



# The Homegrown Herald

The Official Newsletter of Homegrown, Phipps' Edible Garden Program

## Fall Finish

Dear Homegrown Gardeners,

Congratulations to everyone for wrapping up a spectacular and productive growing season! Even though we are starting to put our gardens to bed, fall is one of the best times of the year for gardeners with its own type of fulfillment. As the sun begins to set earlier and we start to retreat indoors, it offers us time to reflect on the fast-paced, event-filled days of summer.

One of those special summer events was the Homewood Good Food Festival. We would like to extend a warm thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and for everyone who attended the event. It was a beautiful day full of music, laughter, friends, and, of course, amazing food! We hope that everyone had just as

much fun as we did and we are looking forward to hearing your feedback.

We would like to remind everyone that fall is a great time to look back on the growing season and celebrate your successes as well as evaluate areas that might need some improvement. Keeping a journal of these thoughts is a great way to help yourself keep track of what worked well and what didn't.

As always, we love to hear from you with questions and comments, so don't be shy — we are here to help out in any way we can. We hope to see everyone soon and we will be in touch!

Happy Fall!



## inside

Revitalize your diet with **savory sweet potatoes**

Prepare your garden **for next spring**

Savor seasonal flavors of **sweet potato soup**

Meet this issue's remarkable **Homegrown Hero**

# For Your Health: Sweet Potato

**Heart Health** — Sweet potatoes contain B6 vitamins and potassium, which are important for a healthy heart. B6 vitamins help the body break down the harmful compound homocysteine, which causes blood vessels and arteries to harden. Potassium is helpful for the heart because it lowers blood pressure and helps regulate your heartbeat.

**Stress Relief** — About 1 cup of raw sweet potatoes contains 18 percent of the daily recommended amount of magnesium for an adult! Magnesium plays an important

role in the body — it reduces stress by promoting relaxation in the body and improving nerve and muscle health.

**Immune Health** — The dark orange color of a sweet potato comes from compounds called beta-carotene. These compounds fight against harmful molecules that cause diseases and give your immune system a major boost. Beta-carotene is especially good for its ability to fight against cancer-causing chemicals.

**Note:** After harvesting sweet potatoes from the garden, they need to be cured. The curing

process helps to repair damage to the potato and toughen the skin. Curing also allows sugars time to develop, resulting in a sweeter sweet potato. To cure sweet potatoes, brush off the excess soil (do not wash) and place them in a warm, dry area indoors for 10 days. After the curing process is done, you can store them for the winter in a dry, room temperature space.



# Upcoming Events

## Homegrown Garden Club Programs

Second Thursday of each month | 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Homewood-Brushton YMCA

7140 Bennett Street

Meet other gardeners and learn from guest speakers.

**Nov. 6:** Herbal Salves Workshop

**No class in December.**

**Jan. 11:** Vertical Gardening

**Feb. 8:** Garden Planning

## Cooking Classes

Tuesdays: Oct. 10, 17 and 24

Morning sessions: 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Evening sessions: 6 – 7:30 p.m.

Homewood-Brushton YMCA

7140 Bennett Street

Learn tips and tricks for making healthy and delicious meals.

Participants must R.S.V.P., as space is limited. To R.S.V.P., please call 412/441-4442.

## Recipe of the Month: Sweet Potato Soup

2 medium sweet potatoes  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 onion, finely chopped  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
1 teaspoon ground ginger  
2 teaspoons mild curry paste  
4 cups chicken broth

1. Peel and cut sweet potatoes into 1-inch cubes; set aside.
2. In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion, ginger and curry paste and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 minutes or until softened.
3. Add sweet potatoes and stir for 1 minute or until coated with spices.
4. Add broth and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer for 10 minutes (or until potatoes are tender).
5. Let cool and puree in a blender.
6. Reheat and serve.

# Garden Tips: Now What?

With summer coming to a close and fall well on its way, you may be asking yourself, “Now what?” Consider the tips below to wrap up this season and get a jump on next year.

**Harvest your remaining tender vegetables.** The USDA predicts the first frost in Pittsburgh will occur on Sun., Oct. 15, so plan to harvest all tender crops (e.g. tomatoes, peppers, eggplant) before that date. If you have unripe tomatoes on your vine, pick them and place them inside away from direct sunlight to finish ripening. You can leave cold, hardy plants in the garden for further harvesting if you wish — these include kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, spinach, carrots, beets, radishes and beans.



**Pull out old plants.** You can help to reduce pests and disease issues in your garden next year and make the space look tidier by removing finished plant material. After completing a final harvest, remove your warm weather plants and place them in the compost bin. If you don't have a compost bin, now is a great time to start one!

**Improve your soil.** Once your garden beds have been cleared, add a layer of compost or shredded leaf mulch to your beds. This will ensure that your gardens are healthy and ready to produce an abundance of vegetables next season.

**Plant a fall crop.** For the fall, choose cold-hardy varieties of plants that grow quickly. Some good cold-hardy vegetables include: spinach, kale, collard greens, broccoli, beets, carrots, turnips and radishes. In addition, you can plant garlic in the fall and harvest it in the spring!



# Homegrown Hero: Ms. Lawanda Long



This issue's Homegrown Hero has been a long time coming. Ms. Lawanda Long has been with Homegrown since the program began in 2013, and has helped to recruit many participants. Living in Homewood for over 40 years, she understands the importance of getting involved — to say that she is active in the community is an understatement! Among her contributions, she helps to organize the Harambee Festival and National Night Out every year. Most recently, she helped us throw our Homewood Good Food Festival!

Along with organizing events for the community, Ms. Lawanda spreads her love and passion through her garden. Starting at the age of 14, she developed a love and knowledge of plants and the outdoors by landscaping with Ms. Mary Savage. This soon blossomed into a passion for growing her own food. Since then, she has enjoyed sharing this experience with her daughter and, more recently, her grandson.

When she speaks about gardening, she explains the importance of sharing the experience with others. “You can either engage them physically in the garden by inviting them in,” she says, “or, if they are unable, share your harvest!” She hopes that by sharing with those around her, it will encourage people to try gardening for themselves!

## contact us!

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