

# GROWING GARDENERS

GARDEN NEWSLETTER FOR MEDICINE HAT & AREA - JULY 2023

## SUMMER HAS ARRIVED

Welcome to summer, fellow gardeners. It has certainly been sunny and warm around these parts! This is an exciting (if a little exhausting) time of year for people growing plants as we start to harvest the literal fruits of our labour.

In this issue, we continue our weed management series, *In the Weeds*, to look at how preventing weeds before they take root is a winning strategy. Because many of us are feeling pulled in several directions at once, on page 3 we have compiled some timely suggestions for things to do in July gardens. There is also information about an exciting platform called *Falling Fruit* that helps communities to map out food-bearing trees, shrubs and other perennials to encourage local foraging and harvest-sharing to minimize food waste.

As always, we've compiled an action-packed list of local events and activities taking place in July geared toward garden and nature lovers (hello Horticultural Association Garden Tour!). If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of mimicking a forest ecosystem to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs while getting your hands dirty, come to the *Food Forest Work Party* on Thursday, July 6th, from 7-8:30pm.

For CFCA Community Garden members, there are two opportunities lined up in July to get advice and answers to any gardening questions that you may have. These are taking place July 3rd (3-5pm) and 7th (6-8pm) at the Sheldon Miller Friendship Garden.

The Growing Gardeners Newsletter aims to support gardeners of all experience levels in Medicine Hat and area. We are pleased to announce that our Newsletter can now be delivered straight to your inbox each month during the growing season. To sign up for the mailing list, or share ideas, harvest recipes, suggestions, or inspiring garden photos to help us to grow, please reach out by email to [cfcagarden@gmail.com](mailto:cfcagarden@gmail.com).

*Genevieve Mathieu*  
CFCA Garden Program Coordinator

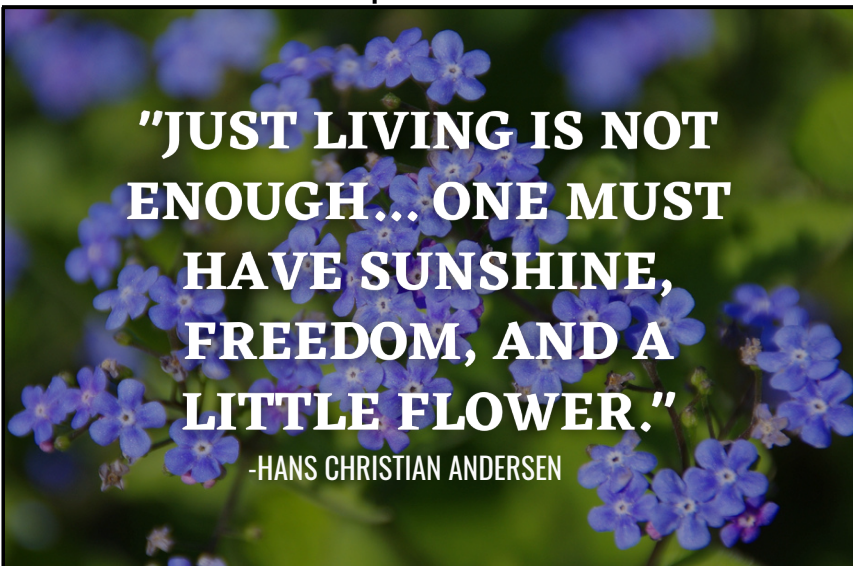
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**"JUST LIVING IS NOT  
ENOUGH... ONE MUST  
HAVE SUNSHINE,  
FREEDOM, AND A  
LITTLE FLOWER."**

-HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN



# IN THE WEEDS PART 2: PREVENTION



It is easy to get stuck in the weeds when unwanted plants start popping up in our carefully planted gardens. A good weed strategy includes understanding, prevention, monitoring, and controlling weeds while protecting our health, the environment and our pocketbooks. In Part 2 of this series, we are discussing the foundation of a solid weed management strategy: prevention. The best way to deal with undesirable guests in the garden is to not give them a chance to take root in the first place.

## STRONG START

Unlike the vegetables we are growing, many weeds are masters of making the best of poor conditions for growth. As gardeners, we can give our plants the upper hand by supporting healthy living soil and providing enough sunlight, moisture and protections from damaging wind and excessive heat. A good irrigation routine keeps the roots of our plants consistently moist and can be accomplished a few different ways. Drip or soaker systems are great (although they can be costly), but any method of watering deeply is good. 1" of water per week should be enough and can be measured using a rain gauge (if watering with a sprinkler). We want to see that the soil is damp at least 5" deep. Watering deeply but less often promotes deeper, more resilient roots than watering a little every day.

## WHERE DO THEY COME FROM

Unless we are only growing in brand new potting mix, our soil is a seed bank for weeds. Every year weeds produce seeds that can be carried by the wind, stuck to the bottoms of our footwear, or spread by birds and other creatures. One of the reasons that weeds can be so successful is that they typically produce many seeds that remain viable (capable of germinating and growing) for many years.

Plant sharing is a lovely thing to do, but it is a good idea to be wary of weed seeds or rhizomes (underground stems) that may be hitching a ride in plants we receive from friends. Consider discarding the soil that accompanies shared plants to prevent accidental weed introduction.

## STOP THE SPROUT

Tilling the garden puts some of the weed seeds lying dormant in the soil in contact with the perfect conditions to sprout and grow. Both till and no-till gardeners would do well to applying a nice thick layer (4-6") of organic mulch (chopped leaves, straw, hay, etc) on the soil surface. This will not only suppress weed seeds from sprouting and create a barrier for newly landed seeds from reaching the soil, but will also help with moisture retention, temperature moderation and support soil life.

When the odd weed does appear, remove it before it flowers or sets seed to avoid adding more seeds to the soil. Don't compost or mulch the soil with mature weeds that have formed flowers/seeds. Avoid using immature compost, manure or mulch that may contain weed seeds. Store-bought compost and manure will be weed free. For those collecting manure from farms, note that the digestive systems of sheep and goats break down weed seeds better than cows and horses. But if the farm's manure pile is not covered as it matures, weed seeds will likely be present.

## WEED OF THE MONTH

### DAME'S ROCKET

*Hesperis matronalis* Provincial Designation Noxious



Dame's Rocket is a member of the Brassicaceae (Mustard) family and was introduced from Europe as an ornamental it is also known as Dames Violet. It is often found growing as an escaped ornamental plant in moist habitats.

**CONCERN** May be spread in wild flower mixes, displaces native vegetation, host for crop diseases, prolific seed producer.

**LIFE CYCLE** Perennial.

**CONTROL** Hand picking or herbicide control before flowering.

#### IDENTIFICATION

**FLOWER** 4 petals, showy purple-pink-white petals, fragrant.

**LEAVES** Stalkless, alternately arranged on the stem, small hairs on both sides, toothed edges. Rosette leaves can be as long as 15cm and stem leaves are 5-15cm (smaller towards the top of the plant).

**STEMS** Up to 1m tall, branched, covered with small hairs.

**ROOT** Shallow, slender, root.

**SEED/FRUITS** Reproduces by seed, thin, wiry seed pods are 5-10cm long, each plant can produce up to 20,000 seeds, highly viability.

Source: Wheatland County. (2017). Identification Guide for Alberta Invasive Plants. [https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=pdf/weed\\_identification\\_book.pdf](https://www.edmonton.ca/public-files/assets/document?path=pdf/weed_identification_book.pdf)



## JULY IN THE GARDEN



Here are some of the things gardeners can do in July:

- **Planting Seeds:** As we harvest cooler weather crops we create space for planting new seeds. This is a form of succession planting which aims to get more out of the garden by planting crops at different times rather than all at once.
- **Made in the Shade:** Consider shade cloth to protect things that tend to bolt (prematurely go to seed) in the heat of our summers, like lettuce. Shade cloth can be purchased from garden centers or crafted using upcycled burlap, lace tablecloths, or other loosely woven fabric. This can be attached to frames, mesh and other structures to provide a semi-permeable barrier from the sun.
- **Insect Monitoring:** For gardeners interested in insects, this is the best time of the year! Healthy gardens should be buzzing with activity in July. Try to identify the life in the garden by taking photos and consulting reputable apps or local insect groups. If you find something eating crops, find out what it is, it's life cycle and best approach to dealing with it that is appropriate and environmentally-conscious. Remember, fewer than 1% of insects are considered garden pests, and many are helping to keep these troublemakers in check.
- **Make it Rain:** It has certainly been a dry year so far so it is prudent to use water effectively and responsibly. This means watering deeply, less often, to promote deep roots and minimize water that is lost to evaporation from the sun and drying winds. Have we mentioned the benefits of mulch?!
- **Reap What You Sow:** The best part of vegetable gardening is definitely harvesting crops! Greens, radishes, herbs and zucchini may be ready now. For anyone that planted garlic last fall, once the scapes have formed a loop they can be trimmed and eaten. Mid-July is often when we harvest garlic, when the lower 2/3 of leaves have turned brown. Let the garlic cure in a well ventilated space out of direct sun for 5-7 days so the outer layers dry out before storage.
- **Tend to the Tomatoes:** An ongoing task for tomato growers, pruning indeterminate tomatoes can be done as needed at this time. We find the best strategy is to keep 1 or 2 main stems from the base of the tomatoes, and pinch off any "suckers" growing from the nodes (where the leaf meets the stem).

## SEEDS TO PLANT IN JULY

- Beets
- Carrots
- Collards
- Kale
- Lettuce
- Swiss chard

## EVENTS

### COMMUNITY GARDEN MEETUPS

JULY 3, 3-5 PM + JULY 7, 6-8 PM  
SHELDON MILLER FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

### FOOD FOREST WORK PARTY

JULY 6, 7-8:30 PM  
BEHIND HEALTH UNIT ON DUNMORE RD

### WATERCOLOUR PAINTING IN NATURE

JULY 8, 1-3 PM, \$5  
POLICE POINT PARK

### SEED LIBRARY RESTOCK

JULY 8, 10 -11:30 AM  
MH PUBLIC LIBRARY

### HORT ASSOCIATION GARDEN TOUR

SUNDAY, JULY 16, \$10

### GRASSLANDS NATURALISTS WALKS

EVERY WEDNESDAY IN JULY, 9 AM  
CONTACT NATURE CENTRE FOR INFO

### BETTER LIVING + HORTICULTURE SHOW

JULY 24-26  
MH EXHIBITION & STAMPEDE

### FARMER'S MARKET @ CYPRESS CENTRE

JULY 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, 9 AM -1 PM

## FALLING FRUIT HARVEST SHARING

Do you have a fruit producing tree or shrub?  
More rhubarb than you can shake a rhubarb stalk at?  
Consider sharing the bounty with others in the community with the website **Falling Fruit**, built by and for foragers!  
"Falling Fruit is a celebration of the overlooked culinary bounty of our city streets." Food-bearing plants in your yard or other public places can be easily added to the map. Check out <https://fallingfruit.org/> for more information.



# GROWING GARDENERS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Did you know that there is a free weekly garden club in Medicine Hat? Starting in May, join us in the community garden behind the Root Cellar (440 Maple Ave SE) every Wednesday at 7pm for **Growing Gardeners Education Program**. Each session covers a different garden-related topic while incorporating hands-on garden learning. Registration is not required and children are welcome so long as they are accompanied by an adult guardian. Watch our social media pages to get updates about topics and information about what to bring (when needed). As we meet outside, adverse weather may force us to cancel or move sessions around. For more information, follow us on social media or email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com).

## JULY GARDEN CLUB TOPICS

<p><b>JULY 5</b> PERENNIAL FRUIT + VEGETABLES</p>	<p>Trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials that produce food year after year. Hardiness, pollination, and protection. Food forests.</p>
<p><b>JULY 12</b> SOIL: PART 2</p>	<p>How to support healthy living soil. Amendments, protection and best practices. Discuss results of at-home soil tests from Soil Part 1.</p>
<p><b>JULY 19</b> UNDERSTANDING INSECTS</p>	<p>Who is eating that plant? Bugs to love and protect. The circle of (insect) life. Controlling pest populations. (Rescheduled from June 7)</p>
<p><b>JULY 26</b> HOW TO HARVEST</p>	<p>When and how to harvest. Best practices for storing and using garden produce. Recipe sharing.</p>



**The Medicine Hat & District Horticultural Association**

## ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR

**Sunday, July 16, 2023**

featuring gardens in Medicine Hat + Dunmore

**12 noon to 5:00 p.m.**

**Tickets \$10.00 each**

**Now On Sale (cash only) at:**

**Blondie's Gift & Garden**  
**Windmill Garden Centre**  
**Tourist Information Centre**  
**Redcliff Public Library**  
**Suntaira Growers Inc (Redcliff)**



**Visit [www.medhathort.ca](http://www.medhathort.ca), or Facebook and Twitter @hort\_hat for updates and information.**

## ABOUT COMMUNITY FOOD CONNECTIONS ASSOCIATION (CFCA)

Community Food Connections Association is a non-profit organization based in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Launched in 2003, we have been working to support food security in the community through education, programming, partnerships and policy support for improvements in food, nutrition, health and local agriculture.

Our programs include the Good Food Club, Community Kitchens, the Local Food & Producers Directory, Medicine Hat Community Gardens, and Growing Gardeners Weekly Garden Club. To find out more, head over to our website, [FoodConnections.ca](http://FoodConnections.ca), or social media accounts:



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