

# **NYACK COMMUNITY GARDEN**

**September-October 2022**

## **The Community Issue**

For the last two years, we lost a bit of the “community” in the Nyack Community Garden since we were unable to meet in person and we had alternate gardening days with our neighbors. This year, we are happy to be able to meet in person for garden events, and we can see everyone in the garden. This fall newsletter emphasizes community.

The flowers featured in Alexandra’s article come from a shared plot, which is something more gardeners are doing this season—doubling up means you get double the help! Kathy’s article features several gardeners, so we can get to know others in our community. NCG board member Laura contributed an article on cover crops, which is a way to give back to the garden by enriching the soil, and since the bags of cover crop seeds are far larger than any one plot will need, you can purchase a bag together with some neighbors and share the seeds among several plots.

How might you find fellow gardeners with whom to share plots, seeds, or stories? Come to the garden potluck on Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>! Here’s to building and maintaining our community (and our soil health).

--Liz Cherry, Newsletter Editor

## **Tips for Planting Flowers for Arrangements**

Growing flowers in your vegetable garden can be a great visual complement as well as benefit to your crop, with certain varieties that attract native bees and other beneficial insects. These helpful bugs help spread pollen around, which encourages your vegetable plants to grow, breed, and produce.

Another benefit to planting flowers in your garden is the lovely arrangements you can make to decorate your homes or gift to your loved ones. Here are a few recommendations of which flowers to plant to yield cut arrangements.

### **Strawflower ‘Vintage White’**

These can grow as tall as 5-6 ft and yield white tissue paperlike petals with a bright orange eye. They are great to use for small arrangements or as a filler.





### Celosia

Another variety that grows very tall and narrow, but produces the quirkiest variety of buds and colors throughout. Each flower truly is unique and grows in abundance. This is great for a tall arrangement.

### Globe Amaranth

These flowers grow as a short but spreading bush sprinkled with button-like buds. This is another great flower to use as filler in smaller arrangements and if cared for properly can be dried.

Now for the main attraction, I recommend **dahlias** which come in all shapes, colors, and sizes. Their geometric and literal all-around perfection makes them the perfect flower to add to a bouquet or arrangement. Zinnias make for another great alternative.

Some of my favorite dahlia varieties include Larks Ebbe, Clearview Peachy, Foxy Lady, Koko Puff, American Dawn, Fleurel, Daydreamer and Maarn. One tuber of each variety will suffice and can grow up to 2-3 feet wide and 3-5 feet tall depending on the variety. Their biggest challenge is their weight as they mature. I highly suggest setting up T-posts and using string to contain them, as they can go grow wild and tall. Be over generous with space, when you first plant.

Dahlias are unique in that you can grow them from tubers. The market for tubers is hot and timely, so be on the lookout for pre-sales and get your wishlist ready, because they will sell out. My favorite farms to order from include [Floret Flowers](#), [Petal Pink Flower Farm](#), and [Capital Blooms](#).





While dahlias are perennials, you'll want to remove the tubers from the ground before the first frost. Waiting for you will be new tuber growth, which you can replant next year or share with your fellow gardeners. Make sure to label them!

Put all these tips together and you've got a recipe for a great arrangement to brighten up any day. If you're interested in growing dahlias, I highly suggest reading [Floret Farm's Discovering Dahlias](#) which covers it all. You can also follow my flower journey in our garden [here](#). Swing by plots #21&22 to see the growth which is still very abundant.

--Alexandra Avila

## From Huge Watermelons to Tiny Ones – All These Grow in Our Garden!

Barbara Berasi-Rosen (plot 3) is a super gardener (she won the blue ribbon for the Best Overall Garden in 2015 and third place for the best maintained garden this year. She always likes to experiment with something new every year, so this year it was watermelon. And boy was she successful! The vine is beautiful itself, but look at what it yielded! She and her husband have been eating watermelon for over a week already!





Meanwhile, in plot 36, Jayne Stuecklen has been growing what looks like a miniature watermelon. But that's not what it is. It is a cucamelon, also known as a Mexican cucumber. They are about the size of grape tomatoes, but taste a little bit like cucumbers. And they sure are beautiful!

Also known as a mouse melon, the Mexican sour gherkin, or by its Spanish name, *sandiita* (little watermelon), a cucamelon is the fruit of the *Melothria scabra* vine.

It is highly nutritious, containing vitamins C, E, K, potassium, fiber and antioxidants including lycopene and beta-carotene.

They can be eaten raw. Since she gave me some, I threw them in a salad. But Jayne pickles them.



Here is a recipe for pickled cucamelon in case you want to grow them next year:

### Pickled Cucamelons

- 2 cups water
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons pickling salt, or Kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 12 to 18 garlic cloves
- 12 to 18 dried small red peppers
- 6 to 12 fresh dill fronds
- 4 to 5 cups Mexican cukes, rinsed and dried

### Directions

1. Add the water, apple cider vinegar, white vinegar, salt, and sugar to a large pot and bring to a simmer. Stir until the salt and sugar dissolves.
2. Add 1 tablespoon of the pickling spice blend to each of the pint jars. Divide the garlic, red peppers, and dill fronds among the jars.

3. Pack the jars with the Mexican cukes, making sure you leave about 1 inch of headspace at the top of the jars.
4. Pour the brine into the jars. Leave 1/2 inch of headspace at the top of the jars. Tap the jars on the counter to release any air bubbles.
5. Wipe the rims with a clean cloth and place the lids on the jars. If you are making refrigerator pickles, store them in the fridge. For hot processed pickles, move on to step 6.
6. Turn the burner under the canner pot to high. Place the jars on the canner rack making sure they get completely submerged in the water. If they are not submerged, add more water. Make sure the water does not exceed 180°F or the pickles will get soft (since they are so small, they cook quickly).
7. Process the jars in the water bath for 10 minutes. Don't let them process any longer than that.
8. Use a jar lifter or tongs to transfer the jars to a cooling rack or dishtowel on the counter. Let the jars cool to room temperature.
9. As the jars cool you will hear a "ping" or popping sound as they seal. Also, the lid will be slightly con-caved, if it rattles up and down it is not sealed and should be kept in the refrigerator.
10. Let the pickles sit in the brine to infuse with flavor for at least 10 to 14 days before using. Store in a cool dry place for up to 1 year (or in the fridge for 2 months if you are making refrigerator pickles).

### Notes

- Before you start, rinse the cucamelons under cold water then spread them out on a clean dish towel to dry.
- If you don't have a canner, you can use a standard pot as long as it is tall enough for the jars. Find a rack that fits inside the pot so the jars do not sit directly on the bottom of the pot.
- Want to make refrigerator pickles? After you have the jars filled with all the ingredients, skip the hot water bath and place them directly in the fridge. Store the pickles in the refrigerator for 2 months.
- You can easily double this recipe or divide the recipe among eight smaller half-pint jars.

By the way, Jayne is another award winner, winning the blue ribbon for the best maintained garden this year! And, indeed, she has won ribbons in several categories for her garden many times in the last 9 years.

And, all of these watermelon stories remind me that there is another vegetable that looks like watermelon, but on the inside only – watermelon radishes. I don't know if anyone in the garden is growing these:

It just reminds us how amazingly diverse and gorgeous is all of nature!



--Kathy Schwarz

# Planting a Winter Cover Crop

Something new that we want to encourage everyone to leave in their plots at the end of the season: a cover crop!

Every year at the end of the growing season, the garden committee asks you to remove everything from your plot. Since we no longer rototill the garden, each person can hand till his/her/their plots before planting. This is better for the health of the soil than rototilling. At the end of the season, you will need to remove weeds, furniture, and props. Remember, there is still no guarantee that you will retain the same plot every year.

There are many advantages to planting a winter cover crop. It helps to protect the structure of the soils and adds nitrogen, making it more fertile. It can help to loosen compacted soil and prevent weed growth. See more here: <https://betterground.org/cover-up-with-a-winter-cover-crop/>

One 5-pound bag of seeds will cover about 5 full plots and typically costs \$15-20, so you can share with several of your neighbors. The planting guidelines recommend sowing 5 lb./1,000 sq.ft, which would be about one pound for a full plot (or a half a pound for a half plot). While in our community garden you are not guaranteed in getting the same plot the following year, either way, you can feel good about enriching another gardener's plot, if not your own. Having grown a winter cover crop for years, I can assure you that the benefits are more than apparent in the spring season.

In the past I have planted winter rye grass, but this requires turning it under about six weeks before planting my crops. I then started using a combination of field peas and oats (see photo) from High Mowing Organic Seeds:

<https://www.highmowingseeds.com/organic-non-gmo-field-peas-oats-mix.html>

They are also available at Hudson Valley Seed Co., Johnny Seeds, and other places that sell cover crops. Peas and oats die back when it gets really cold in winter, so you won't need to turn it under (unless it doesn't get cold enough). Feel free to experiment with different kind of cover crops, but one word of caution: If you use vetch, which is very pretty, you must stay on top of it and turn it all the way under or it can become a menace!



I use 2-3 pounds of seeds on my full plot in mid to late October in my full plot. It's important to weed the plot first! I lightly till with a pitchfork. I spread the seeds evenly by hand, then rake into the soil a bit, covering it with leftover straw from mulching. If we still have drought conditions, it will need to be watered to get it started. If you don't have straw, that's okay, just try to rake those seeds under the soil so the birds don't eat them all. I use whatever leftover seeds I have at home, and save any that are left for next year.

Here's a video that shows you how to plant your cover crop! <https://youtu.be/XvERk9kwmVI>

--Laura Pakaln

## Watering our Gardens

Rockland County declared a drought this summer, and the garden complied with the restricted watering guidelines by only watering on odd-numbered days, and only between 5pm and 9pm. Now that the drought watering restrictions have been lifted, we can still practice good water stewardship by learning more about how to best water our gardens.

### Why water?

In general, plants need space to grow, access to sunlight, air, and nutrients, and of course water, in order to survive. Water makes up 85 to 95 percent of the weight of plants, and it helps move nutrients from the soil into the plant roots. However, too much water can cause the plant roots to rot. Therefore, it is important for us to learn how to best water, and not overwater, our plants.

### How much and how often?

The Farmer's Almanac recommends watering gardens (that are in the ground, not in a pot) with about one inch of water per week. As the Board noted in their email about watering, this amounts to about three times a week, taking rain into account. Only seedlings need regular daily watering until they are established.

Before watering, check the soil at root level—if your soil is cool and damp, there is no need to water at that time.

Interestingly, the Almanac recommends watering just after a rainfall, especially if the rain is light (less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of water). This is because the extra watering will help to ensure that the water seeps deeply into the soil, penetrating down to the roots of the plant.

In general, the Almanac and other garden resource groups recommend watering more deeply and less frequently, such as giving your plot a good soak once a week. They all recommend *against* frequent, surface level “sprinkling.”

## **When and where?**

The Almanac and other sources recommend watering early in the day or late at night, avoiding watering in the middle of the day when the water will simply evaporate. The Almanac notes that watering in the middle of the day or when temperatures are above 90 degrees can lead to a 50 percent loss of water!

There is no need to water the foliage of a plant, as the purpose of watering is to bring water to the root system of the plant. The roots will then transfer water to the leaves internally. Additionally, wet foliage can cause the plant to fall prey to a variety of fungal issues.

Aim the hose at the base of the plant rather than using a “shower” on top of the plant. Many plants have leaves that block the base of the plant, meaning that the water will never reach the soil and root system.

## **Other tips**

Some garden resource groups advise watering a garden in sections, concentrating on saturating the soil in that one section. In any case, whether watering the whole plot at once or section by section, they all recommend allowing the soil to dry out before watering again.

Wilting plants and yellow leaves can be both signs of too little and too much water, so looking to the soil will help determine which one is the culprit.

Different plants require different levels of watering; consult the Farmer’s Almanac to see if your plants have vastly different watering needs.

Applying a mulch will help reduce watering needs, by helping water stay in the soil rather than evaporating. Many gardeners use straw or hay, as it also allows for air circulation. The Cornell Cooperative Extension notes that in a drought, wood chip or bark mulch can soak up all of the water before it gets to the soil, so they recommend placing the hose nozzle beneath this type of mulch when watering.

As we are entering the fall season, our water needs are lower than in the heat of summer, but hopefully we can all go into next season with a more sustainable approach to watering our gardens.

*--Liz Cherry*

# Potluck Dinner

*COME ONE, COME ALL, JUST COME!*

The Community Garden joins together in fellowship and food at the end of the season annually with the exception of the past two pandemic years. So it's been a long time since we've gathered and it's always been a good time. We're thrilled to bring back the tradition of our annual Pot Luck Supper. We hope you'll join us on October 27th (note new date) at 7:00 PM at the Nyack Senior Center (90 Depew Ave).

Everyone is invited for an evening amongst our fellow garden members to feast and drink, and most importantly celebrate the end of a successful and bountiful season. Join us as we award this year's very deserving Garden Contest winners, play games, and draw raffles and prizes that support our local small businesses.

Please bring a dish of your choice that would serve four and bring any required serving utensils. Committee Members will be contacted by Adrienne Alcaro soon.

We hope to see you all there. Happy Harvesting!

--Alexandra Avila

## Plant-a-Row 2022

First, let's start with the wonderful news—on Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Plant-a-Row committee received 73 pounds of donations, for a total of 678 pounds for the season, which surpasses last year's total of 619 pounds. And we still have two months to go! Everyone can add to this year's record-breaking total by donating on Sundays or Monday mornings before 10am, and the donations will continue until the garden closes.

Much of the donations are thanks to the Nyack Garden Club, winners of this year's Best Vegetable and/or Flower Garden in our garden contest! Nyack Garden Club members are required to complete a certain number of volunteer hours every year in the community, and lucky for us, time spent in the NCG fulfills that requirement.

According to Jill Remaly, NCG board member and Plant-a-Row committee chair, the Nyack Garden Club members greatly contribute to this "well-oiled machine," as she put it—on Sunday mornings, Betsy Turk places the green cooler near the shed for donations to People to People. Betsy then returns to the garden on Sunday evenings with her Nyack



Garden Club crew to gather produce to donate. Other garden members add to the bounty on Sunday and Monday mornings, which are then sorted by Plant-a-Row committee members. At approximately 10am on Monday morning, Betty Gaeta—another Garden Club member—arrives to deliver the goods to People to People.

Thanks go to all involved, and here's to continuing the donations through the rest of the fall season!

--Liz Cherry

## Nyack Community Garden Contest Winners

The Nyack Community Garden held our annual Garden Contest on July 27<sup>th</sup> this year. Thanks go to all of the gardeners for participating, to the Garden Contest Committee for organizing, and to this year's judges for bestowing the honors: Candy Pittari, Diane Serratore (CEO of People to People), and Denise Hogan. Photos of the winners courtesy of Stephanie Salter. Come celebrate the winners at the potluck on October 27<sup>th</sup>!

This year's winners are:  
Best Overall Garden  
#48 Nicole & Donna Faustini (photo)





**Best Maintained Garden**  
1st Place #36 Jayne Stuecklen (photo)  
2nd Place #23 Marie Carmel Grube  
3rd Place #3 Barbara Berasi-Rosen

**Best Vegetable and/ or Flower Garden**  
1st Place #43 Nyack Garden Club (photo)  
2nd Place #8B Vivienne Van Wiederhold  
3rd Place #20 Christine Rudolph



**Most Creative Garden**  
1st Place #7 Niki Strippoli (photo)  
2nd Place #37 Jill Remaly  
3rd Place #49B Cristiane Bertone

--Liz Cherry

# Notes from the Board

Please notify us at [membership@nyackcommunitygarden.info](mailto:membership@nyackcommunitygarden.info) if our garden information has incorrect information for you such as wrong name spelling, email, phone number, plot number, committee assignment, or address OR if you change any of these.

While we do not email revised lists every time an update is made to all members, the up-to-date information is always posted on the bulletin board on the door of the shed.

## Nyack Community Garden Executive Board

Jill Remaly (plot 37)	co-president	<a href="mailto:jillremaly217@gmail.com">jillremaly217@gmail.com</a>
Michelle Morales (plot 22)	co-president	<a href="mailto:mzmichelle@hotmail.com">mzmichelle@hotmail.com</a>
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Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/nyackgarden>

## 2022 Dates to Remember

- Mondays by 10am** Plant A Row veggies in cooler will be given to food bank
- Thursday, October 27, 7pm** Pot Luck Dinner with prizes awarded to attending contest winners and free raffle for all attendees
- Sunday, November 13** Garden closes, all items removed and plots restored to state as of April 3
- Saturday, November 20** 8:00 AM sharp: Winter prep clean-up

A message from your newsletter team:

Please send us your garden stories, questions, or tips on what you'd like to hear more about in the newsletter. We'd love to hear from you.

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