

#16 November 2019

Green Thoughts

Conversations and ideas about growing at The Spring Gardens

As we reach November some gardeners have clear-cut their plots while others continue growing with unabated enthusiasm. October is ending mildly so tomato plants continue to ripen nice fruit

Ill-winds

on the vine. Unwittingly they are flowering anew and setting new fruit. Don't they know that cold weather is just around the November corner?

Cornucopia

8 Nov

During the mid-October cool weather our resident bee colony was nowhere to be seen, sensibly staying inside preparing for winter. But in late October the bees started foraging again, gathering their last minute bounty before really hunkering down.

I have lettuce, kohlrabi, spinach and broccoli, cold-hardy plants, started from seed, on their journey through winter and for harvest in mid-spring. I have most of them under light-weight polypropylene cloths that let in 85% of the sun (and keep the plants a little warmer too). It also lets in rain water but protects the plants against pests. They have already survived a late October heavy rain. I might get some red oak lettuce for a Thanksgiving feast. Other gardeners who are better at getting fall crops started in mid-August, have large heads of lettuce and also kale and other cole (*brassica*) varieties.

Tis an ill wind

Mid-October also brought us a day or so of quite heavy winds. Gusts up to 50 mph. I went out to survey what winds did to tall, foliage-rich tomato plants and pole bean plants supported by cages. Sitting targets. It turns out the plants most affected by the winds were in conical-shaped



cages – narrow at the bottom and wider at the top. The cages that had square cross-section profiles were better able to keep the plants upright. The plants that toppled or were leaning over were all listing toward the east. And that

makes sense since NOAA reported the winds were coming from the west. Generally our winds do come from the west so perhaps it pays to reinforce the cages with that in mind. I pound sturdy steel or wooden posts into the ground and then tie the cages to each other and to the posts. Nonetheless I had some plants lean over because I didn't use enough posts.

I know that winds can come from any direction, nor'easters after all, are not from the west. And hurricanes are capricious. Fortunately we don't have to worry much about tornados. They tend to travel from southwest to northeast.

More examples of "I've fallen over and can't get up"





The tomato plants were not irreparably harmed and soon after these photos were taken most plants were rescued.

Things we'll be thinking about over the winter months

Bees Will the current colony of bees survive and emerge again in the spring? Remembering bee colonies past, survival through the winter is a sometime thing. Last spring the current bees collectively came from somewhere else, probably nearby, and on their own volition decided to settle into The Spring Gardens. They took over that empty, sturdy hive in our northeast corner. A wonderful choice, we think.

Subsidence Gardening is the converse of a video game. Everything takes time and patience. That's why it is a remarkable gift to introduce children to gardening. They learn about the seasons and wind and rain, soil and temperature. Watching things grow, more slowly than watching paint dry. Seeing that plants can detect the sun and turn toward it. Slowly, elegantly. And as we know, the earth can sink in spots. The Spring Gardens is not immune to these dips. Will we see noticeable changes when we reach the next equinox in March? Stay tuned. The effects are slow but not glacial.

And please don't forget Cornucopia....

Cornucopia : A Seasonal Food Event – Friday November 8

Our Annual fundraiser returns! Cornucopia: The Seasonal Food event will take place at The Bethany Mission Gallery 1527 Brandywine St. from 7 - 9:30 PM. Hors d'oeuvres and cocktails will be provided. Please bring cash for amazing raffle prizes and a silent auction you won't want to miss! Our 2019 Fundraising Goal is \$20,000 for a new storage structure. We appreciate your support!

Tickets: \$60 for Individual \$100 for Supporter \$250 for Sponsor

Purchase tickets online by [going to our Eventbrite page](#), or you can mail a check by November 1 to: **The Spring Gardens PO Box 56171 Philadelphia, PA 19130**

If you mail a check, please also RSVP via email to events@thespringgardens.org. If you cannot attend, but would still like to make a donation, you can mail a check to the address above or make a donation via PayPal on our website <http://www.thespringgardens.org>

Please send your ideas, thoughts,
suggestions and observations to:

e.gruberg@temple.edu

that address can also be used for getting
on the mailing list for **Green Thoughts**, or
getting off.

Prepared by Ed Gruberg

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