



Weekly Weeder

June 30, 2022

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New Plant Waste Disposal Policy Takes Next Steps

As previous Weekly Weeders have detailed, Sunshine has a new policy for disposing of the plant waste generated at the garden: all will be collected near the compost heaps and not disposed of through the relatively expensive city dumpster.

Last weekend, Sunshine gardeners Steve, Iris, Kingsley, Debra, and Jim took a new step in implementing our new system. Debra made arrangements for a roll-off dumpster to be delivered to Sunshine on Friday. On Saturday morning, Steve, Iris, Kingsley and Jim spent several hours moving a month's amount of the plant waste that Sunshine gardeners had deposited in the compost area.

Like all new projects, there were surprises. The first was the sides of the dumpster at 8 feet were too high for the tractor to dump waste over the side as planned. Fortunately, the dumpster was wide enough (just barely) for Steve to drive the tractor into it to dump the waste. Another surprise (a pleasant one) was that almost no nonplant trash was found in the waste pile. Thanks go to Sunshine gardeners for their diligence in removing such trash before disposing of their plant waste. Another pleasant surprise was that the amount of plant waste was less than estimated, and the dumpster was only about half filled. Consequently, the roll-off dumpster will likely need to be ordered less frequently than anticipated, reducing Sunshine's expenses on waste disposal.

The dumpster will be at Sunshine until Thursday, July 7, so gardeners who are thinking about clearing spent tomato and other plants are encouraged to do so before the 7th. —
Submitted by Jim Willmann





Surprise Harvest: Volunteer Malibar Spinach

I didn't plant it, I don't water it, I prune it constantly, and yet it is the healthiest looking item in my garden plot right now. I'm talking about Malibar Spinach, a native of the Asian and African tropics. It emerged in the same spot in which it appeared as a volunteer last summer, and even in our desert-like conditions, it grows prodigiously. Is it pest or perk? I have come to admire the vines as they reach out to crawl up the okra and cowpen daisy stems, growing inches a day. I eat a few leaves of it during each garden visit as a nutritious snack. Today, I took some home to stir-fry along with tomatoes, basil, squash, okra and hot peppers, and it was quite delicious with pasta and parmesan. So ... I'm calling it a perk! — *Submitted by Susan Van Haitsma*

Call for Stories and Images

The story about Malabar spinach (above, by Susan) is one observation from a gardener among hundreds. This is a call to all Sunshiners to contribute to our exchange of information via the Weekly Weeder or on social media. If you observe interesting changes to your garden, find unusual pests, harvest something grand, or take a selfie with your fellow gardeners, please send your photos and thoughts to Kristin Phillips (phillips.102@gmail.com). We'd love to include more stories from the community!



Tomato harvest 3-4 years ago from a plot that produced a few gun golds this year (K. Phillips)

More on Tomato Woes

This year was not a great year for tomatoes. I commented to two experienced gardeners at Sunshine that my tomatoes did horribly and both commented that the problem is that I grow heirlooms.

This statement is accurate because one of the advantages of hybrid tomatoes is their disease resistance. I think that heirloom tomatoes have better taste.

Tomato plants can meet an early death because there are bacterial and/or mold spores in the soil by causing wilts and blights. Gardeners at Sunshine rarely have enough space to rotate their tomato crops and by planting tomatoes year after year in the same place we have encouraged soil borne fungal and bacterial spores. There is no practical way of getting rid of these spores that cause wilt and blight leading to an early death of our plants and/or a reduced harvest.

There are certain tomatoes that won't produce at Sunshine although they will grow in other areas of Austin. The plant looks healthy for about a month and then dies before any tomatoes can be harvested. Two plants that fit this category are **yellow pear** and **Paul Robeson**. I recommend that you don't try to grow them. Both are heirlooms.

But even if you grow only hybrids, they can be wiped out by wilt and blight, although you are more likely to get fruit production. So selecting the ideal tomato to grow is a bit of a crap shoot. You can improve your chances for a good harvest by planting tomatoes that have a maturity of less than 78 days. This uncertainty is also influenced by weather - most tomatoes need 75 degrees or less to set fruit.. Another variable for success is the gardener's horticultural practices.

This year I found the Goliath variety (thank you to Dawn Friesen for the plant) and a large early cherry Sakura (thank you Maria for the plant) that did quite

well.

In general, certain tomatoes produce satisfactorily year after year. One of the advantages of community gardening is the sharing of this information and updating it as needed.

I think it would benefit all Sunshine gardeners if you had tomatoes that did exceptionally poorly or exceptionally well and share the information. Additionally, Information about peppers and eggplants would also be helpful. --

Submitted by Ila Falvey

Disease/Poor Harvest Database of Plant Varieties

Last week, Randy Thompson suggested that gardeners send in observations about which varieties of tomatoes, peppers and eggplants produced well or poorly this summer. This information can be collated to help gardeners with future growing seasons (ie, which plants to plant). Submit your insights to: jartdaht@gmail.com

GARDEN TASKS - By Steve Camp

Greetings!

I hope everyone is having a great June! Please take care of yourselves during this record breaking weather. Stay hydrated and know the signs of heat exhaustion/stroke. Stay safe!

I think that by now all have heard or read the new directives involving plant waste and trash. Just in case ... absolutely no plant waste is to go into the dumpster. No trash from home is to go into the dumpster. Plant waste should be taken down the hill close to the compost pile. There is a new marked area for all plant waste. Please do not put anything that is not plant waste into that pile.

NEXT SCHEDULED WORKDAY JULY (DATE UNKNOWN) from 0:800 till 10:00

The details of this workday are TBD, but check the next Weeder or social media for details. On the day, please contact Steve Camp or Frank Genco that Saturday morning for instructions.

Workdays often evolve into social events! SCG is a fantastic place to meet new friends and learn both new and old gardening techniques. There's a wealth of knowledge here and experienced people that love to share it.

NEW GARDENERS

There are several new gardeners at SCG! Please don't hesitate to introduce yourself and y'all get to know each other a little and share

garden knowledge and tips. Let's emphasize the COMMUNITY in Community Garden.

Please read handbook and site rules. Any hardware (hoses, sprayers, nozzles, splitters etc.) attached to garden faucets and maintenance of said items are the responsibility of individual gardeners.

ROADS AND PARKING

A. Speed limit is 3 MPH. (Primarily for safety, but also to keep the dust down.)

B. Sunshine's roads provide access to plots and common areas.

Gardeners should not 1) park on roads except to unload a heavy load from vehicle, 2) drive on roads when wet, 3) drive around barriers, 4) drive into another gardener's plot, or 5) put plants or other items in the road.

C. Cars may not be left idling while at the garden.

D. Park only in the front parking area or your common area. On weekends there are parking spaces on Sunshine and 49th Street.

Handbook and Site rules specifically state that **PARKING ON GARDEN ROADS IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED**. Park in the parking lot or common areas only. When the emergency vehicle enters SCG, they may(I hope not)be coming to assist YOU. How inconvenient it would be for them to have to wait for folks to move cars.

Priority Tasks

Khaki Weed Season is Upon Us!

For the uninitiated, Khaki weed is an invasive plant that infects the garden in late spring, summer, and fall. We are determined every year to eradicate it as much as possible. To this end, we are allowing digging up khaki weed to be counted as TSVBI hours until further notice.

>Maintaining common paths and common areas. If you have plants extending into common paths, trim them. The common paths are designed to allow the biggest wheelbarrows that we own to traverse them unimpeded.

TSVBI

>Weeding paths in TSVBI garden and wood chip areas on west side. (This is normally needed. Try to get out roots. Be sure to smooth out paths after weeding to facilitate TSVBI students (who are blind) moving around garden). Mowing between fence and street along 49th St. and Sunshine Dr. along and 10' inside fence.

>Khaki weed removal.

>Cleaning the street curb gutters of dirt and debris buildup. (At places in the curb gutter along Sunshine Dr. And 49th St. soil has built up and grass is beginning to grow. Scrape off with shovel and put in wheelbarrow. If debris is gravel it can be put in low places in the parking lot, otherwise, destination is dumpster.

Note: TSVBI hours can also count as regular hours.

REGULAR:

- 1.Mowing, edging (Please check area around trailer and greenhouses). The mowing season is picking up (if it ever rains, it will pick up exponentially.) It's way easier to keep it mowed than try to catch up when it gets overgrown.
2. Maintaining common paths. (Gardeners are required to maintain a 2' strip of common paths adjacent to their plot.)
3. Mowing and cleaning up overgrown/messy places in common areas.

Your Zone Coordinator may have more tasks than are listed here. Contact them if you feel that you have run out of things to do.

Slow Down (3 MPH!) You're on Garden Time! Enjoy!

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