



The Fentress Giving Garden

A collaborative, interdenominational food ministry
Issue 2025-7, October 2025

What We Need

Leaves and pine needles: Please keep us in mind as fall cleanup time approaches. We use a lot of [pine straw](#) and would be grateful for bags or truckloads. We can pick up bags if you contact us. See page 3 for info.

You: Sweet potato boxing on Saturday, October 25 at 8:30 A.M. Keep an eye on the Facebook page for changes due to weather. We're always ready to welcome new volunteers, and are grateful for all your help.

Around the Garden

We are humbled by God's blessings.

In the last issue, we mentioned receiving watermelons to distribute to our pantries and their guests. As you can see, our part in growing these was simply to accept the grace that was offered, go and pick up the melons. What a joy to be invited to be able to offer the fruits of many others' labors to our friends in need. Add the watermelon growers to the list along with the local farmers who have allowed us to glean collards or corn from their fields. In at least one case, "gleaning" has meant being invited into a previously unharvested part of a field and allowed to take what we could use. We are enormously thankful for these good-hearted people.



On short notice, over twenty volunteers turned out to harvest sweet potatoes. Short notice because the potatoes were ready, we faced some scheduling challenges, and we never know for sure what the weather will do in coming days. So, on Saturday, October 4th, our volunteers came to the garden in the cool of the morning and began the significant task of harvesting some 800 row feet of sweet potatoes. We had volunteers who could be described as new volunteers, frequent volunteers, stalwart volunteers, young, quite young, or rather "well-seasoned." Everybody pitched in and in in



Photos courtesy of Judy Speas.

about two and a half hours our abundant harvest was stored in the curing building, the garden space where they grew was cleaned and tidy, and the morning cool had given way to a gorgeous Indian summer day. Thank you to everyone who participated!

Companion Planting – a guest article

Are you familiar with the term “companion planting?” Chesapeake Master Gardener (CMG) and stalwart member of the garden leadership team, Chris Woodward, wrote the following article about companion planting. It’s great information for all of us who put seeds in the soil, hoping to see plants grow beautifully and abundantly. Thanks to Chris and to CMG for sharing her article with us.

HERBS AS NATURAL DETERRENTS FOR GARDEN PESTS

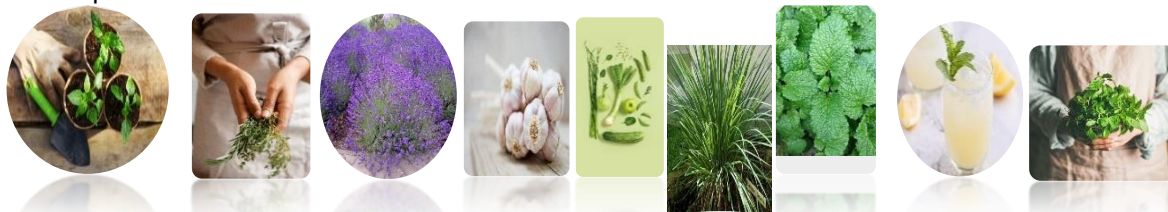
Plants keep pests away! After investing a lot of hard work in a garden, you don’t want insects, or *PESTS*,



to damage or destroy your garden. There’s a natural alternative to toxic insect sprays for pest-free garden-growing of herbs alongside your vegetables, that repels insects. There are many herbs that deter garden pests such as basil, rosemary, lavender, garlic, chives, lemongrass, lemon balm, mint, peppermint, thyme, catnip, chamomile, oregano, coriander, dill, and sage. Not only do they repel pests, many of them also attract beneficial insects such as bees and butterflies-pollinators, or predators of parasites and bad bugs. (See <https://herbsocietyblog.wordpress.com>, *Herbs Attract Good Insects to Garden*)

Some popular herbs that help keep pests away include the following list.

- Basil repels mosquitoes, carrot flies, white flies, thrips, moths, asparagus beetles, and other flying insects.
- Rosemary repels mosquitoes, beetles, cabbage moths, and other insects.
- Lavendar is part of the mint family and repels ants, moths, flies, fleas and mosquitoes.
- Garlic/Chives repel many pests. You’ve likely heard of garlic repelling vampires. If you believe in vampires, you may believe this is true. Garlic and chives do repel aphids, cabbage moths, codling moths, Mexican bean beetles, peach borers, Japanese beetles, root maggots, carrot root flies, slugs, and rabbits.
- Lemongrass is perfect for repelling mosquitos as it contains citronella oil. It must be grown in the sun to be an effective repellent.
- Lemon Balm contains high levels of citronella oil; repels mosquitoes and gnats.
- Mint/Peppermint repel spiders and insects including ants, cabbage moths, rodents, flea beetles, fleas, aphids, white flies, thrips, and mosquitoes. These plants spread out and grow fast; therefore, are invasive. Mints are also tough plants to remove once established. Plant in pots or planters to avoid this.



Companion planting. It’s important to ensure neighboring herbs and vegetables are compatible for effective pest deterrence. For example, basil partners well with tomatoes and peppers (bell, banana). The WV Extension site provides a wealth of knowledge on companion planting ([Companion Planting | Extension | West Virginia University](#)).

Growing conditions. Most herbs, annual or perennial, need six to eight hours of full sun. Soil is best if fertile and loamy, with a pH of 6.3 to 6.8 for optimum growth. Amend with composted organic matter if poor drainage and till or prepare to a depth of 8 inches. Raised beds are ideal for herbs if soil is heavy or has poor drainage. Sow seed in pots 6 weeks before the last frost date for transplant where garden vegetables are planned. Mist for moist soil until plants are established. Alternatives to seed are propagation from root divisions or cuttings. Light mulching 1 inch deep after transplant will help control weeds and retain moisture. For perennial herbs, lightly fertilize early spring to promote new root and shoot growth. This helps with vigorous growth. Generally, one-fourth to one-half of nitrogen used for vegetables in your area is recommended for herbs. (<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-420/426-420.html>, *Herb Culture and Use*)

Pest Impact-How the Herbs Work. Garlic water sprayed directly on plants is effective but must be reapplied after rain. Lavendar, thyme, scented geranium among others produces oils with a strong scent to mask plants, then in turn impede insects from locating them. This is advantageous to humans as the bugs and insects are confused with carbon dioxide and lactic acid exhalations being masked, along with the scent of human sweat.

Success Rate of Using Herbs For Pest Deterrence. While most herbs repel pests through a strong scent, the rate of success will vary dependent on specific herbs due to varying sensitivities, type of pest, and method of application. Moderate to good results are achievable when the method of using herbs is used strategically. However, pests may not be eliminated entirely solely by using herbs in the garden. Combined methods may be required for higher success, such as herb companion planting near most vulnerable plants, herbal sprays, and chemical pesticides as a last resort. The repellent effect of the herb can diminish when the scent dissipates. Frequent applications are necessary for effectiveness due to wind and rain. (<https://extension.msstate.edu>.)

Summary/Closing. You can help deter harmful pests from your garden by planting herbs. Whether planted in pots or in the garden soil, herbs can benefit vegetable plants when placed nearby and repel pests such as beetles, moths, bores, flying insects, thrips, aphids, slugs, rodents, and many more. Herbs do this by some flowering that attracts predator insects that eat or kill pests. Some herbs give off aroma and/or tastes that pests simply don't like. A high concentration of essential oils found in healthy, actively growing herbs repels most insects. This is a natural way to help with successful production of vegetables by repelling harmful pests, but this method may need to be combined with other integrated pest management steps.

References

<https://herbsocietyblog.wordpress.com>, *Herbs Attract Good Insects to Garden*, 2-15-25

<https://www.extension.wvu.edu>, *Companion Planting*, 2-28-25

<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-420/426-420.html>; Appling, Ashley; Graduate Assistant, Horticulture, Virginia Tech, and Latimer, Joyce; retired Extension Specialist, Horticulture, Virginia Tech. 2-15-25

<https://www.extension.msstate.edu>, *Can Fragrant Plants Help Repel Insects?*, 2-15-25

Get involved!!!

There are many ways you can help... By working in the garden on a regular basis or just for special projects, supporting us financially, providing pine straw or leaf mulch (we use a lot of both to mulch our rows), supplying new plastic bags for produce delivery to the food pantries, providing bottled water for volunteers, sharpening our tools, spreading the word to help us grow our volunteer base, and praying for this ministry.

We use a lot of pine straw in the garden.
Please bring bags or truckloads to the garden,
or contact us to pick up bags of pine straw.



Join us for **sweet potato boxing** on Saturday, October 25 at 8:30 A.M. Keep an eye on the Facebook page for changes due to weather.

To learn more, contact Judy Speas (judithspeas@gmail.com) at Centerville Baptist Church, or Janet Grubbs (jdgrubbs72@gmail.com) at Great Bridge United Methodist Church. Can't wait to hear from you.

We Have Harvested this Year

Our crops are producing abundantly. Look at the table below to see what we harvested and donated so far. All numbers are harvested weight in pounds:

Vegetable	Mid Sep – Mid Oct	2025 Total
Basil		3
Blueberries		28
Butternut Squash	839	911
Cantaloupe		1365
Cucumber	46	544
Eggplant	93	222
Garlic		67
Green Beans	22	265
Kale	9	28
Lettuce		311
Onions		391
Peas		18
Peppers (bell, jalapeño, banana)	513	2096
Potatoes		764
Summer Squash	11	616
Sweet Potatoes*	103	103
Tomatoes (large, Roma, Juliette, cherry)	493	2768
Turnips	66	66
Zucchini		<u>535</u>
Total	2,193	11,079

*The sweet potato harvest was a sample to determine readiness for harvesting. The remainder of the harvest is curing and is expected to exceed 1,000 pounds

The Fentress Giving Garden

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