News from the July Garden Meeting: Garden Registrar Gretel announced the new Garden Treasurer, Angus. Gretel also reported that the waiting list currently has six people on it. August workshops included one on pesto and garlic freezing (given by Robin), one on pickling (given by Emma), and one on dehydrating (given by Gretel). The number of workdays has increased. The idea of a volunteer coordinator to run the workdays was proposed. The coordinator would need to be present at workdays. Fee increases and the budget in general were discussed again. Applications for 2011 will be posted in December and will be discussed further at future meetings. Very preliminary estimates for replacing the water system are $7,000-8,000 for parts and probably several times that for labor. Housing is not allowing us to use Campus Access yet; Campus Access allows us to see who donates money to us so we can thank them.

The Eagle Heights Gardens were a monthly winner in the Edy's contest at www.communitiestakeroot.com. We will be awarded a number of fruit trees in mid-September as a result. Upcoming workdays will be announced and advertised on the garden website: http://www.eagleheightsgardens.org, and a seed saving workshop will be held September 12th (given by Melinda). Please also check the garden website for details about the upcoming September garden meeting and future workshops.

Planting a member of the cucurbit family of gourds, pumpkins, and squash is a great way to fill out your plot during the hottest months of the growing season. These large and vigorous plants are extremely heat tolerant, shade out weeds, and produce fruit that stores well (up to one year if kept cool and dry). Storing and aging pumpkin and winter squash in particular also naturally sweetens the flesh significantly, making for superior pie fillings, baby food, etc. In addition, multiple parts of the plants are edible. Shoots, young leaves, flowers, fruit, and seeds can all be eaten.

To allow for a sufficient growth period, cucurbit seeds should have been planted at the end of May or beginning of June. They require a minimum germination temperature of 55° F. These plants take 12-20 weeks to grow and should be planted in full sun. Planting seeds in 1.5' x 2' mounds covered with black plastic is recommended. Place 2-3 seeds in each of two holes cut into the plastic-covered mound and thin to 1-2 plants per mound once seedlings each have 2-3 leaves. Until seedlings emerge, take care to prevent the surface of the mound from becoming hard and crusty.

Also take care not to over fertilize or apply too much compost. This will encourage the plant to produce more leaves and less fruit. On larger fruiting varieties, prune the blossoms so that only 3-4 fruits per plant are allowed to grow. Most cucurbit plants will produce large yellow blossoms that are quite tasty when battered and fried. The bottle gourd, however, bears attractive white flowers that open at night to be pollinated by nocturnal insects. Gourds, pumpkins, and squash varieties vary greatly in size, color, and skin texture. Do some research and look at some photos to decide which cultivar appeals to you.

Mark the center of each plant so you know where to concentrate your watering efforts and water only until the plant is well-rooted. Watering the leaves runs the risk of developing powdery mildew. Once the plant is established, nature will provide enough moisture for it to thrive. A full-size plant can take up a 4-6' area of space, so plan accordingly. Fencing the plant in will help control its growth. When fruit appears, it is a good idea to elevate it off of damp soil by placing a board, bucket, or other device underneath. This will help prevent rotting. Leave the fruit on the vine as long as possible to allow the skin to harden sufficiently for storage. You'll know the fruit is ready to remove from the plant when tapping it produces a hollow sound and the skin feels hard and can't be scratched with a fingernail. After cutting the fruit from the plant, expose the

underside to sun for 1-2 weeks to complete the ripening process. Store at room temperature for 2-3 months or in a cool, dry place (45-50°F) for 6-12 months.

For more information about cucurbits and gardening in general, refer to previous garden columns available here: http://www.eagleheightsgardens.org/tips/monthlyadvice.shtml.