**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Middlesex County Master Gardener Focus Group**

**March 25, 2011**

In attendance:  Chaleen Abley, Jamie Burgess, Fern Martin, Chantal Foster, Maureen Gillis, Barbara Glista, Tim Grilley, Victoria McCarthy along with InternsTad Bartles, Sherry Van Liere and Tom Kalal.

**Thanks to Maureen and Bernie** for giving up their chips and salsa at the last minute, and Chantal’s boys for the banana bread. We send our best wishes to Marsha’s mom and hope for a speedy recovery.

**Minutes** have been posted to<http://mcmgcg.weebly.com/>

**Financials:**

Maureen indicated no change to the $431.16. This balance should be enough to get us through the season for our regular expenses and as such, we do not intend to seek a CMGA grant this year unless the Interns have a special project. As always, we gladly accept donations, most recently from Marsha for peas and nitrogen – thanks!

**Old Business:**

* Soil Test: Tad shared the results of his inquiries regarding the most recent soil test results – questions regarding “low trace elements” and “above optimum” amounts of macro nutrients. Bottom line: no need to worry about low trace elements and no need to add more compost to the “seasoned” part of the garden. There was much discussion on this topic, but it was concluded that only the edge of the garden will be treated with compost and the other established rows will be left as is, nitrogen will be added at planting time.
* Pea Planting: Jamie reviewed the Sugar Snap Pea planting activities from last weekend, starting with John’s prep installing the new fencing, Fern’s help in cleaning things up and Chaleen, Maureen, Marsha and Jamie coming in for the planting. All we need is a little warm weather to get things rolling. There is a 50 – 55 day maturity timeframe for this crop from germination. Nice job!
* Russell Library Outreach: A prep meeting has been scheduled for April 7 at 9:00 in Haddam. The focus of the presentation is Organic Gardening including segments on composting, container gardening and vegetable gardening. Participants will be John, Jamie, Barbara and Chantal.

**New Business:**

* Spinach Harvesting: Our trusty Interns have agreed to keep an eye on the spinach during their weekly trek to Haddam. When they give the signal and harvesting begins, we have agreed to harvest the entire plant instead of clipping leaves. Stay tuned via email for news on harvesting since it will likely begin before our next scheduled meeting.
* Garden Plan: We reviewed a general outline of how crops will be positioned in the garden this year (which Maureen will post on the website) with specific varieties to be discussed at the next meeting. We will be keeping the same crop mix, excluding squash once again, and eliminating determinate tomatoes from the garden based on less than optimal performance last year. In addition to donations we will receive from Paul and Sandy’s Too, everyone is encouraged to offer up varieties with which they have had success, or wish to share. First up will be lettuce and onion planting. Jamie has offered lettuce seed for the row along the compost bins and Chantal will purchase onions. Jamie will also sow lettuce in the cold frames this Sunday, March 27.
* Cold Frame: During winter storage in the shed, the cold frame door hinge was damaged. Marsha is attempting to have this repaired and in the future we will store in the barn.
* April 16 – Open the Garden at 1:00 p.m.: We will have our Garden Set up, including general weeding, set up of hose reel, visitor’s station and gate maintenance. It is also an opportunity for Interns to get familiar with the garden set up and location of tools, etc. Lettuce and onion planting will take place.
* May 7 – Prep the Garden at 10:00 a.m.: This is the next opportunity to work together as a group setting up the soaker systems, tomato stakes, cucumber supports as well as familiarizing Interns with the garden.
* May 28 – Planting Date at 10:00 a.m. (rain date May 29): This is a great experience! Lots of plants, people and fun. It’s a couple of months away, but plan to bring newspaper as all rows are mulched with wet newspaper covered in Mainely Mulch. Chantal will bring two bales to the party.

**Next Meeting is April 29, 6:30 pm. – Marsha, can you bring refreshments?**

Meeting ended at 7:40 pm but we stood around chatting until after 8!

Submitted by,

Chantal Foster