MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALE MAY 16-17

Don't forget! The annual CCEDC Master Gardener Plant Sale is Friday May 16, 10am-4pm and Saturday, May 17 9am – 2pm, rain or shine. We are offering a wide range of annual flowers, foliage plants, herbs, vegetables, and an exciting collection of perennials. Come early for the best selection!

The greenhouse is packed. Annuals and vegetables are thriving. Perennials are potted. Foliage plant have been propagated from cuttings. Herbs fill the air with tantalizing fragrances.

This year we are offering favorite vegetables and annuals and several new varieties too. We’ve grown a wider selection of culinary herbs and have an excellent selection of traditional and unusual perennials. We’ve researched each plant’s attributes including light needs, height, bloom time and color. Click here for more information and the lists of annuals, vegetables and culinary herbs which will be for sale. Details for perennials will be posted in a few days.

Plant Sale Preview: Tomatoes
By Mary Nisley, Master Gardener Volunteer

Again this year, we will have a selection of tomatoes resistant to Late Blight. Late blight was first seen in the Hudson Valley in 2009. In 2012 Late Blight appeared in late July, spreading naturally up from the south. In 2013 it was discovered in the area in August, but fortunately most gardens were not affected.
The plant sale will carry three late blight resistant varieties: Defiant, producing 6-8 oz. red slicing tomatoes on determinate plants; Mountain Magic, producing big trusses of 2 oz., sweet salad tomatoes on indeterminate plants; and Jasper, producing quarter-ounce, chewy, deep red cherry tomatoes on an indeterminate plant.

We will also offer a selection of heirloom and hybrid tomatoes, ranging in size from cherry to beefsteak. See our list of varieties at ccedutchess.org/gardening/community-horticulture

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**Growing Eggplant**

*By Mary Nisley, Master Gardener Volunteer*

Eggplant is an important part of many Mediterranean and Asian cuisines. This year the Master Gardener plant sale is featuring two varieties: Amadeo, a deep purple-black, globular eggplant ideal for Mediterranean recipes and ‘Pingtung Long’ - a long, slender, lavender eggplant from Taiwan. Both are high yielding bitter-free varieties.

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family: a cousin to tomatoes, peppers, and tomatillos. Although its cousins are native to the Americas, eggplant is native to the south-east Asia region from India to China.

Eggplant grows well in the Hudson Valley if given the right conditions. Most important, eggplant is a heat lover. Cool conditions weaken the plants and frost will kill them. Eggplants should not be set into local gardens until the last week of May. Warm the soil before planting by covering it with black plastic in early May.

Small fruited varieties also do well in containers. Pingtung Long is a good choice for container growing, but please, only one plant per pot.

Space eggplant transplants 18-24” apart in the garden. When transplanting, pinch off any flowers or young fruit. This encourages the young plant to develop a strong root system. Although the first fruit will be later, the plant will grow much larger and overall yield will be higher. The stronger plant will be able to produce fruit despite attack by flea beetles.

Flea beetles are a common and very damaging pest of eggplants. Flea beetles are tiny, about the size of a period, and black. They are named after fleas because they jump when a plant is brushed. You can recognize flea beetle damage by the small round holes they chew through the leaves. A heavy infestation of flea beetles can kill a small transplant. Larger plants can survive and outgrow the damage. The picture shows a Pingtung Long eggplant growing in the Edible Landscape at the Farm & Home Center in Sept. 2010. Look closely and you’ll see the pinholes left in the leaves by flea beetles.
If flea beetles have destroyed previous plantings of eggplants, use a very light-weight insect barrier floating row cover to protect the plants. Cover at transplanting and remove the covers when the plants start to flower. The edges of the row cover should be held snug against the ground. Use rocks, boards, or soda bottles half filled with sand. Fold pleats along the sides of the row cover so the plants have slack to grow.

Eggplants may need support while fruiting. Cage the plant with a wire ‘tomato cage’ or bracket it with a pair of bamboo stakes.

Harvest your eggplants when the skin is glossy and shiny. It is okay to harvest on the small side as young fruit tastes great and harvest stimulates production of additional fruit. Use pruners to cut through the stem about 1” from the fruit. Then enjoy the fruits of your labor – the closer to harvest, the better the flavor.

**Frost Reminder**
In 2013 our last frost was May 14. Many gardeners lost peppers and tomatoes to the freeze. With this year’s cool weather I’m expecting another late frost. Don’t be caught off-guard. If you plant early be prepared to cover heat loving plants. Better yet, don’t plant tomatoes, peppers, beans, eggplants, cucumbers and squashes until late May.


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**GARDEN: LET’S GO MEDITERRANEAN**
*By Anthula Natsoulas, Master Gardener Volunteer*

If I were to choose one herb to call a staple in Greek kitchens, it would have to be parsley. Parsley is used in casseroles, salads, and as a garnish. Its flavor easily blends with other herbs and, best of all; it is fairly easy to grow in home gardens.

There are two basic varieties of parsley: flat leaf, also known as Italian parsley, and curly parsley. The flat leaf parsley is more flavorful and is prevalently used in Mediterranean cooking. The curly parsley is more attractive and often used as a garnish. Either variety can be grown in containers or planted in the ground.

Parsley is of the *Umbelliferae* or carrot family and is native to the Mediterranean region. Italian parsley or *Petroselinum crispum* var. *neapolitanum* will grow to an adult height of 12 inches; *Petroselinum crispum* or curly parsley will grow to a height of 10 inches. Both have a spread of about 12 inches. The foliage is a rich green and feathery. Varieties of the flat leaf parsley include a dark green and a gigante; there are double and triple curled and dwarf varieties of the curly parsley. When deciding which to plant, select the ones that you are most likely to use; one flat-leafed and one curly leafed provide a good balance.
Parsley plants may be started from seed. Read packet instructions for specific recommendations such as presoaking the seeds to speed up germination. The seeds should be started indoors, covered with soil to a depth of ¼ inch, and allowed to germinate in the dark. The plants will germinate in seven to 21 days and it will be between 14 and 18 days more before the seedlings will be ready for potting or transplanting in the ground. Buying parsley plants from a reliable nursery is an excellent alternative. In either case, the plants can be put in the ground after they have been hardened and as soon as all danger of frost is gone.

Parsley is a biennial plant and like most biennials it produces lots of leafy growth its first year, stores energy in its roots for the winter, and blooms to produce seed its second year. As a Mediterranean native, parsley generally does not survive Dutchess County winters although it might do so if planted in a protected location. It is more likely to die off during the winter and new plants will need to be replanted the following year. The flat leaf varieties are more vigorous growers and can better withstand early frost.

To insure a continuous supply of the herb, it is a good idea to do a second planting of parsley plants about a month or so after first planting. When harvesting for kitchen use, cut stems at the base to allow for regrowth.

Parsley grows well in containers. It does very nicely in a small clay pot on a sunny windowsill or in a larger container outside the kitchen door where it is easily accessible for harvest. If using larger pots, plastic containers may be the better choice since they are lighter than clay and easier to move around.

Parsley can be planted in the ground alone or as part of a larger herb garden. It needs rich, evenly moist, well drained soil and can be planted in full sun or partial shade. In dry weather, the plants should be watered and not be allowed to dry out. Extra care should be taken with any potted plants since they can dry out sooner than those in the ground. Both in the pots and in the ground, parsley can benefit from applied fertilization.

As an integral part of the Greek cuisine, chopped parsley is added to many vegetable and meat dishes. During the summer season when vegetable gardens are brimming, a Greek salad will consist of fresh tomatoes and cucumbers, some green pepper and onion and chopped parsley. Crumbled feta, olives and an oil and vinegar dressing complete the dish. Another popular salad is one made with eggplant. In Greece in the summer you will find various “village” versions. Here is one I have developed over the years and that you can further modify to taste.

**ROASTED EGGPLANT SALAD**

2 medium eggplants
2 red peppers (or green or a combination)
¼ cup chopped red onion (according to taste)
¼ cup chopped flat leaf parsley (more or less)

1 large or 2 small tomatoes, diced (or more)
1 or 2 garlic cloves, finely minced
olive oil, red wine vinegar, salt & pepper to taste
Preheat broiler. Cover a broiler pan with aluminum foil and/or spray with cooking oil. Broil eggplant and red peppers until the outside skins of the vegetables become blackened, turning regularly so that all sides are blackened. The eggplants will become soft. Remove from the broiler and place each of the vegetables in a paper bag. This makes the skinning process easier. When cool, remove from bag and peel the skin from the peppers and eggplant. It should come off easily as long as they have been sufficiently blackened. Chop and/or dice the peppers and eggplants and put into a bowl. Better yet, the vegetables can be grilled on a gas or charcoal grill.

While the veggies are broiling, dice the tomato. Place in a colander and sprinkle some salt on the diced pieces. Allow to sit in a colander for 15 to 20 minutes so that excess water drains off. Gently blot dry the diced pieces with a paper towel.

Combine red peppers, eggplant, tomato, chopped onion, parsley and garlic in a bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste. Add olive oil and vinegar as desired. It is essential to use olive oil. Taste as you go along.

**A Horticultural Marriage**

*By Mary Grosskopf, Master Gardener Volunteer*

Second in a series: Gardening with Little Ones

(Click here the first in the series: Companion Planting)

A few short years after their wedding found the young couple with the newest subdivisions to their lives: babies! How much amusement these little creatures brought to the quiet, winter months! While the newborns slept, the young couple spent their time thinking about plans for the coming spring in the garden. They had so much work to do! So many seed catalogs to order from! They could almost taste the early spring salads that hadn’t even been planted! But, alas, while sleeping babies were delightful they didn’t always sleep, especially, it seemed when there was work outside to be done. The long, luxurious days of uninterrupted gardening from sun up to sun down on the weekends soon came to a sudden and abrupt end. The young couple gave a joint and collective sigh: several, actually. How were these new parents going to grow their vegetables and pick the berries if they were busy tending their growing family? How would they feed their young with home grown produce if they couldn’t get into the garden to work for hours on end?

So, the still young couple decided to put the little ones in a stroller and go for a walk to talk the situation over. While they walked and walked, an amazing thing happened. The babies, filled with fresh air and sunshine, fell asleep! Oh joy! If only they could get back to the house quickly, they could garden together, pick the berries and maybe some greens for a salad! And so it went all summer long. Long days were divided into small hours and happily snatched minutes while each took turns keeping children occupied while the other tended the gardens. Together the young parents learned that if they stuck together...
and worked together they could still have their dreams. Things would just take a bit longer to get done in the garden, it seemed.

Overnight, walking toddlers grew from the little baby bodies and the growing family’s completely fenced in yard faced another challenge the following season; not from the roving deer who could no longer destroy their crops but rather in the form of little creatures tumbling around the yard excited by all the pretty plants and growing flowers. Free range chickens and grass fed cattle seemed to be the emerging lingo of the farm set, but these folks must not have little toddlers the young parents concluded! Everyone seemed to think that running amok created high quality meat and happy farm animals, but this free love agricultural attitude certainly didn’t help the sturdy little rows of lettuce that wanted to be left alone to grow in peace while happy little human feet traipsed through them!

Now entering their 4th season as companion planters, the slightly older and much wiser couple wondered how they were going to garden while chasing little bodies around the yard. So, they secured their now mobile toddlers into the trusty stroller and pushed their way around the block with even more intensity to discuss the newest dilemma. “Do you see how fast they’re moving?” said she, amazed that children grew so quickly “I know” said he as he remembered the tromping of the rhubarb just the previous day. “What are we going to do?” she asked, wonderingly.

“They’re so cute and too little to know better. We can’t just treat them like structural pests in the home! They’re not just deer and other destructive wildlife we’ve encountered, we can’t just fence them in…..” Her thoughts completed themselves as her face dissolved into a smile as she realized that container gardening was the real answer. The next day was a glorious day for the young family, filled with sunshine and a backyard full of new play yard fencing complete with a little sun umbrella, gardening toys and a cooler for Mom and Dad. “It’s perfect!” they exclaimed as they joined their babies in the newest little fenced in garden in the middle of their backyard, exhausted from their efforts. “Cheers, Darling!” they exclaimed as they toasted each other before nodding off to sleep while the children happily played.

MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALE GIFT CERTIFICATES
A great gift!!

Gift certificates are now available for our Master Gardener Plant Sale on May 16 & 17, 2014. Our plant sale features a wonderful selection of healthy annuals (flowering and foliage), perennials, vegetables and herbs. All plants are grown by our Master Gardener volunteers. We offer personal service! Volunteers will be available during the plant sale to answer gardening questions, to help make plant selections and to bring plants to cars if needed.

These certificates are a welcome gift for any gardener! Certificates may be purchased for any amount and are not redeemable for cash. We depend on the continued success of the plant sale to continue our educational programming. Your support is needed and greatly appreciated! Contact Nancy Halas at 845-677-8223 x115 or nh26@cornell.edu

Announcing Master Gardener Training 2014

Master Gardener volunteer training is held in EVEN numbered years, September through December. The next scheduled training will take place beginning September 5. Applications are being accepted at this time. Click here for more information.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 3, 10am – 4pm, Hudson Valley Garden Fair 2014 Montgomery Place, 25 Gardeners Way, Red hook, NY, presented by the Hudson Valley Garden Association. CCEDC Master Gardener volunteers will answer your gardening questions and discuss home composting. Tickets go on sale April 1, $9 in advance, $12 day of fair. For more information, visit www.hvgardenfair.com

Saturday May 3, 10 am, Stanfordville Free Library, 14 Creamery Road, Stanfordville, NY, “Adding Herbs to Your Garden or Patio” by Master Gardener volunteer Chris Ferrero. For more information visit www.stanfordlibrary.org

Friday May 9, 11 am, Winnakee Educational Arboretum Van Dam Road ribbon cutting ceremony, followed by a guided trail walk. Park behind Hyde Park Florist on Rt. 9. For more information email info@winnakeeland.org or call 845-876-4213.

Saturday May 10, 10 am, Stanfordville Free Library, 14 Creamery Road, Stanfordville, NY, “Composting /Vermicomposting” by Master Gardener volunteer Cathy Lane. For more information visit www.stanfordlibrary.org

Saturday, May 10, 9am – 1 pm, the Verplanck Garden Club Pre-Mother’s Day Plant Sale at Fishkill Town Hall, 807 Route 52, Fishkill, New York. For Mother's Day gift giving: hanging baskets, herbs, geraniums, and other plants for sale; free children's workshops to make a gift for their mothers; home grown perennials from the gardens of our members; many sunny gardens annuals; and a hanging basket raffle. Refreshments will be available. We will have a Master Gardener table set up for your questions. Guests and new members are always welcome to attend our meetings the 2nd Tuesday of each month. To contact VGC, e-mail verplanckgardenclub@yahoo.com or visit us during the plant sale.

Tuesday, May 27, 7 – 8:30 pm, Staatsburg Library Grow Like a Pro series, “Basic Garden Design” by Master Gardener volunteer Michelle Keeley. 70 Old Post Road, Staatsburg, NY. For more information visit www.staatsburglibrary.org

Sunday, June 1, 2:00, The Beatrix Farrand Garden Association, 8th Annual Bellefield Design Lecture “Sitting Pretty: An Illustrated History of the Garden Seat” by John Danzer of Munder-Skiles, Henry A. Wallace Center at FDR site. Reception, Heirloom Plant Sale and Boutique to follow in the Garden at Bellefield Tickets $40 ($35 members), for more information visit beatrixfarrandgardenhydepark.org

Friday, June 20, 6-8pm, Boscobel Lecture Series, Some of My Favorite Gardens and Why, by Page Dickey, Author, Designer & Gardener at Boscobel, 1601 New York 9D, Garrison, NY, followed by a wine & cheese reception in the Carriage House. Tickets $20, Boscobel members free. For more information go to www.boscobel.org.

Sunday, June 22, Frederick W. Vanderbilt Garden Association, Vanderbilt Tea in the Gardens of the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site on Route 9 in Hyde Park, featuring elegantly served period teas, musical entertainment, garden tours, and catered refreshments. Advance tickets will be sold during April and May through www.vanderbiltgarden.org and information can be obtained by e-mailing info@vanderbiltgarden.org. This is an all-volunteer, not-for-profit organization.
Monday, June 23, 7-9pm, CCEDC at the Farm & Home Center, Millbrook, NY, “Poultry Health and Disease” by Dr. Jarra Jagne of Cornell University will teach how to keep your chickens healthy and answer questions on health problems and diseases. For more information go to ccedutchess.org or call Nancy Halas at 845-677-8223 ext 115.

Check out [http://www.hvgardencalendar.com](http://www.hvgardencalendar.com) for more events

**PLANT ID QUIZ**

Last month these buds were just peeking out. Within a week they were in full bloom, and then beautiful foliage emerged. It is *Adonis amurensis*, of the Ranunculaceae Family. Native to Asia, it is a delightful addition to a perennial or rock garden.

This donated perennial was unlabeled. Its stems from last year are thick which hints it will be quite tall. Do you know what it is?

**Need Soil pH Testing? Need Lawn or Plant Diagnosis? Have any gardening questions?**

The Horticulture Hotline, (845) 677-5067 will be open Wednesday 9-noon starting April 2. Samples for identification or diagnosis can be submitted all year long. Visit our [Horticulture Diagnostic Lab website](http://horticulture.cornell.edu) for reliable resources and information on our services.

Learn more about CCEDC and its activities. Subscribe to our new monthly E-newsletter. Text CCEDC to 22828 to get started, or email Nina Doyle at nm62@cornell.edu

HELP SPREAD THE DIRT! Please forward a copy to anyone you think might be interested. To be added or removed from our e-mail list, or submit upcoming gardening events, contact Nancy Halas at nh26@cornell.edu, www.ccedutchess.org.

Websites mentioned in Dutchess Dirt are provided as a courtesy to our readers. Mention of these websites does not imply endorsement by Cornell University, Cornell Cooperative Extension or by the author.

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