

# The Ithaca Community Gardener

A Newsletter of Project Growing Hope/The Ithaca Community Gardens August 2011

## Welcome to the 2011 Gardening Season!

As we enter the dog days of Summer, it's a busy time in the garden! Our hard work is beginning to pay off – vegetables are ripening, herbs are at their peak, and an array of beautiful late summer flowers greet us every time we visit the gardens. Amid the bustle of harvesting, cooking, and canning, it is a very exciting time to be a gardener!

If you have not put in your 4 work hours yet this year, don't despair! There are three remaining workdays left this season:

- Saturday August 27 at 10:00 am.
- Saturday September 24 at 10:00 am.
- Saturday October 29 at 10:00 am.

Four hours per plot per year is the minimum work requirement - there is no maximum. Why not come to an extra work day? Your garden needs you!

### Upcoming Workshops and Events:

- “Mushrooms in the Garden” on Sunday, August 28 at 11:00 am
- “Identify Your Garden Bugs!” Tuesday, August 30, 6:30pm
- Guided tour of Ithaca Community Garden, September, date TBA
- Member meeting, Tompkins County Public Library, Borg Warner Room, Tuesday, November 1, 5:30-7:30

### Did You Know?

- Water is the Ithaca Community Garden's biggest expense.
- The amount of water we use, as well as the price, is going up every year.
- Your garden may not need to be watered as often as you think. See the article "Tips for watering your garden" on the Gardening Web Resources page at [ithacacommunitygardens.org](http://ithacacommunitygardens.org).
- You can help us reduce expenses by watering wisely and making sure the spigot is turned off when you are done watering.

#### Board Members 2011 – 2012:

The board meets monthly. If you have an issue or idea to discuss or want to know more about meetings, contact the board via email at:

[ithacagardensboard@gmail.com](mailto:ithacagardensboard@gmail.com).

<b>Chris Negronida</b>	President
<b>Shannon Haskins</b>	Vice President
<b>Gail Blake</b>	Secretary
<b>Sheryl Swink</b>	Treasurer
<b>Emma Silverman</b>	Board Member
<b>Will Parker</b>	Board Member
<b>Chao Cheng</b>	Board Member

## Pulling Annual Weeds by Hand

Weeds such as lamb's quarters, carpet weed, annual sedge, chickweed, crab grass, knotweed, and Japanese clover are all annuals. These weeds should be pulled up before they produce seed heads. This is key to annual weed eradication because if you let those little seed heads mature, they're going to scatter themselves silly all over your yard and garden - leading to a bigger battle.

The best time to hand-pull weeds is after a good rain. In fact, there's a weeding technique called "pre-sprouting" where you purposefully wait until right after a good spring rain to weed the garden because they tend to miraculously pop up at this point. These weeds can also be added to your compost pile because the seeds heads haven't formed, and there's no way for them to reproduce.

Some vegetable gardeners will pull them up and then bury them right into the vegetable bed for added nitrogen. The important thing here is that they lack seeds heads when they're tossed into the pile.

### ***Hand-Dig Out Perennial Weeds***

So what about weeds such as bindweed, dandelion, purslane, Queen Anne's lace, burdock, nut grass, Bermuda grass, and curly dock? Well, perennial weeds are a horse of a different color. If you just yank them up by hand willy-nilly, you may end up with more than you started out with. Aside from seed, this crafty group also reproduces by stolon, runners, and tubers underground.

Of course, removing them from garden beds and landscaping before seed head form is still the right thing to do. But you should take extra care to dig them out of the ground completely -- removing the entire plant structure so that they have no chance of using their stolon-runner-tuber reproductive back up plan.

Generally, it's a good idea to keep these weeds out of the compost. It may be actually work out fine for certain perennial weeds, but one or two bad experiences will make you swear this practice off.

## How to Can Tomatoes

As our tomato plants begin to produce an abundance of fruit, you may be thinking "What in the world am I going to do with all of these tomatoes?". Luckily, canning high-acid vegetables, like tomatoes, using the hot water bath method is easy, fast and very safe.



First, of course, you'll need to make the sauce, and you probably already have a favorite recipe. If not, a sample recipe can be found at the end of this article.

### ***Preparing the jars***

Start the process by checking the jars for any chips around the top edge of the rim where the jar and lid meet. Anything less than a smooth rim will cause the seal to fail. Wash the jars with dish soap and water. Be sure to rinse the jars thoroughly.

Bring a canner full of water to a rapid boil then dip the jars into the water for about 10 seconds to sterilize the jars. Place the hot jars inverted on a clean cotton dish towel.

Sterilize as many jars as you plan to use during the canning session. Once the water in the canner has been used for sealing the jars it isn't clean enough to use for sterilizing jars.

### ***Filling the jars***

Working quickly is the key to good canning results. Heating the sauce before filling the jars will make the process go quicker and lessens the chance of the jars heat-cracking when lowered into the hot water bath. Try to start filling the jars while they're still warm from the sterilizing process. A canning funnel that has a fill mark molded into the neck can be invaluable, but a regular ladle works

well too. About a 1/4in. to 1/2in. head space (empty space between the top of the sauce and the rim of the jar) is necessary to keep the sauce from expanding out of the jar during the hot water bath, ruining the seal.

### ***Lids and rings***

Sterilize the lids by tossing them into a pan of boiling water for one minute. Make sure you have enough rings handy. If they've been used before, check the inside edge of the ring, where it meets the lid, for dents or corrosion that could compromise a good seal. Before placing the lid on the jar, wipe the rim of the jar clean with a wet paper towel, sauce on the rim will result in a failed seal between the lid and jar.

### ***Processing***

The jar rack makes loading the canner easy. Place the rack in its high position in the canner. The water should be just shy of boiling hot.

Load the jars in pairs, loading in opposing positions to balance the rack and keep it from inadvertently tipping. The loaded rack is ready to be lowered into the hot water.

Slowly lower the jars into the water. The jars should be covered by at least one inch of water.

Cover the canner, turn up the heat and when the water starts boiling set the timer for 30minutes. Adjust the burner heat to keep the water at a low boil.

### ***Finishing up***

When the timer sounds turn off the burner and lift the jar rack to the high position. It's a good idea to get the jars out of the canner immediately. Use the jar lifter to remove the jars placing them on a cloth. Also, immediately wipe the standing water off the lid. As the jars cool, a vacuum forms under the lid pulling the center of the lid down causing an audible click or snap - a good sound as this assures a good seal has formed. After the jars have cooled check to make sure the lids have sealed.

The lid will be depressed in the center and a light tap will result in a dull thud. If the lid isn't sealed you can simply put the jar in the fridge and either

use it in the next few weeks or add it to the next batch of canning tomato sauce.

Use a fine point marker to date the jars on the lid, making it easy to keep track of your pantry inventory; oldest dates used first.

Store your canned goods in a dry, cool, dark place. Properly stored tomatoes will keep for at least a couple of years. Enjoy your harvest year round!



## **Tomato Sauce Recipe**

Yield 3 cups

Ingredients

- 10 ripe tomatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
- 1/4 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/4 cup Burgundy wine
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 stalks celery
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste

### **Directions**

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Have ready a large bowl of iced water. Plunge whole tomatoes in boiling water until skin starts to peel, 1 minute. Remove with slotted spoon and place in ice bath. Let rest until cool enough to handle, then remove peel and squeeze out seeds. Chop 8 tomatoes and puree in blender or food processor. Chop remaining two tomatoes and set aside.
2. In a large pot or Dutch oven over medium

heat, cook onion, bell pepper, carrot and garlic in oil and butter until onion starts to soften, 5 minutes. Pour in pureed tomatoes. Stir in chopped tomato, basil, Italian seasoning and wine. Place bay leaf and whole celery stalks in pot. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 2 hours. Stir in tomato paste and simmer an additional 2 hours. Discard bay leaf and celery and serve.

### **Strawberry Lavender Spritzer**

*Serves 4-6*

Even if you can't get to a lavender festival this summer, tip a glass of this light summer cocktail in salute to glorious fields of home-grown purple pleasure.

- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 cup fresh strawberries
- 1 tablespoon fresh lavender buds
- 3 cups white wine (or one 750 ml bottle)
- 4 cups mineral water
- 4 to 6 fresh lavender sprigs
- 4 to 6 fresh strawberries

1. In a blender or food processor, blend the orange juice, 1 cup of strawberries, and lavender flowers. Transfer to a jug or bowl.
2. Pour wine over the blended mixture and allow to steep for 30 minutes; then strain into a punch bowl, discarding solids.
3. To serve, fill a wineglass half full with this flavored wine and top with mineral water. Garnish with a sprig of lavender and a strawberry.

Recipe by Lockwood Lavender Farm

### **Herbes de Provence**

*Makes 3/4 cup*

Make your own blend of the traditional seasoning widely used in Mediterranean cooking. Use it to season lamb or poultry, in a honey glaze for pork or roasted turkey, and with roasted onions, garlic, and other root vegetables.

*Use well-dried, organic herbs.*

- 1/4 cup thyme leaves
- 1/4 cup savory leaves
- 3 tablespoons basil leaves • 2 tablespoons crushed bay leaves
- 2 tablespoons crushed rosemary leaves
- 1 tablespoon crushed lavender flowers

1. Mix the whole leaves together and store in an airtight jar in a cool, dark place.
2. Just before using, crush to a fine powder and add to foods.

### **Cold Cucumber**

#### **Dill Soup**

- 2 medium cucumbers
- 3 cups vegetable stock
- 2 Tbs. flour
- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 Tbs. chopped chives
- 2 Tbs. chopped dill plus dill fronds for garnish
- 6 servings



Peel, seed, and chop the cucumbers. In a large saucepan, combine the cucumbers and 1 cup of the stock. Cook over medium heat just until the cucumbers are very soft.

Mix the flour with 2 Tbs. of the stock to make a smooth paste, then combine with rest of the stock and add to the cucumbers. Stir over a low flame until heated through, then simmer for 5 min. Allow the mixture to cool, then purée. Refrigerate.

When ready to serve the soup, thoroughly whisk the yogurt, chives, and dill into the refrigerated mixture.

Recipe by Peter Garnham  
Fine Gardening Magazine  
June 1998 from issue #15