



WEEKLY WEEDER

June 15, 2023

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Melon Flowers Attract Butterfly!

I took this photo of a visitor (Black Swallowtail; *Limenitis archippus*) to my cantaloupe flowers! — Submitted by Debra Mariano

A Healing Place

In the flower garden there is a mockingbird that I swear has developed a crush on me. She follows me as I do my work, perching just out of reach and chatting to me with all that mockingbird gibberish. A very handsome bird and I make it a point to congratulate her when she brings a squirming insect trapped in her beak to show off. But lately, she has acquired a taste for our much loved grapes, just now beginning to ripen and blush with color. And she seems just as proud to show me her sweet success, looking up at me and making sure I watch as she slowly pecks the grapes to death! Of course last year, when the grapes were pillaged by the animals, I fell to my knees and wept. But this year I can not help but crack a smile and giggle. I smile because working in the flower garden has changed me. You see, I've come to realize that one of my goals for the flower garden is to bring gardeners in contact with nature without the pressures of productivity. Which means that the grapes are fair game. And so I just wink at my new friend and go about my chores with a lighter heart.



The rain this year has been a welcome blessing and prepared the flower garden for the lethal heat that has arrived at last. Finally I have been able to achieved my dreams of keeping the garden interesting through the seasons with a steady succession of annuals.

Something that I have been working towards for awhile and could not have accomplished without the help of some lovely, kind-hearted gardeners and some very dedicated volunteers. All the pollinators are thrilled that we still have borage and calendula blooming, which is surprising because the seeds were tossed willy-nilly into the flower beds in

very early spring. The scented geraniums, that I grew from cuttings last year, were planted by the new benches in late March and have really beefed up. They add such a beautiful texture to the garden with their soft fuzzy leaves that are ruffled at the

edges. The citronella scent of the geranium is supposed to repel the much despised mosquito, which makes them perfect for planting around a seating area. The lisianthus, planted in April, are just barely opening their eyes while the zinnias and celosia planted in May are already breaking stride. And just last week we planted over fifty young zinnias and plains coreopsis, insuring a colorful display well into July and August. Everything is knitted together by the wonderful and hard working Bidens Alba (Spanish Needles), which has sown itself around, bringing a beautiful and unpretentious airiness to the garden. She looks like a delicate plant but is tough as nails and her white daisy like flowers shine even at night. When the older plants start to fade and the zinnias begin to grey with powdery mildew, we feel no remorse in removing them, for there are plenty of young plants waiting to take their place. This schedule of growing, planting and removing annuals keeps the garden looking fresh and exciting.

There is a bit of magic that exists in a garden that is loved and cared for. On a hot day, I swear it feels a few degrees cooler under the shade of the grape and coral vines. When the birds are singing and the garden is full butterflies and pollinators, floating or buzzing from flower to flower, you feel as though



you might be a Disney princess that at any moment could break into song! And when I'm feeling sorry for myself and it feels like the world is crumbling around me, there is always something beautiful in the garden to lift my spirits or a chore to distract me. There is always something new to learn and get excited about. There is always room to make mistakes. Allowing me to be in the present, while keeping an eye on the future and letting go of the past. For me, it is a healing place. And so dear reader, if you have a chance, my prescription for you is to wonder over to the flower garden and explore. **Or come volunteer with us every Sunday from 9am to 12pm and receive your hours while absorbing the healing powers of nature and community.** — Submitted by Matthew Johnston with images by Patrick Hagenow

Cool Room is for Produce and People

Austin's long hot summer has arrived, and higher humidity combined with triple digit temperatures may be a dangerous combination. Gardeners should take care not to

risk heat exhaustion or worse while at Sunshine this summer. Drink plenty of water



and feel free to cool down with the Micah 6 donations in the “Cool Room” in the trailer whenever needed.

The Micah 6 Cool Room has an air conditioner set in the seventies to keep produce like tomatoes and basil that degrade in the refrigerator at a cool temperature until they can be delivered to the food pantry. But the room is not just for contributions to our neighbors who may need a little extra help obtaining healthy food—it is also for Sunshine gardeners to use when they start feeling tired or overly warm. Take a

water break in the cool room as often as needed. There is also a small collection of gardening books in the cool room that gardeners may read while they cool off. Please remember to close the door to the cool room to keep the air conditioning contained.

Austin will be under a heat advisory for at least the next ten days. It is likely to stay this way for much of the summer. Look out for your garden neighbors and take good care of yourself. — *Submitted by Maria Beach with photo of Mike Phillips' beet donation to Micah 6 by Maria Beach*



Show & Taste

***Saturday, June 17 at 11 o'clock
on the porch***

***Meet and Greet your fellow gardeners.
Bring your favorite tomato or dish using
produce from your garden to be sampled.***

Garden Education by Ila Falvey

This week: *Tomato Ponderings, with photo by Susan Van Haitsma*

For years I tried to figure out what diseases affect my tomatoes. I looked online and found the following key to tomato diseases: [Symptoms on Leaves | Cornell Vegetables](#).

I spoke to the author and tried to lure him to visit Sunshine when he came to visit his daughter who attended UT. It didn't work ... nor could I successfully figure out whether it was a fungal disease, a bacterial disease, a wilt, a blight, or something else.

A plant disease expert came from Texas A&M. He toured the garden with several gardeners following behind him and we didn't figure out much.

So after 30 years of attempting to learn what diseases affect my tomatoes, I give up!

I decided instead to take a practical approach and tell you what I think I've learned.



Our major problem growing tomatoes at Sunshine is soil-borne diseases. We cannot realistically solve that problem, but we can plant tomatoes that have some resistance to these diseases. All our tomatoes will get brown leaves at the bottom but they will

still produce good tomatoes. But there are some tomatoes that seem to suffer instant death. They wilt and die before they produce any crop. I know of two varieties that do this - Paul Robson and Yellow Pear. I call this behavior "cratering."

The advantage of gardening at a Community garden is that you can share information and have a large enough sample to know what tomatoes do well. You also know what tomatoes "crater" and probably should not be grown at Sunshine (although they can be grown in other areas in Austin).

My goal is to encourage gardeners to share information so that we plant tomatoes that are likely to do well.

We also want to know what different varieties taste like. So show up Saturday at 11, bring your favorite tomato and we can sample it. You are also invited to bring a dish that you made using Sunshine produce.

See you on the porch for **Show and Taste** (info above)

Garden Notes from Marsha Riti

The lovely icons for this section were created by Marsha Riti



Heat Advisory

Summer is here so please take caution when working in the garden. Stay hydrated, wear sunscreen, and a hat. Also, remember we have a "cool room" in the trailer where the AC is running, and there are popsicles in the freezer. Please read this article from the

CDC about [Heat Stress Related Illness](#).



Service Hours are Due

Sunshine Community Garden and TSVBI service hours are due at the end of this month. If you are unsure how many hours you have left to work please check the [Green Binder](#).



General Workday

Need service hours? There will be a general workday Saturday, June 17 (8-10am) hosted by Kerry Howell and Bill Cason.



Beautification Committee Workday

Need service hours? There is always a workday every Sunday (9-12pm) in the flower beds around the trailer. Hosted by Matthew Johnston.



Kid's Garden!

Thanks to the volunteerism of Sunshine gardeners, Sunshine is ready to get young members of the community gardening. While there is more to come, in terms of tools for the kids and shade areas, the beds are ready for the kids to start planting!

Gardeners who made contact about sponsoring a child aged 5-11 will be contacted soon by the Children's Garden Zone Coordinator, Pam Kirby. We still have some available beds for children. If you are a garden member in good standing and wish to sponsor a child who would enjoy gardening in his or her own 3x3 bed, contact [Pam](#) for further information.



OMG, Cars, slow down!

Please drive slowly (3 MPH) in the garden. There are cats, kids, and gardeners who use this space, and we need it to be safe for everyone.



Mowers and Weed Whackers

Don't know how to use the gas or electric grass cutting equipment? Please contact:

[Steve Camp](#) (electric mowers / weed wackers)

[Ray Porter](#) (gas mowers)



More grass than garden?

Please clean up your plot. If you have health issues that are keeping you from working on your plot contact your Zone Coordinator or the Vice President for assistance. Also, if you'd like to fallow your plot for the rest of the summer, posted below is how to do that (taken from page 28 of the Handbook). Please make sure your Zone

Coordinator or Vice President knows you are following your plot.

Fallow Season or Cover Crop

Occasionally, members may choose to leave a plot fallow for a season. This is a good practice to provide the soil a break. Fallow plots should be cleared of plants and weeds, then covered completely with compost and then cardboard, a thick layer of leaves, or other material that allows water to permeate. Avoid using plastic as it creates a good environment for fire ants underneath, and water pools on top. An alternative to a fallow season is to plant a cover crop to serve as green manure; this can be turned under at the end of the season to condition the soil. Consult the literature or local garden center for details on this technique for soil improvement.

Contact both [Kristin Phillips](#) & [Maria Beach](#) to contribute the Weekly Weeder.



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