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

**March 30, 2012**

In attendance: Susan Allison, Tad Bartles, Peggy Becker, Jamie Burgess, John Carlson, Marsha Dowling, Chantal Foster, Barbara Glista, Tim Grilley, Tom Kalal, Vicky McCarthy, Karen Rottner, Sherry Van Liere, Jim Woodworth and future Interns Terri Cain, Flora Drapeau, and Alexandra French

Thanks to Chantal for a lovely spread of homemade chili, fruit, cheese, and crackers and Maureen for rolls and beverage. Cherry’s PEP meeting also provided some cookies, drinks, wraps. The minutes from our last meeting have been posted to <http://mcmgcg.weebly.com/>

Chantal called the meeting to order at 6:30 and proceeded with introductions. Marsha iterated the importance of Interns taking a lead role in the garden; while the ongoing Focus Group supports the effort, each year we look to the Intern Class to take charge, make improvements, etc. Members, including Interns, should think about whether they’d like to take on the Co-Chair role with Chantal in the coming season/year.

REMINDER: Don’t forget, all volunteer hours should be logged into the UConn system at <http://www.uconnmastergardeners.com> If you haven’t signed up for the site yet, email Vicky for the initial password. After, you sign in using your email and a password of your choice.

Financials – we have $316.24 in our account, John mentioned that CMGA can be a source of grants if we need funds. They have generously provided funds in the past for fencing, compost bin, cold frame, compost tea brewer, and general operations.

**Old Business:**

Soil Test – Chantal passed around the soil test results; it has been scanned and posted to <http://mcmgcg.weebly.com/>. Changes from the prior test (11/10) are pH decreasing from 7.0 to 6.6 and organic content increasing from medium to high (you win some, you lose some!). Otherwise, results and recommendations were little changed. Before planting, we should sprinkle some N (blood meal) on the planting rows. Vicky also suggested side dressing during growing season is important, and the group concurred. We haven’t done that in the past (except using fish emulsion) and should do so.

Rain Barrels – Tom reported on how he planned to fix the rain barrels (the plastic threaded opening for the hose bibb has broken off); permission has been received for the Extension Center to make the repairs. Tom will do so in the near future. (Note: Only 2 of the 3 barrels are connected to the roof gutters.)

Membership/Calendar/Interns – the membership listed was updated and people signed up for April and May garden dates. Chantal had a successful meeting with the Intern class earlier in the month, resulting in over 20 expressing interest and 10 Interns signing up for the web site and several attending today. We are very excited!

**New Business:**

***April Tasks:*** The calendar, including current sign up, has been posted to <http://cmgcommunitygarden.ning.com/>. If you work in the Garden in April/May, please report in the online monthly log (in the Discussion area) or email Maureen at moberngillis@comcast.net so she can update the log. From June onward, the first person each week should create a new Discussion (Garden Log for Week of XXX). Interns: if you want to start learning the ropes at the garden, but haven’t signed up because you want to have someone there to show you, just email Maureen or Chantal and we can arrange a time/date.

The following April tasks were agreed to:

* Start harvesting spinach shortly. See harvesting procedures for when/where to deliver. Generally, M, W, F, Sat is Amazing Grace and Tue, Thurs is SVDP.
* Maureen will give the garlic fish emulsion sometime soon
* Beans will be sown, depending on weather and availability of a planting row. The Old Farmer’s Almanac indicates beans can generally start being sown in Haddam from April 19-May 3. Chantal will secure yellow wax and Italian flat beans; Jamie will secure some Dragon Langerie bush and purple pole beans. We have green Provider beans in the seed box.
* Jim moved, turned, and watered the compost and it should sit for a while. He will move again when it’s time
* Other tasks when signed up for the garden: weed, water if needed.
* Cold Frame: Jamie will reseed some lettuce; we should later transplant tomato and eggplant seedlings (late April, see below). We will possibly grow okra in the frames in the summer; Chantal will check with SVDP whether they would use okra (Chantal, also check on the vegetable scraps for composting; can we arrange convenient pick up etc.? We DO need green matter for the compost, as it is mostly leaves and such).
* Chantal will purchase a rain gauge (Tom suggested a sturdy one, such as from Harts); the CLEAR Weather Station has been down for some time. (Joel indicated to me previously that they are awaiting software from Dell for the server).
* Susan will contact Marisa about herbs for the garden. Jamie has lavender and rosemary ready to replant in the garden; she will drop off sometime.
* April 27 Focus Group Meeting: We will transplant small eggplant to larger pots. Jamie will provide peat/cow pots; Maureen will provide 36 eggplant seedlings (last year, we planted Black Beauty); Chantal will provide potting soil; Sherry/Tad will bring table tarp; Tom will move most to his greenhouse, the rest will be planted in the cold frame. Maureen will provide some tomato seedlings for the cold frame (unless she kills them before that!).

***May Tasks:***

Garden set up day is May 5 at 9 am and planting day is May 19 at 9 am. We will sow cukes in the inside perimeter near the road and follow the same plan as last year for the main crops (rotation is not achievable since 4 of 5 rows are Solanaceae family). We need to determine, after peas are cut down, what to plant along the “non cuke” sides. We also need to determine whether cukes need more support than the fence, and if so, how to provide barrier for the cold frame (against deer) if we use the cuke trellises for cukes instead of barriers.

For Set Up Day MAY 5:

* We need to tighten the fence
* Soaker hoses will be installed (Jamie to provide some additional ones for the inside perimeter).
* Beans sowed if not already done
* Sow cukes if peas are done
* Intern orientation

Commitments for planting day MAY 19 are:

* If we don’t have leftover blood meal, someone needs to obtain. I’ll check the box next time I’m there
* Maureen will email Fern to see if he’ll arrange for tomatoes from Paul and Sandys Too (same # as last year; some cherry tomatoes and indeterminates, various varieties, 48 in total). (Last year we planted: Jetstar; Beefsteak; Early Girl; Mountain Gold; Sweet 100)
* Marsha will provide bell and cubanelle seedlings for planting day (need 32 total)
* Tad/Sherry will provide hot peppers (need variety of 12)
* We will use hay instead of Mainely Mulch. Hay is usually not recommended as a mulch since it contains many weed seeds and is the reason we switched several years ago to the expensive Mainely Mulch. We will have to see what happens but it might entail more vigorous weeding. Chantal will provide the hay.

Peggy and Flora will bring refreshments for the next meeting at 6:30 on Friday, April 27.

Meeting ended at about 8:30 pm.

Submitted by,

Maureen Gillis