

# DIGGING IN

At Troy Community Gardens  
Madison, WI

## Building Organic Matter in Your Garden: Fall Cover Crops

By Megan Cain, Madison FarmWorks

Community garden plots are often heavily gardened areas. The same soil is worked by lots of different gardeners over the years and most gardeners grow crops in every inch of their plots to coax as much food as possible out of them. In such an intense gardening atmosphere, it's important to try to return to the soil what we take out of it throughout the course of the season.

It seems that most gardeners know that they should be adding compost to their plots each year. Some more dedicated gardeners source composted manure locally and put a lot of effort into mulching with hay, leaves or grass

clippings. These things all add organic matter to and improve the nutrients in soil over time which in turn results in more healthy and productive plants.

In the past few years, I have added another source of organic matter into my own garden - cover crops. Cover crops are often grown on farms, but they are also easy to use in small scale gardens. Mid-August through late September is a great time to plant cover crops in your garden as you clear out old plants. Cover crops introduce more diverse inputs into your garden, attract beneficial

insects, and allow you to grow your own organic matter. They also offer soil protection and help suppress weeds in the fall garden. To prevent erosion, compaction and desiccation, it's best not to leave bare soil in your garden throughout the fall and winter.

Not all cover crops work well in the home garden. Madison FarmWorks recommends planting either buckwheat or a mix of oats and peas because they are inexpensive, easy to germinate and die over the winter. This year in my garden, after I harvested all of my onions, I raked off the hay mulch, worked the soil a bit to loosen it up, then



Sprouting buckwheat

broadcasted buckwheat on the garden bed and used a hard rake to make sure it was covered with soil. I watered it once and then watched the weather for the next week or so to make sure it was getting enough water to germinate. Within a week or so it was up and growing quickly. I will pay careful attention to it once it becomes mature and is at full flower because I don't want it to reseed in my garden for next year. Once it is at full flower I yank it out by hand (easy to do!) and lay it down on the garden bed. Then I put hay mulch over it for the win-

## WORK DAY

**SATURDAY**  
**September 18**  
**9 AM - 12 NOON**

If it is raining on Sept. 18, the work day will be changed to Sept. 19, 9 a.m.

Hnub ua haujlwm pab dawb yog 9/18/10, 9 a.m. txog 12 teev tavs, yog los nag muab pauv rau 9/19/10 9 a.m.

### Día de Trabajo

El Sábado 18 de septiembre 9 a.m. - 12 medio día  
Si llegara a llover el 18 de septiembre, el día de trabajo será cambiado para el día 19 de septiembre 9 a.m.

ter. By spring, the cover crop is broken down and my bed is ready to plant. It's an easy and inexpensive way to add a new source of organic matter to my garden!

*Megan Cain is the Program Manager for the East High Community Farm and Madison FarmWorks and gardens in two plots at Troy Community Gardens. Madison FarmWorks is selling 5# bags of organic cover crop seed for \$6, which includes growing instructions. One bag will cover about 250 sq. ft. of growing area. To order, please email [megan@troygardens.org](mailto:megan@troygardens.org) or call 239-6205.*

## Time to Volunteer Running Out

There are only three more organized work days left for 2010. After the August work day, 58% of the gardeners still needed some or all of their hours. Remember if you do not complete your hours, you will need to pay for them at a rate of \$10/hour before we accept your 2011 garden application. Check *Up-coming Events* on Page 3 for volunteer work days/times.

# Troy Community Gardens Harvest Festival Saturday - 9/18/10 - noon



Join us for a celebration of the harvest

—  
Potluck - Door Prizes - Cider Pressing

—  
Bring a dish to pass, as well as a plate, utensils and a chair for yourself

—  
Enter to win one of many door prizes

—  
Enjoy the company of your fellow gardeners!

—  
Teb Troy Caij Sau Qoobloos Kev Lomzem

—  
Hnub Vaxaum (Saturday), 9/18/10  
thaum 12 teev tav su

—  
Thov cov tswv ua teb vaj zaub txhua tus tuaj ua kev lomzem txhawb nqa lub Caij Sau Qoobloos

—  
Noj mov uake, muaj khoom plig pub thiab zom kua txiv haus

—  
Npaj ib yam khoom noj tuaj faib rau lwm tus saj, nqa tais diav thiab rooj zaum rau yus

—  
Muaj sau npe tau khoom plig

—  
Tuaj sib txhawb thiab nrog cov phoojywg ua teb tham uake

## All-Gardener Meeting



October 9 · 10 am-noon

The All-Gardener Meeting will take place on October 9 at the Lakeview Lutheran Church. Topics of discussion will include:

- Converting plots H1-H60 to no-plow/organic plots for 2011 (plots west of the greenhouse, including the row that runs just north of the greenhouse)
- End of season wrap up and Closing Day reminders
- 2010 volunteer hours update
- New ideas for completing volunteer time commitment of 3 hours/plot in 2011
- Using Timedollars for missed volunteer hours
- Possible gardener work shops in 2011

Attendance at the All-Gardener meeting is not mandatory, but it's a great opportunity to offer your input on these topics and others. If you are interested in earning volunteer hours, we will need a few people to bring snacks for the meeting. Please contact Jill Schneider at [schneiderjill@charter.net](mailto:schneiderjill@charter.net) or 608-241-1821 if you can bring something to the meeting.



## Martinis & Zucchini

an evening celebrating the bounty of Troy Gardens

Wednesday, September 15, 2010  
5:00-8:00 pm

Troy Gardens, 500 Block of Troy Drive, Madison

Cocktails and delicious food by Marigold Kitchen/Sardine, featuring locally sourced products like produce from our certified organic Troy Community Farm and spirits from Yahara Bay Distillery

Tickets: \$65

(\$45 of which is tax deductible)

Proceeds support Community GroundWorks' work to nurture meaningful relationships between people and the land.

**Deadline to purchase tickets is 9/10.** For more information, please call 608.240.0409, or visit our website at [www.communitygroundworks.org](http://www.communitygroundworks.org)

## Give to Community GroundWorks Where You Work

Community GroundWorks (formerly Friends of Troy Gardens) is very pleased to be a member of Community Shares of Wisconsin as of this year. So if you have a workplace giving campaign available to you, it's easy for you to include us in your charitable giving. If you're in a public sector workplace, look for us under the "Community Shares of Wisconsin" section of your campaign booklet. Many private sector employers also have a Community Shares campaign as well.



Remember that your donations allow us to continue to develop the land in a sustainable manner, to improve food security for Madison's Northside residents, and provide educational programs on gardening, natural areas restoration, food preparation, nutrition, and environmental education.

Don't have a Community Shares of Wisconsin campaign at your workplace? Ask your employer to consider starting one, and ask us to put you in touch with Community Shares. It's a great way to support our work and the work of other area nonprofits.

Thank you for considering a gift to us through your workplace giving donations. We appreciate your support!

### Book Discussion & Potluck at Troy Gardens

September 9, 2010, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

A potluck and discussion of [\*The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks\*](#) by Rebecca Skloot will be held on Thursday, September 9 from 6:30-7:30pm at Troy Gardens. Part of Go Big Read, UW-Madison's common-reading program, the event is sponsored by Community GroundWorks and Lakeview Branch Library. Katie Scharf, neighborhood librarian, and Troy Gardens staff will be on hand to facilitate the discussion.

The story of Henrietta Lacks, the African-American cancer patient who was the unwitting donor of the "HeLa" cells which have directly aided

many advances in modern medicine, raises issues of medical ethics, poverty, racism, ownership rights and the law. Copies may be reserved by contacting any Madison Public Library or stop in at Lakeview and tell them you are a part of the Troy Gardens' discussion group. Frugal Muse bookstore will also stock copies. Join us at beautiful Troy Gardens with a dish to pass, a place setting and your opinions of the book. In case of rain, we will meet at the Lakeview Library in the Northside Town Center. Call Katie at the Library, 246-4547, with any questions.

## —Madison FarmWorks—

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ONE-ON-ONE & GROUP EDUCATION



communitygroundworks.org



## Upcoming Events

### Book Discussion & Potluck at Troy Gardens

Thurs., Sept. 9, 6:30 to 7:30 pm (see details to left)

### Community Writing Workshop (continues)

Sat., Aug. 21 & 28, Sept. 11 & 18, 10 am

### Special Work Day (to get property ready for Martinis and Zucchini's Fundraiser)

Mon., Sept. 13, 5 pm - 7 pm (rain date is Sept. 14, same time)

### Martinis and Zucchini's: An evening celebrating the bounty of Troy Gardens

Wed., Sept. 15, 5 pm - 8 pm (see details on Page 2)

### Community Gardens Work Day

Sat., Sept. 18, 9 am - 12 noon

### Community Gardens Harvest Festival

Sat., Sept. 18, 12 noon - 3 pm (see details on Page 2)

### All-Gardener Meeting

Sat., Oct. 9, 10 am - noon, Lakeview Lutheran Church (see more info on Page 2)

### Community Gardens Work Day/Closing Day

Sat., Oct. 23, 9 am - 12 noon

For more information about events, please call the Community GroundWorks office at 240-0409.

## Eggplant Recipe: Hot Tuscan Sandwich

This is one of my favorite eggplant recipes and a great way to use up 2 to 3 large eggplants as it stores well in the fridge to be enjoyed all week. The ingredients you'll need are in bold.

- Mix together marinade:  
**3/4 cup olive oil**  
**3/4 cup balsamic vinegar**  
**2 teaspoons dried whole thyme**  
**1 teaspoon crushed red pepper**  
**1 teaspoon salt**  
**1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper**
- In a marinade dish or a bowl that has a tight-fitting cover, pour marinade over:  
**24 slices eggplant, peeled and cut 1/2-inch thick**  
 (Flip dish periodically to evenly distribute the marinade. Let sit for at least 1/2 hour.)
- Cut into 1/2 inch strips:  
**3-4 green or red bell peppers**
- Slice into rings, 1/2 inch thick:  
**2 large red onions (yellow work well too)**
- Over a bed of hot charcoals, cook the pepper strips until slightly roasted/charred. Cook onions until soft and translucent (can also be done on stove).
- Remove peppers and onions from grill and keep in a large microwavable or oven-safe dish with cover.
- Remove eggplant from marinade and pour marinade into

pepper/onion dish and keep covered.

- Grill eggplant slices over hot charcoals, turning as needed. Cook until grilled on both sides and moderately soft but not falling apart.
- Remove eggplant from grill as they each finish cooking and place in bowl with peppers/onions.
- After last eggplant slices are finished and added to peppers/onions, microwave if needed to warm up peppers/onions.
- Lightly toast on charcoal grill:  
**Slices of sturdy bread such as sour dough (wheat or white), focaccia, etc.**
- Spread **pesto** on each side of bread and build sandwich with eggplant, onions and peppers.

You can store dish with eggplant, onions, peppers and marinade in fridge and heat up what you need for sandwiches. Toast the bread in toaster or under broiler in oven. Enjoy!

*Jill Schneider*



## Tips for storing the bounty . . .

### Pesto Cubes

Most gardeners wait as long as they can to pick their basil and make pesto, often harvesting all their basil before the first night when frost is predicted. If you find yourself with huge amounts of pesto to store, try this method. As you make each batch, spoon the pesto into ice cube trays. Freeze until solid. Remove from freezer and pop the cubes out of trays and store in freezer-grade ziplock baggies. Use them throughout the year as needed by thawing in fridge or microwave them a bit to thaw them for recipes.

### Garlic Cubes

If you find your garlic starting to sprout during storage, you can freeze it in olive oil and use as needed. Peel garlic and cut each clove in half to remove any green sprouts in the middle (these have a bitter flavor). Chop up garlic by hand or in food processor. Spoon a clove or two's worth of chopped garlic into the bottom of each section of an ice cube tray. Top off each section with olive oil. Freeze until solid. Remove from freezer and pop the cubes out of trays and store in freezer-grade ziplock baggies. Remove cubes from freezer as needed for all those recipes that start out with "heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in pan and add chopped garlic."

### Freeze Basil or Dill (and other herbs)

Who can use all that dill or basil (unless you're making pesto) when it's at its best. To store these herbs (and others) in the freezer, pick the amount you'd like to store. Clean and pat dry. With scissors or knife, cut into small pieces and place on a cookie sheet or plate that can fit flat in your freezer. Once herbs are frozen (~30 min.), slip herbs into freezer-grade ziplock baggies. You can remove as much as you need later for soups, stews or other recipes. Thanks for the idea Pat!