

RCCG NEWS

June 2023 RCCG Newsletter

RCCG Contact Information

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Important Dates:

Next Inspection

Sunday, July 9

Get your plot started and weeded for the growing season to start.

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.



Happy Summer gardeners!

From Joe Nelson, President, Rock Creek Garden

Hope that your garden is doing well, you are enjoying tending to it, and reaping spring/summer rewards. Amazingly enough we've seen our first tomatoes in the garden, super early but I'm sure tasty. I'm patiently waiting for mine and other garden goodies. I also note that I keep learning and experiencing new things even though I've been gardening for years. For instance, this year I've learned because of a happy accident that you can cut and come again beet greens as a way to help thin the plants and harvest a crop of greens for salads or other yummy dishes. I've grown beets for years and now I know more. That is one of the great thing

1

**HAPPY
SUMMER**
Joe Nelson

2

**RABBIT
DETERENT**

4

MOTHER DIRT
Camila Karam

5

**COYOTE
SIGHTING**
Anita Albertson

9

**RECIPE
CORNER**

about gardening, some mistakes are not, and even if you do mess up, there is always next year to do better.

On the community front I have a couple of notes to emphasize.

- * Newsletter and website. Committee leads please use the newsletter and website <https://rockcreekcommunitygarden.org> for announcements and reference postings and schedules and volunteers on those committees please help the leads with the same especially if you are more oriented towards writing and documenting. For regular gardeners please contribute to the newsletter and the website, we have lots of reference postings and are always looking for more. If you have recipes or garden tips to share, we'd love to hear from you. You can reach out to us via the website <https://rockcreekcommunitygarden.org/contact-us> or via e-mail at rockcreekgarden@gmail.com. Thanks again to Susan G and Camilla G for their work on the newsletter and website.
- * Rabbits are not a problem for everyone but when they are it can be devastating for such a cute creature to do such damage, especially in early spring. There is no foolproof way to keep them out but fencing and plant and other deterrents can lower the odds of a breach/damage considerably. Also we do want to know your experiences and remedies tried to keep them at bay. Let us know your successes and failures.
- * Enjoy the garden, the community, and the summer but with the recent rain and higher temperatures both weeds and garden plants are set to take off, please keep both under control as best you can.
- * Please communicate issues, insights, and suggestions, it's your garden and it's what you/we make it.
- * Volunteer as you are able. Many ways to do that...see point 1 for more info and background. If you need more info just ask.

Hope to see you soon in the garden or drop me a line. Perhaps we will have a summer picnic/get together to share the bounty. Enjoy!

Rabbit Deterrence

To construct good rabbit-proof fencing, you'll need to create a barrier that prevents rabbits from accessing the garden plot area. Here's a step-by-step guide on how to build rabbit-proof fencing:

Plan your fence: Determine the boundaries of the area you want to enclose and measure the length and height of the fence you'll need. Consider the terrain, vegetation, and any specific challenges in the area.

- * Select fencing materials: Choose suitable materials for your fence. Options include wire mesh, chicken wire, or rabbit netting. Make sure the mesh or netting has small enough gaps to prevent rabbits from squeezing through, younger smaller rabbits are potentially the biggest offenders (there is some wisdom in the tails of Beatrix Potter!) and they can fit through surprisingly small gaps or dig or just outsmart you. For our garden ensure the fencing is a uniform black color not metal or other color. Understand that plastic mesh is likely to be chewed through but some have found it enough of a deterrent. Consider working with fellow gardeners for a buy of material. Also consult with fellow/adjacent gardeners to plan or share the work.

Inspection Schedule

June 25 - Inspection Open House- all welcome

July 9

July 23

August 6

August 20

September 10

September 24

October 8

October 22 - Final Inspection--garden should be tidied and put to bed, unless fall/winter gardening

- * You can use existing fence posts or dig additional if it's an interior space but please be cognizant of the impact your work has on quadrant fencing or other plots. Remember you cannot use concrete or other materials to anchor, only good old dirt.
- * Attach the mesh: Start at one end and attach the wire mesh or rabbit netting to the first post using fencing staples. Ensure the bottom edge is buried a few inches into the ground to prevent rabbits from digging underneath. Some gardeners use boards for this purpose. You also might want to use newspaper or other barrier under the boards or fence to keep weeds from invading the gaps.
- * Attach the remaining wire or mesh: Unroll the wire or mesh along the fence line and attach it to each post using staples. Make sure it's pulled tightly and securely fastened to prevent rabbits from pushing through or squeezing between the gaps. You can use zip ties (black) to keep it integrated into existing deer fence
- * Gate installation: You may need a small piece to cover the gate areas. You also may need to modify the door sweep to prevent rabbits from crawling underneath. Also some gates don't fully close at the bottom so an additional doorstop might need to be added to secure the gate at the bottom.
- * Check for gaps or weaknesses: Walk along the fence line and inspect for any gaps, loose sections, or potential weaknesses that could allow rabbits to breach the fence. Reinforce or repair any issues you find.
- * Burrow prevention: To further rabbit-proof the fence, consider burying the bottom edge of the wire mesh or netting several inches into the ground. This prevents rabbits from digging under the fence.
- * Remember that while rabbit-proof fencing is effective, determined rabbits may find ways to overcome it. Regularly inspect and maintain your fence to ensure its integrity and make any necessary repairs.
- * Additionally, consider combining the fence with other deterrents like repellents, garden design modifications, or natural barriers to create a more comprehensive rabbit control strategy.
- * There are several natural deterrents that can help in keeping rabbits away from specific areas. While their effectiveness may vary depending on the situation, here are some examples:
 - * Plants with strong scents: Rabbits have a strong sense of smell, and certain plants emit odors that rabbits find unpleasant. Consider planting aromatic herbs like mint, lavender, sage, or marigold around the perimeter of the area you want to protect. The strong scents can help deter rabbits from entering. As always ensure that you keep these border plants under control so they don't spread to neighbors.
 - * Spicy plants: Rabbits are also sensitive to spicy or pungent flavors. Planting chili peppers, garlic, onions, or other spicy plants in and around your garden can act as a deterrent. Rabbits are less likely to nibble on plants that have a strong, spicy taste or odor.
 - * Predator urine: Rabbits are prey animals and are naturally wary of predators. Spraying or scattering predator urine, such as that from foxes, coyotes, or owls, around the area can create the impression that predators are present. This may deter rabbits from entering the area.

Exciting news in the garden:

The plot tended by Anita and Tom are hosting a family of praying mantis! Apparently Mom Mantis moved into the sorrel and launched scores of baby mantis which are jumping around looking like small sticks with big eyes!

So very cool!

More information on Praying Mantis

<https://www.google.com/search?q=baby+praying+mantis+hatching&oeq=baby+praying+mantis&aqs=chrome.1.69i57joi512l9.10759joi7&source=chrome&ie=UTF-8&bshm=nc/c/1#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:537723b3,vi>

- ✱ Repellent plants: Some plants naturally repel rabbits due to their taste or toxins. Examples include yarrow, geraniums, ageratum, and columbine. Interspersing these plants within your garden can help deter rabbits.
- ✱ Companion planting: Certain plant combinations can work together to deter rabbits. For instance, planting strong-smelling herbs or flowers alongside vulnerable plants can mask their scent and make them less attractive to rabbits.

Remember that no deterrent method is foolproof, and rabbits may still find ways to overcome them if they are highly motivated. Using a combination of natural deterrents and other methods, such as fencing or repellents, can provide better protection for your desired areas. Regular monitoring and maintenance of your chosen deterrents are important to ensure their effectiveness over time. Talk with other gardeners on their experiences for advice.

Mother Dirt

By Camila Karam

Nature, Gardening, and people...we are meant to work in partnership, balance and cooperation. The very physical existence of all people is connected through Nature. Nowadays, it appears that many people place more value on technology. The 20th century has encouraged outdated and profit-making systems which have resulted as an ecological crisis. I think the more we know about Nature, the better we will treat it. There needs to be a shift! The new partnership with Nature is for ALL people and need not have a commercial or profit-making agenda.

I love to share information that I have found in my wonderful mundane moments of living and reading.

Beautiful Clary Sage...has broad wrinkled leaves which are green with a hint of purple. This plant was known and used by our ancestors. Drunk as a tea it is calming to the nervous system, stomach, kidneys, and uterus. It also acts as a tonic. Clary Sage is well known as a strengthener for the kidneys and stomach. Good to drink a tea after your meals. Steep in hot water for about 15 minutes.

Bees! Some years ago in Ryazan, Central Russia, it was noted that an electrical field was found around flying bees and plays a role in the communication between these buzzing insects. It can be thought of as a telepathy between them...they don't use cell phones!

Stinging Nettles! A most intelligent herb. This plant sometimes gets a bad rap in the garden world. However, it is a jewel to have at your disposal. Yes, it can sting you but be wise and wear gloves if you want to harvest it. You can use scissors to cut the young shoots and tender leaves directly into a bag...this is what I do. Boiling the leaves in a small amount of water for a short period (less than a minute) destroys the irritant. I cook it in my barley congee for a highly nourishing breakfast meal. Nettles is high in Vitamins A, B, C, protein and has many minerals. The stems were used by our ancestors as a fishing line and clothing. It is excellent to use in your garden as it will re-mineralize the soil. A strong decoction of dried Nettles strained and poured into the hair and rubbed into your scalp is restorative and beautifying.

GINKGO Tree This tree does grow in the DMV and in the Autumn the leaves turn a gorgeous yellow color. I have seen it in the city of DC and out in Nature. The leaves and seeds are used in traditional Chinese medicine. It is used to sharpen the mind, memory loss, dementia, and Alzheimer's dis-ease. It has also been used to relieve PMS symptoms.

Bitter Sweet! The bitter flavor is missing in many Americans' meals but it is an essential component to overall health. It stimulates your liver to produce more bile, which aids digestion. Keep in mind that one

can eat healthy food but it may not be digested properly. Proper digestion is key to good health. Here are some bitters to add to your diet: dandelion greens, broccoli rabe and parsley...just to name a few. Chop them up well and add to your salads. I chop up dandelion and parsley and add it to my cat's food. She has NEVER been to a vet and she has made 10 cycles around the sun.

SPLEEN (a what?) An organ in the human body whose primary job is transportation. It is close to the pancreas and stomach and works in partnership with them. Located on the left side of the abdomen, toward your back and below the rib cage. After food passes through your stomach, the spleen processes and distributes the nutrients your body has extracted from the food and drink. It also controls all the sensory information that comes into your body, including aromas and tastes that are a part of eating. You may have food growing in your garden plot that supports this organ. Root vegetables, ginger and black pepper are known to keep it well functioning. Also warm, nourishing soups.

The F word: FENNEL The short, fat bulbs have a similar texture to celery and are topped with feathery fronds. Fennel has a mild anise flavor which is most potent when eaten raw. It can be roasted after it is brushed with olive oil. It is a diuretic and has a calming and toning effect on your stomach. It contains beta carotene and folate and many vitamins and minerals.

Drying HERBS Bay leaves, rosemary, sage, and marjoram all dry well, but other more delicate herbs, such as, cilantro, basil, and parsley are better used fresh. Pick your herbs before they flower, preferably on a sunny day after the dew has dried. Avoid washing them- instead wipe with a dry cloth. Tie the herbs in bunches and hang them upside-down in a warm dark, place. This should take about a week. Strip the leaves from the stems and store in airtight jars.

Coyote Sightings in the Garden Meadow

By Anita Albertson

Late in May, Michael was in the garden at dusk and saw two adults and two juvenile pups frolicking in the horse corrals for around 20 minutes. The photo is one I "borrowed" from a Next door post, by hiker in the garden area....

According to the NPS website for the Park (plagiarizing! <https://www.nps.gov/rocr/learn/nature/coyotes.htm>), coyotes have entered the park naturally and are subject to the same protection as other park wildlife under park regulations. Coyotes do not present a problem or a threat to public safety. The park will continue to monitor the situation and manage accordingly. They've been confirmed in the park since 2004. They have mostly been sighted between Military and Wise Roads--that's our territory.



Coyotes are canines with gray to tan with long snouts, large erect ears and a bushy tail with a black tip. They stand about 2 feet high at the shoulder. Their front legs have a dark vertical stripe on the shin, which may be hard to see. When running, coyotes hold their tail down almost between their legs. They look similar to a German shepherd dog, but coyotes have longer legs, longer snouts and bushier tails.

Coyotes eat carrion (dead animals), berries and other vegetation. They also hunt small animals such as mice, amphibians, snakes, and birds. They hunt alone or in small family groups.

Coyotes prefer to avoid people and are usually not aggressive toward humans. They can be seen during the day, but they are most active in the evening and at night when the park is closed to pedestrian visitors.

Coyotes hunt small animals, but avoid people. If your pet is leashed and you and your pet are on a trail, a coyote will likely avoid you.

You can stop and watch, but do not approach it. As with any wild animal, if it feels threatened by someone coming toward it or chasing it, it may feel the need to protect itself. Do not feed or attempt to feed coyotes or any wildlife in the park. Once a wild animal gets accustomed to being fed by humans there is much more likelihood that an individual will get bitten by an animal looking for food.

If you see a coyote in the Washington, DC, portion of Rock Creek Park, please contact us.

What can neighbors do to prevent any unwanted contact and protect their pets and the coyotes?

- * While in the park, keep your pet on a leash no longer than six feet.
- * At home, keep pet food indoors. Food left outside can attract coyotes and other wildlife.
- * At home, keep all trash well contained in tightly closed garbage cans

Weed Warrior Report

These are the problematic weeds that are emerging!

- * Pinellia Ternata (lily weed) continues to spread - remember to dig up the korms and throw them in your trash, not your compost. If you see the jack in the pulpit/cobra head flower - at the very least - pull it off the plant so it doesn't go airborne and spread hundreds of seed in your plot! <https://marylandgrows.umd.edu/2021/08/17/nasty-weed-jack-in-the-pulpit-look-a-like-pinellia-ternata-featured-video/>
- * Bind weed and Morning Glory. These are beginning to emerge - nip them when they are young before they start climbing over your fence and your other plants! https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/pdfs/Bindweed_factsheet_King.pdf
- * Wild vs Mock Strawberries (not the same thing). <https://www.tasteofhome.com/article/mock-strawberry-plants/>
- * Porcelain Berry. <https://vnps.org/unwanted-unloved-porcelain-berry/>
- * Nut Sedge Grass. <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/nutsedge/>
- * Mulberry Trees - just not in your garden - and they volunteer everywhere because of the birds! <https://rennieorchards.com/identify-mulberry-tree/>
- * Other volunteer trees and vines - Please check around your fence line and in your garden - there will be oaks and maples, butternuts and mulberries and sometimes poison ivy and tulip magnolia trees volunteering in your plots and especially at the fence line where the birds enjoy their dinners and drop seeds.

Dig them up while they are small!

Recipe Corner

Mint Recipes Ideas

Mint tea

2 cups filtered water
 15 fresh mint leaves (peppermint or spearmint)
 1 to 2 teaspoons sugar (or honey), optional
 1 cup ice, optional
 2 lemon slices, optional
 Fresh lemon juice, optional

Mint tabbouleh

½ cup bulgur
 1 cup diced cucumber (1 small-to-medium)
 1 cup diced tomato* (1 large)
 1 teaspoon fine sea salt, divided
 3 medium bunches curly parsley
 ⅓ cup (⅔ ounce) chopped fresh mint (optional but recommended—you can chop it in the food processor with the parsley)
 ⅓ cup thinly sliced green onion
 ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 3 to 4 tablespoons lemon juice, to taste
 1 medium clove garlic, pressed or minced



Mint pesto

¼ cup whole raw, unsalted almonds with skins
 2 cups packed mint leaves, thick stems removed
 1 cup packed flat leaf parsley leaves, thick stems removed
 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced, optional
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 Pinch ground black pepper
 ⅓ cup hot tap water
 ¼ cup olive oil
 2 teaspoons lemon juice
 1 teaspoon lemon zest

Mint Julep

8 mint leaves
 ¼ ounce simple syrup
 2 ounces bourbon
 Garnish: mint sprig
 Garnish: Angostura bitters (optional)