

News from the August Garden Meeting: Garden Registrar Gretel announced that four people remain on the waiting list for a garden plot. Weedy plots were assessed for the last time for the season on August 29th. Fees were returned to those on the waiting list who did not receive a plot by September 15th. September 15th was also the day when the 40-60 fruit trees and blueberry plants won in the Edy's contest were installed in the gardens.

Also discussed at the meeting was the need to revise applications and raise fees for the next growing season. The committee aims to finalize the revised application by October and a version translated into Chinese and Korean by the end of November. The new application should be ready by December, so that gardeners can apply for the 2010-2011 growing season. As part of the discussion about raising fees, the possibility of paying workers was brought up. Currently, the garden relies heavily on 200-300 work hours put in by volunteers. The increase in plot fees would help cover the cost of paid workers. Putting up multilingual garden signs was also discussed. The signs would list five basic rules of the gardens in English, Chinese, and Korean.

Upcoming fall garden meetings will be held on the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm. Please check the garden website for more details about meetings and other garden events.

October is an ideal time to plant garlic if you plan to renew your garden plot for the 2010-2011 growing season. Garlic requires very little time and care. It also takes up a minimum of space in your garden, making it a very rewarding crop to grow. Many varieties store for a very long time – some up to one year.

Unlike many other plants, garlic is grown from cloves rather than seed. There are a plethora of strains available, including those with white skin, those with purple or pink skin, hard-stemmed varieties, and soft-stemmed strains ideal for braiding. I would recommend starting your own garlic plants from local organic garlic found at the farmers markets in the area. You may also be lucky enough to receive some garlic from a garden neighbor to use as a starter. Last year, I grew some Sicilian and Elephant garlic from the Dane County Farmer's Market and also a Californian variety from a friend in the Eagle Heights Gardens. All did very well. Non-local garlic strains may carry disease and may not be well suited to Wisconsin's growing conditions, so please avoid using them.

At the middle or end of October (before the ground freezes) choose a site in your garden that has good drainage and will be free from standing water through the fall, winter, and spring. Place a single peeled or unpeeled garlic clove in freshly tilled and well drained soil, pointy end of the clove facing up. The pointy top of the garlic clove should be 1-2 inches underground. Space cloves 6-10 inches apart and cover over with soil. Garlic can also be successfully grown in containers.

Garlic plants will begin to emerge in the spring, when the ground has thawed. Water the plants when they appear dry. Cut the flower bud off of the top of the stem when it emerges. The garlic will be ready to harvest 2-3 weeks after removing the flower, usually in July or August. Another sign that garlic is ready is when the leaves of the plant start to turn yellow. Some soft-stemmed varieties will produce an above-ground bulb of garlic as well as one underground. Dig up garlic bulbs carefully to avoid damaging them and hang or lay out in a cool, dry place to sufficiently cure before using (at least two weeks). Be sure to save some cloves from your yearly harvests, so that you can plan the same variety again the following year.

For a roasted garlic recipe (January 2010) and more information about gardening, visit <http://www.eagleheightsgardens.org/tips/monthlyadvice.shtml>.