

A POSY PICKER'S PAPER
New Meadows Garden Club
Topsfield, Massachusetts
April 19th through May 17, 2022



Love home grown tomatoes? Check this month's Green Thumb Corner for some tips on how to grow your very own on your deck, your balcony or any other small outdoor space.

The objectives of the New Meadows Garden Club shall be to foster knowledge of home gardening, decorative arrangements and an interest in civic projects.

*May 5—workshop
May 6
Mother's Day sale*



Our Mother's Day Tea Cup Fundraising Sale is here once again this year! All hands on deck...it's time to get ready. Collect your tea cups, dainty mugs and other interesting small containers, your live and silk floral material and make a plan to contribute 4 or 5 designs to the cause, if possible. Our sale will again take place outside the Topsfield Post Office, this year on May 6th from 9 am until noon.

Mary Connor has once again graciously volunteered to host a workshop at her home, 138 Haverhill Rd. Topsfield on May 5th at 10:30 am. Please let Mary know by May 2nd if you plan to attend so there will be a seat for you (978-887-8295). Also, please get back to Mary with answers to the few questions contained in an e-mail message sent to you on April 24th, which will be very helpful for our planning!

If you plan to design your containers at home, please drop them by at Mary's home prior to sale day on Friday, May 6th. They may be left outside her garage door. If you don't have containers available, there will be extras at Mary's workshop. Just bring your plant material with you. There will also be some extra plant material available for your use. Donations of spring colored silk flowers are definitely welcome!

Workshop attendees using silk flowers should bring wire cutters to size the stems to the containers. Oasis will be available for those who choose to bring and design with live material. Again, be sure to check out Sandy, and Jane's e-mail message of April 24th, which contains lots of details and tips. There are also links included in that message to spark your creativity!

This promises to be an exciting event for our club once again this year. Remember that we will use the proceeds from our event to help fund the upkeep of our traffic islands and cemetery garden, so please lend a hand!

May 17

Our next board meeting will be held at the Topsfield Town Hall COA Meeting Room at 10 am.

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...more news on the following page...

NOTES



Calling all members! Please be on the lookout for a request for helpers very soon for mulch spreading at our Linebrook Road and Prospect Street Islands.

There will also be a call for helpers on planting day during the week before Memorial Day at the Pine Grove Cemetery garden. Stay tuned.

More information will come via e-mail, so be sure to check your mailboxes!

Are you suffering from cabin fever after all these months, excuse me, years of social distancing??? Here are two garden tours that aren't too far away that may just help lift your spirits and brighten your day!

Town and Country Garden Club Of Ipswich

Garden Tour



Saturday, June 18, 2022

10:00 am to 3:00 pm

Tickets:

\$20.00 in advance

(info on website)

\$25.00 day of tour

(available at Hall Haskell House)

*A self-guided tour of
some of Ipswich's and*

*Rowley's most traditional, quaint and eclectic
gardens.*

*Bring your friends and get some ideas for your
own gardens.*

*The fundraiser benefits annual scholarships and
many community beautification projects.*

For tickets and additional information:

www.Ipswichtownandcountrygardenclub.com

...another tour on the following page...



ANDOVER GARDEN CLUB

EST. 1927

PRESENTS:

Andover in Bloom
A TOUR OF ANDOVER GARDENS

SATURDAY JUNE 4TH 2022 | 10 AM - 4 PM
*If it rains then the event will be rescheduled
for Sunday June 5th 2022 rain or shine*

PURCHASE TICKETS ONLINE AT:
andovergardenclub2022tour.com
or at the event (cash or check only)
Tickets \$25 | \$30 at the event
To purchase tickets by check please call: 978-500-0626

Start at the garden of your choice.
Carpooling encouraged.



...Bits and pieces...



*Signs of spring at the Prospect Street Island!
Many thanks to Jane for a great photo!*

...Green Thumb Corner follows...

Green Thumb Corner

Although winter has been trying to hold on every once-in-a-while this spring, real spring weather is not far off. That's when the real fun starts in the garden! While many of us have downsized our outside chores, there is still garden enjoyment to be had. I don't know about you, but I have always loved the concept of growing my own food. My parents were avid gardeners into their 80's, as their parents before them. All of this said, gardening in the middle of the woods of Boxford for the past 33 years has been a real challenge for me. I find myself constantly at war with the local wildlife, running in chase like a crazy maniac to keep the critters away from my plants. Thank goodness our



home is 150 feet from the street...hopefully, no one can see my mad antics! I just can't understand why the 14 acres of town land that borders our property doesn't provide enough juicy treats to keep our resident wildlife happy and away from my stuff! So, you will understand when I tell you that I learned a long time ago how to grow my food plants in containers on our deck. At various times I have grown lettuce, carrots, radishes, onions, beans, broccoli and, of course, my favorite tomatoes and basil. There's no way I will miss the enjoyment of biting into a home grown tomato!

So, today I'm going to chat a bit about growing tomatoes in containers, which can be done in any small outdoor space that gets a good amount of sunlight, 6 to 8 hours a day. If you would like to try this, your first consideration will be the size of the container. It's a good thing to stay away from small pots, since it is very difficult to keep your plant's soil from drying out, especially in the heat of the summer. Most tomato plants need containers a minimum of 12 to 18 inches deep and must definitely be well-draining.

Next, you'll have to decide which variety of tomato plant to get. Tomatoes fall into two groups: determinate and indeterminate. Determinate tomatoes grow to a certain height and then stop, and are better suited for growing in containers since they are compact and need only a little staking. Tomatoes from these plants produce all their fruit over a three week period and can be harvested within four to six weeks. Indeterminate tomatoes, on the other hand, grow continuously, producing fruit up until the first frost. These plants are much larger and require much more staking. You'll need really tall supports that should be positioned early on! A larger pot is a good idea as well for indeterminate tomatoes. Don't let this discourage you though! The last two years I have grown lovely, delicate heirloom tomatoes, all indeterminate types. It can be done in a container! Last year, we enjoyed the last tomatoes I removed from my plants prior to our first frost at Thanksgiving time by keeping the unripe ones in a paper bag in our basement until they ripened up! Here's one additional point...tomatoes of all types are vulnerable to diseases such as blights, wilts, leaf spot and blossom end rot, but if you choose carefully, you may be able to find some that are disease resistant.

Okay, now's the time to get our hand's dirty! If you are growing your tomato plant in a container, a good soilless potting mix is considered the best growing medium. Garden soil is okay, but sometimes drains poorly and may contain weeds and diseases. I must admit that I do grow my plants in garden soil that I mix with compost which my husband makes from leaves, grass clippings and my kitchen waste. When planting your tomato, be sure to plant it deeply! You can remove the lower few sets of leaves and bury the stem up to the first set of leaves you've left on your plant. Roots will grow out of the stem, which will in turn help the plant develop a strong root system. Staking should be done the same day you plant your tomato.

And now the maintenance. Because containers dry out quickly, your plant will thrive if you maintain a consistent watering schedule. The biggest challenge to container gardening is maintaining adequate moisture. Keep in mind that the heat around your container will warm the soil more quickly than in-ground plants. A good watering routine is to provide water directly on the soil in the morning, which will provide moisture to your plant all day. Avoid wetting the foliage since this can encourage

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fungi and blights. Consistent watering is key, since inconsistency may also result in cracked or split fruit. During really hot summer days or hot days when it is very windy, you might find it necessary to water your tomato plant twice a day. While keeping the soil moist is important, don't be tempted to make the soil soggy, which can cause the roots to rot. There is a tender balance here! If you travel out of town regularly over the summer, you might want to consider installing a timed drip watering system, which will take care of your plant while you are away.

Next comes feeding. Tomatoes are classified as heavy feeders. In containers, they should be fed every two weeks. The fertilizer you use should contain nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus. If you are using potting soil, be sure to read the label to see if these nutrients are already present. If your soil does not contain fertilizer, feed your plant with an all-purpose, slow-release fertilizer or with a fertilizer specially formulated for tomatoes. I've had success with Miracle-Gro Tomato Plant Food.

The beauty of growing tomatoes or any other veggies in containers is that you can move the containers around to provide the most perfect conditions. As I mentioned previously, tomatoes need a lot of sun...6 to 8 hours a day, preferably between the hours of 10 am and 4 pm. Check and see if your plant is getting this. If not, move it to a sunnier spot, if you have one!

And the last consideration is temperature. Tomatoes love warm temperatures, so if you hear that the temperatures will drop below 50 degrees, either bring your plant inside or protect it from the cold. Under these circumstances, I choose to cover my plants with plant cover, which is available on Amazon.com. A curious fact about tomatoes is that temperatures that are too warm can shut them down. If temperatures are sustained at more than 90 degrees, the plants will stop producing flowers and the fruit already formed may not mature. This explains why my daughter, who lives in St. Croix, hasn't had much success growing tomatoes. One would think you could do this in the tropics!

And now for the harvest! This is the best part. For the best tomatoes, wait until they are fully ripe before you snag them. Tomatoes that are picked early can ripen on your countertop, but they will not be as flavorful or full of nutrients as they would if you had been more patient! Supermarket tomatoes come to mind...they are picked long before they are ripe so that they will hold up better during shipment and will last long enough for you to bring them home. You can do way better than this right on your deck! You'll know when it's time to harvest when your tomatoes are full of color depending on the variety. Once you have done your picking, for the best flavor, find a nice place on your counter at room temperature. Be sure to gobble them up quickly! If this is not practical, tomatoes can be stored in the refrigerator, but the taste will not be as spectacular and they may become somewhat mealy.

If you have a bumper crop at the end of the season or even during the season, tomatoes can be popped into a freezer bag and frozen whole. Thaw them later and use them in your favorite sauces!

I hope these tips help to make you a Tomato Master Gardener this summer!