

RCCG NEWS

May 2023 RCCG Newsletter

RCCG Contact Information

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www.rockcreekcommunitygarden.org

Important Dates:

First Inspection

Sunday, May 7

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

Plant Swap

Saturday, May 6 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.



Community Gardening

By Joe Nelson, RCCG President

Community gardening is a practice that not only provides a source of fresh, healthy produce, but also brings people together to build relationships and foster a sense of belonging. The value of community gardening extends beyond just the production of food; it has a positive impact on both the environment and the local community.

In addition to the environmental benefits, community gardening promotes social interaction and fosters a sense of community. By working together to grow food, individuals have the opportunity

1

**COMMUNITY
GARDENING**

Joe Nelson

2

RECOGNITIONS

Garden Starts
Awards

3

**CO-PLANTING
IN COMMUNITY
GARDEN**

Joe Nelson

7

MOTHER DIRT

Camila Karam

9

**PLANTING
VEGETABLES IN
STRAW BALES**

Jean Gagliolo

to build relationships and form connections with others who share similar interests. Community gardening also provides a space for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together and engage in a shared activity, breaking down social barriers and promoting inclusivity.

I hope this spring you take time to enjoy the value of community, like our spring clean up, our plant swapping day, perhaps in helping with our fencing projects or in the herb and flower garden. We invite you to write or create articles for our newsletter and website. Please enjoy the fruits of your labor as you plant tomatoes, peppers, beans, or what ever makes you happy. As always please attend to your weeds so they are not a problem for others. Thanks for being a part of the Rock Creek Garden community.

Recognitions

Garden Stars awards- making a difference volunteering in the garden

Please join us in recognition for some of our all star gardeners who showed the spirit of the community in their volunteer efforts. Awardees are not only recognized in the spring meeting and in the news letter but receive a 20 gift card or credit for amendments. Thanks again to our all stars!

- ★ Lena Heron – As a new gardener – Lena took a position on the board, she also stepped in for co-leading inspections in the middle of the season due to unexpected events and worked hard on building an inspections process. She was extremely involved with the review of by-laws and garden rules.
- ★ Stephanie Bruce – Stephanie also stepped in to co-lead inspections working with her co-lead to rework the inspections process and administer it
- ★ Jack Nelson – Jack agreed late last season to serve as treasurer again and handled all the gardeners dues and other treasurer duties as interim treasurer last fall and this winter. Luckily she's staying on with Steve Erickson as a new co-treasurer this season.
- ★ Michael Sullivan - for all of his offering to help and making seven gates and rebuilding the small picnic table. Mike is always doing various handiwork projects in the garden and we are so the better for it. He also has volunteered this season to assist Rima as an assistant garden manager.
- ★ Bob Keith – Bob is always working on gates, tillers, mowers, and other things - Seems he was always out doing one thing or another for the garden
- ★ Jim Prust – Jim has consistently worked the split rail fences and has generally around willingness to help in dealing with the extra garden garbage and helping in clear and maintain Jim Pittman's plot
- ★ Jeremy Bernstein - Supported fencing project and resurfacing the shed ramps, both very labor intensive work. Thanks Jeremy!
- ★ Duane Gelderloos - Duane stepped up on fencing and the pergola fix.
- ★ Carol Franek - Carol is self motivated, consistent, hard working, willing, clocked a good number of hours on invasive plants
- ★ Natasha Naunton - for all her many years and help with the herb/flower garden Kathy Gallagher wrote: Natasha has been at this for years! For a few years she managed the herb garden on her own in addition to her own plot.
- ★ Laura Henschel - Laura has done a fine job with the shed garden, making those areas more attractive kempt and vibrant.

Inspection team notes

The 2023 garden season has started! The full inspection schedule can be found on this page.

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

*Please note the three weeks interval between inspections in June. This is to accommodate Father's Day and to ensure that we don't have an inspection scheduled the Sunday before the July 4th holiday when many people travel.

We will hold an **Inspections Open House on June 25th**. Everyone is welcome. On that date, in addition to the usual inspection activities, your inspection co-chairs, Lena and Stephanie, will both be in the garden and available to answer questions, point out issues that might earn notices or citations, and help identify invasive plants and other problematic weeds typically found in our garden plots.

Preparing for Inspections

As you prepare for inspections, **remember these tips:**

Fence and Gate

- Check for holes or tears in fencing. Repair damage or breaches.
- Check fencing (general and rabbit) connection to posts or gates. Fix dangling or swaying fencing. Attach bottom of fencing to a bottom board. Keep excess fencing off common paths.
- Check and ensure your gate closes securely.

Chips

Weed and Chip the public paths abutting your garden plot.

Common Weeds

Remove common weeds from inside your garden plot, from all fence lines and from the public path (front and perimeter) of your garden.

Invasive Weeds

Remove all invasive weeds from inside your garden plot, from all fence lines and from the public path (front and perimeter) of your garden. Remember to bag and remove invasive weeds. Do not put them in the compost.

Pests

Check plants and garden plot for pest activity. Remove plants with excessive insect infestation. Remove standing water.

Inspection Co-Chairs are Lena Heron and Stephanie Bruce. Email Address is Inspections.RCCG@gmail.com

Inspection Schedule

May 7 - First Inspection-- garden should be weeded and planting begun

May 21

June 4

June 25 - Inspection Open House

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

Garden Tip:

Start seeds in ice cream cones or egg shells and plant directly in the soil when ready. The perfect bio degradable hack.

Co-planting in Community Gardens

By Joe Nelson

Co-planting, or companion planting, is a technique where two or more crops are planted in close proximity to each other to provide mutual benefits such as pest control, nutrient exchange, and space utilization. Co-planting is a practice that has been used for centuries by various cultures around the world.

Here are some examples of co-planting and a little bit of history of one of the versions of co-planting.

- * **Basil and Tomatoes:** Planting basil alongside tomatoes can help repel pests and improve the flavor of the tomatoes. The basil emits a strong aroma that can deter pests, while the tomatoes provide a structure for the basil to grow on.
- * **Carrots and Onions:** Planting carrots and onions together can benefit both crops. Onions can help repel pests and improve the flavor of carrots, while carrots can help improve the soil structure and nutrient uptake for onions.
- * **Cabbage and Dill:** Planting dill alongside cabbage can help repel pests such as cabbage moths and aphids. Dill attracts beneficial insects like ladybugs and lacewings that can feed on pests, while the cabbage provides a structure for the dill to grow on.
- * **Radishes and Spinach:** Planting radishes and spinach together can benefit both crops. Radishes can help break up compacted soil and improve soil aeration, while spinach can help shade the soil and retain moisture.
- * **Squash, beans and corn** have a specific name of milpa or three sisters are also great pairings and deserve some special mention and a little bit of history on its origin and use.

Native American co-planting, specifically the practice of milpa (three sisters) farming, is a traditional farming method used by Mesoamerican cultures that dates back thousands of years.

The milpa farming system is based on the concept of intercropping, where multiple crops are grown together in the same field. In this system, corn, beans, and squash are planted together in the same plot of land. The corn provides support for the beans, which in turn fix nitrogen in the soil, and the squash acts as a living mulch, preventing weeds and retaining moisture in the soil. This combination of crops creates a sustainable and efficient system that maximizes yield and minimizes the need for fertilizers and pesticides.

The milpa farming system was developed by Native American cultures such as the Maya, Aztec, and Inca. It was a key component of their agriculture and played a significant role in their societies. The milpa system provided not only food but also cultural, social, and spiritual benefits. It was a way of life and a connection to their ancestors and the land.

Today, milpa farming is still practiced in many rural communities in Mexico and Central America. It has also gained attention in recent years



A quick guide to other companion plants

as a sustainable and regenerative farming system that can be used to address environmental and social issues. The milpa system has been shown to improve soil health, increase biodiversity, and provide food security for small-scale farmers.

Co planting, specifically the milpa farming system, is a testament to the ingenuity and wisdom of indigenous cultures. Today, it serves as an example of how traditional farming practices can be adapted and applied in modern agriculture to promote sustainability, food security, and cultural preservation. Hopefully you can find some co-planting success in your garden this season. For my part I do basil tomatoes and marigolds together as well as cucumbers and dill. Have co planting successes or failures? Tell us about your techniques and experience in co-planting.

Mother Dirt

By Camila Karam

The vivacity of Spring has arrived! **Spring** awakens the spark of life, and Nature is animated with new vitality, eager to share its nurturing force with gardeners and all life forms. This is the energy we work with...not man-made devices.

Gardening is a joy and a blessing with numerous benefits. It is a handicraft that brings people together to share seeds, plants and knowledge handed down by our ancestors. Plus, we are co-creating with Nature! I want to share some of the rich, varied heritage of Nature's generosity, insights, and traditions.

Start your seed in eggshells! As your seedling grows just put it in the ground...don't forget to poke small holes at the bottom of the eggshell. The eggshell will gradually decompose adding richness to the soil. Be aware that using eggshells for acid-loving plants such as azaleas and gardenias...they do not particularly like it.

Experiment with planting or transplanting when the moon is in the water signs of **Cancer, Scorpio, or Pisces**. These astrological signs are the most fertile and fruitful. This practice of planting by the moon is a very ancient and accurate practice.

Did you know that "snow" is a fertilizer for the land? It provides nitrogen, phosphorus and other minerals. Snow has 40% less heavy water (deuterium oxide), than normal water. Deuterium is a heavy isotope-this slows down some chemical and biological processes of growing plants. Some scientists have observed when heavy water molecules are removed, plants grow faster. So maybe this will enlighten folks who complain about the snow!

The ancient cultures and many indigenous people knew the value of the **Sounds of Nature**. The sound frequencies emitted by nocturnal insects, amphibians and the songbirds enhance our cells and DNA. These creature's sounds also awaken the seeds to grow! It also balances our energy fields! LISTEN!

Basil has for centuries been considered a tonic for melancholy and low spirits. Its antispasmodic qualities make it useful for headaches, insomnia nervousness that comes from stress, tension, and nervous indigestion. Consider this, take a handful of basil leaves to a liter of good red wine, leave to macerate for 4 to 5 days, strain and sip a small glassful after dinner.

Give your tomato, pepper and onion plants an extra boost by heaping compost around them. This will keep their roots cool and moist. This greatly assists them to endure the heat of the sun and produce longer.

St. John's Wort (*hypericum perforatum*)-A Noteworthy Herb! Every age and system have found a use for this herb. In European herbalism it was an effective anti-depressant. It is par excellent for nerve damage of all kinds. Only in America it is known as "Klamath Weed", it is not revered. It has been the target of chemical eradication campaigns because it grows in pastures and range land.

Chamomile flower blossoms soaked in room temperature water for 3 days can be used as a spray for and to control treating many plant diseases and to control damping-off in green houses and cold frames.

Sprinkle some powdered cinnamon on your plants! Cinnamon fights fungus, protects seedling revives sick plants and keeps mosquitos away.

If you are growing melons in your plot, keep them off the soil as they grow. This prevents them from rotting. Cut a plastic gallon jug in half or use a flat tile to place under neath them once they reach the size of an orange. Use mulch and don't weed melons. Working around the vines by weeding mat disturb the transmission of nutrients to the fruits. It is advisable to stop. Have a prosperous garden this year!!!

Water Pressure and Water Volunteer Needed

From the Garden Manager

Water Pressure in the Garden: In recent years we've had issues with water pressure. Unfortunately there is not fix for it that I am aware of. I'm thinking of poking the NPS maintenance crew to help figure it out, but they are not always responsive. Please be patient when the pressure drops, as it does with regularity but inconsistently. If anything changes, I'll let you know.

Secondly and very IMPORTANTLY: We failed to include a section on volunteering to help with the water system in the garden 2023 applications. While we have a longstanding Water Grand Master, after decades or work he is ready to step back. We've been working on trying to develop a reliable team of water volunteers, but even there we've taken a hit, as, sadly, one eager team member passed away on clean up weekend. So please read the description below and consider being part of the team. What happens is someone brings a water issue to my attention and I send a blast limited to the water volunteers and wait for a reply. Replies need to be prompt--yea or nea--someone can work a task, since usually running water is involved.... If we have enough volunteers, we could potentially divvy up responsibility to particular weeks during the season, when a person might be on call, like we do for mowing, and the flower/herb garden, and inspections. I hope those of you mechanically inclined will give it serious consideration as this is a service everyone greatly appreciates, but without the team to work the system, the system could fail or be turned off.

You can write me a the RCCG email: rockcreekgarden@gmail.com.

Here's the descriptor:

(WTR) Water—Need a team to be available to respond to water issues in the garden. Turn on the water in the spring; bleed the pipes in the fall and turn water off. Routine tasks may be as simple as hose repair, or more complicated like a pipe leak or faucet replacement required. Ability to be responsive is a must, which is why a group is needed to so that at least one person from the group is able to respond timely to manage an issue—since often running water is involved and must be stopped/slowed/fixed. There is not a clear sight picture of how often you might be called; guess is an average of once or twice a month. Time spent, depends on the nature of the problem. Level of exertion is moderate (when digging to find and repair the pipe leak).

Planting Vegetables in Straw Bales

By Camilla and Jean Gagliolo

Growing vegetables in straw bales is a great option if you want to expand your gardening techniques. I have found that certain vegetables do better in straw bales than directly in the soil in the garden. I have had particular success growing eggplant and peppers in straw bales.

Here are the steps to grow vegetables in a straw bale:

- ✱ **Condition the bale(s):** Before planting, the bales need to be conditioned to start the decomposition process. To do this, water the bales thoroughly and then add a high-nitrogen fertilizer, like blood meal or fish emulsion. Add the fertilizer according to the package instructions, and then water the bales again. Repeat this process every other day for about three weeks. I use blood meal and add it every two days and water in between. Don't be surprised if you start seeing mushroom appear in your bale. That means the conditioning is on its way.
- ✱ **Choose your plants:** Straw bales are suitable for growing a variety of plants, including tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, beans, lettuce, and herbs. Choose plants that are suited to your climate and the amount of sunlight your bales will receive. We use the bale for hard to grow vegetables like eggplant, peppers, and hot peppers. Rima grows her sweet potatoes in her bale in the garden. Any vegetable that likes a steady temperature at its roots will like growing in a straw bale. It also provides a more porous growing environment so any root vegetables will be happy in a straw bale.
- ✱ **Plant your vegetables:** Once the bales have been conditioned, it's time to plant. Use a trowel to dig a hole in the top of the bale, and then add some soil or compost. We add a number of natural ingredients at the opening in the bale to help provide nutrients. We add ground eggshells, sardines (yes sardines in water from a can), and our homemade compost. Now, place your plant or seedling in the hole and cover the roots with soil.
- ✱ **Water:** Straw bales are porous and can dry out quickly, so water them regularly to keep them moist. You may need to water them more frequently during hot, dry weather. Some straw gardeners recommend a drip hose for your straw growing environment.
- ✱ **Monitor for pests and diseases:** Keep an eye out for any signs of pests or diseases, and take action quickly to prevent the spread of problems.
- ✱ **Harvest your vegetables:** Once your plants have matured, it's time to harvest your vegetables! Enjoy your fresh, homegrown produce.

Growing vegetables in straw bales can be a fun and rewarding way to grow your own food. With a little care and attention, you can produce a bountiful harvest in a small space.



Recipe Corner

By Rima from the following source [Kevin Lee Jacobs/A Garden for the House.com](https://www.kevinleejacobs.com/2018/05/leek-tart/)

Ingredients for one 10-inch tart, serving 4

- Pate Brisee dough, thoroughly chilled ([recipe here](#))
- 5 strips of bacon
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 2-3 medium medium leeks, thinly sliced (enough for 3-4 cups)
- Seasonings – salt, freshly ground pepper, thyme leaves (fresh or dried) and/or rosemary
- 1 cup Ricotta cheese
- 1 generous tablespoon dry French vermouth
- 1/2 cup grated or shredded Parmesan or Asiago cheese, plus a little more for sprinkling over the tart

Cooking Directions

In a large, heavy skillet set over a medium flame, fry the bacon until crisp but not burnt; drain on paper towels.

Remove most of the bacon fat from the skillet, and replace it with the butter.

After the butter melts, toss the sliced leeks into the skillet. Add the vermouth and the seasonings — a big pinch of salt, several grinds of black pepper, and a big pinch (about half of a tablespoon) of thyme and/or rosemary.

Toss the leek mixture with a spatula, and then cover the skillet, lower the heat, and let the leeks sweat until soft and delicious — about 7 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Set the oven rack at the lower third position; preheat oven to 400°F.

Meanwhile, on a lightly-floured surface, roll the Pate Brisee into a 12-inch diameter circle. Transfer the circle to a lightly-greased, rimless baking sheet (or a rimmed sheet turned upside down). Refrigerate both sheet and dough for several minutes, just to firm up the butter.

In a medium bowl, mix together the Ricotta and Parmesan (or Asiago) cheese and a big pinch thyme and/or rosemary.

Spread the cheese mixture evenly over the pastry, leaving a 2 inch border all around. Top the cheese the leeks, and then crumble the bacon on top.

Bake until the crust turns golden brown — about 20-25 minutes. Let cool on the baking sheet for 5 minutes.

Slide the tart onto a platter, a round cake-stand, or a wooden board. Dust the top of the tart with a small handful of freshly-grated or shredded Parmesan or Asiago cheese.

Serve hot, at room temperature, or even cold, with copious goblets of champagne or Sauvignon blanc. A lightly-dressed green salad is the perfect accompaniment.

Poetry Corner

Poems from an RCCG Gardener

Preferring to remain anonymous.

Aren't they lovely?
I stare upwards
On a cold February evening
Our oak tree forms
A dark silhouette against a starry sky

I am wondering
How many light years until spring?

What makes the end of winter tender?
Watching the soft, ripe camellia buds
Ready to burst into bloom
At any sign of spring

—

Fresh green threads emerge in rows

The smell of wet earth and wood chips
Will fill your soul

Our resident harbinger of spring
A lone red cardinal
Calls out
Come join me

—

Here is the lovely place
Where I plant seeds
To grow dreams

Looking out our front window
I watch budding azaleas
Burst into orchid, raspberry and coconut
mountains

The grass rejoices by growing two inches
An hour
And the dandelions are increasing
In Fibonacci numbers

—

Spring arrived on Saturday
At 6:45 a.m.
I can't sleep because the sounds of
Soft raindrops
Flood my dreams

