

FAIRFIELD GLADE
COMMUNITY GARDENS

HANDBOOK

FOR OUR

GARDENERS

March 9, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years Fairfield Glade Community Gardens have brought health and satisfaction to literally thousands of our residents. Clearly our gardeners benefit from growing nutritious fresh vegetables and herbs while enjoying the beauty of the flowers many grow. Now with the introduction of perennial plots, many are now planting perennial vegetables, herbs and fruit plants and bushes in addition to their annual vegetable and flower gardens. Other than enjoying the unique freshness of what is harvested, what are the other benefits of gardening? Let's list just a few:

- Improves quality of life.
- Develops new and often lasting friendships.
- Builds pride in self.
- Provides a social outlet outside of home and church.
- Brings the community closer together.
- Through exercise and other factors, gardening has proven to improve both mental and physical health including stress reduction.
- Education.

In addition our gardeners constantly pitch in and help each other in times of need and understand that when called upon to participate in a community garden group activity to benefit the gardens as a whole, they need to step up and help. We have now grown in size with our gardeners having new and more intriguing questions each day. This booklet was developed to help provide answers to those questions.

PURPOSE

This Community Gardens Handbook is designed to provide Fairfield Glade resident gardeners with important information concerning the history of the Fairfield Glade Community Gardens, leadership structure, rules, expectations, plant diseases control and much more. This handbook is updated as needed and distributed to all gardeners more appropriate but no later than before each gardening season. We hope that every gardener has a great and healthy gardening experience while forming new and lasting friendships

LIABILITY DISCLAIMER

Being assigned a garden plot is a privilege and not a right. Once assigned a garden plot, the assignee and the assignee on behalf of all others working or just visiting his/her plot has agreed to assume all risks and legally hold harmless any person, organization, company, service provider and employee or volunteer affiliated thereto or with, the beekeeper, gardener(s) and their guests from loss, injury or damage to person(s) self or property that occurs on the Community Gardens sites irrespective of its cause including, but not limited to, carelessness, inattention or negligence of any level.

HISTORY

The Community Gardens (Gardens) are located on property owned by the Fairfield Glade Community Club (FGCC). Community Gardens have existed for an estimated 40 years which makes us among the oldest, if not the oldest in HOA/POA communities in the nation. Such communities are beginning to realize their value in community growth as well as the personal, mental and general health benefits to their seniors.

There are no records or knowledge on how or by whom our Gardens were managed prior to 2005, but from 2005-2019, they were self-managed by the

gardeners themselves with one person (Coordinator) largely in control of all operations and finances. During this time the pledge of the Gardens to the Community Club (FGCC) was that the Gardens would be financially self-sufficient and would never require a financial subsidy from the FGCC. Financially, the FGCC collected the fees set by the Coordinator, deposited the fees in the Gardens account and paid the bills/invoices submitted to it by the Coordinator. FGCC Maintenance would maintain and repair leaks in the pipelines, winterize the lines, and turn the water on and off as seasonally required and maintain the garden roads.

Up until 2020 there were two sites—one on each side of Westchester Drive. The Stables side site was shut down in 2019 because the Stables needed the property for its business. In exchange, a new site was created at a location now called “Site B” The Stables agreed to lay water lines into the Site B plots and create a road from Westchester Dr. for the length of the site at its expense but not all around the site.

In 2020 so much changed. In 2020, the FGCC informed us that the FGCC would now require the Gardens to be totally self-sufficient in every way. There would no longer be any FGCC involvement. After a lengthy period of “negotiations” (an agreement with the FGCC was reached. The Community Club agreed to replace the aged water lines, level Site A to help alleviate past soil erosion, repair, maintain and replace the main water line from the meter to the garden plot feeder lines and maintain the garden roads annually. In exchange, the Gardens agreed to collect its own fees, pay its own bills, open its own bank account, repair, maintain and replace the water feeder lines into the garden plots, open its own account with Crab Orchard Utility, and turn the water on and off with line safety concerns.

In 2021, Site B was first activated with gardeners. In the spring of 2022 the Site B road was completed full circle around the Site at the Garden’s expense. After a few more bumps in the road, effective June of 2022, the transition to complete

administrative self-sufficiency was complete and the historical financial self-sufficiency was once again pledged.

LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The Gardens are managed by the Garden Committee with each committee member having specific management responsibilities. Overall coordination of this work is done by the **Garden Coordinator**. The Garden Coordinator is the primary contact for our gardeners. (See Contacts on the last page of this Handbook). The **Water Line and Faucet Maintenance and Repair Group** which is composed of gardener volunteers is responsible for repairing reported water leaks from the feeder water lines and faucets will remain in place.

GARDEN SITES AND PLOT SIZE

There are 2 sites. **Site A** (directly across from the Stables) has 24 full plots for **annual** gardens and over 22 plots for those interested in **perennial** gardens. **Site B** on Westchester Dr. (up from Site A closer to Chestnut Hill Rd) has 14 full plots.

The average size of full plots is 40'x40' (20'x 40' for half plots) while the average size of the perennial plots is 20'x20'. **"Annual"** gardens are for our normal summer season vegetables, herbs and flowers which need to be planted every year. The annual plots are tilled in the spring. **"Perennial"** gardens are for vegetables and fruits that are not planted each year (e.g. asparagus, berry plants/bushes). These plots have water access during the season but are not tilled.

FEES AND FEE COLLECTION

The Garden Fees are set before each garden season by the Garden Committee.

Presently the annual fee is \$50 for full plots and \$25 for half plots. The fees cover spring tilling, water line maintenance, site improvements and water access. The fee for **perennial** plots is \$20. It covers all of the above, less spring tilling.

Fees are generally collected in **the fall** of each year for the following season. Gardeners are advised by email the fee collection period and where to send the payment. **Fees are not refundable.** Fees **not** paid by the collection due date will result in the plot being assigned to other gardeners unless the gardener has applied and been approved for an extension. Requests for an extension are to be directed to the attention of the Committee Chairperson (See “Contacts” on last page).

GARDEN SEASON

Annual Gardens

The gardens are tilled in the spring as soon as the soil is dry enough which is generally around **April 1**. This is followed immediately by staking out the individual plots. Water is turned on **April 1** and shut off on **November 13**. This allows for fall gardening for those who have an interest while avoiding further water billings until the following April. So the garden season for **annual** gardening is approximately April **1-Mid-November**. However this does not prevent gardeners from gardening after mid-November, but without water access. Projected frost dates (light and heavy) will determine this more than the calendar will. Garden access is permitted **after** tilling has been done and plots have been staked out. Each full plot will be identified with a stake at each of the four corners marked with the plot number.

Perennial Gardens

The “season” for perennial gardening is the full calendar year but with water access limited to April 1-November 13. These plots are not tilled because they contain plantings that grow year after year without the need to replant (e.g. fruit bushes, strawberries, asparagus, rhubarb, garlic and certain herbs). Those who have been temporarily assigned to a vacant perennial plots are responsible for do their own tilling.

PLOT STAKING AND PLOT SHARING

Only full plots are measured and staked. This means that if a plot is shared by 2 gardeners, they must divide the plot into the 2 halves themselves. The place of the names on the plot map does **not** indicate which half they will have. That is left to the gardeners themselves to work out.

If they both gardened the same plot lot the previous year, it's easy. Unless they decide differently, they keep the half each had the previous year. If one gardened the plot the previous year and one is newly assigned, the one who gardened the plot the previous year will keep the same half. If both have been newly assigned to the plot, it is suggested that they get together and divide the plot together and decide who gets what half.

What happens if you are new to that particular plot and you don't know your garden partner and you want to get started? Contact the Committee Chair and ask for the name and contact information (see "Contacts" on the last page). If your partner gardened the plot last year and is not available to help you divide the plot, ask which half he/she had and you take the other half. If your partner is also new to the plot, then you are free to take either half.

How are plots divided?

Create a central line of the plot, then create a 3' walking path between the 2 halves (18" on each side of the central line) and use 4 stakes to identify the walking path boundaries.

RULES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Important: Every gardener is presumed to have received, read, fully understands and agrees to comply and be bound by the provisions of this Section.

Garden Plot Usage

All gardeners who have been assigned a full or half plot are expected to garden the plot. Notwithstanding, it is recognized that unexpected life events may prevent a gardener from actually gardening the assigned plot in a given year after paying the garden fee. In order to deal with this effectively, the following shall apply:

- If the garden fee is not paid by the announced deadline, the plot assignment will be revoked and the plot will be assigned to another unless the gardener contacts the Committee chairperson prior to the deadline and asks for an extension. If the request is approved, a new payment deadline will be set. (See Contacts on the last page of this handbook).
- Paid garden fees are **not** refundable.
- Should an assigned plot **not** be gardened **by May 15**, the plot assignment may be revoked with the plot assigned to a person on the garden waiting list. This assignment revocation can be avoided by that gardener contacting the Committee Chairperson prior to May 15, explaining why that deadline needs to be extended. If the extension is approved, it will be reset to a date on or before **May 31**. A second extension request will **not** be considered.
- Should a gardener, because of an unexpected life event (e.g. health issue, family issue etc.) not be able to garden the assigned plot at all in that gardening year, but the gardener wants to have that plot the following year, the gardener is to contact the Garden Committee Chairperson on **or before May 15** and explain why the plot will not be gardened. If the reason is approved, the fee still must be paid and the plot may be temporarily assigned to another **for that year only** from the waitlist. The garden fee shall also be paid by that replacement gardener. Should the absent gardener not return the following year, the gardener who occupied

the plot on a temporary basis will be given the first right of refusal to be assigned to that plot as the primary gardener.

Should there not be anyone on the garden waiting list, the plot will be left vacant and the gardener assigned to that plot **must still maintain** that plot and its perimeter through the end of October of that gardening season by limiting vegetation to a maximum height of 6". Failing this, the plot will **not** be assigned to that gardener the following year. This privilege of not gardening a plot, if approved, is limited to that year only.

Plot Maintenance

- Each gardener is responsible for the ground maintenance of his/her own plot. This includes keeping the weeds and grass within the plot itself to a maximum height of 6."
- Those with plots adjacent to the garden road or to Westchester Dr. have an extra responsibility of keeping the perimeter of the plots similarly maintained. Those on the **garden roads** are responsible for the perimeter down to the garden road. Those on **Westchester Dr.** are responsible for the perimeter out to the mowing contractors' mowing. Those adjacent to the **water line grassy areas** are responsible to maintain that grassy area.
- Each gardener must keep weed/grass growth on his/her own to a maximum height of **6 inches through October 31** even if closing the plot before that and even if you have no plans to return the following year. This will allow us to avoid costly fall bush hogging or **unfairly** requiring another gardener(s) to step in to do it for you. Please respect this obligation. A fine equal to the rental cost of the plot will be charged for non compliance.
- When you have finished gardening for the year, take everything with you such as stakes, hoses, poles, netting, tomato cages/supports, fencing, plastic/fabric mulches etc. (The deadline for this is November 30.) In other

words, leave your plot as debris free as it was when you walked in. This is to avoid damage to our service provider's tiller. It also applies whether you intend to garden the next year or not. Failing to do this requires others to do it for you. That is unfair and unacceptable.

(Note: Fencing on **perennial gardens** need not be removed at season's end).

- Failure of a gardener to maintain his/her plot and plot perimeter in the manner described above may result in the loss of the privilege to garden the following gardening season.
- It is important that every gardener has a stake in the gardens as a whole—not just their individual plots. On occasion, gardeners may be called upon to engage in a short work session to improve the aesthetics of the area, help with staking out the plots, help with a special project/event etc. or even maintain the beehive area. A positive response is expected and appreciated.

Faucet Lines Grass Maintenance

Using weed and grass killer ("Round-Up") or cultivation to control grass is prohibited. This grass prevents soil erosion. Control of the grass to a maximum height of 6" is done by mowing, weed "whacker" or other tool of choice.

Water Access and Conservation

Water is our biggest expense item. Therefore we must do what we can to follow the general guideline of just **one inch (1") per week total** from our two combined sources of rain and garden faucets. After each measurable rainfall, you will receive an email giving the amount of rain that fell on the gardens. It is the gardener's responsibility to track the cumulative rainfall for the week. That total is then supplemented from the faucets up to the **1" total**.

Important: It is better to water once a week **1"** deep rather than several shallow water totaling 1." If the surface looks dry, there may still be sufficient wetness

beneath the surface. (**Note:** Mulch will conserve water by slowing down evaporation while also controlling weeds). Guidance can also come from reading the planting instructions on the seed packages. Some seeds need to be kept damp until sprouting. A sprinkling can is useful in doing this. **Bottom line:** This is not an exact science. Gardeners are just expected to use their **common sense** and do the best they can with the 1" weekly guide kept in mind.

Other control requirements are:

- If a **leak** in a faucet or water line is detected, please report it immediately to the Committee chairperson. (see Contacts on the last page)
- Be present at all times when watering.
- If an abuse of the water privilege is observed, please remind that person of the watering rule. If you are not comfortable doing that, call or email the Committee chairperson with the name of the offender or the plot number. The Chairperson will handle the problem confidentially from there.
- After watering, **disconnect** the hose from the faucet. This ensures that the water has actually been turned totally off. We have had occasions when the nozzle was closed on the hose, but the faucet was not turned off. The pressure from the water caused the hose to rupture in the middle of the night. Result? A very large water bill.
- If you use a "**splitter**" **which** enables multi-users at a single faucet, you **must** disconnect the splitter from the faucet after each use.
- Do **not** water with a lawn sprinkler because of waste. Best choices are: a soaker hose (10 minutes per week = 1"), a wand, watering can, pail, nozzle aimed at the **base** of a row only, PVC pipe inserted into the base of a plant, or any other efficient watering device.

Fencing

Fencing the perimeter of the entire plot or just a small section within a plot as protection from some animals is an individual decision as is the fencing material chosen. Some use chicken wire while others decide on a material more substantial. Look around you and take your lead from others. If the fencing you plan to use is not neat and does not seem to fit in (e.g. vinyl strips) please choose another material. If you have a question about it, please ask the Committee chairperson for guidance. Fencing may remain in place year-round on **perennial gardens only**. All other fencing must be removed by **November 30**.

Stake Preservation

The stakes used to stake out the 4 corners of each plot are an expense. For this reason, we recycle them to be used the following year. Emails are sent to all gardeners in the spring reminding them that once they have accessed their plots, they are to pull those four stakes and **leave them at any faucet for pick up**. Your cooperation is important.

Bee Hives

A prominent local bee keeper has very productive hives located on Site A which serves both sites equally. We need bees to pollinate most of the flowers and vegetables we plant. Bees are our friends because of the amazing amount of product they bring to us. But the relationship between us gardeners and our bees can be harmful to the bees. If we don't have a clear understanding of how **insecticides and fungicides** harm bees, we may be unknowingly killing them and potentially their full hives. (See Section on "**Insecticides, Fungicides and Herbicides**" below.

PLANT DISEASES

Our two most common plant diseases are **powdery mildew** and **tomato blight**. Both are difficult to prevent, but steps can be taken to keep them under reasonable control. Let's take one at a time.

Powdery Mildew

When it becomes hotter and drier (e.g. August) squash and cucumber plants will likely be infected by powdery mildew leaves and/or stems. Remedies for spraying the stems and both sides of the leaves every 7-10 days include:

- Neem oil (follow mixing directions)
- 4 parts milk to 6 parts water
- 1 part mouthwash to 3 parts water.
- 2-3 tablespoons of vinegar to gallon of water

When watering, try to water soil only—not the leaves.

Note: Unlike insecticides/fungicides, none of these control liquids are toxic to bees and can be used/sprayed anytime during the day.

Tomato Blight

There seems to be no escaping early tomato blight in Tennessee because of our climate of generally mild winters, high humidity and warm temperatures during the growing season. It is especially troublesome in seasons with heavy rainfall.

Blight can be caused by windblown spores. It can also come up from the ground through water splash from diseased spores from the previous year. That is why tomatoes are not planted in the same spot for at least 3 years and never next to potatoes or egg plants.

Typically blight is first noticed on the older leaves closest to the soil. The signs of blight in the order of appearance are:

- Small brown or black target spots marks (lesions) on the lower leaves ¼-1/2 inch in diameter
- Lesions often develop “Bullseyes” rings with leaf yellowing.
- Begins moving upward on the plant towards newer growth.
- Leaves begin to fall.
- Lesions develop on the fruit which are dark brown and leathery.

It is important to stay alert for the first signs. Pick off infected leaves and branches immediately and **remove them from the site.**

Can blight be prevented? Probably not but it can be mitigated by:

- Plant disease resistant plants.
- Stake or cage the plants.
- Provide good ventilation by liberal plant spacing.
- Remove bottom branches so that they do not lie on the ground once fruit begins to develop. This reduces soil splash and increases airflow.
- Begin applying fungicides early prior to the development of the disease.
- Apply fungicides every 7-14 days to the **top and bottom** of the plant leaves and before each rain if it appears that the leaves will have a chance to dry before the rain starts.
- Water the plants at the base and not on the leaves. Water in the morning to promote rapid drying of foliage that does get wet. This also gives the leaves that do get wet a chance to dry before evening.
- Healthy plants with proper nutrition are less susceptible to the disease.
- Fertilize when planting then once every 1-2 weeks once fruit appears and then as long as the plant continues to produce.
- Mulch may reduce splash on leaves and fruit.
- Manages weeds around the plants.
- **Important:** Remove all diseased leaves, branches **and plants** from the plot. Dispose of them at the rear of both sites A&B across the road, or in the woods on site B.

The most **used fungicides** are those containing “Chlorothalonil ” sold under the trade names Daconil, Bravo, Echo and Fungonil. There is also “Mancozeb ” and

“Maneb” sold under the trade names Dithane, Manex and Penncozeb. Finally, there are “Copper products.” Your Garden Center can help you find them and even provide some advice.

Some swear by a tomato blight treatment using baking soda which is not toxic to bees. To one gallon of water add one heaping teaspoon of baking soda, one teaspoon of vegetable oil and a small amount of a dish detergent.

Neem Oil is also useful for this purpose and is not toxic to bees when following the mixing instructions. It can be applied at any time.

There are several very good UT Extension publications on tomato blight all gardeners are encouraged to read. These are W1027, SP277-W, SP370-C and W436. Google (ut extension publication # (see above line)

For other diseases Google “Vegetable plant diseases” That will help you identify and control them.

INSECTICIDES, FUNGICIDES AND HERBICIDES

All are toxic to bees

Fungicides help control tomato blight and powdery mildew on squash and cucumbers.

Insecticides control harmful insect infestation. In **DUST /POWDER** form it does not evaporate as do liquids which can be very harmful to our bees. Read the label to be sure it is effective against the insects you are targeting. Reports are that **Bonide Pyrethrin** is the best and safest to use followed by **Monterey LG 6135** and **Garden safe Neem oil concentrate**. That does not mean that other insecticides are not effective though.

Herbicides like “**Roundup**” kill all vegetation so their use within the garden plots

themselves is **discouraged** but not prohibited. Manual maintenance within the plots is the best way to go. Herbicides **are prohibited** on the **faucet lines and garden perimeters** except along the fence and tree line areas. If used when there is **wind** that may cause the spray to drift to plantings within your plot or that of others. There are also homemade sprays that are effective but not toxic to bees. **(1 gallon white vinegar, 1 cup of table salt and 1 tablespoon of liquid dish detergent is one of them).**

IMPORTANT!!! Since bees forage during the day, but return to the hives at dusk (sundown), applying any chemical before 7:00 PM is strictly prohibited.

The chemical will evaporate overnight and will not harm bees when they return to the plants the next day. Even here avoid spraying the plant blooms to the extent possible and do not spray if you see bee activity.

IMPORTANT!!! Insecticides in dust/powder form do not evaporate like liquids do. Because of this they are STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

Alternatives Control Methods--Some gardeners choose not to use chemical control. Instead they simply pick the undesirable insects off the plants and use a hard water spray to remove insects like potato bugs and aphids. (Ladybugs are good).

QUESTIONS ON FILLING VACANCIES

How Are Plot Vacancies and Special Requests Identified?

In the late summer/early fall of each year, a survey is sent to all assigned gardeners to express their intention of coming back the next season. At the same time they are asked for any special requests. Examples of this would be such things as:

- I Want to downgrade from a full plot to a half plot.
- I Want to upgrade from a half plot to a full plot.

- Would like to have a plot closer to the road.
- Would like to move from Site A to Site B.

Granting of special requests is based solely on plot availability and the gardener's place among others having the same requests

How Is The Wait List Created and Administered?

The Garden Committee maintains the wait list. It is created primarily by:

- Emails and calls from residents wanting a plot the next year.
- Sign-ups from special events, including a garden held open house.
- Media notices, referrals from the "Center," internet postings and our "Fact Sheet" at the garden site.

Those expressing an interest are placed on the list in the order their request is received. Each is sent a copy of this Handbook and told about when they will be contacted. If their wishes cannot be granted for the next season, they are transferred over to the waitlist to the season while keeping their place "in line."

How Are Plot Vacancies Filled?

Generally speaking, plot vacancies are filled as follows:

- a. If a half plot is vacated and the person on the other half has made it known to the Committee that he/she wants to take over the full plot, that request will be honored.
- b. If a gardener on a full plot wants to downgrade to a half plot, that gardener will remain on that plot unless requesting a move.
- c. Once the other vacancies have been identified, they are made known to all returning gardeners. Should any gardener want to move to one of the vacant plots, that request will be granted on a "first come first serve" basis.
- d. A person (other than a spouse/partner) **not** on the waiting list will not be eligible to share a **full** plot with an assigned gardener. This is to protect the integrity of the waiting list.
- e. If two gardeners, prospective or assigned, want to share a plot with someone on the waiting list, that may be accommodated irrespective of that

person's place on the waiting list.

- f. If on the waiting list, the person will be assigned to vacant plots at the discretion of the Committee.
- g. Those on the waiting list are assigned a plot based on their request and on what is available. They shall not be assigned to multiple plots even if available with the exception of one annual plot and one perennial plot.

What Happens To Plot Vacancies Created By Death or Disability?

Should this unfortunate event occur, filling that vacancy will be handled at the discretion of the Committee based on the situation at the time under the following general guidelines:

Annual Plots

- The spouse/partner of a deceased or disabled gardener has the option to retain possession of the plot for the balance of the season and into the future or to surrender it immediately.
- If the option is to surrender it (or there is no surviving spouse/partner), it will be reassigned to a person on the waiting list or others as the Committee shall decide.

Perennial Plots

- The spouse/partner has the option to retain possession of the plot or to surrender it.
- If the plot is surrendered, the spouse/partner must remove all plants and garden hardware within one month or the plants and hardware will be dealt with as the Committee sees fit. This includes offering the hardware to present perennial gardeners and the plants for transplant.
- If the plot is surrendered, it shall be assigned to the next person on the perennial waiting list or to others as the Committee shall decide while keeping the best interest of those on the perennial row in mind.

A CATCH-ALL OF MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Our Animal Visitors

Over the years we have had different animals who seek to share our plantings including two legged ones at times. **Deer** are around but have not been a problem. **Raccoons** are annual visitors who seem to come and eat our corn the day before we go to pick it ourselves. So, if you plant corn, you know the risk.

Then there are the **field mice (voles)** and other burrowing animals which seem to like root plants such as beets and sweet potatoes. There are deterrents available at your garden center for these. In 2019 we experienced a new one—**Rabbits**. They came from nowhere and totally devoured beans but not much else. Many gardeners put **inexpensive fencing** around their bean plantings. Discussions with your fellow gardeners for other ideas that may have worked for them may be helpful. In short, we have learned to live with all animal life **except raccoons**.

Soil Samples

If you want to take a soil sample of your plot, February/March and in the fall are probably the best times to do it because it gives you time to make recommended nutrient alterations before gardening starts. You will need **2 full cups of dry soil** taken from several different spots on your plot and mixed together. Take it to the **UT Extension Office across the road from the Senior Center** (next to the FairGrounds). They will give you a box to put it in. You can also stop at the UT Extension Office and pick up a box in advance. The fee was \$20 in 2023. Results will be emailed and/or mailed to you in a couple of weeks. Concerning the frequency of a soil test, 3 years is recommended, but more often if you applied manure or lots of leaves. You can also purchase soil testing kits from garden centers, but they are reportedly not as accurate as those from testing providers such as UT Extension.

Wide and Double Row Planting

Considerable planting space can be saved by utilizing these planting methods for much of what we plant in our gardens. If interested, Google “Wide and double row planting.”

Communications

Our internal communication is done by email. Those sent to all gardeners are sent to the group as a blind copy (bcc) so that addresses are not shown. If anyone wants to share something with the group (e.g. a problem, success story, suggestion, question etc. send it to the **Garden Committee** (communitygardensoffg@gmail.com). If the email is intended as just a 2-way conversation with the Garden Committee Coordinator, see “Contacts” on the last page of the Handbook. Responses will be to the sender only unless it is felt that the question and answer is not confidential and may be of benefit to all gardeners.

Mulching

Mulches are used to suppress weeds, enrich soil nutrients, help retain moisture in the soil, regulate soil temperature and prevent soil erosion. There are several kinds of mulches such as plastic and fabric sheets, grass clippings, compost, wood chips, leaves and straw.

Residential kitchen compost is also a good source of organic matter. The key here is to make sure it is composted. Raw vegetable and fruit waste is not acceptable. It will attract pests.

The only mulching material that is prohibited are newspapers!! The reason is that no matter how well they may be secured, they do actually break free and blow onto the Wildwood Stables property including horse trails. This unsightly “debris” is not beneficial to the Stables business and clean-up is unfairly left to the Stable’s staff.

All plastic and biodegradable fabric mulches must be removed from your plot and taken home with you at the close of the season. It seriously interferes with spring tilling. (Perennial gardeners are exempt from this requirement).

Fire Ants

In the spring of 2023 we began to see fire ant nests which we usually did not see until late summer/early fall because our spring tilling usually destroyed their nests temporarily. Fire ants are dangerous because they are aggressive and bite in mass. Should you be bitten and feel nauseous, dizzy, or experience difficulty with breathing or swallowing, seek immediate medical attention. Always deal with them at arm's length.

How to identify fire ant nests from those of regular ants which are good and should not be destroyed. Nests of **fire ants** are round or even wedge-like made of fluffy soil and can range from small bumps to 18" in height. They do **not** have a noticeable entrance. When the nest is touched with a pole handle or other object (then get out of the way) they quickly pour out of the nest in attack mode. The nests of **regular ants** are more sand-like with a clear entrance hole. If you disturb these nests, the ants will come out slowly if at all. Those nests are good to leave alone because these ants feed on aphids.

How do I get rid of the nest safely? The best way to get rid of them is to **drench** the nest with a liquid insecticide. You can also use solid insecticide granules. The key is to kill the queen. These insecticides are available at your garden center. Read the product label carefully. If it does **not** say **safe for gardens**, do not purchase. Why not? If it is not safe for gardens and you use it anyway, you should discard the plants that you are growing and not re-plant that area for a full year. **It is a threat to your health.** For example, all **AMDRO** labeled products contain the ingredient **Hydramethylnon** which is **unsafe** to use in a garden. It is good for lawns and foundations but not vegetable gardens. There are others as well. The ingredients **Pyrethrin and Carbaryl** are both safe for gardens and for "drenching" the nest. **Suggestion!** When looking at the product, check the ingredients--then **"Google: "Is (ingredient) safe for vegetable gardens?" Remember insecticide dusts are prohibited in our gardens because of their lasting toxicity to our bees.**

There are also natural remedies. For these it is suggested that you Google **“Natural remedies’ to kill fire ants.”** Examples- dish soap, vinegar, and lemon juice each mixed with varying parts of water with application instructions. And drenching with boiling water.

Companion Planting

Many believe that growing certain plants in close proximity to each other helps deter pests, promotes growth and otherwise is beneficial. One common one is the Marigold which reportedly is one of the best protectors for many plants—especially tomatoes. They repel nematodes which attack the tomato plant roots. If interested in this **Goggle vegetable companion chart.** “ It may be of help in planning your pre-season garden layout.

Fertilizer and Fertilizing

The 3 major nutrients that plants need are **Nitrogen** to promote leaf growth and color, **Phosphorus** to promote root growth and fight disease and **Potassium** for strong stems and overall plant growth. All fertilizer labels have numbers (nutrient level) in that order. **For example,** a 10-10-10-label is a balanced fertilizer with an equal amount of all 3 nutrients; a 15-10-15 fertilizer contains 15% nitrogen, 10% phosphorus and 15% potassium. A 24-0-0 fertilizer is 100% nitrogen.

How much to use? Generally speaking for a fairly balanced fertilizer about 2-3 pounds (2 cups) per 100 square feet Work into the top 2”-3” of soil.

Important—to know for sure what to apply, get a soil sample covered elsewhere in this Handbook. **More is not better.** If 2-3 pounds per 100 square feet is good, 3-6 pounds is not better.

Is that It? Yes for beets, beans, peas and carrots. All other vegetables can benefit from subsequent side dressing with the same or one with a higher nitrogen content. **For specific recommendations Google “Jennifer Poindexter side dressing of vegetables.”**

Lime affects the acidic level of the soil. Apply lime only if a soil sample indicates a need. Otherwise, it may do more harm than good.

Rocks—Disposal

Rocks are everywhere. If you want to dispose of some of them, do **not** put them in the grass on the water lines. Take them to the rear of both sites A & B across the road and dump them or into the woods on site B.

Vegetation Disposal Sites

Tomato plants, corn and sunflower stalks and any other flower or vegetable plants that need to be removed from garden plots may be disposed of at the rear of both sites A and B at the edge of the woods. Only organic vegetable matter from our garden plots may be deposited here. All other garden refuse such as, plastic mulch, pots, rope, twine, fencing or any other material not grown in the garden must be disposed of off site. This means take it away and dispose of it at a designated landfill or in the residential trash.

Leftover Seed

Seed is expensive so don't throw it away. It can be kept to use the next year by storing in a cool dry place, in the refrigerator or even the freezer.

Resources

If anyone has a question on almost any garden issue (e.g. diseases, pests, best practices, tomato blight etc.) the **UT Agricultural Extension** has an excellent website with outstanding publications on most any subject. A good way to research a topic is to do it by subject. Examples are: **ut extension planting sweet potatoes; or ut extension controlling powdery mildew**. We all plant tomatoes. Tomato blight is a particular problem in Tennessee. Search—**ut extension tomato blight**. If planting in a **raised bed**, search **ut extension raised bed gardening**.

For **new gardeners especially**, there is an excellent **planting guide** on both warm weather vegetables (beans, corn, tomatoes etc.) and cool weather vegetables (broccoli, lettuce, peas etc.). **Note:** Google **ut extension planting guide** and scroll the pages top to bottom and you will find warm weather, cold weather and fall

vegetables planting times, spacing and more. They can also be found in UT Extension Publications **SP291-O and SP291-P**.

One gardener recommended the book “**Vegetable Gardening for Dummies**.” Another found seed catalogs such Park Seeds, Johnny’s Select Seeds, Burpees etc. to be helpful. (**Note:** If you plan to order seeds from a catalog, you might first look at the seeds on that company’s website where you will generally find a larger selection).

Garden Centers/Nurseries

There are several garden centers nearby selling vegetable and flower plants and seeds. These include:

Crossville Garden Center—1780 West Ave, Crossville—931-484-9050

The Feed Store—928 Highway 70, Crossville-931-456-0604

Chapman’s Greenhouse—45779 Highway 127, Pikeville—423-533-2777

Johnson Nursery—1717 E, Spring St, Cookeville-931-528-8000

Williams Greenhouse-I-40 Midtown Exit, 219 Dogwood Ct Harriman TN
865-882-0536

CONTACTS

Garden Coordinator

Name: Brian Dilts

Community Gardens Committee

Email: communitygardensoffg@gmail.com