

Chickering GROWS

THIS WEEK IN THE GARDEN

April 5, 2021

WHAT'S GROWING

We are excited to GROW with you!

ALL ABOUT SECTION

Knowledge is power!

TIP OF THE WEEK

Let's learn something NEW!

DIY PROJECT

Want to do a gardening craft?



WHAT'S GROWING?

Seedball grow kits are here! We are growing the Ace 55 Tomato, a medium-large, determinate, heirloom tomato that produces delicious, red, thick-walled tomatoes; Genovese Basil, also known as Sweet Basil, which has a clove-like aroma; and Thai Basil, which has a bold licorice flavor. Check your seedballs every day and be sure the soil remains moist. The seeds should germinate in 7-14 days with little sprouts appearing from the seedballs. Do not break up the seedballs, as they are more successful intact. We cannot wait to see photos of your growing gardens on our Spring Padlet!

HAPPY GROWING!

ALL ABOUT: GUERRILLA GARDENING



Imagine an abandoned, barren strip of land near your house. Scraggly weeds and hard packed dirt. You see it every day. The neighbors see it. The people who drive by see it. Do you want to do something about it? You can be a Guerilla Gardener! Guerilla gardeners aim to green up neglected spaces in their local environment. And guess what? Seedballs are one of the best gardening techniques to do this type of growing!

The term “guerilla gardening” began in the early 1970’s in the lower east side of New York City, when local resident Liz Christy was tired of the lack of green space in her neighborhood. She began planting window boxes and tossing seedballs into vacant lots. One day, she and her friends came across a large, abandoned lot, littered with trash. Dubbed the Green Guerrillas, they transformed this derelict private lot into a beautiful garden filled with vegetables, flowers, and trees. This once vacant lot became known as the Bowery Houston Farm and Garden! The space is still cared for today by volunteers and enjoys the protection of the city’s parks department.

A project becomes “guerilla” as soon as it occupies land, typically publicly owned, that the gardener does not have the legal rights to tend. The caveat, of course, is that such land is generally regarded as unwanted or abandoned. While it is illegal to garden on land you do not own, you do not have to break any laws to participate in guerrilla gardening. You can contact city or town officials to find out if there are empty plots of land that could use a few flowers or plants. They will also be able to tell you if there are bans on planting in your area. Guerilla Gardening can be as simple as tossing seedballs into ditches or embellishing tree pits with wildflowers, providing beautification and strengthening community pride. And in the case of edible gardens, providing a source of fresh food. More flowers blooming means more habitat and food for beneficial insects and pollinators.

Thanks to guerrilla gardeners, there are lush plots, budding orchards and beautiful flowers blooming where there were once drab spaces, cinder blocks and dirt piles! The movement is so wide-ranging that the first day of May each year, which is now known as International Sunflower Guerrilla Gardening Day, there are public gatherings around the world in which civilians embark on a day of planting sunflowers in neglected places in their neighborhoods! When you plant seeds in your local community, who knows what may grow? Just remember to double check if it is okay to plant in that space and use seeds that are native to your environment. YOU can help transform neglected spaces into beautiful places!

To learn more about Guerilla Gardening, check out: <http://www.guerrillagardening.org>



TIP OF THE WEEK: COMPANION PLANTING



Companion planting is the practice of growing certain crops near each other and keeping others separated so that they all thrive. It is based mostly on observations passed down from gardener to gardener through the generations, but science can also explain some of the effects of growing certain plants together.

The rule of thumb for companion planting is to build good plant communities when planning your garden. Complementary plants with different requirements, such as sunlight, spacing, and nutrients, are grown together because they are unlikely to compete for resources. What you place where in the garden can have a huge impact on another plant's health and yields. Some vegetables, herbs and flowers benefit the other by improving soil, while others deter pests from one another. Companion plants can also provide support or shade for a fellow variety grown in close proximity.

Probably the best-known example of good companion planting is the Native American "Three Sisters" Garden (corn, pole beans, and squash). The corn offers the beans needed support to grow high. The beans pull nitrogen from the air and bring it to the soil for the benefit of all three crops. As the beans grow through the tangle of squash vines and wind their way up the cornstalks into the sunlight, they hold the sisters close together. The large leaves of the sprawling squash protect the threesome by creating living mulch that shades the soil, keeping it cool and moist and preventing weeds.

Basil and tomatoes are good garden buddies on and off the plate. You can plant them close together without significant reduction in yield, which is helpful in small gardens. The plants share nutrients under the soil surface which helps enhance flavor and growth. The distinctive odor from the aromatic oils in the basil leaves helps repel insects from eating the tomatoes. And during the high heat of summer, basil benefits from a little afternoon shade provided by the taller tomato plants. Basil and tomato plants can be harvested at the same time so that you can have a considerable yield together. Companion planting sets the stage for healthier plants, better growth and bigger harvests!

To learn more, check out the Old Farmer's Almanac companion planting guide and chart:
<https://www.almanac.com/companion-planting-chart-vegetables>



DIY: STEPPING STONES

Stepping stones are ideal for walkways, paths and gardens! They make beautiful and permanent pieces of art, as well as records of little hands and feet! In addition to their aesthetic potential, garden stepping stones help reduce the amount of dirt tracked into your house and absorb the impact of foot traffic on your grass! Make sure to protect your deck, driveway or lawn from the wet concrete by spreading old newspaper or a thick drop cloth over a large work area. Dress in your most beat-up play clothes and wear garden gloves while working with the concrete mix. This is a messy and fun project!

SUPPLIES

- Stepping stone mold*
- Quick-setting concrete**
- spoon or paint mixer
- Nonstick cooking spray
- Old newspaper or drop cloth
- Embellishments
- Bucket

* For the mold, you can use a metal cake or pie pan, plastic ice cream bucket, disposable saucer for a large planter, a pizza box or a cereal box.

**For one stone, purchase an 8-pound box of stepping-stone mix from a craft supply store. For 6+ stones (depending on the size of your mold), purchase a standard 50-pound bag of quick-set concrete at your local hardware store.



EMBELLISHMENT IDEAS

- Stones, shells, mosaic tiles, glass beads
- Vintage game pieces or small toys such as dice, dominos, plastic figurines, or old board game place markers to create a colorful playtime-themed stone
- Colorful soda bottle caps to create a rainbow pattern
- Lettered tiles to spell a name, quote or sentiment
- A yin-yang pattern using small, smooth river rocks in contrasting light and dark colors
- Flowers and dragonflies from pieces of colorful sea glass or glass beads
- Create your own rock “footprints” by placing small round stones above a large oval stone
- Imprinted leaves or old rubber door mat cuts create unique textures
- Colorful stenciled numbers for hopscotch

DIRECTIONS

1. Fill mold with a heaping pile of concrete to determine how much you need to mix.
2. Pour the concrete mix into your bucket.
3. Coat mold with cooking spray to prevent the concrete from sticking after it dries.
4. Mix water into concrete mix, a small amount at a time, until it resembles the consistency of thick cake batter. Refer to the instructions on your concrete mix for further details.
5. Spoon mixed concrete into the mold and spread it smooth. If sturdy enough, carefully lift and tap the stone gently to help smooth the surface and release any hidden air bubbles.
6. Personalize the surface with handprints, names or other embellishments.
7. Once satisfied with your creation, let the stone dry overnight. Once completely dry, carefully pop it out of the mold and let it cure another 5 to 7 days before using it as a stepping-stone.



LET'S CONNECT

POST ON PADLET:

<http://bit.ly/ChickeringGrowsFallPadlet>

<https://padlet.com/chickering/GROWSWinterPadlet>

<https://padlet.com/chickering/GROWSSpringPadlet>

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

<https://www.doverpto.org/chickering-grows>

ANY QUESTIONS? ASK US:

JAMIE GODFREY

CHICKERING GROWS COORDINATOR

jamiedgodfrey@gmail.com

KIM B. HALL

COMMUNITY OUTREACH, DOVER PTO 2020-2021

community@doverpto.org

RENEE GRADY

CHICKERING GROWS TEACHER LIASON

gradyr@doversherborn.org