



The GreenThumb Print

GreenThumb News and
Topics of Interest to Community Gardeners in New York City

March 2002

The bulletin of GreenThumb, a program of City of New York Parks & Recreation



A letter to the gardeners

As we begin another spring planting season with the fantastic celebration of community gardening we like to call the GrowTogether, I wanted to pause to reflect how this spring is different from any other spring, for myself, for New York City, for GreenThumb, and for every one of you. If you are like me, you are more than ready to say goodbye to the year 2001, ready for warmer days and happier times. As the daffodils we all helped to plant in the fall as a memorial to those we lost break ground and add fresh color and beauty to our world, we should all stop to think about the very important work we have embarked on as community gardeners. Together we make New York a little bit quieter (or joyously loud with celebration), we make our neighborhoods cleaner and simpler (or bursting and alive with riotous color), we make eight million people (or just one) feel welcome, special, and cared for.

Community gardens embrace so much more than any other garden, being artistic expressions of the generosity of their keepers, places where friends are made, and neighborhoods come together. A little garden near my house has become the center of my world, there being no better place to stand in the sun on a fresh spring day and say hello to everyone passing by or coming in, listening to so many stories from former strangers, childhoods down south, a favorite hollyhock, a grandmother's roses. These are stories that might be lost were there not this little garden to talk over and to share, to provoke memory and openness and warmth between people.

Whether your garden is large or small, whether you are the lead organizer or just someone who visits once in a while, you are an essential part of creating a special place. Your welcoming smile, your labor and your struggle to understand each other and work together, this is what makes your garden, and by extension our city and our world, a little bit sweeter place to be. John Ikerd, Professor emeritus of Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Missouri writes that "A true community of people is a group of people that care about each other. There can be different degrees of caring but caring is the fundamental part of community. Out of that caring there arises a commitment, and it is this caring and commitment that make a real community. Most of our communities today are not real communities, but collections of people who by accident live in a place. We have become a nation of distant people".

Each of our gardens is our own personal expression of the fact that we do not choose to live as "distant people". We want to know our neighbors, raise our children together, build things that we share. It is my hope that GreenThumb has also become a true community. I know that our staff cares about each other, and you. I know that we are committed to provide you the best help we can in your efforts to create your own sweet world. Please share your dreams with us and tell us what you need to realize them.

What is different about this spring, I believe, is that we have all learned a little more about hope, a little more about what is important to us and what we don't want to lose, in short, about what is precious. Realize those precious things. Nurture your garden, and invite your own true community to share your gifts.

-Edie Stone, Director

18th Annual GreenThumb GrowTogether

Get ready for NYC community gardeners' harbinger to warmer weather and return to the outdoors! The 18th Annual GreenThumb GrowTogether is ready to kick off the 2002 growing season on Saturday, March 16th, 2002. February was a whirlwind of activity as we put the final touches on the biggest gardening event for New York City community gardeners.

Registrations have been sent and gardeners' pre-registration cards are pouring in. The winning T-shirt design has been selected and the list of workshops compiled - and ever increasing. This year, we have over 80 workshops to offer with some returning favorites and some new ones to try.

The GrowTogether is an event for community gardeners, by community gardeners. It is a place to meet new gardeners or greet gardeners from years past; a place to share knowledge, exchange stories, ideas and even flower cuttings; or a place to go for a family outing. We have some exciting additions that we are sure you will enjoy from garden gear to an expanded kids area with organized activities and workshops divided by age groups. "Rooting for Harmony" will be fun for the whole family. And remember, kids 12 and under enter free of charge!

We look forward to seeing you and your family Saturday, March 16th, 2002 at Hostos Community College! Registration begins at 9:00 AM. Make sure to pre-register by March 10th!

Cast your vote!

Project for Public Spaces, a public spaces nonprofit, has launched a website, Great Public Spaces, Great Community Places, that allows you to praise or damn the public places you live in and visit. From train stations and open markets to parks and playgrounds, you can express your views on your favorite or most despised. But there seems to be a shortage of community gardens and children's gardens in their website. Enhance the community garden reputation as great public spaces and nominate a community garden, or add your comments to the few community gardens that have been nominated.

Go to <http://www.greatpublicspaces.org> and cast your vote.

Funds for your garden

The National Gardening Association awards 400 Youth Garden Grants to schools, neighborhood groups, community centers, camps, clubs, treatment facilities, and intergenerational programs throughout the United States.

Each grant consists of an assortment of quality tools, seeds, and garden products generously contributed by leading companies from the lawn and garden industry. To be eligible, groups must plan to garden in 2002 with at least 15 children between the ages of three and 18 years. Selection of winners will be based on demonstration of a child-centered plan that emphasizes children directly learning and working in an outdoor garden. Selection criteria include leadership, need, sustainability, community support, innovation and educational, environmental and/or social programming.

Please look for the 2003 application form in the National Gardening Association website: www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp or call: 800-538-7476 (800-LETSGROW) for more information.



Got compost?

If you need compost for your community garden, give your outreach coordinator a call and we will gladly arrange to have it delivered. What plant wouldn't like a compost treat?

Staff updates:

Alice Brooke Wilson, the North Brooklyn outreach coordinator will also be the Staten Island outreach coordinator and Harold Paynter, the South Brooklyn outreach coordinator will take on Queens, effective immediately. Any questions, please call (212) 788-8070.



Daffodils

March into Spring

Spring will soon be upon us even if Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow on Ground Hog's Day. In a few short weeks, as the days get longer and the air a bit warmer, flowers will awake, officially welcoming us to Spring.

Among them, daffodils will be one of the first. This winter has been so warm that some have been sneaking up through the ground already. After all, it isn't Spring 'til you can see a bed of daffodils doing a sprightly dance.

Daffodils and narcissus are synonymous, Narcissus being the botanical name of all Daffodils. There are about 25 species of Daffodils with over 13,000 hybrids divided among 12 divisions of the official classification. The botanical daffodil may have acquired its name through Greek mythology. The droopy head of a Daffodil represents a greek figure named Narcissus who was so fond of his own image that he wasted away while bowing down to gaze in admiration at his own reflection in a pond. How narcissistic!

Daffodils are native to the western Mediterranean and were first cultivated by the ancient Greeks as early as 200 BC. Daffodils were introduced to northern Europe by the Romans who brought the plant along in their travels for they believed it to have healing qualities. But they believed wrong. Daffodil bulbs and leaves are actually poisonous if ingested (but the Romans still managed to succeed in their endeavors). The poisonous sap deters squirrels and rodents from eating up your garden, although it does not prevent them from digging it up. The poisonous substance also clogs other flowers so if you want your cut daffodils to last longer or don't want your other flowers to wilt you should let daffodils stand separately for approximately 6 hours before putting them in a flower arrangement. Speaking of flower arrangements...according to plant lore, daffodils are not recommended for weddings lest they bring unhappy vanity to the bride and meet the same unhappy fate as Narcissus! But maybe if you get a flower named after you, it might not be so bad...

Daffodil bulbs will last almost forever under the right growing conditions. Daffodils like fertile well-drained soil and the flowers last longer in partial shade. The blooming period is 6 weeks to 6 months, depending on climate and cultivar. After blooming, let the daffodil plant rebuild its bulb for the next year. The leaves stay green while this is happening. When the leaves begin to yellow, they should be removed.



Fields of Gold

In a few weeks, if not already, NYC will be graced with glorious golden-colored daffodils. The fields of gold are the result of the Daffodil Project, a citywide initiative to create a recurring

memorial to the victims of WTC that ordinary citizens can be a part of. Last Fall, thousands of volunteers planted over a million daffodils. Soon to bloom, the fields of gold provide a sense of renewal to the city, just as Spring is a renewal in the cycle of life.

Daffodil

~ William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company;
I gazed-and gazed-but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.