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# VERONA COMMUNITY GARDEN

Newsletter #2

*April 10, 2026*

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Verona Community Garden and That's My Brick!®



## Events

**April 12, at 11:00 a.m. (this Sunday)**

**Planning Your Kitchen Garden Workshop**

Location: Garden (weather permitting)

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Rain Date: Wednesday, April 29 at 6:30 p.m.  
 Location: Verona Public Library

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Join us for a workshop presented by the Backyard Garden Company focused on planning your kitchen garden for a successful growing season.

**RSVP here:**

<https://forms.gle/6i3tH8PnaFb6M5VF7>

All Verona residents are welcome—feel free to share with friends and neighbors!



A chat in the garden with Dani Scannella, owner of  
*The Backyard Garden Co.*

Sunday, April 12 at 11am  
 Verona Community Garden

**April 30 – May 2****Montclair Community Farms Annual Plant Sale Fundraiser**

Location: Montclair Community Farms

- **Thursday, April 30:** 9:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.
- **Friday, May 1:** 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- **Saturday, May 2:** 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (or until sold out)

**May 1–2****Rutgers Master Gardeners of Essex County Plant Sale**

Location: Presby Memorial Iris Gardens

- **Friday, May 1:** 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- **Saturday, May 2:** 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**May 9****Additional Plant Sale Date**

Location: Essex County Environmental Center

- **Saturday, May 9:** 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**May 2, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.****Opening Work Day & Orientation (All Members)**

All members—new and returning—are expected to attend.

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- **Check-In:** Please sign in upon arrival

We look forward to getting the season off to a great start together!



## Reminders & Tips

- **The official garden opening is May 2.** Returning gardeners are welcome to work in their bed. New gardeners are encouraged to wait until orientation. **No one can begin this season until your payment is made online or mailed in. If you pay online you do not need to also mail in a lease agreement.**
- A list of gardeners names and email addresses will be emailed to everyone. The purpose is for each of you to find a garden buddy. **Do not share this list.**
- **Those gardeners who share a common wall or bed** will be invited to a separate meeting to discuss productive uses of your shared space.
- The shed will not be ready for common use until May 2. Use caution if you must enter.

The lock combination is 2497, **Please do not share it with anyone except paid garden members.** The shackle on the lock (U Shaped bar)

- **What to Bring to the Garden:** Each gardener should have a personal bucket or tote with basic supplies, such as: gloves, pruners, snips (small pointed shears), a trowel, a claw rake, string, harvest bags, and waste bags. A small spray bottle of alcohol is also helpful for cleaning tools between uses.
- **Tool Kit Option:** If you prefer a ready-made solution, a garden tool and tote set can be a convenient way to keep everything organized.



Alternatively, something along these lines are useful. [Garden tools and Tote Set.](#)

- **Soil Access:** Soil is available next to the green shipping container behind the shed. You are welcome to use wheelbarrows

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lock, push the shackle into the lock with the combo set, then spin the number dials. Be sure to check the area for other gardeners before you lock the gates.

- **Gate Use:**

To open the front gate, push down on the handle.

You may also use the back gate if parking in the gravel lot is more convenient.

**Always close gates behind you to keep critters out.**

- **Water Access:**

The water is now on. Hoses will be installed later this month.

- **Waste Policy:**

All refuse and plant waste must be taken home—please do not use the black municipal trash can for garden waste.



- **Stay**

**Informed:**

The shed bulletin board includes bed assignments, a plot map, and planting calendars—check it regularly for updates.

- **Shared Tools:**

Tools and gloves in the shed are available for community use. Tomato cages, fertilizers, and certain supplies are reserved for the advisory committee, donation beds, and school use only.

- **Community Donation Beds:**

The metal beds in the public

is also appreciated—these beds should be filled to about 3 inches below the top.

- **Student Groups:**

Students will be working in the garden at various times throughout the day. If you are present during these times, please do not engage with the classes so they can stay focused on their activities.

- **Planting Timing:**

Just because plants are available for sale at garden centers does not mean it is the right time to plant them outdoors. Be sure to research appropriate planting times for your crops.

- **Community Donation Beds:**

The metal beds in the public park area are maintained by committee members and students. Produce from these beds is donated to residents of Hillwood Terrace Apartments and others in need. Volunteer opportunities to help with these beds will be shared soon—thank you in advance for your support!

- **Soil Testing & Monitoring:**

Many gardeners find a soil moisture meter helpful for proper watering. You may also consider a soil NPK test kit (typically under \$20) to monitor nutrient levels. For more detailed analysis, the [Rutgers Soil Testing Lab](#) offers testing services for approximately \$20. If you complete a soil test,

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please share your results with  
Carol or Dan.

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students. Produce from these beds is donated to residents of Hillwood Terrace Apartments and others in need. Volunteer opportunities to help with these beds will be shared soon—thank you in advance for your support!



## What's Up in the Garden

### Getting Your Garden Going After Winter

One of the best things about the first thaws of spring is watching the peeks of new growth from your perennials, or watching the leaf buds on your trees and shrubs begin to open and expand. Spring bulbs emerge and fill the air with sweet fragrances and bright color. Your lawn begins to green and come back to life. Your garden will readily begin to come to life as the weather warms, but it'll still rely on you for some extra care and attention before the growing season really gets going. Here are some things you can do to help get your garden going after winter.



Prune fall flowering shrubs and trees. This is a good time to attend to any rejuvenating cuttings and removal of dead wood from winter's onslaught.

Clean the crowns of emerging perennials, such as daylilies and ornamental grasses. Remove last year's layer of deceased growth, making room and airing out the crown when the weather warms, keeping your plants from getting fungal diseases.

Plant summer blooming bulbs and tender bulbs dug up from the fall, such as gladiolas and tender lilies. Canna, ranunculus, calla lilies, begonia tubers, elephant ears, and other such bulbs, corms, and tubers should be planted in the spring as soon as all danger of frost has past.

Prepare your veggie garden. Start with making sure your soil is ready. Amend with organic matter and compost after removing protective coverings if you put one on

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wait until your sown seeds sprout and produce true leaves before using a product like Preen.

Add a fresh layer of mulch to your established perennial beds as they come back to life.

Take time to remove weeds out of walkways either by hand or with a chemical like Roundup. If you don't get a handle on these tough weeds now, you'll never completely eradicate as the season progresses.

Waking up your garden from a long winter's sleep is an exciting and rejuvenating time, something most gardeners look forward to each year. If you're like me, you'll be jumping at the bit to get out in the yard and get everything ready for the growing season ahead. There's plenty to do, so enjoy and happy spring!

### **7 Vegetable Garden Layout Ideas To Grow More Food In Your Garden**



There are lots of possible vegetable garden layouts. There are many ways to organize and space out vegetables in a garden. There's the growing. And then there's a creative aspect to it. That means that two gardeners given the same garden bed can come up with completely different layout plans. Enjoy the creative

journey! There's no perfect vegetable garden layout—there's a layout that suits you and your situation.

#### **Grow in Blocks – Rows are for Farms**

In a traditional row-gardening layout, there's space between rows for cultivating. That

cultivating chops down little weed seeds that are germinating. Gardening this way allows one person to weed and tend a lot of plants when labour—not space—is limited.

Planting in rows can make sense on big pieces of land.

But in a home vegetable garden, we're growing on a different scale. In a home veggie garden, we're limited by space.

And that means growing some vegetables in blocks, instead of spread-out rows of plants.

By growing in solid blocks of plants, we fit lots of plants into a plot and have less bare ground showing.



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means growing some plants upwards instead of letting them sprawl around the ground.

### **For example:**

Growing a climbing plant up a stake or trellis frees up space on the ground for different plants.

Grow crops in layers. By growing vertically, you can also grow more than one crop in a small space. For example, make an A-frame for cucumbers, and underneath the A-frame, plant leafy greens that benefit from some shade during the summer.

And one more idea if you're making layers in your garden: Hanging baskets. They're great for herbs and many of the leafy greens.

### **Climbing Plants for Vertical Gardens**

Here are a few climbers to grow in a small space:

- Malabar spinach (a vining spinach substitute, not really a spinach...but excellent during the heat of summer)
- Achocha (a.k.a. Bolivian cucumber, it's absolutely prolific, and a fun novelty)
- Vining peas
- Pole beans
- Runner beans
- Cucumber
- Squash



### **Plant Densely, and then Thin – Seed Spacing...How Many plants?**

Seed-spacing recommendations on seed packets and in articles are often geared towards commercial production. And these recommendations work fine in a home garden.

*But...* Most plants do well with less than the spacing recommended on a seed packet.

So if you want to grow more food, plant more densely.

### **Forget Finicky**

Commercial growers (or hard-core gardeners with big gardens) often use seeding machines to place seeds at a specific spacing. There are also hand-operated seed dispensers to help get perfect spacing.



Your plants won't know the difference—and you can make your seeding less complicated by not being finicky.

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When seeding a block, I hand-scatter seed. With practice, you can scatter seeds so that they are spread at approximately the distance you want. Don't sweat the exact spacing.

It's not an exact process. You will get some seeds too close together; and some too far apart. (Remember, gardening is detox for perfectionists.)

Where seeds are too close, thin as plants start to grow.

Beets too close? Thin out a few and enjoy baby beet greens.

Carrots too close? Thin your block of carrots and have some baby carrots for supper.

When scatter-seeding blocks, you will use more seed than if you seed in rows.

That's fine: It saves time and you get more veg from the same area.

### **Choose Crops to Maximize Your Harvest**

To grow more food in less space, be strategic with your crop choices as you're laying out a vegetable garden.

My first rule of vegetable gardening is to grow things you like. Sure, radishes are easy to grow. But do you like eating them three times a day?!

Here are three other things to think about as you fit more food plants into your space.

Next, avoid the space hogs. These are crops that take up a piece of garden for the entire growing season...and only give you something at the end of the year. That's right: if you have a small garden, think twice about those parsnips and Brussels sprouts!

Keep the vining space hogs, but grow them vertically (see above.) So instead of squash sprawling around the garden, grow it up a fence or trellis. (I've even grown squash along a cedar hedge!)

If you have a small plot, skip the stingy crops. I'm talking about something like edamame, which is easy to grow and delicious...but takes a fair bit of space considering what you get from it. You'll get way more bang for your buck with something like bush beans.

And let's get back to the idea of rows versus blocks as we think about choosing which vegetables to grow.

### **What to Grow in Blocks**

Here are examples of crops that I like to grow in solid blocks, instead of rows.

Beet

Carrot

Leafy greens

Garlic

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It makes sense to grow certain crops in rows. Here are the ones I prefer to grow in rows:

- Potatoes (so I can easily "hill" them)
- Tomatoes (because I stake them, and it's easiest when I can access them from both sides)
- Peas (for ease of picking)
- Pole beans (for ease of picking)



### **Keep Pathways to a Minimum**

Some crops simply won't thrive in your area. As a beginning gardener, it's best to start with plants that are well-suited to your climate and save the more challenging ones for later.

How can you tell which crops struggle locally? Check what other gardeners in your area are growing, see what's available at your local farmers' market, and take note of the transplants at nearby nurseries. Ask your local gardening friends on Facebook—gardeners LOVE to talk about what they grow!



Start with crops that are known to do well in your region. Once you gain confidence, you can experiment with the more "iffy" crops—you might be pleasantly surprised.

### **Plant Two Crops Together**

Companion planting is another way to fit more plants into your vegetable garden.

Plant two vegetables in the same space—ones that are good companions because they mature at different speeds.

My favourite combination is fast-growing radish, with slower-growing carrots or beets.



When I scatter carrot seed on a block of garden, I also scatter radish seed. The radish grows much more quickly than the carrot, and is ready to harvest while the carrot seedlings are still quite small.

Harvesting the radishes frees up space for the carrot seedlings, and as the tap root of the radish comes out, it also loosens the soil around the carrot seedlings. It's a perfect combination.

### **Grow Succession Crops**

Growing vegetables in succession as each parcel of your garden makes sure none of it goes unused during the growing season.

As your spring-planted cool-season crops finish, plant a heat-loving crop for summer.

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Garlic done? I like to grow rapini (and for those of you who are avowed rapini haters because of the bitterness, get yourself a bowl of orecchiette pasta with rapini and some chunks of spicy sausage fried to crispy, and you'll see rapini in a different light.)



*Steven Biggs© 2026 Food Garden Life Media*

## Plant Spotlight

### Borage: A Pollinator Magnet and Garden Ally

If you're looking for a plant that works as hard as it charms, borage is a standout addition to any garden bed. This fast-growing herb produces clusters of striking, star-shaped blue flowers that are irresistible to bees and other pollinators. But beyond its beauty, borage earns its place by actively supporting the health of your garden.



Borage is especially valued as a companion plant. Tucked among tomatoes, cabbage, strawberries, squash, or even along the edges of cucumber beds, it helps deter common pests like tomato hornworms and cabbageworms. Its benefits don't stop there—borage attracts an impressive lineup of beneficial insects, including parasitic braconid wasps, hoverflies, and predatory bugs that feed on unwanted garden pests. It also serves as a host plant for lacewings, whose larvae are known for their appetite for aphids and other nuisances. Some gardeners even note that the plant's scent may help repel tomato hornworms.

One of borage's greatest strengths is how easy it is to grow. It thrives in a wide range of conditions (Zones 3–10) and will do well in most gardens as long as the soil is well-drained. Plant it in a sunny location after the last frost, once the soil has warmed. Sow seeds about ¼ to ½ inch deep, and once seedlings reach 6–8 inches tall, thin them so plants are spaced 18–24 inches apart. Rows should also be spaced about 18–24 inches apart to give this shrubby plant room to spread—it typically grows 1 to 3 feet tall and wide.

Borage requires minimal care. Water regularly while plants are establishing, but there's no need for fertilizer. A layer of mulch will help retain moisture and suppress weeds. To keep plants blooming לאורך the season, trim off older flowers.

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and new blooms for late summer. Be prepared for borage to make itself at home in your garden. Healthy plants produce plenty of seeds, and it's common to see volunteer seedlings pop up for a year or two after planting. These are easy to transplant to new spots—or simply compost if you have more than you need.

With its combination of beauty, resilience, and natural pest control, borage is a simple way to boost both the productivity and biodiversity of your garden this season.



<https://www.almanac.com/growing-borage-home-great-garden-and-health>



## Recipes

### White Beans with Radishes, Miso and Greens

*Colu Henry*  
[\*NYT Cooking\*](#)

In this 10-minute take on beans and greens, creamy white beans are sautéed in butter and garlic, then crunchy radishes and tender greens are stirred in at the end for texture and crunch. White miso, a fermented soybean paste that's worth seeking out if it's not already in your fridge, provides a complex, umami flavor that



pairs well with the mild beans. Finish the dish with a good squeeze of lemon to add brightness and balance out the salty miso. Serve these beans on their own, or alongside grilled shrimp or salmon. Any leftover miso paste can be whisked into salad dressings and marinades, or used as a base for a quick weeknight soup.

Total Time: 10 minutes

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2 tablespoons white miso  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter  
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
2 (15-ounce) cans white beans, like cannellini or butter beans, rinsed and drained  
3 cups pea shoots, arugula or other baby greens  
3 to 4 small radishes, thinly sliced  
Fresh lemon wedges, for squeezing  
Black pepper

**PREPARATION:****Step 1**

In a small bowl, whisk the miso with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water until dissolved. Set aside.

**Step 2**

In a large skillet, melt the butter over medium heat until it foams. Add the garlic and cook, stirring often, until fragrant, about 30 seconds.

**Step 3**

Add the beans and toss to coat with the garlic butter. Add the miso mixture and cook, stirring occasionally, until the flavors have melded and the beans are warmed through, about 2 minutes. The beans should be a bit saucy, so thin it out with a tablespoon or so of water if needed.

**Step 4**

Remove from the heat and stir in the greens and radishes. Gently toss until the greens are just wilted. Squeeze with lemon juice, season with pepper and gently toss again.

## Gin Daisy

*Wine Enthusiast*

The gin daisy originated in the late 1800s in Washington, D.C., according to Mr. Boston's Official Bartender's Guide, but many variations have popped up since. The oldest published recipe for a daisy cocktail was found in Professor Jerry Thomas' The Bartenders Guide or How to Mix Drinks: The Bon-Vivant's Companion from 1862.

As for the actual moniker? "The name daisy seemingly derives not from the flower but from slang for something extraordinary—from which the word 'doozy' is also derived," writes Rob Chirico in Field Guide to Cocktails.

**Ingredients**

2 ounces dry gin

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¾ ounce lemon juice  
 2 teaspoons grenadine  
 Splash of soda water  
 Lemon slice, for garnish  
 Mint sprig, for garnish

### Instructions

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, combine gin, orange liqueur, lemon juice and Grenadine.



Shake until combined. Strain into a rocks glass filled with crushed or cubed ice.

Top with club soda to fill the glass and garnish with a lemon slice and mint sprig.

Enjoy responsibly.



## Poems & Humor

### Spring

#### Christina Rossetti

Frost-locked all the winter,  
 Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,  
 What shall make their sap ascend  
 That they may put forth shoots?  
 Tips of tender green,  
 Leaf, or blade, or sheath;  
 Telling of the hidden life  
 That breaks forth underneath,  
 Life nursed in its grave by Death.

Blows the thaw-wind pleasantly,  
 Drips the soaking rain,  
 By fits looks down the waking sun:

There is no time like Spring,  
 Like Spring that passes by;  
 There is no life like Spring-life born to  
 die,  
 Piercing the sod,  
 Clothing the uncouth clod,  
 Hatched in the nest,  
 Fledged on the windy bough,  
 Strong on the wing:  
 There is no time like Spring that  
 passes by,  
 Now newly born, and now  
 Hastening to die.

### Garden Puns

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trees;  
 Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,  
 Swollen with sap put forth their  
 shoots;  
 Curled-headed ferns sprout in the  
 lane;  
 Birds sing and pair again.

There is no time like Spring,  
 When life's alive in everything,  
 Before new nestlings sing,  
 Before cleft swallows speed their  
 journey back  
 Along the trackless track -  
 God guides their wing,  
 He spreads their table that they  
 nothing lack, -  
 Before the daisy grows a common  
 flower  
 Before the sun has power  
 To scorch the world up in his  
 noontide hour.

Every day I'm brusselin'  
 Totally radish  
 You look radishing  
 Give peas a chance  
 Find your inner peas  
 Spread hap-pea-ness  
 Peas and quiet  
 I dig carrots  
 Keep calm, carrot on  
 Lettuce romaine calm  
 Lettuce celebrate  
 I love you from my head to-ma-toes  
 I'm a gardener down to-ma-toes  
 Kale yes!  
 Turnip the music  
 You're one in a melon  
 Oh my gourd



## Garden Centers

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[Verona Community Gardens Inc - 240 Pleasant Valley Way, West Orange](#)
[Metropolitan At Caldwell Nursery - 246 Passaic Ave, West Caldwell](#)
[La Serra Gardens - 813 Union Blvd, Totowa](#)
[Centre Ridge Garden Center - 652 Centre St, Nutley](#)
[Cerbos Parsippany Greenhouse & Garden Center - 440 Littleton Rd., Parsippany](#)
[The Farm at Green Village - 403 Green Village Rd., Green Village](#)

### Educational Platforms

**Wildstead** is a design practice and education platform for people who are ready for change — ecologically, aesthetically, and personally. Design services. Self-guided curriculum. And an app coming soon. Wildstead® replaces authority with agency through design, education, and stewardship of land as a living system. <https://www.wildstead.com/>



## Building Legacy One Brick at a Time

[Verona Community Garden and That's My Brick!®](#) have joined forces to raise money for our project! The Verona Community Garden is located near HBW Middle School.

The goal of this space has been to create a multi-use community centerpiece. The garden has given community members an opportunity to learn, connect and grow together.



This cherished spot has grown over the last 4 years and is fully funded by grants and donations. As the demand for the garden has grown we need a walkway in our public section of the garden. We are asking for your support through an engraved brick fundraiser.

Help us create a legacy for the community by showing your support with this fundraiser.

[order here](#)

### Stay Connected with VCG!

Join our vibrant community online! Follow us on **Facebook** (*Verona NJ Community Garden*) and **Instagram** (*veronanjcommunitygarden*) for updates, photos, and event highlights. You can also stay in the loop by joining the [VCG WhatsApp Group!](#)

### VCG Manager:

Carol Thomas – [veronanjcommunitygarden@gmail.com](mailto:veronanjcommunitygarden@gmail.com)

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