



## GARDEN ANGELS: GUIDE TO SUMMER GARDEN CARE

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# THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING TO HELP CARE FOR OUR GARDEN!



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### **BEING A GARDEN ANGEL**

*Thank you for helping our garden continue to grow and thrive throughout the summer - without your help, the hard work our students put in this spring would go neglected. Now, in fall, they can return to a well-tended garden that reflects the continuity of the growing season.*

*As a Garden Angel, we ask that you:*

- *Water the garden regularly*
- *Weed as needed*
- *Re-sow crops when possible*
- *Weigh and record garden harvests*
- *Log garden activities, concerns or delights in your school's garden journal*

*We appreciate your help and welcome you to share in the bounty of the garden by taking home some of the produce we've grown together.*



## WATERING THE GARDEN

In general, if the weather is overcast and cooler you can get away with watering every other day, but during hot dry weather the garden should be watered *daily*.

**DOES IT NEED WATER?** To test if the garden needs water poke a finger into the soil (up to your knuckle). If the ground is moist all the way down it doesn't need to be watered, but if it is dry be sure to water everything thoroughly.

**WHEN TO WATER?** The best times to water are in the *morning* and *evening* when temperatures are most moderate. Watering in the heat of the day causes much of the water to be lost in evaporation instead of being taken up by the plants. Watering late at night can chill your plants and make them susceptible to disease. Water the base of plants rather than spraying their leaves – water can burn leaves in the hot summer sun.

**HOW TO GET WATER?** Your Garden Educator will let you know how to access water at your school.

**HOW MUCH TO WATER?** Plants primarily take up water through their roots, so make sure the soil all around the plant is well soaked. When watering, think “rain” rather than “flood.” Slow, gentle sprinkling means that the water will soak into the soil rather than erode it, potentially exposing the root of your plants. Use the finger-test described above to determine if the garden needs more water. Remember that young seedlings need frequent light watering since their roots are not well established.

**SIGNS YOUR PLANTS NEED MORE WATER:** Wilted, yellowed or dried leaves are a sign that your plants need more water. Lack of water lowers a plant's resistance, so bug infestations or early bolting can be indicators that your plant is under water stress.

## WEEDING THE GARDEN

Our goal here is not to be on the cover of Gardener's Magazine, but to make sure that the weeds in our garden are not out-competing our crops.

**WHEN TO WEED?** Weeding is most effective when the weeds are young and the weather is warm and dry. Little weeds will dry out quickly once plucked and left with their roots exposed to the sun.

**HOW OFTEN SHOULD I WEED?** Plan to spend 15 minutes a day weeding (or 1 hour total during the week). If each garden angel commits to consistent weeding, we'll be able to keep on top of the weeds while they are small.

**WHERE DO I PUT WEEDS?** Do your research first – you may be able to eat those weeds! Many of the unintentional crops in our garden are just as nutritious as the ones we planted! Anything you don't want to eat will be composted and turned into food for the garden. Your Garden Educator will let you know about your school's composting system.

# GUIDE TO COMMON GARDEN WEEDS



**THISTLE**



**LAMBS QUARTER**



**CHICKWEED**



**CLEAVER**

\*eat the whole plant, except the roots; great in salads

\*used medicinally



**CREeping BUTTERCUP**



**PLANTAIN**

\*a medicinal for topical use



**HORSETAIL**



**DANDELION**

\*flowers and tender young leaves are edible



**PINEAPPLE WEED**

\*a relative of chamomile sometimes used in teas



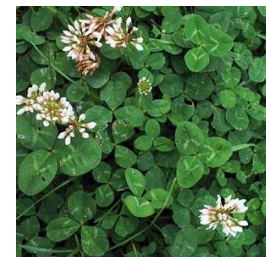
**NETTLES**

\*watch out for the sting; leaves may be made into pesto, cooked, or dried for tea



**POISON HEMLOCK**

\*CAUTION: this parsley relative resembles wild carrot, but is highly toxic to people and animals



**CLOVER**

\*red clover blossoms are dried for tea and used medicinally

## **PLANT CARE**

**THINNING** – Carrots, beets, radishes, chard, spinach, and other roots or greens sown from seed may need to be “thinned.” When there are many seedlings coming up, some will need to be pulled out to make room for the others to grow. Thinning may need to happen multiple times as the plants grow. Do an initial thinning when the plants are 1-2” tall, thinning so that one or two of your fingers fit comfortably between each plant. When the plants grow a little larger and start to look crowded, do a second thinning leaving about 2” between carrots and radishes, 4” between beets, spinach and chard. At this point some of your “thinnings” may be large enough to eat as “baby” carrots/beets. Baby beet greens, spinach and chard are also delicious in salad!

**SUCKERING** – Tomatoes are a vine and their impulse is to spread. We want to encourage our plants to grow UP and FRUIT rather than putting energy into more leaves. As the plants grow remove the “suckers” or side shoots from the plants – these are the little shoots that emerge in the V between the main stem and the leaf branches. They are best pinched off when small – use garden clippers or scissors if they are more than a few inches to ensure a clean cut. Be sure NOT to clip off the growing head at the top of the plant, though – this will stop the growth of the plant entirely! (*\*Oops – cut off the growing head? No worries! Leave one of the “suckers” in place and it will take over as a new head.*)



**REMOVING BOLTING PLANTS** – “Bolting” is when a plant goes to flower near the end of its life cycle. In greens, you will notice the plant shoots up from the center and puts a flower at the top. Once a plant bolts it is no longer ideal for eating as the amount of formic acid in the plant increases and it takes on a bitter taste. The leaves also become tough and hairy. In some plants, like Basil, you should regularly pinch off the flowering heads BEFORE they flower, encouraging the plant to continue leaf production. For most plants, though, trimming off the flowering head will make little difference – they will continue to bolt. Unless the plant is being saved for seeds, bolting plants should be pulled out and re-sown. We will allow some plants to flower and go to seed so students can collect the seeds in the fall for replanting next spring. Your Garden Educator will let you know which plants are being saved for seed. Before you compost bolting plants, pick off some of their flowers. The flowers of many plants, like kale, broccoli, and radish, make a delicious and colorful edition to salads!



**HILLING POTATOES** – As they grow, you should pull soil up from the pathways around the stems of your potato plants, called “hilling.” Hilling potatoes adds loose soil in which more tubers can easily grow, resulting in a bigger harvest. It also covers existing tubers, keeping them from turning green in the sun. Potatoes should be hilled for the first time when they are about 4” tall. Continue hilling potatoes weekly until midsummer when the mounds are about 1 foot high. With each hilling, cover the base of the vines with no more than an inch or two of new soil. If you hill your

potatoes regularly you shouldn't have any problems with weeds. Hilling buries and kills weeds around the plants before they become a serious problem. Hilling also provides better drainage.

## **HARVESTING**

- ✓ Bring knives and bags/baskets for harvesting produce!
- ✓ All produce is best cut when young but fully mature and ripe – finding that balance is the challenge! If you are unsure, ask a more experienced gardener to help you decide what is ready to pick.
- ✓ 2-handed harvesting keeps plants intact and rooted – use one hand to hold the plant and the other to pull off your harvest.
- ✓ Be sure to leave some produce for students to use in the fall. Your garden educator will let you know which crops to save.

### **HARVESTING SALAD CROPS:**

**Mesclun Mix / Loose Leaf Lettuce** – Use a knife or scissors to cut the entire plant, leaving about 2” from the base of the plant. The leaves will re-grow from the growing points. Typically, you can expect to get 3 cuts from a plant before it needs to be re-sown.

**Head Lettuce** – Use knife to cut entire plant at the base. The plant will not re-grow so you can pull out the root and re-sow.

**Spinach/Chard** – Trim off the larger outer leaves of the plant. Cut each stem close to the base of the plant. This can be done 1-2 times per week depending on how heavily you harvest. There should be AT LEAST 3 leaves left at the center of each plant after harvesting.

**Herbs** – Harvest herbs sparingly so that there is enough to go around. For herbs like oregano, thyme and rosemary, pinch sprigs off starting with the outer stems. For chives pull together a small handful and trim the entire section about 2” from the base so it will re-grow. Parsley and cilantro can be harvested using either of the methods above.

### **HARVESTING BRASSICAS:**

**Broccoli** – Broccoli will produce one large head at the center of the plant and multiple smaller buds as side shoots. Allow the center to grow into a large head then use a knife to cut the stem below the buds but above the larger leaves of the plant. Harvest side shoots as they mature. If left too long the broccoli heads will begin to flower – the yellow flowers are still edible, but ideally you will harvest while the head is still tight, before the buds begin to loosen and flower.

**Kale** – Trim off the larger outer leaves of the plant. Cut each stem close to the main stalk of the plant. This can be done 1-2 times per week depending on how heavily you harvest. There should be AT LEAST 3 leaves left at the center of each plant after harvesting.

### **HARVESTING FRUIT CROPS:**

**Cucumbers** – Wait for fruit to mature to harvest. Cucumbers should be filled out and about 8-10” long. Use a knife to cut the stem just above the top of the fruit.

**Peas/Beans** – Use scissors to snip pods off at the top of the stem, or pluck them by hand, being careful not to tug the entire plant. Shelling peas are ready when the pod fills out. Snow peas won’t fill out but should be harvested when they are about 4” long. Beans should be 5” or longer.

**Tomatoes/Peppers** – Wait for the fruit to turn their true color before harvesting. Be sure to cut or break fruit off using our 2-handed harvesting method to avoid pulling on the whole plant.

**Squash** – Winter squash should be left throughout the summer for fall harvesting when school is back in session. Please leave all winter squash (pumpkin, butternut, delicata, hubbard, etc.). Summer squash (costata romanesca, zucchini, yellow crookneck, etc) can be cut as it reaches about 2” in diameter or 6-8” in length. Use a knife to cut the stem just above the top of the fruit. Avoid letting summer squash grow too large as they will develop a tough skin and large seeds.

## HARVESTING ROOT CROPS:

**Radishes** – As radishes grow, harvest to thin by pulling out every other radish, making room for the others to grow larger. Harvest radishes when the exposed top of the root is about 1” in diameter. Radishes quickly turn woody and bolt if left too long in the ground.

**Beets/Carrots** - Pulling beets and carrots should serve a dual purpose, harvesting and thinning. Pull out closely spaced plants so that the remaining ones have more space to grow. Once they have reached ideal spacing you can judge the size and decide if they are ready to harvest by brushing the dirt gently away to expose the top. If a beet or carrot has a thick base then it is ready to harvest, just give it a gentle tug! Ideally, Garden Angels will re-sow in July for a late crop when school is back in session.

## HARVESTING ALLIUMS:

**Green Onions** – Green onions are most often planted in bunches. Harvest by gently pulling out an entire bunch. The white of the onion should be at least as large around as a pencil before harvesting.



**Garlic** – Garlic is harvested in the fall, but during the summer months you may be able to harvest the “scapes,” or flower stalks, of hard-neck garlic (*\*see picture at left*). The scapes should be cut off of the plant, since they take energy away from the growing bulb. As a bonus, garlic scapes are both edible and delicious. They get tougher the longer they grow, so cut them in their first circle while they are still tender. You can chop them raw into salads like green onions. More mature scapes can be sautéed lightly with pasta, eggs or greens, for a garlicky flavor.



## RE-SOWING GUIDE

As you harvest, please re-sow the bare spots in the garden. Logging what you've sown in the garden journal will serve as a helpful guide to the Garden Angels who follow you over the summer. Some likely candidates for re-sowing are:

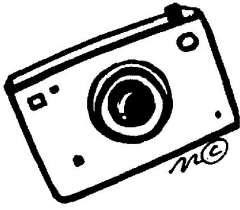
SEED	DEPTH	SPACING IN ROWS	SPACING BETWEEN ROWS
Carrots	1/4"-1/2" trench	1/2"-1"	8-10"
Beets	1/2" trench	1"	8-10"
Radishes	1/2" trench	1/2"	4-6"
Lettuce (starts)	Shallow hole; gently press soil around roots	6-10"	6-10"
Lettuce (seed)	1/4" trench	1"	6-10"
Mesclun Mix (starts)	Shallow hole; gently press soil around roots	6-10"	6-10"
Mesclun Mix (seed)	1/4" trench	1"	6-10"
Spinach	1/2" trench	1"	10-12"
Chard	1/2" trench	1"	10-12"

## IDEAS FOR FUN IN THE GARDEN

1. Have a picnic in the garden. Invite friends and family members to join you! Bring along salad dressing and harvest a fresh garden salad or other veggies, then enjoy fresh!
2. Record your discoveries in the Garden Journal: bugs and wildlife, things you tasted/smelled/touched, things you're curious about.



- Take photos to share! E-mail them to [info@commonthreadsfarm.org](mailto:info@commonthreadsfarm.org) (make sure to note which school you're at) so that they can be shared with the school community in the fall.



## SCHOOL-SPECIFIC NOTES

### NOTES FROM YOUR GARDEN EDUCATOR

<b>Water Access</b>	
<b>Composting System</b>	
<b>Garden Journal</b>	
<b>Scale</b>	
<b>Crops to Save for Student Use</b>	
<b>Crops to Save for Seed</b>	
<b>Crops to Re-Sow</b>	
<b>Other Important Notes Regarding our Garden</b>	