



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Rockland County

School Garden Network

*Cultivate Socially, Physically and Emotionally Healthy
Children & Youth through the Garden Experience*



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January/February 2010

Welcome to the School Garden Network/From the editor

As spring rapidly approaches, so does the thought of bringing students out of the classroom and into the garden. The Master Gardeners and I have been busy doing school site visits, and many are looking to start a new garden or new after school garden club. Teachers understand the many benefits of a school garden as an outdoor classroom, whether it's used as an extension to the curriculum, as a tool to teach children about health and nutrition, or has a future as a Certified Schoolyard Habitat. Whatever the reasons for a garden, they are certainly good ones, and I'm sure you'll agree that this is the year to get our children outside and into the garden. ~Donna Alese Cooke, Community Horticulture Educator



Photo courtesy of Lauren Boer



Upcoming SGN Workshops

Workshop 3: Secrets Revealed: How to Keep Your School Garden Thriving for Years to Come...

5:00 - 8:00 PM, Tuesday, March 9, 2010

Location: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland

Starting Garden Seeds Indoors—Amy Albam, Rockland CCE Horticulture Lab Senior Horticulturist

For most gardeners, nothing washes away the winter blues like browsing through garden catalogs. Even though it's fun to pick and choose seeds from catalogs, be forewarned that unless you grow a large number of plants, starting seeds indoors at home may be more expensive than buying transplants (seedlings) from the garden center. You can save some money by ordering early when many companies offer a discount.

You'll need vermiculite, sterilized potting soil, pots or flats, a way to regulate heat, moisture, adequate light, space and plenty of patience. Starting your own seed may be rewarding if you're looking for new or unusual varieties of plants that are not available at the garden center, or you're a gardener who simply enjoys starting plants from seed.

A Simple Method

The following method of starting seed indoors is simple and results in a high percentage of germination of many varieties of plants. First, wash a few pots in soapy water, then sterilize them by soaking them in a 1:10 solution of bleach to water for a few hours. After the pots are dry, if you can't fill a pot without the vermiculite pouring out of the bottom, lay a small piece of paper towel to cover the drainage holes to keep it contained. Fill the pot with vermiculite, then gently set the entire pot in a pan of clean tap water to wet the vermiculite from the bottom up. Remove the pot from the pan when the surface is moist.

Follow seed packet or catalog directions for spacing and planting depth. Keep the directions for future reference on transplanting, bloom times and maturity dates. In the absence of specific sowing information, space small seeds at least one-eighth inch apart within rows that are one inch apart. Allow more space for larger seeds. In this way a "nursery" pot or flat can hold dozens of seedlings. Cover the seeds by evenly spreading a one-quarter inch layer of vermiculite over

continued...



Starting Garden Seeds Indoors *continued...*

them if light is not necessary for germination. If the seeds require light to germinate, sprinkle them over the surface of the vermiculite. If possible, press them gently in. Label the rows with pencil or indelible marker.

To ensure that the vermiculite stays moist, you may make a tent over the pot with a plastic lunch bag or put all the pots in one large container or tray and loosely cover the tray with plastic wrap. In either case, allow room for the seedlings to grow their first true leaves. As soon as these leaves appear, remove the plastic to increase air circulation.

Most seeds will sprout quickly if the vermiculite is given bottom heat (kept at a constant 70-80 degrees F). They can be set on top of the refrigerator or other warm appliance for heat if they don't need sunlight while germinating. Using this method, peppers, which usually sprout in 21 days, may pop up in only seven. Set the plants in bright light. Use a well-lit, sunny windowsill or place them two to four inches beneath artificial lights as soon as they sprout. Four-foot fluorescent shop lights fitted with 50 percent each warm white and cool white bulbs work well. If you use these, you do not need specialized day-light bulbs.

When the plants have two to four true leaves, push a knife or fork deep into the vermiculite under the roots and lift them out. While holding the leaves only, carefully separate the seedlings' roots. Place each transplant in its own two-inch pot or in a cell of a cell-pack or other growing container, available at most garden centers. Use sterilized potting soil in these pots or packs.

Keep the soil evenly moist but not soggy. If the plants begin to become root-bound, pot them up in larger containers. If the plants are not ready for larger containers, but are growing poorly they may benefit from a dilute, balanced fertilizer. Fertilizer at full strength will burn tender plants.

Your plants will need to be slowly acclimated to outdoor conditions before they can move to their final place in the garden. Approximately two weeks before planting, slightly reduce watering (don't let the plants dry out). Running a small fan that creates a light but indirect breeze will strengthen the plants. At least one week before planting, place the pots outdoors in the shade for a few hours each day. Gradually increase the amount of time they spend outdoors and sunlight they receive. After a week or so, you may leave them out overnight in a protected place; at this point they will withstand full sun and the outdoor environment and may be planted in the garden.

Time Your Indoor Planting

Follow any specific instructions from the catalog or seed packet that relate to your specific varieties. In the absence of information from a seed company, you may use the chart on this page as a guideline for popular varieties. Hardy varieties marked with an * may be planted outdoors after the last spring freeze, usually in early to mid-April. The remainder are tender varieties that must be planted after the last frost and the soil has warmed. This usually occurs between mid-May to Memorial Day or the first week in June.

Cucumber, Melon and Squash are often direct seeded outdoors in warm garden soil (around Memorial Day or the first week in June).

Seed starting times for popular varieties

1st week March

- *Broccoli
- *Brussels sprouts
- *Cabbage
- *Cauliflower

Dusty Miller
Impatiens
Lobelia
Petunia
Phlox

Snapdragons

2nd week March

Eggplant
Pepper
*Lettuce/salad greens

Ageratum

Alyssum

Marigold

Salvia

Strawflower

Verbena

3rd week March

Tomato

Aster

Balsam

Coleus

Cosmos

Nasturtium

Portulaca

Statice

3rd week April

Cantaloupe

Muskmelon

Celosia

Zinnia

1st week May

Cucumber

Squash

Watermelon

New...After School Jr. Master Gardener Clubs, Vegetable Garden & Wildlife Gardener Clubs for Grades 3-5

If you're looking to start an after school gardening club, then the Jr. Master Gardener Program (JMG) may be the answer. The Jr. Master Gardener program is an international youth gardening program of the University Extension network. The JMG Mission: To grow good kids by igniting a passion for learning, success and service through a unique gardening education



Club members can earn certification from the JMG Headquarters:

- Jr. Master Gardener- requires a year-long program.
- Wildlife Gardener – can be a 10 week or year -long program *
- Growing A Vegetable Garden - 10 week program
- Health & Nutrition from the Garden –can be a 10 week or year-long program
- Literature from the Garden -10 week program

*Wildlife Gardener Clubs can work on building a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Certified Schoolyard Habitat at your school.

After School Jr. Master Gardener Clubs, Vegetable Garden & Wildlife Gardener Clubs for Grades 3-5, and JMG Clubs for Grades 6-8



Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Rockland can help you get started! We will:

- assist teacher/leader in scheduling and planning your 10 week (spring or fall) or year-long (Sept-June) program, and provide a teacher/leader guide.
- register your group so students can become “Certified Jr. Master Gardeners.”
- have expert Master Gardener volunteers periodically visit your club.

CCE fee is based on a 10 week or year-long (Sept-June) program.

For more information, or to get your club started, contact
Donna Alese Cooke, Community Horticulture Educator, at 845-429-7085 ext. 108
or email dmc72@cornell.edu

Gardening to Attract Butterflies

A butterfly garden can be a great source of delight when it attracts these beautiful visitors, and the plantings may help conserve native butterfly species. Nectar and food plant sources within expanding urban areas can contribute to the prosperity of our local butterflies.

Planning Your Garden

A suitable site for butterflies has three basic requirements: full sun, shelter from wind, heavy rain or other adverse weather conditions, and a source of water. If you want butterflies to live in your garden, you will need to supply plants that serve as food for immature butterflies (caterpillars), as well those that provide nectar and pollen for adults.

Encourage Caterpillars

Because caterpillars consume plants, you must be willing to accept some damage to ornamental plant hosts. Do not use any insecticides in your butterfly garden. In addition to harming the caterpillars, many insecticides will also hurt adult butterflies. Consider sitting the caterpillars' food plants in a less visible spot of the yard. Place flowers that provide nectar and pollen for adult butterflies in a more prominent location.

Help Butterflies Feel at Home

The best nectar flowers are fragrant, have a long season of bloom, and provide a sequence of bloom throughout the season. You may achieve this by mixing native and exotic plants. Clumped or massed plantings are most effective in attracting butterflies. Simplicity is the key to a satisfying and easily maintained butterfly garden.

Flowers that are flat-topped or clustered provide landing platforms and easy access to nectar. Blossoms with short nectar tubes may be used by a wide range of butterflies. Blue, purple, white, pink, yellow, orange, and red flowers may entice butterflies to your yard. Whether your garden is large or small, a number of attractive choices are available. For details, consult the following lists of butterflies common to Rockland County and plants that appeal to them:

Complete the Habitat

Butterflies must bask to regulate their body temperature. Provide flat stones throughout the garden where they can rest and absorb sun and heat. Many gardeners also provide a container of wet sand or a muddy puddle where butterflies may obtain salts and mineral-rich liquids.

Resources:

Carolyn Klass, Senior Extension Associate, Department of Entomology, Cornell University and Robert Dirig, Assistant Curator, Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium Herbarium, Cornell University.

Trish Schroer, Master Gardener, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland County.

Favorite Butterfly Plants

Perennials

Bee Balm – *Monarda didyma*
Black Eyed Susan - *Rudbeckia* spp.
Butterfly Bush – *Buddleia davidii*
Cardinal Flower – *Lobelia cardinalis*
Joe Pye Weed –
Eupatorium purpureum
Milkweed – *Asclepias* spp.
New England Aster –
Aster novae-angliae
New York Ironweed –
Vernonia noveboracensis
Phlox – *Phlox* spp.
Goldenrod – *Solidago* spp.
Purple Coneflower –
Echinacea purpurea
Sedum – *Sedum* spp.

Annuals and Tender Perennials

Aster – *Aster* spp.
Cosmos – *Cosmos* spp.
Dahlia – *Dahlia* spp.
Geranium – *Pelargonium* spp.
Heliotrope – *Heliotropium* spp.
Impatiens – *Impatiens* spp.
Lantana – *Lantana* spp.
Marigold – *Tagetes* spp.
Mexican Sunflower –
Tithonia rotundifolia
Pentas – *Pentas lanceolata*
Pinks, Sweet William – *Dianthus* sp.
Petunia – *Petunia* spp. hybrids
Salvia – *Salvia* spp.
Snapdragon – *Antirrhinum majus*
Statice – *Phylliostachys* spp.
Strawflower – *Bracteantha bracteata*
Sunflower – *Helianthus annuum*
Tropical Hibiscus –
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis
Verbena – *Verbena* spp.
Zinnia – *Zinnia* spp.



Nature Speak

*an environmentally education
experience for youth*



*In order to hear the voice of nature
one must first learn its language.*

Nature Speak is a program of natural linguistics, a kind of eco-speak, which requires a kind of eco-listen. This program encourages the natural tendencies of youth to explore the sights, the sounds, the voice of nature long believed to be a competitive voice (How red the tooth and claw?) as opposed to the indigenous dialogue of kinship (Father Sun, Grandfather Beaver, Spider Woman).

This course involves three classes (two hours each) that take the students along the flora/fauna footpath within the region of suburbia, the places of development where nature has been most impacted. Environmental Educators Chuck Stead and Ed Bieber join in this venture to encourage through story and experience a human/nature collaboration within the local ecosystem.

For more information, contact:

Chuck Stead
429-7085, x125
wgs42@cornell.edu

More Great Resources from Cornell Activities for the classroom during the winter months

Visit the Cornell Garden-Based Learning website for these classroom activities and more at:
<http://blogs.cornell.edu/garden/get-activities/activities/>

Drying Flowers -Learn how to air-dry flowers, a technique you can use with a variety of flowers and which produces a rich array of effects.

Forcing Bulbs -Learn how you can make bulbs to flower out of season for indoor enjoyment. Two types of bulbs are especially easy to “force” — amaryllis and paperwhite narcissus.

Forcing Twigs -Find out how spring flowering trees and shrubs can be forced into bloom after they have completed their winter dormancy requirement.

Fun With Natural Plant Dyes -Find out how the science of dyeing has evolved through history, and engage in natural dyeing experiments. This activity includes an excellent colorful handout for students.

Grapevine Wreaths -A perfect fall activity – collect grapevines and create holiday wreaths with different themes.

Grow Spider Plants -Learn how to grow spider plants – these easy-to-propagate houseplants are terrific for beginning gardeners, or new gardeners on the go! They are very satisfying to work with and will provide you with enough plantlets to both grow and give away.

Hypertufa - Learn about concrete and its history while working together to make hypertufa planters.

Making Fresh Flower Arrangements -Handling and arranging fresh flowers is one of the easiest and most pleasant ways to bring the outdoors in!

Making Potpourri -Learn how to make potpourri – a mixture of flowers, leaves, fruits, essential oils, and fixatives. They can be used to freshen up rooms, in sachets, or as the perfect gift.

Making Rose-Petal Beads -Youth will make flower-petal beads while exploring Native American culture and art.

Plant Clinic -In the snowy depths of winter, a plant clinic can be the perfect thing for reviving tired houseplants (and winter-weary people as well!)

Sachets and Catnip Bags -Sachets have been historically appreciated for their sweet fragrance.

Turtle Sprouts – Join educators around New York State with this easy, introductory garden-based learning activity for children.

Programs at CCE Rockland in Stony Point

- February 8, 6 PM - How to Start a Community Garden, free
February 18, 9:30 AM - Xeriscaping & How to Build a Rain Barrel \$35 pp
March 4, 9:30-12:30 PM - Starting a Garden from Scratch \$35 pp
March 11, 9:30 AM - Backyard Composting, free for SGN schools
April 22, 12:30-3:30 PM - Growing Annuals & Perennials \$35 pp
April 27, 7:30pm - How to Grow Crops in Pots
(Container Vegetables) \$35pp

Become a Rockland County "Green Gardener"

The Green Gardener Certificate Program is a non-credit adult education program offered to gardening enthusiasts, professionals and aspiring entrepreneurs. Students have the option to earn certification over the course of one or two terms.



The Green Gardener Certificate Program is based on the latest research-based information from Cornell University, providing students with a practical approach to environmental stewardship. Taught by Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators, Master Gardeners and local horticultural experts, this series of lecture presentations, interactive workshops and outdoor gardening practicum offers an in-depth experience of environmentally sound landscape gardening.

Classes and workshops listed below are held at the Education Center in Stony Point, can be counted toward though the Green Gardener Certificate program or can be taken just for fun.

Contact Donna Alese Cooke for upcoming 2010 Winter and Spring classes.

It's not too late to join the School Garden Network



For a yearly enrollment fee (per school), you will receive:

- An onsite evaluation to sponsoring school/garden, with ongoing gardening advice from extension educators and CCE Master "School" Gardeners.
- Three educational workshops for professional development, featuring prominent leaders in the field of garden-based learning. Workshops are free for teachers, staff, parents and volunteers from each registered school, and include NYS Learning Standards-based lessons and classroom activities.
- Bimonthly e-newsletters with the latest gardening information and resources, garden-based learning updates from Cornell University and other land-grant institutions, with links to school garden grants and more.
- Information for teachers to transform their garden and classroom into living laboratories of learning.



To register for any of these programs, please call
Caryn Singer at 845-429-7085 ext 117.

For more information, contact
Donna Alese Cooke at 845-429-7085 ext 108, or dmc72@cornell.edu.

Organic Vegetable & Small Fruit Growing

Growing your own organic vegetables and small fruit in your home or school garden is rewarding and financially beneficial. This six part series will provide you with all the information needed to be a successful grower of vegetables and small fruit. Lectures will include a complete understanding of the soil your crops grow in, how to maximize the yield in small growing spaces, growing your own transplants, and using companion planting and beneficial insects for healthier plants. Demonstrations will be an integral part of the series. The final lecture will include a tour and discussion at the Leifer's home garden.

Monthly classes are held Monday nights at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland from 7:30-9:00 PM. \$50 for the full series.

Taught by Diane & Bob Leifer, Master Gardener Volunteers.





Garden Writers Association Foundation
www.gardenwriters.org
 Call Toll Free: (877) 492-2727

Plant a Row is a people-helping-people program to help feed the hungry in local neighborhoods and communities. Launched in 1995 by the Garden Writers Association (GWA), Plant A Row (PAR) encourages gardeners to grow a little extra and donate the produce to local soup kitchens and food pantries serving the homeless and hungry. PAR's mission is to provide an avenue through which individuals, corporations and over 84 million gardening households in the U.S. can help America's most vulnerable citizens and the food agencies serving them.

Join your friends and neighbors of Rockland County and donate your produce for the hungry.

The Master Gardener Volunteers at Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Rockland County have started a PAR campaign for Rockland County. This committee will assist you in getting started and getting your extra produce to those in need within Rockland County.

Take the pledge and donate whatever you can. It's easier than you think!!

Sign up today!

(845)429-7085, ext. 108

dmc72@cornell.edu

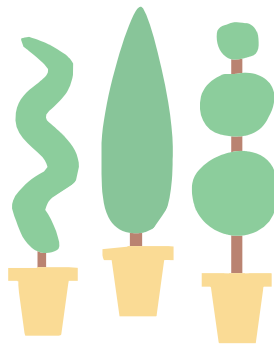
or fax a request to

(845)429-8667

School Garden, Garden-Based Learning & Horticultural Resources



- **Cornell University's Garden Based Learning:** <http://blogs.cornell.edu/garden/>
- **Cornell's Gardening Resources:** www.gardening.cornell.edu/
- **NY Agriculture in the Classroom:** Resources for students, educators, school gardens and more. www.nyaged.org/aitc/
- **Junior Master Gardener program:** www.jmgkids.us



- **NYS 4-H Resource Directory:** Learn about how 4-H connects kids to Cornell, 4-H funding, how to join and program resources. www.cerp.cornell.edu/4h/
- **Art of Horticulture:** Cornell Department of Horticulture courses explore plants as the subject of art as well as plants as media for creating art. www.hort.cornell.edu/art
- **Cornell Farm to School Program:** Develops strategies and disseminates information to increase the amount of locally grown food served in New York's schools, colleges and universities. <http://farmtoschool.cce.cornell.edu>

- **American Horticultural Society:** www.ahs.org/youth_gardening
- **National Gardening Association:** www.kidsgardening.com
- **Friends of Burlington Gardens & the Vermont Community Garden Network:** Creating, enhancing, and preserving community gardens for all: www.burlingtongardens.org/gardenorganizer.html



Ask a Master Gardener

By Janet Fenton, Nyack Master Gardener

Q. So many people this year are planting a victory garden. Where does the name come from?

A. During the World War I, “war gardens” surfaced from food shortages and fears of increasing food prices. During World War II, victory gardens were another way citizens could demonstrate their support of the war effort. These vegetable gardens were planted to ensure an adequate supply of food for civilians as well as troops, since canned goods, being shipped to the military, was in short supply at home. Government agencies, foundations, businesses, schools and seed companies worked together to provide land, information, and seeds for individuals and communities to grow food. Americans across the country prepared back yards, vacant lots, fields, and school yards for planting. The goal was to grow enough fresh produce to last through the summer. Excess produce was canned and preserved for the winter and early spring, until a new crop could be harvested. In 1943, 40% of America’s food was grown in over 20 million victory gardens.

In the post war years, gardening was considered more of a hobby than necessity. Today, with concerns of global warming, the economy, and food contamination, victory gardens are having a revival. It is a way for people to reduce their food bills and increase the nutritional value of the food they eat, while decreasing the size of their carbon footprint.

Some ideas to consider, even if your space is limited:

- You can combine vegetable plants with flowers in your front yard.
- You can plant containers on your porch, patio, or balcony and can grow sprouts indoors.
- Check to see if you have a community garden available.
- Perhaps a neighbor or friend without time or ability would let you garden their yard, in exchange for some produce.

If these options are not available, you can also choose to purchase foods grown locally.

If you have a question for our Master Gardener Volunteers, please call or email Donna Alese Cooke at 845-429-7085 ext 108 or dmc72@cornell.edu

Demonstration Gardens are open all year!



2010 FREE GARDEN TOUR

Take a guided tour the last Sunday of each month from April through October or explore the gardens anytime at your own pace. Each Sunday tour is approximately an hour long and starts at 1PM.

April 25 • May 30
June 27 • July 25 • August 29
September 26 • October 31

Learn about the ever-changing display of plants native to our region; perennials, ornamental grasses, annuals, herbs, ferns, and more.

Children will enjoy activities hosted by our Master Gardeners.

Directions:

East off Exit 14 on Palisades Parkway to the first traffic light. Turn left on Patriot Hills Drive.

Master Gardeners of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Rockland County plan and maintain the Demonstration Gardens, trying out new and different plants to determine their suitability for our area. Some of the plants are selected for drought tolerance or deer resistance. Others for size, blooming time, or winter interest. Maintenance follows Cornell’s Integrated Pest Management(IPM). This approach encourages the minimal use of toxic pesticides.