

WALTZING TOWARD THE SOLSTICE

NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY GARDEN
AUGUSTA BENEDICT

Winter tip-toes upon the fringes of Indian Summer days. Frost, ever so delicately, greets the morning pumpkin patch. Soon enough winter's insistence will march unabashedly through the garden and November's maintenance activities will begin. This year's harvest season behind us, the community garden takes a pause before winterizing the site, planting winter crops, and preparing for the next cycle of growing. During this brief hiatus it's nice to shift the focus of "garden work" to the kitchen table. As the days grow shorter, colder and wetter there's an essential part of gardening that can be done in the meditative presence of the hearth or kitchen.

With cold grey rolling in from the north, briefly abandon the outdoors. Retreat indoors to cultivate other gardens. Time has come to laze about the kitchen and daydream. Spend a few days and evenings away from the weather, dirt, and rain of the vegetable plot. Quiet and unhurried review, reading and planning always benefit any garden. No particular place to go (both physically and mentally) are proper perspectives for this period of constructive idleness.

Review the past growing season at leisure, mentally roaming the past year in and around the garden beds. Recollect what went well, what was enjoyed and what might be repeated next season. Likewise, remember the goofs, disappointments and things to avoid during the next growing cycle. Wander from the procedural tittle of gardening and reminisce the poetry of its seasons. Remember the garden as much for the bruised knuckle, that hummingbird in the July dawn, or the secret conversation held in front of the sunflower stalks, as for the harvest it yields. If a journal or notes were kept, go back to them, but only as a tourist. At this point peruse the pages as one would the writings of an 18th century diary. Enjoy the progress of the plantings in review.

Tread at this time of year with the same casual approach. Don't bog down in the technical writings at this point. We all scurry towards references often enough during the growing season. Rather look to those writings that nurture the gardener's soul. American Garden Writing, edited by Bonnie Marranca is a splendid series of essays from writers both historical and contemporary. William Hudson was a naturalist before writing his wonderfully romantic Green Mansions. His style is influenced and the story well-informed by that background. Rodale Press publishes The Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening. As with any encyclopedia, this tome is fun to flip through at random. Lastly, From a Monastery Kitchen by Elisa Boulding is a perfect winter's evening reading for the gardener. In addition to delicious seasonal recipes from the kitchen of a Benedictine priory, the book is a treasure of proverbs, poems and quotes that give one pause to reflect.

In grounded reflection lies the foundation of good planning. In this season of quiet and meditation it's good to begin planning for the next season's plantings. Again, arm-wrestling with technicalities is not the purpose of winter's kitchen table colloquium. If struck by the urge to map out the garden's next campaign and make a list of to-do's, Augusta suggests a tot of brandy. For now, relax, sit and dream of the next year's possibilities. Let the garden roll-on, under the grey folds of a winter's day. In the meantime, ladle out a bowl of mixed vegetable curry from the Monastery Cookbook's winter recipes.

If you would like to become a community garden member and begin growing your own vegetables, flowers, and herbs, the volunteer-operated garden welcomes new members. Regularly scheduled work parties are held at the garden each Sunday morning from 9am to 10am. No experience, tools, or horticulture enlightenment are required. The garden's Sprout Queen, Leslie Sroufe, can be reached at 436-0738 for more information. The garden is located at the east end of Madison Street, in the Grove.



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Leonardo da Vinci

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WILDLIFE on the EDGE

Two abundant indoor/outdoor
regulars are the
Housefly and the
Potato/Sow/Pill Bug.

Flies are a constant annoyance;
the Potato Bugs mind
their own business and it is
only their carcasses that give
the shivers.

This is the time of year when
the deer turn into Elk. Already
these mighty beasts are
making their presence
felt around town, and it
won't be long before we see whole herds.

The Common Loon is wintering on the Columbia. They
are recognizable by the dark back and stark white belly,
though many retain the polka-dots
long into the winter.



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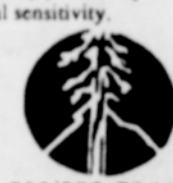
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Mixed Vegetable Curry

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 lb. green peas | 4 tablespoons butter |
| 3/4 lb. carrots | 3 onions, sliced thin |
| 1 1/2 lbs. potatoes | 2 teaspoons chopped mint leaves |
| 1 lb. string beans | 1/2 cup yogurt |
| 1 clove garlic | 3/4 tablespoon cumin |
| 3/4 tablespoon green ginger (1/4 teaspoon powdered) | 1 1/2 tablespoons tomato paste |
| 2 tablespoons turmeric (optional) | 1/2 teaspoon black pepper, salt to taste |

Shell and wash peas. Peel and dice carrots. Peel and halve the potatoes, add beans. Mix them together in a casserole or saucepan of boiling water. Cover, remove from heat, and reserve.

Pound the garlic and ginger (and turmeric, if desired) and mix with 3/4 cup water. Melt the butter and fry the onions. When onions are well browned, add the chopped mint leaves. Fry for a minute more, then add the yogurt and cumin. Cook very gently for 5 minutes. Add the vegetables, drained. Cook for another 10 minutes. Then add the ginger-garlic water, with tomato paste, pepper, and salt. Cook until the liquid is dry. Now add 2 cups of the water from the vegetables. Cook covered (adding more water if necessary) until done.

Serves 8.