



Photo by Maelee Thomason

May 2021
Vol. 4, Issue 2

Welcome back!

Garden Member Report 2021

Gardeners:
39 gardeners
9 new gardeners

Rented:
67 whole plots
9 half plots
2 raised beds

Still available:
6 half plots
12 whole plots



Stay Well

We continue to encourage a distance of at least 6 feet between yourself and others whenever possible.

Please come prepared to wear a mask when you are in close proximity to others.

Yellow dandelions brighten the path for gardeners as they return to their plots full of hope for the growing season. We're all excited to be back in the dirt growing food and flowers for ourselves and our community.

We're also excited to share our spring newsletter! Thanks to new contributors and fresh ideas, this issue offers more stories, information, and features than ever before. We've even added a page just for kids!

Enjoy!

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AND MORE!



Photo by Quinn Stanford

Notes from the garden manager

By Roy Swazey

- 1) The water is on. If there is no one else at the garden when you leave, make sure the valve you have on is turned off. It would be great if you make sure that all valves are off at the set that your valve is in.
- 2) We have a lot of newspapers for weed barrier.
- 3) I have quite a bit of cardboard. I am getting more. I really need help taking the tape off cardboard. Two or three people make that go better.
- 4) When you lay cardboard or newspapers, please cover them with mulch so that somebody else doesn't have to chase it down.
- 5) If you take some piece of hardware out of the irrigation setup. please find out where it goes so that we do not lose it.
- 6) Robins are nesting in odd places around the garden. For the next several weeks leave shed doors mostly closed so that Papa Robin doesn't build one in the shed (He can swat one together in 20 minutes).



Photo by Maelee Thomason

Text me at 570-556-9810, if you need me.

Walk gently.

Be on the lookout for the spotted lanternfly

By Jackie Lambert

Spotted lanternfly, *Lycorma delicatula* (WHITE), is in Northumberland County, Dauphin, Montour, Columbia, and east to Philadelphia. We will see it here soon. It is important to be alert for it. Just as we watch for damage from termites to limit the damage to our homes, we need to watch for spotted lanternflies to prevent or control damage to our shade trees and other plants.



Photo from Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture website

This planthopper, native to Southeast Asia, attacks grapes, apples, stone fruits, and tree of heaven has a devastating impact. Early detection is key in protecting Pennsylvania agriculture and other businesses. We must all do our part. Please review the information on one or more of the following links to familiarize yourself with what the insect looks like during its various life stages.

If you find any life stages of this pest, collect and/or kill and report it to Penn State Extension by calling 1(888) 422-3359 or use the reporting tool on the [Penn State Extension website](#) (uploading a picture of your find is helpful).

Learn more:

WATCH this very informative video!

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Pest Alert

Virtual Seed Exchange-2021

By Arden Miller



Photo by Lori Lupolt

Who knew that a virtual seed exchange could work so well! While we missed seeing and chatting with gardeners from the area in person, we received seed requests from all over (even Georgia). A big thank you goes to Mitch Alday from the Rudy Gelnett Memorial Library. Mitch took the list of seed types donated by our supporting seed companies and turned it into a Google ordering form. As requests came in, Roy and Arden packaged the seeds and contacted the gardeners to determine how they would get their seeds. A few people ordering took requests from neighbors and relatives, so a true total of "attendees" is not known. With that in mind, it is estimated that over 52 people attended our virtual seed exchange. Thank you again to the seed companies that support our gardening efforts: High Mowing Organic Seeds, Park Seed Company, Rohrer Seed Company, Seed Savers Exchange, Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, Territorial Seed Company, True Leaf Market Seed Company, W. Atlee Burpee & Company, and Victory Seed Company.

some kind words from happy participants

😊 . . . I received everything I requested and greatly appreciate you and the East Snyder Community Garden for putting them together. I'm sorry that we couldn't conduct the seed exchange in person this year, but I'm so thankful to still be able to get seeds for my gardens. Many thanks and best wishes for a fruitful harvest!

😊 I was impressed by the wonderful variety of seeds—not just vegetables, but a delightful assortment of herbs and flowers too. Thanks, ESCG for finding a way to offer the seed exchange during the pandemic.



Meet Karl with a K

By Maelee Thomason

It is often difficult to get to know our fellow gardeners other than a casual hello. It's my opinion that the exception to this is Karl Stengel, one of our new gardeners for 2021. He is the kind of person who stops to speak to everyone. Although this is the first year he has rented a plot, Karl is no stranger to East Snyder Community Garden. For three years he has been helping other gardeners by mulching and pulling weeds. He also helped Roy create a zinnia pollinator garden. Karl really enjoyed having a season to just "help out" and understand things before managing a plot of his own last year. This season he plans to work two plots.

Karl always has a smile and a quip to make you laugh. He is a creative person, and he expresses his creativity both in his plant choices and his unique gardening style. Karl makes spirals, vignettes and tee pees! I asked him what his favorite thing about gardening is, and he couldn't give me a simple answer. "Time spent at the garden is never wasted. You're allowed to mess up, pretend you did it on purpose, and go about with something else. If you manage to grow anything, it's more than you had when you started. If you can't find any sense of wonder or amazement in a garden, I don't know what to tell you."



Photo by Maelee Thomason

An example of Karl's creative gardening

Is microplastic a concern in the community garden?

By Arden Miller

Microplastics are small plastic pieces less than five millimeters long. Because research into microplastics is so new, there's not yet enough data to say exactly how they're affecting human health. It's likely that ingesting microplastics could further expose us to chemicals found in some plastics that are known to be harmful.

Microplastics arrive on commercial farms through processed sewage sludge used for fertilizer, plastic mulches, and are even intentionally added as slow-release fertilizers and protective seed coatings. Microplastics get into the wastewater originally through laundry, personal care products, and urban runoff.

Studies have shown that microplastics possess physical and chemical characteristics that have the potential to alter soil bulk density, microbial communities, water holding capacity, and other properties that influence plant development. Microplastics can lead to death of earthworms by damaging their digestive tracts. Earthworms that consume microplastics can lead to microplastics proliferating through the food chain.

It has been shown through use of microplastics that were laced with fluorescent dyes that that plastic particles are not too large to pass through the physical barriers of intact plant tissue. Microplastics have been detected in Italian supermarket produce including carrots, lettuce, broccoli, potatoes, apples, and pears.

These findings are of concern because microplastics are chemically active materials, capable of attracting and binding to compounds known to harm human health. In addition to cadmium, microplastics have been shown to accumulate lead, PCBs, and pesticides. Further, plastics are manufactured with their own suite of toxic compounds, which can include BPA, an endocrine disruptor. Researchers have suggested that both acquired and endogenous compounds could leach out of degrading plastics into their environment, whether that be soil or human tissue.

While little plastic is used at the community garden, it can be found. We do not permit the use of plastic ground cover because it is too hard to clean up, and as we now know, can degrade and become a "microplastic" soil contaminant. Think of other items that can add to the "microplastic" content of the soil-- plastic plant pots, plastic plant markers, plastic bags, tape and labels on cardboard and more. Any plastic we leave in the garden can become "microplastic" through exposure to sunlight, oxidation or friction, or by animals nibbling on the plastic.

What can you do as a gardener to prevent microplastics being added to the soil? When you are at the garden, be sure to keep your plot clean. Don't use plastic items (such as plastic spoons) as plant markers. Help the garden as a whole by walking around picking up trash. The wind carries in items none of us would drop but, we don't want it to stay in the garden.

What can you do as a citizen? There are many good organizations working toward decreasing plastic pollution. If you need assistance finding a group, email the garden for assistance.



Photo by Arden Miller

In a little over a half hour this is what I picked up at the garden.

To learn more about microplastics in Pennsylvania waterways, go to [Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Podcast](#) and listen to an interview with Faran Savitz, of PennEnvironment about a recent study of microplastics in state waterways.

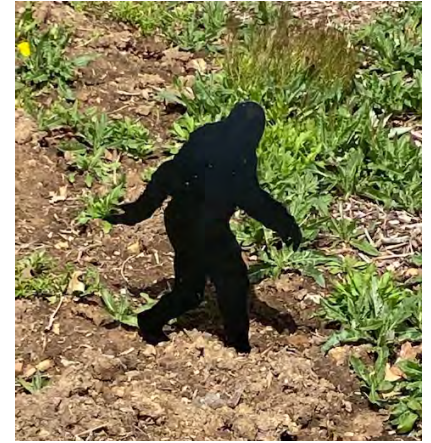
Gardeners personalize their plots with signs, flowers

By Quinn Stanford

As you walk among the plots at the Selinsgrove Community Garden, you never know what you might see. Aliens. Bigfoot. Decorated stones that feature an inspiring message.

OK, that last example is much more likely. But all of the illustrations above are typical of the types of whimsical items people use to beautify and personalize their plots. Just like in individual homes, everyone decorates their gardening space differently. Some people prefer messages, some like flags, while others like animals.

Yes, animals seem to be the preferred choice when decorating a plot. At the Selinsgrove garden, you see it all. Ceramic roosters. Plastic owls. Metal dogs and rabbits. Then there's Bigfoot. Making his first appearance at the garden this year, Bigfoot occupies space at the garden plot of this writer. Although I can't take credit for it.



"I've always loved Bigfoot," says Todd Stanford (my dad). "When I was in elementary school, I would go to the library and check out books about Bigfoot. I just enjoy reading about the Bigfoot legend or watching documentaries about Bigfoot or the Yeti on TV."

Bigfoot might be the most unusual animal taking up residence at the Selinsgrove garden this year, but he's not the only mythical one, at least if one gardener's sign is to be believed. One plot features a warning that you're about to enter Area 51 – the infamous government base that allegedly houses aliens that have crashed on Earth.

Images of Sasquatch or warnings about invaders from Mars might inspire a giggle, but there are plenty of decorations at the garden that simply brighten up a space. For example, Maelee Thomason and Lynn Bressler, long-time members of the garden, are putting flowerpots on their multiple plots this summer.

"We're trying something new with flowerpots," Thomason says. "It's for decoration and pollination."



The most common curios that you see at the garden are almost certainly the aforementioned decorative stones. Many have simple messages, like the ones Linda Heikel puts in her space. Bearing messages like, "To Plant a Garden is to Believe in Tomorrow," and "Welcome to My Garden," these stones were gifts from her grandchildren.



Then there's this writer's stone, which reads simply, "Quinn's Veggie Garden." It was a birthday gift from my parents two years ago. It's a lovely stone, though it's also caused some consternation, because my dad would use it as an excuse to loaf on those weekend days when he preferred taking a nap to helping me at the garden.

"It says 'Quinn's Veggie Garden,'" he informed me on more than one occasion.

I took care of that problem on Father's Day last year. We now have an additional decorative stone in our plot: "50% Todd's Garden."



I ♥ holy basil (tulsi)

By Lori Lupolt

As I cradled a small potted tulsi (aka holy basil) seedling in my hands, I wondered, *What am I going to do with you, little one?*

The tulsi plant was given to me during a foraging trip with an herbal simpling class. Being new to herbalism, I had heard of tulsi and its use in Ayurvedic medicine, but I didn't have any personal experience with the herb. I took my seedling home, planted it in my plot at ESCG, and started watching and reading.

The tulsi charmed me with its delightful clove-like, minty fragrance. No matter where I was working in my plot, I could smell it. I was surprised by how quickly it flowered. For the rest of the season, I was serenaded by happy humming bees that couldn't get enough of tulsi's tiny purple blossoms! It was hard to say goodbye when frost took my precious annual.

The following year as I was working in my plot, tulsi's familiar fragrance wafted around me. Could it be?? I followed my nose to a cluster of tiny tulsi seedlings, most not more than two inches high. My tulsi had reseeded!! It amazed me that even before tulsi is visually recognizable, one gentle rub of its leaves confirms its identify. When the seedlings were large enough to transplant, I lined some up in a row and dug out a few to plant at my house. I was in heaven—so much holy basil!! I was grateful for another year to learn more about this amazing herb!



One of the many bees that enjoyed my tulsi

Unlike its cousin sweet basil, holy basil is not typically used as a culinary herb. For more than 3,000 years tulsi has been honored as one of India's most sacred and powerful plants. It offers a wide range of health benefits including reducing stress and anxiety, regulating blood sugar, sharpening awareness, relieving digestive symptoms, decreasing pain, and supporting heart health and the immune system.* Tulsi is most often enjoyed as tea, a daily tonic that supports overall health. It can also be used in a variety of herbal preparations like tinctures and hydrosols.

I make tea from fresh cuttings (leaves, blossoms, and stems) throughout the summer, and I also dry leaves, so I can enjoy tea year-round. I discovered that tulsi blends well with other herbs like lemon balm or mint, so I often steep them together for a delicious cup of tea. I have also made tulsi ice cubes by brewing a strong pot of tulsi tea and freezing it in ice cube trays. Tulsi cubes add a beneficial and refreshing kick to a glass of water. Just recently I brewed kombucha using black tea and dried tulsi. I also made a lovely body oil, an infusion of fresh tulsi leaves and lavender blossoms. The oil soothed my skin, and its beautiful fragrance lingered all day.

My love affair with tulsi has only just begun! I'm looking forward to adding a few sprigs to seltzer water this summer. I have not yet tried cooking with holy basil, but I've read that it can be stirred into omelets, soups, pesto, and stir fries. Last summer I transplanted a plant from my plot at ESCG to our new home in Gettysburg. I'm anxious to see how many seedlings emerge this spring. I saved some of the tiny seeds to germinate—just in case.

If you have the opportunity to grow holy basil, I highly recommend it. Of the many varieties of tulsi, *Ocimum sanctum* is the most commonly cultivated and easiest to find for purchase. This brief introduction to an amazing plant is not intended as medical advice. Learn more about holy basil.

* Forêt, Rosalee de la. *Alchemy of Herbs: Transform Everyday Ingredients into Foods and Remedies That Heal*. Illustrated, Hay House Inc., 2017.

See the garden through our eyes!

Kids art at ESCG



By Naomi Niskala



Photo by Naomi Niskala

Do your kids need a break from digging for worms, running around the pathways, making mud pies, or climbing the mulch piles? Is it a hot day that's better spent in the shade? Do you have a budding and curious artist?

In the (smaller) shed you can now find a clear plastic tub labeled "ESCG Kids' Art Tub!" which includes paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, and clipboards. Please encourage your kids to look in the tub, take out some supplies, and draw a bird, plant, flower, bug, or fellow gardener they see at the garden. And if they'd like to share their artwork, please have them sign their paper with their name and age and leave it in the yellow folder in the tub. We'll choose a few drawings to include in each garden newsletter!

Happy drawing!



Garden soil temperatures measured and recorded by Mia L., age 7



"Birds I like to watch at the garden. Red wing blackbirds are scitish, and robins like hearing Harry Potter read to them. Last summer my mom read Harry Potter to me in the garden and robins came right up to our feet."

- Mia L., age 7





Photos by Lynn Bressler

*We invite you to share your wisdom, photos, stories, or creative writing.
Please email newsletter submissions to escgpanews@gmail.com*

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