



Succeeding with Improving Gardener Security

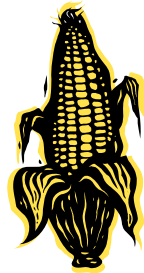
The new board of directors is working diligently to improve gardener security as one element of the, "Improving the Gardener Experience" program. Some of the innovative, yet simple steps taken are:

1. Requesting more police presence and making sure crimes are reported such that police management sees the numbers, and support the need for more police presence. So far the police have responded favorably with more car patrols, mounted police units, and bicycle patrols.
2. Strengthening defenses, like gates, locks, and fences to offset the park's reputation as an "easy target". Program elements include: FGS building fences and gates for gardeners, strengthening them where issues arise, and keeping the vacant gardens better protected and managed.
3. Making the park less attractive to after-dark users. Proactive measures already taken include eliminating water availability when the park is closed, and reducing the number of places to hide.
4. Ensuring the park is "policeable". This includes maintaining open sight-lines, reasonable tree height, and enforcing planting rules so law enforcement can do their jobs effectively.
5. Eliminating the gardeners who are engaged in criminal activities, or those who cannot follow guidelines and regulations.



Vegetable Harvesting Tips

Now that summer is here, it is time to harvest spring crops and plan for summer garden harvesting. Spring crops that are ripe for harvesting now include lettuce, spinach, peas, strawberries, beets, carrots, and broccoli.



All crops are heavily dependant on proper watering, but watering is even more important just before and during the harvest. Failure to provide proper water can make lettuce and spinach bitter, or cause dry strawberries. Broccoli, carrots, or beets will be more vulnerable to pest infestation if not properly hydrated.

Other crops require regular harvesting to prolong fruit production. Strawberries and peas will keep producing for an extra week or so if fruits are promptly picked upon maturity. If fruits are left for too long, the plant may stop production. Lettuce, spinach, and broccoli, are cool-weather plants, and will to seed as the weather becomes too hot. Planting these in somewhat shady areas will prolong the harvest, but be sure to harvest them before they begin to seed.



Enjoy!

Fens Fest Planning

As the gardening season moves into full swing it is time to start planning for FensFest, the annual garden festival will be held on September 20, 2008, with a rain-date of September 21.

This year the FGS received a grant from the Mission Hill/Fenway Neighborhood Trust, for \$3,000 to fully fund FensFest. This is about double the amount usually budgeted for the annual garden festival, so this year will be extra special.

Three FensFest planning meetings are scheduled, each at 10AM by the flag pole. Please join us for some or all of these meetings!

- June 29 Sunday [already took place]
- July 26 Saturday
- August 23 Saturday.

During the planning meetings we will discuss garden judging, food, drinks, equipment rental, music, location, prizes, awards, and more.

We look forward to seeing you!

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Putting the Community Back Into Community Gardening

Several years ago the Victory Gardens began looking a bit shabby. Morale was low, and so was the pool of helpful volunteers.

Under the last board's leadership, several solutions were implemented that turned this trend around, such as all park cleanup days, which have expanded the labor pool, beautified the gardens, and built garden pride. As a city park, it is vital that we maintain a beautiful, and compliant park environment so that the tradition of private plots that are available to residents of Boston can continue.

The new board urges gardeners to join committees. On June 1 several people joined the compost committee to turn one of the compost piles. Many people simply volunteered in advance. Others gave in to a last minute recruitment push to increase the number of people helping with the project. During just 3 hours turning the compost the group discussed composting methods, transplantation and weeding problems, and separating perennials. There were 11 attendees over the course of the scheduled "turn". The next compost turn will be on Sunday July 27 between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. Getting an early start will help guard against the expected heat.

Please feel free to show up for some good "dirty" fun!



Other committees that need volunteers include Security, Fens-Fest, Area Directors, and of course the Compost Committee. Anyone interested in committee membership can email Victoria Stock: victoria@notelevision.com

Clean-up Day Another Success

Despite soaring temperatures and humidity, 45 volunteers attended and accomplished a tremendous amount. In addition to the always needed trash pick up, weeding and composting, special projects such as pipe protection, herb garden path light-blocking and mulching, soil removal from the Muddy River side of the road and placement in trenches alongside the center road were all accomplished.

All-park clean-up volunteer efforts are very important to Victory Gardens. In addition to keeping our environment

cleaned up and pleasant for gardening, the results of our efforts are a tangible

gardener contribution to the Parks Department, the city and our neighbors.

Such FGS gardener contributions are particularly high priority now as we work to improve our relations with the Parks Department, the support of which we need for critical and costly capital improvement projects like replacing our failing perimeter fencing, and irrigation system.

This clean-up day incorporated a new approach. Specifically, an advance write up of each of the tasks that needed to

be accomplished so volunteers could self-select where they wanted to contribute. Volunteers seemed to like it and comments are welcome.

Next All-Park Clean-Up Days:
 —> **Sunday, August 10th**
 —> **Saturday, October 11**

Please note that calendar-challenged Joe Axelrod scheduled the last clean-up day for a non-existent Saturday, October 12th. If you signed up for the October 12th date thinking it was Sunday and cannot do it on Saturday, please re-schedule for Sunday, August 10th.

All clean-up days start at 9 a.m.

Plant Nursery

Each summer we find that our perennials have multiplied, leaving garden beds crowded. As you separate or thin your flowering plants, be sure to think of your fellow gardener!

In addition to simply giving extra plants to your friends or neighbors, please consider planting some extras in the plant nursery. The plant nursery is a wonderful place to find free annuals and perennials.

Some coveted plants that would go quickly from the plant nursery include peonies, forsythia, spring bulbs such as daffodils, daisies, flox, foxglove, lupine, chrysanthemum, herbs like sage, or chives, and even extra veggie plants like tomato, eggplant, cabbage, or peppers.

Please avoid planting invasive or pervasive plants such as purple loosestrife, or day lilies, as they could invade the nursery. Your fellow gardeners will thank you!

Sponsor the Newsletter

Gardeners are loyal customers and tell their friends.

A sponsor of the Garden Society will enjoy a steady stream of business from gardeners, their friends, and their families.

It does not matter what type of business; hardware and supply store, florist, nursery, restaurant, clothing store, grocery store, and more - this highly targeted group of gardeners will know your business as a sponsor, and a place they can feel confident spending money locally, while supporting the Victory Gardens.

We encourage local businesses and organizations, to contact us regarding sponsorship.

If you are a gardener and know a local business owner or staff, please sign them up!



STAND OUT IN THE COMMUNITY WITH YOUR AD HERE

Basic Business Program Participation

Offer FGS members with an ID 10% [or other fixed %] off of purchases at your establishment. Receive a printed mention in each newsletter regarding the discount. The newsletter is read cover to cover by more than 300 targeted gardening members.

Sponsoring Business Program Participation

Offer members with an ID 10% [or other fixed %] off of purchases plus sponsor the newsletter for \$100 per issue [published quarterly] and receive a 1/4 page ad for your business. The newsletter is read cover to cover by more than 300 targeted gardening members.

Ultimate Business Program Participation

Offer members with an ID 10% [or other fixed %] off of purchases plus sponsor the newsletter for \$100 per issue [published quarterly] and receive a 1/4 page ad for your business. The newsletter is read cover to cover by more than 300 targeted gardening members. Plus, make a tax deductible contribution to the FGS Endowment Fund, or Annual Fund, of \$1,000 or more to help to secure the future of the Victory Gardens.

Become a Business Sponsor of the Victory Gardens

By tapping into a highly targeted group of over 300 City of Boston residents that actively garden in the neighborhood, you can harness the Garden Society's collective purchase power.

All members of the FGS receive the Victory Garden Newsletter, and all members receive an ID card.



IRRIGATION IRRITATION

The board is experimenting with a new way of managing the irrigation system to try to reduce non-gardener water use. Boston City plumbers installed a programmable computer timer and valve that allows the FGS to automatically turn the system on and off. **The system has been set initially, to make water available starting at 6:30 a.m. and stopping 9:30 p.m.**

What's the point? You can tell by what's left behind, that our faucets are being used after gardeners have gone home at night.

Sometimes the faucets are left on or the pipe is broken and runs for hours in the dark wasting enormous amounts of water.

This program hopes to stop the illicit use and leaks reducing wastage and discouraging people being in the park after dark. The park officially closes at dusk.

What's the experiment? One of the issues we are assessing is whether after-dark users will leave the faucets open when they cannot get water from them. We are checking every morning when the system turns on to see how many running faucets there are, so feel free to volunteer for a.m. water duty.

So far there haven't been many and, of course, even when we kept the system on all night sometimes after-dark users would leave the faucets open.



As we are honing the computer programming, we are trying to minimize or even eliminate the time the new controller uses to reset itself interrupting water flow.

When we started, there were three 5 minute interruptions per day at 10:30 a.m., 2:35 p.m. and 6:40 p.m.

Part of the news here links to news in other parts of this newsletter in 2 ways: 1) as another example of ways the city helps us - it gave us the programmable controller and valve as well as a half day's worth of 2 plumbers to graft our new electronic marvel onto to our creaky irrigation system's old pipes; and 2) we are trying to make the park less attractive to illicit use at night as part of our integrated security program.

By Mike Prokosch, a Gardener in Plots Y29-30

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is proposing to dredge the Muddy River over the next three to ten years. This "Muddy River Restoration Project," will have a major impact on our gardens and surroundings. We should look carefully at the plans; there may be better alternatives.

From flood control project to garden and park

In 1879 Frederick Law Olmsted submitted a plan to replace, "the filthiest marsh and mud flats to be found anywhere in Massachusetts" -- Boston's Back Bay. Olmsted proposed a meandering salt marsh leading to the tidal Charles River. Storm sewers would cut off the sources of pollution -- Muddy River and Stony Brook -- and take them directly into the Charles. "Sedgy" vegetation on the low banks would absorb Stony Brook overflow during heavy rains.

Olmsted's marsh was built, but changes through the 1900s cut down its flood-absorbing capacity. The Charles River Dam, completed in 1908, turned Olmsted's salt marsh into a slow-moving fresh water stream with grassy banks, fed by the Muddy River. Over objections from Olmsted's landscape firm, more marsh was filled including the Victory Garden area in 1910-1911 and the Rose Garden in 1931-33. "Other flow restrictions have been created over the years as public agencies have filled sections of the river and installed pipes or culverts that restrict flow during major storms," said one engineering journal. The river gradually filled with road sand, toxins, and runoff, while its culverts clogged with trash.

Then came a flood. A hundred-year storm in 1996 dumped a foot of rain on Boston over a two day period. Water filled the Kenmore Square subway stop, costing millions of dollars and bringing in the Army Corps of Engineers to design a remedy. The Restoration Project, which the Corps is revealing in stages, would "daylight" the river (replacing the culvert under Brookline Avenue with an open river), dredge it, and eradicate the *Phragmites* reeds that line Muddy's banks.

A closer look at the Restoration Project

"Dredging" means tearing up the river bed, mixing it with river water, and pouring the slurry on the banks to dry. The water runs back into the river; the solids get trucked out of state. Dredging will stir up lead, arsenic, PCBs, DDT, and pesticides that are now capped by river soil and will be put back into the water.

Removing the river bed means displacing or killing fish, frogs, several species of turtles, and other wildlife. Excavation will, "disrupt root systems of some adjacent trees and shrubs, possibly killing them."



Roots will be further damaged by the trucks and heavy equipment compacting the banks along the river. We can expect to lose much of the tree cover along the river, and it will be difficult to grow new trees in compacted soil.

With the trees will go the birds. Bird populations in Massachusetts are already shrinking by half every 30 years, due partly to toxic exposure and loss of habitat. The Muddy River is one of their best remaining homes. The dredging is scheduled for May/June through October, when birds are breeding and raising young, and dredging will continue for several years. The noise (one eighteen-wheel truck leaving each staging area every hour), dust, and the chemicals used in the staging area may get rid of any birds that survive their loss of habitat.

Besides losing birds and other wildlife, our gardens will lose some of the tree cover that screens us from the busy roads around the Fenway. Expect more noise, dust, and fumes, less peace and quiet.

Dredging is scheduled to start in 2010 and continue for some years. If the environment around our gardens is not permanently changed, it will certainly take a long time to recover. All that time the river will be silting back up and being re-polluted as storm drains and runoff dump new heavy metals and pesticides into the river.

That's how the Muddy River became clogged and poisoned in the first place. Its silt and toxins come from city streets and storm sewers that overflow when it rains. Those could be buffered or diverted, but that kind of maintenance takes money, and there's no money for it in the Army Corps' plan. Dredging alleviates the problem of flooding but doesn't solve it. In a few decades they'll have to rip up the river again.

The Army Corps of Engineers also hopes to “eradicate 6.2 acres of *Phragmites* present in the Riverway and Fens by dredging or cutting with concurrent application of a glyphosate herbicide.” *Phragmites* is a tough plant, so “follow-up application will be required for several years.” The US/EPA’s Material Safety Data Sheet calls glyphosate “Toxic to aquatic organisms” with potential “long-term adverse effects in the aquatic environment” and warns, “Do not allow material to enter drains or water courses. Avoid contaminating sewers and waterways with this material.” Glyphosate is not species specific; it kills most types of plants and persists in soil with a half-life of 47 to 174 days, and in water from 70 to 84 days. Will it infiltrate the water table by our gardens over the “several growing seasons” the Corps envisions? Will it harm the migratory and nesting birds that live in the reeds? Will we experience “symptoms of exposure” from glyphosate application including “eye irritation, burning eyes, blurred vision, skin rashes, burning or itchy skin, nausea, sore throat, asthma and difficulty breathing, headache, lethargy, nose bleeds, and dizziness,” not to mention “increased risks of the cancer non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma, miscarriages,” and more?



and sewage out of rivers. The Muddy River has evolved over 120 years into a working wetland that may be capturing urban toxins and keeping them from spreading into the Charles River and Boston Harbor. That’s worth finding out. If so, foot patrols may be a better way to manage crime and sex among the *Phragmites* than trying to remove the reeds.

Alternatives to dredging

Does Muddy River need to be dredged at all? Dredging is meant to prevent future floods. However, ‘daylighting’ the river under Brookline Avenue will remove the choke point where the subway flooded in 1996. Once that is done and the storm drains into that section diverted, regular maintenance and anti-erosion work on the river’s banks would help keep new sediments out of the river. That will take money, but that money may be better spent than on dredging the river and watching it fill up again.

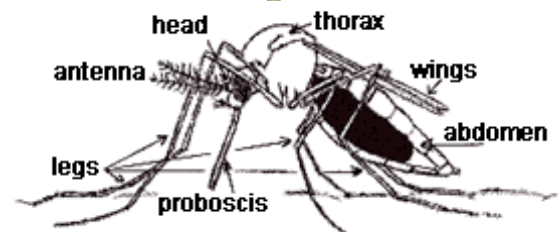
For a more in-depth critique of the Muddy River Restoration Project, which provided sources for this article, see Z. Zsido’s “Environmental Values Assessment Report On the Muddy River Restoration Project”

In Europe, *Phragmites* is valued for filtering heavy metals

CITATIONS AND REFERENCES FOR MUDDY RIVER ARTICLE:

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Pond Mosquito Control



Garden ponds are beautiful, but can be a prime source for mosquito breeding. To keep your garden and pond free of mosquito infestation, be sure to implement some natural mosquito controls within your pond!

1. Mosquitoes breed in shady water so keep watery areas shaded by trees or tall plants to a minimum.
2. Pond animals, if chosen carefully, will eat mosquito larvae. These include frog tadpoles, goldfish, minnows, and guppies. As an added bonus, some garden frogs and toads will eat slugs.
3. Be sure to remove excess organic matter from your pond. This decomposing matter will cause your pond water to “foul” producing the kind of microorganisms that mosquitoes LOVE to eat. This foul stagnant water may also kill your pond fish.
4. If you have a clear water bird bath, be sure to clean it on a regular basis to prevent algae buildup that can lead to mosquito breeding.

Compliance—That Dirty Word



FGS conducts regular inspections that assess garden condition against the official Rules and Regulations. The board recently completed the spring inspection and found that most gardeners are in compliance, and that in areas being singled out by the Parks Department for special attention, particularly tree heights, we are hovering in the 90% compliance rate range. That

means there are about 20 gardeners out there with trees that can be shaped to have lower profiles/better sight lines who still haven't done what they need to do, and we are following up with them regularly to bring them into compliance.

Speaking of sightlines, this spring has been magnificent for roses. Unfortunately the many multiflora roses are going nuts giving the FGS a lot of sightline issues into gardens as well as down paths. *Rosa multiflora* is grown as an ornamental plant, and is also used as a rootstock for grafted ornamental rose cultivars. The latter was how our multifloras originally found their way into The Fens. In eastern North America, Multiflora Rose is now generally considered an invasive species ... Some places classify Multiflora roses as a "noxious weed." There has been a program in the Victory Gardens to remove these plants.

Be that as it may, many gardeners still have them – their talon-like thorns make for good security. Now members need to control their height!



Why should the FGS be so interested in compliance with the Guidelines and Regulations? There are 3 over-riding issues: 1) the City (police, Mayor's Office, Parks Department) view these rules as our agreement with them as to how we garden, 2) some previous FGS administration committed us to these Guidelines and Regulations, and we haven't the power to change them without Parks Department approval which they aren't giving, and 3) some of the Guidelines and Regulations, particularly those that pertain to safety and security make very good sense.

Specific questions and answers about this situation follow:

Why are we trying to increase compliance with our Guidelines and Regulations? There are at least 3 reasons for

needing better compliance: (1) some important Parks Department personnel are concerned that Guidelines and Regulations they, and previous FGS administrations created and agreed to are obviously not being followed or enforced; (2) most FGS gardeners abide by the rules and some of those gardeners are questioning why the Guidelines and Regulations were not being enforced uniformly in the past; and (3) some of the rules are common sense e.g., the ability to better see into and through gardens will reduce crime and increase safety.



Why not ignore the Parks Department personnel who are on our case, or go over their heads? There are at least 2 reasons why this is a bad idea: (1) it alienates the very people who control the budgets we need to dip into for major capital project funding, and (2) while the people may/will change at the top of Parks and the City itself, the people who are on our case are in their jobs for the long-term.

But what is different now – we've successfully ignored the Guidelines and Regulations in the past? Beyond our needing Parks Department budgetary help, Parks Department is losing patience – the Guidelines and Regulations were negotiated a number of years ago and Parks Department isn't seeing the progress it expected; it holds FGS' Board responsible for making more progress.

Some of the Guidelines and Regulations are stupid – why doesn't the Board change them? We can propose changes to the Guidelines and Regulations but Parks Department has the final say. The previous Board tried to get changes through but were rebuffed. When we asked about changes again this spring we were told not to bother.

Why don't we apply the rules to just the new gardeners? The established gardeners know what they're doing and will use common sense (someone actually said this!). It's unfair and it doesn't address Park Department's concerns. It also paves the way to favoritism which this Board is against. Favoritism can also be called discrimination.

But there are big trees all over the park, are we going to cut them all down? The Guidelines and Regulations apply only to conditions within our gardens. The trees outside our gardens are directly Parks Department's responsibility.

Much of this seems to hinge on the need for money – my fence (irrigation system) isn't so bad/doesn't need replacing! Both the perimeter fence and the irrigation are reaching the end of their useful life and are failing. The only prudent course of action is to prepare now particularly as the way the city budgets, requests don't get filled for a year or more if at all. While we are raising money as hard and fast as we can, it's clear we are going to need Park Department help.

Fenway Garden Society Summer Newsletter 2008

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED:

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2008 Board Members:

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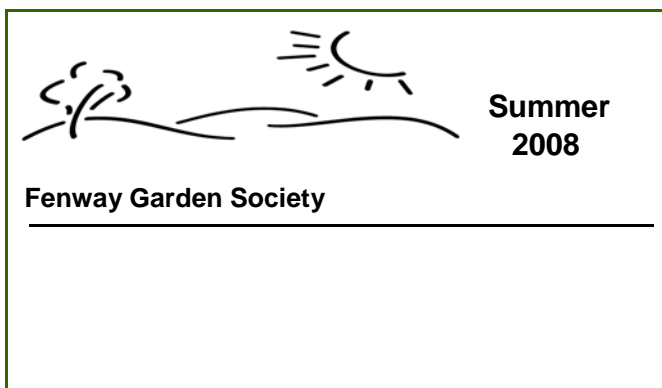
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Vice President of the Park:
Joe Axelrod

On the web at [http://
fenwayvictorygardens.com](http://fenwayvictorygardens.com)



Deliver
TO:

The Fenway Garden Society is a non-profit organization that oversees the Fenway Victory Gardens. We are located on 7 acres in the part of the Emerald Necklace known as the Fens. We have approximately 300 members gardening 500 garden plots, and are the oldest remaining Victory Garden in the country. The Fenway Victory Garden Newsletter is aimed to keep our garden community up to date on the latest happenings at The Fenway Garden Society and surrounding community.

Please send comments, suggestions or submissions c/o
Richard Rogers: richard@richard-rogers.com

Bank	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

31—Fall Mailing

September

20-Fens Fest (Rain Date 21)

21—Garden Inspections

25— Board Meeting

October

11— All Garden Clean-up #4

12—Final Garden Inspections

23—Board Meeting

November

20— Board Meeting

December

6—All Garden Meeting

NOTE: All Fens Fest
Planning Meetings are

July

20-Garden Judging

26-Fens Fest Planning Meeting

24—Board Meeting

Last Week-Garden Inspections

August

10—All Garden Clean-up #3

20-Garden Judging

21— Board Meeting

23-Fens Fest Planning Meeting

Random things to remember

It is summertime and the living is easy. A few things to remember to keep it easy ...

1. The grassy area between the Muddy River and the back road is not ours to use. The only exception is the woodchip pile, it was put across the road in dispute and should not be there. Be mindful of nesting turtles and other wildlife in the area.
2. When bringing vehicles into the park, park them on the paved road ONLY. Many of the grassy areas near the road have fragile, easy to collapse irrigation pipes under them.
3. Close faucets even if there is no water in the system, and report leaks quickly. You can report leaks at the FGS website.
4. If you see something that makes you uncomfortable, call the police – a police report is a powerful tool for removing undesirables from the park. You can request a call back telephone report if you prefer. Please send a copy of your report to the board.
5. No cooking, fires or barbecues in the park without the appropriate permit from the city, period.
6. Keep the sightlines down paths wide open – it's a crime deterrent. Plants growing past fences and outside of gardens are subject to beheading if impeding sightlines.
7. Be nice to city and state workers in the park, as well as to visitors! Stop the police and trash collectors and just say, "Thank you, you do a really good job."

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