

The Belmont Victory Gardens



HANDBOOK

2013

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Welcome!
to the
Belmont Victory Gardens

*Who loves a garden still
his Eden keeps,
Perennial pleasures plants,
and wholesome harvest reaps.*

Amos Bronson Alcott 1868

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INTRODUCTION

The Belmont Victory Gardens are one of the largest and oldest continually active community gardens in the Boston area. They cover two acres of land, with 137 plots ranging in size from 12 by 12 feet to 50 by 50 feet. There is no residency requirement, so anyone may garden here.

The Gardens are located in Rock Meadow Conservation Area along Mill Street, which spans 70 acres of meadow, wetlands, streams, and woods. This area is part of the Western Greenway, a corridor of undeveloped green space linking Belmont, Waltham, and Lexington (see appendix for map of the Western Greenway). Rock Meadow has been designated by the Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife as “an important grassland conservation area” that provides significant habitat for plants and animals. As a part of this Greenway, the crops and flowers grown in our Garden plots benefit from and support the rich biodiversity of the area.

1. ROCK MEADOW & THE VICTORY GARDENS

History of Rock Meadow

Ten thousand years ago, a vast glacier that covered this area began to retreat, sculpting the undulating land that is now Rock Meadow and leaving in its wake the rocky soil that inspired its name. Native Americans, notably the Pequosetts, periodically burned the meadow to produce grassland that attracted game. Grasslands like this are a unique habitat where many species of animals, birds, insects, and plants thrive.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, as Europeans colonized New England, the Eaton, Browne, and Kendall families became the first white people to settle here. Over the next 250 years, these families farmed, grazed animals, and operated wool, lumber, and grain mills on Beaver Brook. Remaining from those times are the Beaver Brook millpond, the 1750 Eaton House, and the 1819 David Kendall House, located south of the Meadow along Mill Street. (The Browne House is located on Main Street in Watertown.)

In 1895, McLean Hospital (founded in Charlestown in 1811 and the first mental hospital in the United States) purchased 100 acres of land in Belmont, including Rock Meadow, and relocated its facilities. McLean established a farm that provided food for its live-in patients and staff. Records from 1927 show there was a farmhouse, stone crusher, cow barn, dairy barn, silo, slaughterhouse, pump house, greenhouse, two piggeries, and two stables.

After the outbreak of World War II, many men who had worked the McLean farm went off to fight the War, and the farm ceased production. By the 1950s, the production and distribution of food in New England had changed so much that the farm never reopened. In 1969, the hospital sold much of its land to the Town of Belmont. The only remnant of the McLean farm is the abandoned dairy barn, located south of the Rock Meadow parking lot.

History of the Victory Gardens

In 1943 victory gardens were a part of a nationwide effort promoted by Eleanor Roosevelt to ease food shortages and boost national morale. At their peak, victory gardens produced up to 40 percent of the fruits and vegetables consumed in the United States during World War II.

During the 1940s, the Belmont Victory Gardens were located on Concord Avenue next to the current high school. In 1969 the site was earmarked for athletic fields, and the gardens were moved to Rock Meadow Conservation Area on Mill Street, land that the Town had newly acquired from McLean Hospital.

Over the next forty years, the fortunes of the Gardens rose and fell and rose again. The 1970s saw a renaissance in community gardening, as baby boomers espoused “grow your own” and the United States experienced its first oil crisis and subsequent rise in food prices. During the 1980s and 90s, interest in vegetable gardening waned. Many community gardens were bulldozed to make way for housing developments and malls. Belmont’s victory gardens were fortunately located on conservation land and thus spared that fate, but plot use declined. Fences and paths fell into decline, and plots became overgrown. Rock Meadow also fell into decline for want of sufficient mowing. By 2003, about 30 percent of the meadow had been lost to the processes of reforestation.

The Meadow & Gardens in the 21st Century

In 2003 neighbors who abut the Meadow became alarmed at the increasing loss of grassland due to reforestation. They formed the Friends of Rock Meadow and for two years raised money to help pay for mowing. In 2005 they partnered with the Belmont Conservation Commission and raised over \$75,000 in matching grants to create a long-term plan for the Meadow.¹

The new conservation project brought new visibility to the Meadow and The Gardens. Invasive trees and shrubs were removed along Mill Street, and passersby, for the first time in years, could actually see the Gardens from the road. The Gardens also gained a presence online, enabling anyone looking for a community garden to Google and find it. New leaders appeared and promoted the Gardens through the local newspaper and farmers’ market. And the local food movement began to surge as bestsellers like Michael Pollan’s *Omnivore’s Dilemma* and Barbara Kingsolver’s *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* revealed the dangers of a globalized and industrialized food system.

These rapid changes had a profound impact on the Gardens. In 2007, we saw a threefold increase in applicants. All available plots were taken, and a waiting list was started. In 2010, the Gardens were expanded—16 new plots were added, large plots that had earlier been conjoined

¹ The goal of the long-term plan is to control invasive plants and restore 30 acres of the property to grasslands. The first phase of this work began in the summer of 2007 and will continue through 2016. In addition, a grant from the Rails to Trails Program is making it possible to improve infrastructure, including trails, bridges, signs, and benches.

were divided, and 12 abandoned plots were reclaimed. As of 2013, the waiting list stands at over 100. There is always turnover, however. Applicants typically wait two to three years to be assigned a plot.

2. OWNERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

The Belmont Victory Gardens are a part of the Rock Meadow Conservation Area, which belongs to and is under the jurisdiction of the Town of Belmont. The Town purchased this 70-acre parcel of land in 1969 with Belmont tax money and significant support from state and local grants.

Belmont Conservation Commission

The Belmont Conservation Commission has jurisdiction over Rock Meadow Conservation Area and the Gardens. It sets policies, including fee allocation, and approves any changes in infrastructure on the property.

Garden Commissioner

The Commissioner, MARY TRUDEAU, is a wetlands expert who was hired by the Town of Belmont as the Town's Conservation Agent in 2006. She works under the Belmont Conservation Commission and oversees the Gardens. Her responsibilities include setting and enforcing garden rules, overseeing applications and plot assignments, setting and collecting fees, and coordinating with the Garden Coordinator in daily operation of the Gardens.

Garden Coordinator

The Coordinator, KATHY MARTIN, is a volunteer and works with the Garden Commissioner. Kathy has gardened at Rock Meadow since 2006. She has gardened for 30 years and is the creator of a top garden blog, "Skippy's Vegetable Garden," which gets 2000 page views per day in peak gardening season and won Horticulture magazine's Best Garden Blog award in 2011. Kathy collaborates with volunteers and oversees the Garden's operations. Garden operations include enrolling volunteers, organizing gardener meetings, and managing the Spring and Fall Work Days, annual trash collection, communal composting, and path mowing. She also procures and manages equipment, plans and carries out improvements, provides information about organic pest control, and facilitates communications and social events.

BRUCE WESTGATE, the previous Garden Coordinator from the 1970's until 2009, works with the Coordinator, maintains the front of the Gardens, and continues to be a valuable help and resource to the Gardens.

3. GARDEN EXPENSES & FEES

The Belmont Victory Gardens are a self-supporting entity. Garden fees and donations cover all garden expenses.²

Garden Expenses

Garden fees pay for various services we provide, including:

- Irrigation
- Garden expansion
- Trash removal
- Purchase, upkeep, and repair of wheelbarrows and mowers
- Installation of communal compost bins
- Pilot program to provide disease-resistant tomato seedlings to gardeners (this program will likely be fully funded by donations)
- Pilot program to provide free, certified organic pest control products to gardeners

Other programs requested by gardeners and that we are considering include:

- Installing a shed to store mowing equipment and pest control products
- Supplying better quality compost
- Supplying manure
- Providing communal fruit trees or bushes

Why are plot fees increasing?

Although our garden fee has been rising recently, it is currently comparable to, or lower than, other community gardens in the Boston Area.

Irrigation Costs - Since 2009 the plot fee has doubled from \$25 to \$50, which is due in part to the fact that our water bill has tripled since 2008. Fifty percent of the plot fee is applied to the water bill.

Improved Garden Services - The fee has also increased in order to cover improved services (listed above). In particular, in 2010 the Gardens responded to a rapidly growing wait list by contracting with a landscaper to level and amend space for 16 new garden plots.

² Bee keepers with hives at Rock Meadow also donate money toward Meadow upkeep.

Other - We now contribute a portion of our budget to Meadow upkeep, including path work, mowing, liming, and repairing potholes in the parking lot. Also, as of 2011 the Town stopped paying for our annual trash removal.

Grant Funding

As we develop organizationally, we will be able to access grant funding, community support, and donations to offset our fees. We recently applied for a grant from the Town of Belmont to cover the costs of upgrading our irrigation system. If awarded, this grant would cover all costs to install and replace pipes and spigots to reduce leaks and increase water availability in our plots.

4. GARDEN COMMUNICATIONS

Newsletters

Newsletters are sent by the Coordinator approximately every week in the summer and every month in the winter. These are sent by email or USPS and cover garden events, project updates, reminders about rules and etiquette, and garden tips. If you don't receive these, please contact KATHY MARTIN, the Coordinator, kathy.bvg@gmail.com. to make sure we have your correct email or address.

Meetings

Gardener meetings, held at Town Hall in Belmont, are held periodically, some to get input on how to improve the Gardens and others for the various volunteers to do planning. The Coordinator notifies gardeners by email and USPS. Please come help envision and plan the future of the Gardens!

Bulletin Board

The bulletin board was made local Boy Scouts, Belmont Troop 304, in 2009. The front side is for communications from Garden Management; the back side is for communications among gardeners. If you have questions about using the bulletin board, contact VICTORIA THATCHER. Does Victoria still do this?

Yahoo Group

Joining is easy – just go to the Yahoo website (or link below), log on to your account or create and account, and look for The Belmont Victory Gardens. If you need help, contact KATHY MARTIN, the Coordinator. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/belmontvictorygarden>

Facebook

Search for “Facebook, Belmont Victory Gardens” or type the following address:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Belmont-Victory-Gardens-at-Rock-Meadow/145600744935>

Town of Belmont

<http://www.town.belmont.ma.us>

5. GARDEN RULES

Rules and etiquette enable community gardens like ours to function and thrive. The rules below have been established by the Belmont Conservation Commission. If you are not in compliance with them, the Garden Commissioner will contact. If you continue to be non-compliant, you will lose your plot.

Garden Rules

- 1) Gardens must be gardened and well maintained during the entire growing season.
- 2) Use only certified organic pest and disease controls are allowed in the Gardens.
- 3) Attend the mandatory annual Spring Work Day held in April and the Fall Work Day held _
- 4) Keep paths clear.
5. Keep your garden free of invasives.
6. Keep your fence in good repair or replace unsafe and unsightly fences.
- 7) Be respectful of your garden neighbors.
- 8) Conserve water.
- 9) Do not install bird boxes/houses or feeders in the gardens.

Explanation

1) **Gardens must be gardened and well maintained during the entire growing season.**

There are plenty of reasons why gardeners neglect or abandon their gardens. But a neglected or abandoned garden is a serious liability - for your neighbors and ultimately the whole garden community. That's why there are strict rules about maintaining the plots.

Your plot must be worked by June 1.

This means it must be cleared of trash and show visible signs of spading, sowing, planting, weeding, etc. If your plot doesn't show these signs, the Garden Commissioner will reassign it to someone on the waiting list.

You must maintain your plot during the whole season.

Weeding is particularly important because:

- Your weeds impact other gardens.
- Weeds can shade neighboring plots.
- Weeds can shed seeds beyond your plot.
- Weeds offer cover for garden pests.
- Weeds give an appearance of neglect that can invite theft and complaints.

If you have a condition that prevents you from weeding, contact the Commissioner for help from our Weeding Assistance Program.

2) Use only certified organic pest and disease controls are allowed in the Gardens.

The Gardens promote the principles and practices of organic gardening and do not permit the use of chemical pest controls that are deemed harmful by the USDA. Herbicides of any kind are not permitted. See the appendix for recommended organic controls.

3) Attend the mandatory annual Spring Work Day held in April. And the Fall Cleanup Day held _ Attendance at the annual work day is required. You must attend in order to retain your plot. See the "Spring Work Day" section for details.

3) Keep paths clear.

You are responsible for maintaining the paths adjacent to your garden. This means:

- Level the path surface to the best of your ability.
- Remove rocks.
- Keep your fence well maintained so there is no protruding material.
- Clip any plants growing on the fence so they do not stick out into the paths.
- Do not plant in the paths.
- Do not store things in the paths, with the following exceptions:
 - Hoses can be left running at the edges of paths.
 - Hoses may be buried in the paths.
 - Personal compost bins can be placed in designated areas, with permission.
- Ensure your fencing does not encroach on the paths.
- Keep the paths around your plot at least 3.5 feet wide to enable gardeners, wheelbarrows and lawn mowers sufficient room to pass.

Clearing and maintaining paths can be hard heavy work. If you need assistance, contact the Garden Coordinator.

5) Keep your garden free of invasives

Invasive plants spread quickly to other plots. Birds eat the berries of invasives and drop the seeds wherever they fly, spreading invasives far and wide. Information in invasives is posted on the entrance side of the bulletin

6. Keep your fence in good repair or replace unsafe and unsightly fences. Protruding and rusty fences pose a safety hazard to other gardeners.

7) **Be respectful of your garden neighbors.**

- Aim to cultivate good relations with your garden neighbors.
- Avoid planting crops that can shade neighboring plots.
- Avoid planting “garden thugs” - potentially invasive or hard-to-remove plants. These include raspberries, blackberries, mint, Jerusalem artichoke, lily of the valley, purple loosestrife, and groundcovers.

8. Conserve water.

Please help us conserve water. It’s our biggest expense, and the rising cost of water is one of the reasons our fees are increasing. Over 100 gardeners share the water at the Gardens, so conserving and using water equitably is a priority.

- Unattended watering devices (sprinklers, sprayers, and soaker hoses) are not allowed.
- Ensure that water faucets are turned off when you leave your garden.
- Try to water your garden at times when others are not.
- If water pressure is low, check to see if other gardeners are watering. If not, a spigot may be running. If possible, take a moment to check the garden spigots. Thank you!
- Always turn the water off at the spigot, even if your hose has a nozzle that controls water flow. Closed hose nozzles put a lot of pressure on the spigots and can cause them to leak.

9) Do not install bird boxes/houses or feeders in the gardens.

A Bluebird Nesting Program is underway in the meadows. Bluebird populations have been declining in New England in recent years due to loss of habitat (mowed open fields) and nesting sites. House sparrows and house wrens are aggressive and successful competitors for nesting sites, and ordinary birdhouses in the Gardens encourages these birds.

The Bluebird Nesting Program provides specially designed boxes that are dotted throughout the Meadow. These are professionally designed, positioned, and managed so they are appropriate for bluebirds (and swallows), but not for house sparrows and wrens. Joe Finn, the creator and manager of the program, is the fellow dressed in a white hat and protective clothing who you can see throughout the year working in the Meadow.

6. GARDEN ETIQUETTE

Wheelbarrows & Buckets

Wheelbarrows are provided by the Gardens and maintained by volunteers. They are marked with the letter “C” (community) and kept at the front of the Gardens near the compost area

(southeast corner). Please return them to this location and make sure they are upside down so they don't collect rain and rust.

Standing Water

Please don't leave water standing in buckets or other containers. Standing water breeds mosquitoes and can trap small creatures like chipmunks looking for a drink. The Garden Coordinator checks for buckets with standing water and will dump any that are found.

Keeping Up Appearances

Please keep your garden looking good. This means keeping it weeded, free of debris, and keeping your vegetables tended and harvested in a timely way so they don't rot (especially tomatoes). We especially want the gardens to look good as we seek funding for various improvements. We are in a highly visible public space, and everyone associated with it, especially neighbors and other Belmont residents, wants to feel proud of it.

Harvest vegetables in a timely way. Rotting vegetables are unsightly and attract insects, rodents, pathogens, and thieves, since they give the appearance that no one cares.

Trash – Carry It In, Carry It Out

Trash removal costs money. Providing public trash cans also encourages illegal dumping (which is one reason the Town of Belmont does not provide cans at Rock Meadow). The Gardens policy on trash is: Carry It In, Carry It Out. This policy not only saves us money, but is in line with reducing waste. When we are forced to deal with the trash we generate, we stay mindful that there is no "away" as in throwing trash away - it always goes somewhere, and someone has to deal with it. Thus, we ask you to:

- Reduce waste in your plot.
- Do not allow trash to accumulate.
- Dispose of your own trash.

A dumpster is hired once a year for the annual Spring Work Day.

7. ANNUAL SPRING WORK DAY & PLOT SHUFFLE, FALL CLEAN UP DAY

This April event is the only collective work day of the season. It's a big event with many gardeners working together to clear the Gardens of brush and debris. It's also when plots are assigned.

Everyone is required to attend the work day in order to be reassigned a plot. If you are not able to attend, you must contact Kathy Martin, the Garden Coordinator, before the work day to arrange alternative service. Failure to do this will result in you losing your plot.

Timeline

- 9:00 to 12:00 The gardeners clean up the gardens. Tasks include:
- Clearing brush from the periphery
 - Turning communal compost piles
 - Path improvement - removing rocks, leveling & widening
 - Clearing invasive vines from fences
 - Removing trash
- 12:00 noon The Garden Commissioner assembles people who are in line to get their first plot and current gardeners who want to switch plots, and then assigns plots to them. Current gardeners who want to switch get first choice.

A Clean Up Day is held in the fall to remove debris and weeds that will set seed if not removed.
See FALL CLEAN UP on page _____

Switching Plots

If you've had a plot for at least one year and are in good standing, you are eligible to switch to a plot that's more to your liking. Gardeners who want to switch plots have first choice. To request to switch, contact the Garden Commissioner, MARY TRUDEAU, *before* the annual Spring Work Day.

8. GARDEN HAZARDS

Rough terrain

The garden paths contain rocks, stumps, holes, and sometimes ground hornet nests.

Improving the paths is a high priority for the Gardens and takes many hands over a sustained period of time. Be alert and use care as you walk on the Garden paths.

Tick-borne diseases

Tiny deer ticks – not to be confused with larger and very prevalent dog ticks - are carried by deer and mice. They can carry various pathogens, notably Lyme disease. They live mainly in tall weeds and grasses.

Lyme disease is a serious illness. Stay on the mowed paths when walking in Rock Meadow. After walking and gardening, check your body for any red, swollen spots indicating bites, and see a doctor if you have any indications. Help us keep the paths mowed so we can reduce the number of ticks.

Mosquito-borne diseases

Mosquitoes are prevalent in the Meadow at dawn and dusk. They can transmit serious pathogens, notably West Nile virus.

When the threat of West Nile virus is high, the Belmont Health Department notifies the public via the Belmont newspaper and its website. Kathy Martin, the Garden Coordinator, also sends a garden-wide email and posts a notice on our bulletin board.

Protect yourself against mosquito bites in the Gardens and stay informed about local health notices. Do not leave standing water, which attracts mosquitoes, in buckets or other containers.

Ground hornets

Ground hornets, like bees and wasps, are pollinators for our crops. Also, hornets and paper wasps prey on other insects, and help keep pest insect populations under control. Paper wasps carry caterpillars and leaf beetle larvae back to their nests to feed their growing young. Their sting is painful, however, and every year we find their nests in the garden paths. They become increasingly aggressive as the season progresses. As long as we avoid stepping on their nests, they do not pose a problem.

Typically, hornet nests are discovered by people who are mowing the paths. Be careful when mowing. If you find a nest, contact the Garden Coordinator, who will mark it so others don't step on it.

Bees and wasps

There are many bees, wasps, hornets and other stinging insects in the Gardens. They are pollinators for our crops.

If you are allergic to these, please make sure you know how to handle a sting safely.

Poison ivy

We are trying to eliminate poison ivy from the gardens, but there are still some patches around.

Please learn to identify this plant. If you come into contact with it, wash well with an appropriate scrub/soap within 24 hours of contact.

Coyotes

Coyotes appear regularly in the Meadow and have also been seen walking along the paths through the Gardens. Unlike the wolf, the coyote's range has expanded in the wake of human civilization, and they readily reproduce in metropolitan areas. They move about during the day and night. They are capable of digging their own burrows, though they often prefer the burrows of groundhogs. They are opportunistic, versatile feeders eating voles, rabbits, squirrels, mice, lizards, snakes, deer, livestock, ground-nesting birds, insects and other invertebrates. They also prey on cats and dogs in urban areas. Fruits and vegetables can form a significant part of the coyote's diet in the summer and autumn. As top predators in our ecosystem, coyotes perform useful ecological services by controlling populations of rodents and other small mammals.

Coyote attacks on humans are uncommon, because in general, they have a healthy fear of humans. However, attacks are becoming increasingly frequent, especially in the state of California. Coyotes are losing their fear of humans which is further worsened by people intentionally or unintentionally feeding them. In such situations, some coyotes have begun to act aggressively toward humans, chasing joggers and bicyclists, confronting people walking their dogs, and stalking small children.

Precautions - Never feed a coyote! Coyotes that have learned to expect food from humans can be dangerous. Leash your dog and keep it close to you, especially during winter and spring, when coyotes are breeding. John Maguranis of Belmont Animal Control says that while waving your arms and yelling used to be effective in scaring away coyotes, it is less so now because urban coyotes have learned these gestures pose no threat. He reports he has been able to scare coyotes away by walking directly toward them. If you are nervous about coyotes, carry a stick when walking in the Meadow. Report any sightings of coyotes within the Gardens to Kathy Martin, the Coordinator.

9. GARDENING BASICS AT THE VICTORY GARDENS

Fence Recommendations

Garden plots do not need to be fenced, but adding a fence on your plot will help to keep out local wildlife and to reduce human theft. Please avoid plastic fence material as this degrades and ends up all over the Meadow. We recommend a 4- or 5-foot tall metal wire fence.

Be sure your fence does not encroach on the path. We need to have enough room for lawn mowers and wheel barrows to easily navigate the paths. Make sure the path around your plot is at least 3.5 feet wide.

Irrigation

In the spring, when there is no risk of the irrigation pipes freezing, the water is turned on. In the fall, when the risk of freezing begins, it is turned off. The dates are:

Water on - around May 1

Water off - around October 1

Before and after these dates, you will need to carry your own water in to the gardens. In dry spring weather, you may want to delay the planting of delicate seedlings until the water is on.

Soil Testing

We recommend that you test your garden soil for nutrients and contaminants upon starting your garden and then every three or four years. Soil samples can be mailed to the Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Lab at UMASS Amherst and a variety of tests requested. Directions for collecting and mailing your samples are on line at: <http://soiltest.umass.edu/>. A routine analysis costs about \$10 and will tell you exactly how much lime and fertilizer you should be adding for the type of crops you plan to grow. It will also give information on any toxic metals (lead or arsenic) that may be in the soil.

The Garden Management regularly tests random plots and receives information from individuals who have done their own soil testing. Soils tend to be acidic, but some plots can be basic. We have never had a report showing a significant level of lead or arsenic; these levels are always very low or undetectable.

Soil Preparation

Building healthy soil and soil preparation is the key to successful organic gardening.

Compost

This is the most important addition to maintain fertile soil. We recommend you add a 2-inch layer of compost to your garden beds in the fall or spring. Turn this under, or use a lasagna layering or no-till method, and you are ready for planting. Several types of compost are available for you to use at the Gardens:

- *Compost produced by the Town of Belmont from home garden waste.* This is delivered several times a year. This compost pile is delivered either to the area under the pine trees (northeast corner) or where the wheelbarrows are stowed (southeast corner). Unfortunately, this compost often has bits of trash in it and needs to be sifted, so we have researched getting better quality compost and are hopeful we can provide it in the near future.
- *Compost piles at the garden periphery where decades of gardeners have piled organic matter from their plots.* Dig down in any of these piles and you will find dark rich compost. There are piles on the north, west and south sides of the Gardens.
- *Newly constructed communal compost bins for garden waste.* These bins were put into use for the first time in 2012. Signs for accessing compost will be posted on the bins.

Manure

Manure (horse, cow, and chicken) helps build healthy soil and is necessary for continued fertility. Raw manure needs time to break down, so apply it to your garden beds in the fall (never apply it to plants as it will burn them). Lightly dig about 3 to 4 inches of manure into the soil, cover with some hay, and leave until spring. Composted manure can be made by adding raw manure to your compost bin or simply letting it sit in a pile on its own for about four months, after which it will be ready to use.

Free horse manure - Four Fillies Farm, 55 Allen Road in Lexington has free manure for gardeners from the Victory Gardens. The manure dumpster is easily accessible. Jennifer, the farm owner, knows that gardeners will be stopping by, so you do not need to notify her.

Fertilizer

We recommend applying fish emulsion or Garden Tone (both available at garden centers) to vegetables that are heavy feeders, such as tomatoes, peppers, corn, and squash.

Fall Cleanup

Please clean up your garden in the fall.

- Weed to reduce the amount of weed seeds that sprout in the spring.
- Store equipment and remove trash.
- Pull and compost annual plants.
- Cut back perennials and mulch them.
- Harvest potato and sweet potato beds (voles will help themselves all winter).
- Leave kale and Brussels sprouts until spring and pick all winter (if snow isn't a barrier).
- It is good for garden soil (but certainly not necessary) to cover it with mulch to protect from drying out and freeze-thaws.
- Add manure and/or compost to beds. (Or add compost in the spring.)
- Add lime in the fall if your soil pH is low (most garden soils around here are low).
- Mulch beds with salt hay, if desired, to protect them from frost heave and erosion.

Composting

We recommend composting your garden waste within your own plot. Do not compost diseased plant matter, especially tomatoes or potatoes infected with Late Blight. Garlic mustard, a major weed at the Gardens, should not be composted if it's flowering as the plant will quickly go to seed even in the compost! Whatever you don't compost yourself, please take to the large compost pile on the north side of the Gardens (north of plot 130) or to the wooden bins at the front (southeast side) of the Gardens.

Planting Times

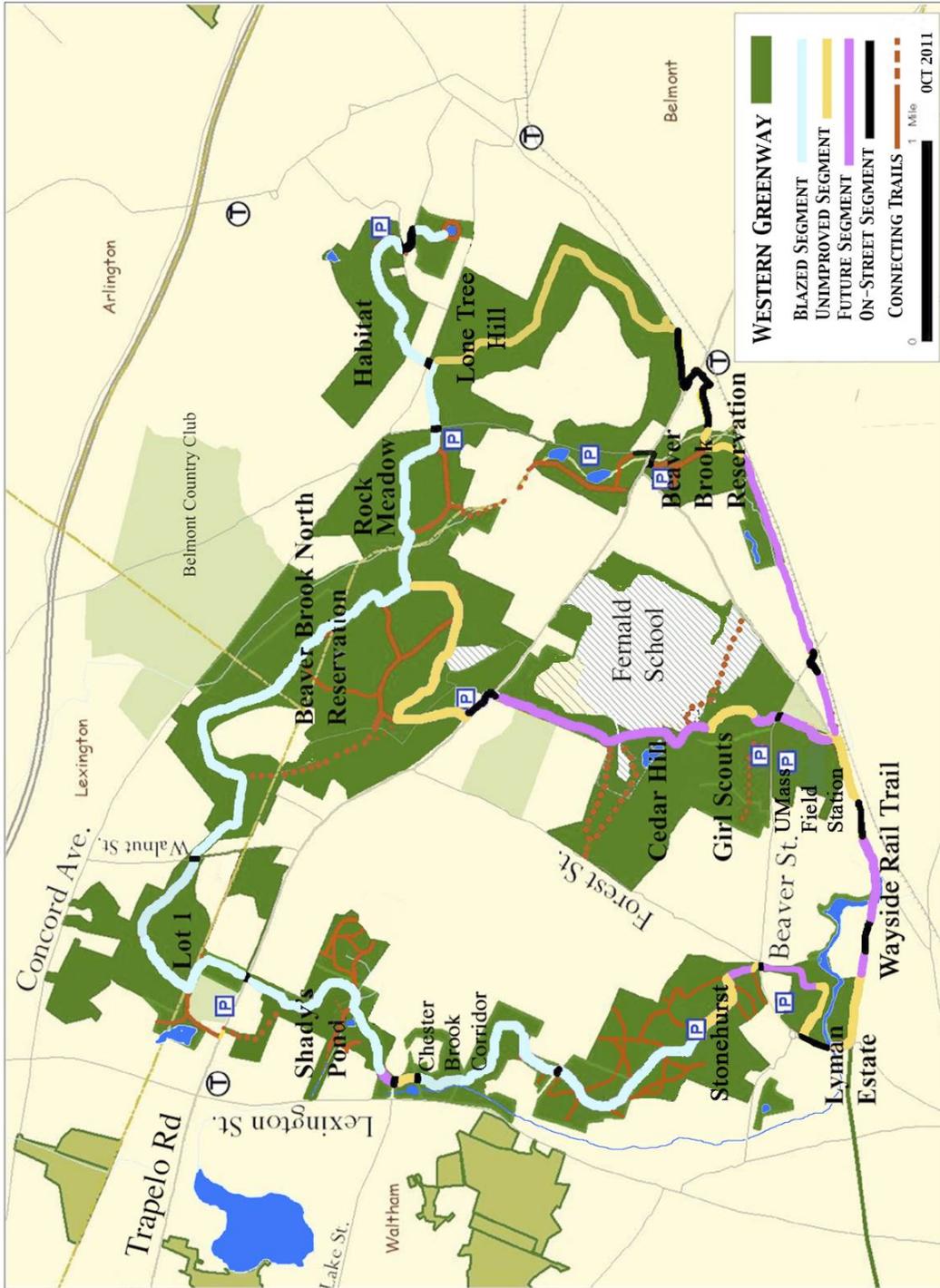
Our Unique Microclimate

The Victory Gardens are located in a bowl-shaped hollow on the north side of Belmont Hill and adjacent to wide open grasslands and woods. We have a microclimate that is often colder than the surrounding residential areas. Especially in spring and fall, frost can nip the Meadow even though in surrounding areas there is no frost.

In spring, peas, fava beans, carrots, spinach, beets and other hardy spring crops can be sowed as soon as the ground can be worked – often mid-March. In mid-May you can begin to set out seedlings of tender warm-weather crops like tomatoes, squash, and peppers, though June 1 is a safer date. *The average last frost date in spring is around May 10.* However, light frosts can and do occur at the Gardens until Memorial Day. *The average first fall frost date is around October 20.*

See the appendix for additional suggested planting times for the Belmont Victory Gardens.

The Western Greenway



Examples of Organic Pest & Disease Controls

BTSD *Bacillus thuringiensis*
var. San Diego

A naturally-occurring strain of soil bacteria. For leaf-eating beetles, including the Colorado potato beetle. Available from organic supply catalogs.

BTK *Bacillus thuringiensis*
var. Kurstaki

Naturally-occurring strain of soil bacteria. Used to control cabbage loopers, hornworms, and most other caterpillar pests. The Garden will be supplying this to Gardeners this year.

Copper sulfate

Controls bacterial and fungal diseases of fruit, vegetable, nut and field crops, including mildew, leaf spots, blights (Late Blight), and apple scab. It is used in combination with lime and water as a protective fungicide, referred to as Bordeaux mixture, for leaf application and seed treatment. The Garden will be supplying this to Gardeners this year.

Neem Oil

Extracted from the Neem tree, native to India. Repels and kills many pest insects. Can discourage some pollinating bees. Use sparingly and when pollinators are not around (dawn, sunset). Available at most garden centers.

Pyrethrin

AKA pyrethrum. Has been used since the 19th century. A derivative of a certain species of chrysanthemum plant grown mostly in Kenya. A nerve poison to most insects, including honeybees, killing them at high concentrations and repelling them at lower concentrations. Use sparingly and when pollinators are not around (dawn, sunset). Available from most garden centers.

Spinosad Chemical derived from a rare type of bacteria. Effective against many caterpillar and beetle pests. Toxic to many beneficial insects. Use sparingly and when pollinators are not around (dawn, sunset). Available from organic supply catalogs.

Free Organic Pest Controls for Gardeners

Pilot Program 2013

Pilot Program

Kathy Martin and Maria Leza are piloting a program this year to purchase bulk organic controls and spraying equipment and distribute them free of charge to the gardeners.

Sourcing and buying organic pest controls can be hard for small-scale gardeners. Some controls are only available through special organic supply catalogs that market primarily to farmers not gardeners. Often they are only available in large quantities, and they are expensive. And they require equipment - a different sprayer for each spray. If we feel daunted by all this, we may feel it's a lot easier to just resort to conventional toxic chemicals - which is against the Garden Rules. Or let our garden become infested, which can jeopardize our neighbors' gardens and the whole garden community.

Interested in taking advantage of these products? Kathy is happy to meet with you to explain, demonstrate, and assist, if needed. Contact Kathy for an appointment.

Products Available

<u>Product</u>	<u>Pest</u>	<u>Crop</u>
Row cover	Cabbage worm	Brassicas
	Potato beetles	Potatoes
	Squash vine borers	Squashes
	Flea beetles	Potatoes
	Leaf miners	Beets, chard, spinach
Sluggo	Slugs and snails	Leafy crops, dahlias
Oxidate	Powdery mildew	Squashes
	Early blight	Tomatoes
	Late blight	Tomatoes and potatoes
Dipel (BTK)	Corn ear worm	Corn
	Cabbage worms	Brassicas
Copper fungicide	Late blight	Tomatoes and potatoes

Beneficial Insects

Beneficial insects will also be purchased and released this year (by the Garden Coordinator):

- Spined soldier bug - Controls Mexican bean beetles and Colorado potato bugs
- Lady beetle - Controls Aphids
- Tricogramma parasitic wasp - Controls corn ear worms, cabbage looper, and squash vine borer

Suggested Planting Dates – Spring & Summer Harvest

- Feb 22: Sow onion, celery and celeriac seeds indoors (11 weeks before last frost).
- March 8: Sow broccoli, kale, cool weather lettuce, escarole, eggplant and thyme seeds indoors (9 weeks before last frost).
- March 15: Sow pepper seeds indoors (keep temp above 78°F for germination). Also sow indoors marigold, parsley, basil and beet seeds. (8 weeks before last frost)
- March 27: Start watching the soil for the first direct planting! As soon as the soil can be worked, it's time to sow peas, fava beans, arugula and radish seeds directly in the garden (up to 6 or 7 weeks before last frost).
- March 29: Sow tomato seeds indoors. Sow cabbage seeds indoors. (6 weeks before last frost).
- April 5: Transplant lettuce, broccoli and kale seedlings into the garden (use row cover if necessary). Sow more cool-weather lettuce seed indoors. (4 weeks before last frost).
- April 19: Sow pumpkin, cucumber and zinnia seeds indoors (3 weeks before last frost).
- April 26: Sow summer squash, watermelon and melon seeds indoors. Sow 2nd planting of peas directly in the garden. (2 weeks before last frost)
- May 3: Sow more cool-weather lettuce, more beets and spinach indoors or directly in the garden. (1 week before last frost).
- May 10: Sow directly in garden seeds for sunflowers, nasturtiums, carrots, parsnips. Plant potatoes, onions sets. Plant 2nd crop of radish. (Week of last frost).
- May 17: Transplant tomatoes to garden. Plant seeds for corn, beans and soy beans directly in garden. (1 week after last frost).
- May 23: Sow 3rd cool-weather lettuce crop indoors or in garden. Transplant peppers, pumpkins, squash, cucumbers and melons to the garden if the soil is well warmed. (2 weeks after last frost).
- June 14: Sow warm-weather lettuce crop (Summer Crisp type) indoors or in garden. Sow 2nd crop of beans, 3rd crop of radish in garden. (5 weeks after last frost).
- July 5: Sow 2nd warm-weather lettuce crop (Summer Crisp type) indoors or in garden (8 weeks after last frost).
- July 23: Sow 3rd warm-weather lettuce crop (Summer Crisp type) indoors o Sow 3rd crop of beans, 4th crop of radish in garden. (11 weeks after last frost).

Suggested Planting Dates – Fall Harvest

Sow seeds for last crop of beans by June 27 (15 weeks before first frost).

Transplant fall broccoli and cabbage seedlings to garden by July 11 (13 weeks before first frost).

Transplant fall collard and bok choy seedlings to garden by July 18 (12 weeks before first frost).

Sow last crop of carrot and beets directly in the garden by July 25 (11 weeks before frost).

You can try to get a fall crop of peas, though the weather typically goes from hot to frost too fast for a crop to mature. Sow pea seeds in the garden by August 1 (10 weeks before frost).

Sow fall spinach seeds indoors or directly in the garden by August 15 (8 weeks before frost).

Sow last fall lettuce seeds indoors or in the garden by August 22 (7 weeks before frost).

Sow last crop of radish seeds directly in the garden by September 5 (5 weeks before frost).

CONTACT US

Garden Commissioner

Mary Trudeau, Office of Community Development, Homer Municipal Building, 2nd floor, 19 Moore Street, Belmont, MA 02478. Phone 617-993-2667. Fax 617-993-2651. Hours: Tuesday and Wednesday 8:00 am - 2:00 pm. Email: mtrudeau@belmont-ma.gov

Garden Coordinator

Kathy Martin (Garden plot 63.1) Phone: 617-484-8969, Email: kathy.bvg@gmail.com Do you have a new number, Kathy?

Volunteer Project Leaders

Bulletin Board	Victoria Thatcher (plot 3)	vthatcher@comcast.net
Front Area, Chips, Compost	Bruce Westgate (plot 34)	bruce.westgate@gmail.com
Invasives	Judy Otto (plot 131)	otto.judy@gmail.com
Irrigation	Gino Volpe (plot 5)	
	Stephen Pinkerton (plot 96)	s.pinkerton@verizon.net
Waiting List	Diane Bissaro (plot 22)	dbissaro@comcast.net
Weeding Assistance	Glenn Gallo (plot 22)	ggallo@seaportgraphics.com
Wheelbarrows	Maria Leza (plot 34)	tak3ma@gmail.com
Fences		
Tomato Seedlings	Amelia	

