

## Haddam Garden Club

July 2017 Garden Blog Article

by Cindy Tillson



### Abundance—of All Things Garden

When I think of the garden in July, the word abundance comes to mind. Plants are getting so *tall* they need staking. They are getting so *crowded* we need to do some selective trimming to make windows for plants that were suddenly *overcome* by zealous neighbors. We can remove an abundance of plant material by *weeding, deadheading, pruning* out ratty looking plants gone by, *cutting back* leggy plants to *regenerate* them (like Cranesbill Geraniums and perennial Bachelor Buttons). If you have Spirea bushes, prune the dead stuff and the crossing wood out, cut back by 2-5 inches, apply fertilizer and/or compost and the bush will re-bloom in September.

Then there is the abundance of slugs, lily leaf beetles, Japanese beetles and powdery mildew. Milk (yes, milk) or Neem oil will take care of powdery mildew. Just don't spray Neem when the bees are out. It will kill them.

The reward? Hopefully, an abundance of flowers and vegetables. You will also be looking at a much cleaner, greener garden. You can fill in the holes left by spring flowering bulbs and dormant bleeding hearts with some flowering plants coming into bloom now or later.

To keep those flowers beautiful, it's time to give them some food, especially the plants in the containers. Plants in containers need extra food and attention to stay lush. A nutritious organic seaweed and/or fish emulsion concoction or some compost tea will make the plants smile again while not harming any pollinators. Don't forget to feed the veggies too!

The garlic is probably looking a little sad now. When there are three-five brown leaves with only one or two green ones left, it's time to harvest. Do this when the soil is dry. Gently loosen the dirt *near* the garlic so you can pull the bulb out. Gently brush the heavy stuff off being careful not to bruise it. The rest of the dirt can wait until after curing. To cure, tie a few bulbs together with string and hang in a dark, *well-ventilated* place for about three weeks. Alternatively, you can lay them on screening and even run a fan for that critical air circulation. Now they can be cleaned for storage. Cut the stalk off about an inch above the bulb. Snip the roots off. Then, with your fingers, wipe the dirt and probably a layer of garlic skin off. Voila! As you put them away for storage (a dry place, 33-38 degrees) pull aside the biggest and best bulbs to replant. Store them until fall. Garlic quality improves each year it is replanted.

Now you have vacant veggie garden space! Recharge the soil with a few inches of compost lightly mixed in and plant with a crop for fall such as beans, beets, radishes or greens. Some of my newfound space inevitably becomes the repository for those plants I find while out and about that I just have to have but don't know just where to put yet.

On May 8 the garden club got down and dirty sprucing up Haddam. Small groups worked tirelessly in the gardens at the Town Office Building, Brainerd Library, the Haddam Green, the gazebo at the Higganum Green and at the "Welcome to Haddam" signs. The Town Transfer Station, the club's newest and biggest garden, had seven people adding many new plantings, compost and mulch. Everyone worked hard and the gardens show it. Harvest New England donated 9 cu yards of organic compost, the equivalent of a hearty well-balanced spring breakfast for the gardens.

Photo by K.C. Alexander



Photo by Louise Carlson