbraith

Pam Ross – Science Teacher – Gardener – Creative

Pam Ross and I joined RCCG around the same time, around 23 years ago. We were both in education. Pam was a very busy science teacher at Oyster Bilingual Elementary School. Though we didn't know each other, we have discovered we have much in common.

I asked Pam how she got interested in gardening.

Pam: When I first got married and we moved into our first house, I started a garden. Even before that I grew plants in pots on the windowsill in my apartment in Brooklyn. Even as a kid, I grew African violets and imagined I'd grow up to be a horticulturalist. Then, when we lived in New Jersey I went and completed a master gardener certification program.

Susan: As a teacher, did you run a garden program at your school?

Pam: When the Oyster Bilingual School opened at 29th and Calvert, I got parents from my own kids' classes (then pre-k and 2nd grade) to help me build raised beds. I didn't realize how much effort it takes to maintain a school garden. It takes a commitment from the whole school community to have a core out there every day. But there were teachers who were really interested, and it worked for a bunch of years. I received two \$2000 grants to start a garden, purchase tools, and build a shed and raised beds. Then we organized a manageable afterschool Garden Club. I even found a way to bring kids out in the summer, who learned to love gardening as I did, choosing what they wanted to grow. Kids mostly don't like to weed anymore than adults do, but they tried new things and went home with their own fresh veggies.

Introducing young people to growing food in a garden is a passion. I gardened with both my children, and now my son is a full-time professional vegetable gardener. I'm proud to have raised a gardener.

Susan: What are some of the changes you've seen at RCCG over the years?

Pam: I've seen a lot of new gardeners come in and younger gardeners. I'm eager to see plots turn over and new people given the chance to try gardening, especially families, some of whom have been on the waiting list a long time.

Susan: And isn't it exciting to see the diversity of cultures represented and produce they grow?

Pam: Didn't you love the artichoke garden? And what about Peter? He was such an original in how he gardened?! He made a fence with upside down golfclubs. And the bird lady's garden with the platforms!

Susan: Your enthusiasm is catching. How would you describe our community?

Pam: I just love our community; people have always been so helpful. I remember Rita bringing me over squash seeds, and Natasha has also shared things, and Judy Reiter. Lots of people over the years have reached out.



Susan: What are you growing this year? And aren't you bold to be putting so much in earlier perhaps than certain others would advise.

Pam: I just love growing things in all seasons. Of course tomatoes, but I don't put those in yet. And peppers will also be coming. Likewise, zucchini, summer squash and basil.

The shorter list is what I am not growing. Right now I 'm thinking to make maximum use of my space thing that grow up and things that grow down. (She mimes the vegetables sending down roots or up shoots) Big onions and bunching onions, red onions, beets, beets, turnips, radishes, romaine and another kind of lettuce, two kinds of kale, pak choy and bok choy, garlic, peas and carrots. I plant every inch of that space. Even my triangular tomato cages allow me to squeeze in more. I break the rules of how close you should plant tomatoes, but I do it anyway. I get in 21 tomato plants! It's like how I pack my suitcase. There are even potato bags in the aisles! (I grow Kueka, a variety of Yukon gold, Charlotte potatoes (a kind of fingerling,) and a third variety.) I get all from Wood Prairie Farm – specializing in all kinds of potatoes.

Susan: Would you tell me again why you plant potatoes in bags?

Pam: They're a member of the nightshade family (like eggplant and tomatoes.) You're not supposed to plant potatoes where tomatoes have been grown for three years. Since I rotate my tomatoes every year to alternating beds, I had to find another solution to also have potatoes.

Susan: Where do you get your seeds and starter plants?

Pam: A variety of places, including Farmer's Markets and certain garden centers on the Eastern Shore? And did you see the structure I put up this year? I want to support squashes or zucchini. I'm going to try butter ball squash, smaller, rounder and sweeter.

Susan: You called yourself a Creative. So how do you manifest this in your gardening?

Pam: I love the design aspect of gardening. I love color. I love to draw and paint. I'm learning right now how to work with pressed flowers.

Susan: You sound like you have a lot to share. Would you consider doing a small workshop under the pergola?

Pam: Oh yes. I have to discover what flowers press well and find heavy substitute books as there are no longer telephone books – maybe my husband's law tomes –

Susan: Do you also grow rhubarb? You promised me a recipe or two.

Pam: I bake quite a lot. If I see rhubarb at a market, I always buy up a big bundle and make jam and scones and whatever you can do with rhubarb.

Susan: Do you record your bountiful garden?

Every year at every stage, ever since I had an iPhone!

Susan: Well, you should be our photographer. We love featuring gardeners and unusual plantings or solutions. Calling all RCCG gardeners: JUST SEND PICTURES!

Any message you have for your fellow RCCG gardeners?

Pam: Good weeding makes good neighbors! And isn't it marvelous just to watch our garden grow and change? Look at our pergola with the white moon flowers. Isn't ours a joyful community! And yes, let's offer some small workshops, like how to make jam with things you grow. Or prepping for a summer meal from the garden. Or crafts. Or The Garden as Inspiration – for sketching or watercolors. And what about in the offseason field trips to other garden – like Glenstone Museum and Gardens in Potomac. This could be another way to build community.

Susan: These ideas all sound good to me

Check out this recipe from Pam and her husband --Barry's Riff on Moroccan Carrots!

Poetry Corner

April is the month for poetry, and I'm amazed that poetry seems to be sprouting everywhere.

Here's one I found on Connecticut Avenue around the Golden Triangle which seemed to speak to us starting our own spring gardens:

First garden
She checks for sprouts
Every hour
— Tina Crenshaw

Fellow dirt diggers, seed planters, and spout tenders,
Care to try a gardening haiku of your own this year?
I promise to publish in our next edition.

— Your RCCG Communications Team

Can't get enough of Gardens and Growing Things?

Come and Celebrate Daffodils!

With the Washington DC Daffodil Society!

WashingtonDS 2023 Daffodil Show

April 7-9, 2023

Alexandria Scottish Rite, 1430 Braddock Road, Alexandria, VA 22302

Enter Exhibits: Friday April 7 – 12 noon to 6 pm

Saturday April 8 – 7 am to 9:30 am

Judging: Saturday April 8, 9:30 am to 1:30 pm

Open to Public: Saturday April 8 2 pm to 4 pm

Recipe Corner

Roasted Moroccan Carrot Salad or Dip

By Pam Ross

This recipe is based on one you can find in *The Food 52 Cookbook*. We've adapted it by roasting the carrots and finding alternate uses for the salad.

The dish looks especially nice with tricolor carrots.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch of medium carrots (about 10-12), peeled
- 2 tablespoons of harissa (or substitute)
- 4 tablespoons of chopped preserved lemon
- 5 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 1/4 bunch of cilantro, chopped
- salt and ground pepper

Directions:

1. Cut the carrots crosswise to make 1/4 inch rounds
2. Cook the carrots by either roasting or boiling them. We prefer roasting because the carrots will caramelize.

If roasting, toss with 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil and sprinkle with sea salt. Roast them at 400 degrees for 35-45 minutes. They should be "al dente" - soft with a little bite.

If boiling, use 4 cups of water and a pinch of salt. Once the water boils, add the carrots and boil for about 10 minutes. Check them at 8 mins so you don't overlook them.

3. Place the carrots in a colander to drain and cool down to room temperature.
4. Mix the carrots in a bowl with all of the other ingredients in a large bowl. Refrigerate overnight or up to 48 hours.
5. Remove the bowl from the fridge and allow it to come to room temperature. Check the seasoning on the carrots and add salt or vinegar.
6. Serve the carrots one of these ways:- as a room-temperature salad
 - as stopping for a lentil or chickpea dish

Notes:

The original recipe calls for harissa. Harissa is a North African chili pepper paste that comes in mild (sweet) and spicy varieties. You can find it, as well as the preserved lemons, in many grocery stores but also at specialty food shops that sell Lebanese and Greek ingredients.

You can make substitutions such as adobo sauce with chipotles, gochujang pepper paste or Greek yogurt mixed with chili crunch. It will change the flavor, but will still be good. Alter the amount of the harissa substitute based on your taste.