

Robbins Farm Garden

A Cooperative Learning Project



R o b b i n s F a r m P a r k - A r l i n g t o n M A

Report

2010 Pilot Project

November 2010



Report Outline for 2010 Pilot
Robbins Farm Garden: A Cooperative Learning Project

Mission: to create a model community garden for local residents to plant, cultivate and harvest organic vegetables, herbs and flowers for their beauty and utility, and to serve as a high-engagement learning resource for visitors to Robbins Farm Park, local schools and the public.

Pilot Garden (for 2010 growing season):

- One 25' x 40' fenced plot (1,000 square feet)
- 65' below playground, 35' from fence and 50' from Eastern Ave sidewalk (see plan)
- Garden planted in April and replanted with winter rye for general park use in November
- Town of Arlington provided yard hydrant for water
- Town of Arlington Department of Natural Resources provided temporary snow fencing
- 9 founding members supplemented by 7 members through Arlington Recreation

Management/Budget:

- Garden endorsed by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park Board
- Garden supervised by Arlington Recreation Department
- Garden Finances managed by Arlington Recreation Department
- Garden members paid \$75 fee and committed to 15 hours of seasonal work/month
- Gardeners were responsible for setting up, planting, harvesting and removing garden
- Gardeners provided fence supports, seeds, fertilizer, compost bins, hoses and tools
- Harvest was shared by the gardeners and the public

Education/Community Outreach:

At the Garden:

- Welcome sign indicating the purpose of the garden & gardening hours
- Regular gardener hours (Sat AM & Wed PM) for demonstrations and Q&A
- Easy-to-read signs labeling all the vegetables, herbs and flowers planted
- Summer Garden Education classes for children (Arlington Recreation)
- Open Houses for Park events (Field Day, Movie Night, etc.)

On Line (for adult gardeners):

- Journal accounts of what's going on in the garden
- General information on the features and history of the garden
- Gardening schedule, activities and events, local garden calendar, etc.
- Links to blog and other useful sites (FORFP, cooperative gardens, etc)

On Line (for younger gardeners):

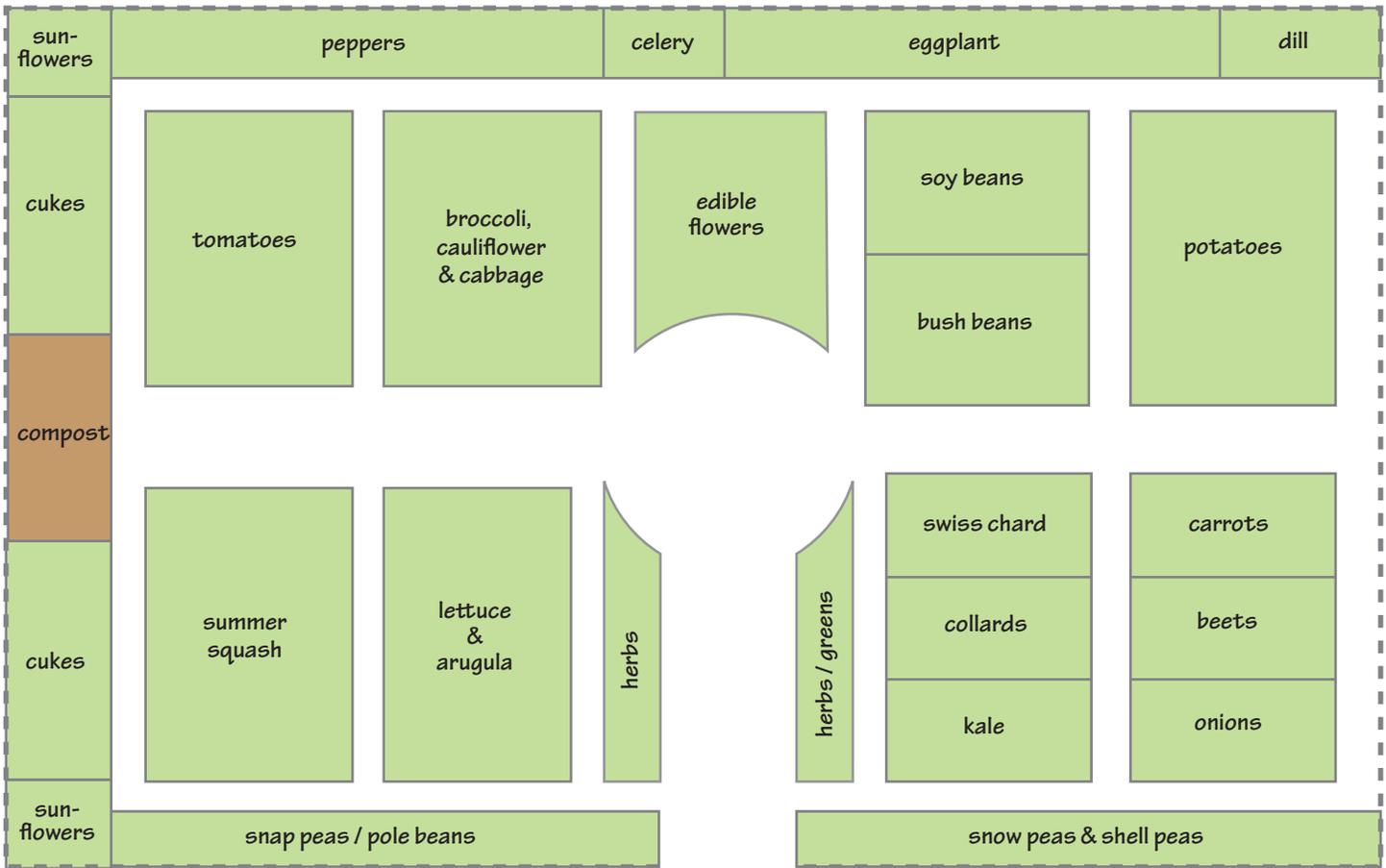
- Biographies of crops in the garden (history, taxonomy, edible parts, etc.)
- Basic garden science (veggie lifecycles, photosynthesis, etc.)
- Arlington and Robbins Farm gardening history
- Garden Books for Kids Bibliography (from Jennifer Cunningham)

Appearance:

- Garden maintained as an efficient, well-groomed resource for education
- No raised beds, plastic sheeting or interior fences
- Excess vegetative matter was composted in bins within the garden space

Plantings:

- Seasonal vegetables, herbs & edible flowers (see next page for complete list)



ROBBINS FARM COOPERATIVE GARDEN 2010 PILOT PROJECT

Amaranth
 Arugula
 Basil, Green, Lettuce Leaf
 Basil, Red, Sweet Petra Dark
 Bean, Green Bush, Provider
 Bean, Purple Bush, Royal Burgundy
 Bean, Yellow Bush, Rodcor
 Bean, Green Pole, Kentucky Blue
 Beets, Red, Merlin
 Beets, Specialty, Crosby Egyptian
 Broccoli, Arcadia
 Cabbage, Green, Derby Day
 Cabbage, Copenhagen Market Early
 Cabbage, Red, Red Express
 Calendula, Pacific Beauty
 Carrots, Multi-colored, Kaleidoscope
 Cauliflower, Snow Crown
 Cauliflower, Early Snowball
 Chives, Pink and White
 Collards, Georgia
 Cucumbers, Improved White Spine
 Dill, Dukat
 Eggplant, Asian, Mangan
 Eggplant, Specialty, Fairy Tale

Kale, Dinosaur, Lacinato
 Kale, Green, Ripbor F-1
 Kale, Red, Red Russian
 Lemon Balm
 Lettuce, Boston, Nancy
 Lettuce, Green Leaf, Nevada
 Lettuce, Black Seeded Simpson
 Lettuce, Red Leaf, Red Cross
 Lettuce, Red Leaf, Red Sails
 Lettuce, Romaine, Plato II
 Lettuce, Romaine, Verte Mar
 Nasturtium, Kaleidoscope Mix
 Onions, Set Collection
 Parsley, Green Curled
 Peas, Pod, Pioneer
 Peas, Snap, Sugar Snap
 Peas, Snow, Oregon Sugar Pods
 Pepper, Bell, Lady Bell
 Pepper, Chili, Jalapeno
 Pepper, Italian, Carmen
 Potatoes, Red
 Potatoes, Russet
 Radishes, Red, Cherriette
 Radishes, Red, Cherry Belle

Radishes, Specialty, Watermelon
 Rosemary
 Soybeans, Green Pearls
 Soybeans, Sayanumume Edamame
 Squash, Patti Pan, Bennings Green Tint
 Squash, Crookneck, Summer Crookneck
 Squash, Zucchini, Dark Star
 Sunflowers, Russian Mammoth
 Swiss Chard, Rainbow, Bright Lights
 Thyme
 Tomato, Cherry, Black Cherry
 Tomato, Cherry, Blondkopfchen
 Tomato, Cherry, Red Jelly Bean
 Tomato, Cherry, Sun Gold
 Tomato, Grape, Sugar Plum
 Tomato, Heirloom, Eva Purple
 Tomato, Heirloom, Ukranian
 Tomato, Heirloom, Moskvich
 Tomato, Heirloom, Brandywine
 Tomato, Heirloom, Red Brandywine
 Tomato, Standard, Beefsteak
 Tomato, Yellow, Yellow Perfection
 Tomato, Zebra, Red Zebra
 Turnip, Purple Top, White Globe

www.robbsfarmgarden.org - Windows Internet Explorer
http://www.robbsfarmgarden.org/
Bing

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Robbins Farm Garden

A Cooperative Learning Project



Robbins Farm Park - Arlington, Massachusetts



Visit Veggie School

RFG Photo Gallery

2010 Season

- 2010 Crops
- 2010 Expenses
- 2010 Seeds
- 2010 Supporters
- Veggie School Reviews
- 2010 Veggie Adoptions

Resources

- Inspiration
- Seed & seedling sources
- Garden Books for Kids
- Friends of Robbins Farm Park

About the Garden

- History
- Location, Size and Layout
- Rules and Policies
- Educational Opportunities
- Printable media
- Gardener login
- Membership

Welcome

Submitted by Nathan on Sun, 03/21/2010 - 7:35pm
in Robbins Farm Garden

Welcome to Robbins Farm Garden, a pilot project of the Parks & Recreation Commission, endorsed by the Friends of Robbins Farm Park.

What are we doing? Growing vegetables organically in a single garden, as a group.

Why? To create an educational gardening resource for the community.

How long is the pilot? The pilot is approved for the 2010 growing season: April-October.

How do I join? Contact Arlington's Parks & Recreation Department. We are compiling a list of people who might be interested in joining next year.

Can I tour the garden? Gardeners will be happy to show you around Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings, weather permitting. Gardeners are often there at other times many days and evenings. Feel free to come over and ask for a tour. Children of all ages are especially welcome.

How many potatoes do you get - Redux

Submitted by Alan on Sat, 09/25/2010 - 9:55pm
in Potatoes

On the morning of Town Day, we harvested a sample of crops for the display table, and wanted to show off our potatoes. So we pulled the first plant from the remaining row, and were shocked to find an almost solid bunch of red bliss. These are the red potatoes that didn't seem like they were ever going to sprout last spring, so we overplanted with russets. But apparently at least one of them grew, and this was what we found under a single plant. all



Search this site:

October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Full calendar

Events

Sunday, Nov 7, 2010

- Fall Clean up Day/Bulb Planting
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

2010 Season

amaranth Arugula Basil
Beans Beets Broccoli
budget Cabbage
Carrots Cauliflower
Celery chives Collards
Community Gardens
compost concepts
Cucumbers Cutworms
Dill dogs education
Eggplant Gardening
Herbs History ideas
inspiration Kale kids leafy
greens Lettuce Mildew
Note to the future
Onions outreach Park
Events Peas Peppers
Pesticides pole beans
Potatoes Radishes
Robbins Farm
Garden Robbins Farm
Park rocks seedlings Seeds
snow peas Soybeans
Spinach Squash
Sunflowers Swiss Chard
This Day
Tomatoes tours
Turnips veggie school
video visitors visits

VEGGIE SCHOOL WEBSCHOOL

Robbins Farm Garden - Veggie School - Windows Internet Explorer

http://veggieschool.robbinsfarmgarden.org/index.php?page=peas-1

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Favorites Robbins Farm Garden - Veggie School

Page Safety Tools



- Robbins Farm
- Arlington Agriculture
- Veggie Lifecycles
- Growing Patterns
- Veggie Families
- Garden Bugs
- Basic Tools
- Photo-synthesis



Peas

Some people like peas because they're fun. They roll around on your plate like little green marbles.

Other people like peas for their fresh, sweet taste, the taste of a new Spring after a long Winter.

But there are people who seem to think that peas are boring. These people are probably misinformed. Because once you get to know peas and their history, they are anything but boring.

Maybe these people don't know the important roles peas have played in the history of science. Maybe they haven't thought of peas as the geeks, the nerds, the propeller heads of the vegetable world.

And who in Arlington would ever claim that geeks, nerds, or propeller heads could be boring?! That they can not be just fascinating people? Who would say that geeks, nerds, and propeller heads do not make great neighbors?

Once they've read what follows, these people will know "what's what" about peas.



Origins

Peas claim the longest history of any vegetable in Robbins Farm Garden. Along with lentils and garbanzo beans — neither of which is being grown in this garden — peas are one of agriculture's three founding vegetables.

They go back over 10,000 years to humankind's first-ever gardens, planted in the Near East, in what is now Syria, Jordan, and southeastern Turkey.



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Report on 2010 Pilot Garden Project

Robbins Farm Garden: *A Cooperative Learning Project*

November 2010

The idea of a cooperative garden at Robbins Farm Park was at once steeped in history, and the strong interest of the present. For the park had once been a farm, and during WW II hosted 66 Victory Gardens! When a member of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park (Oakes Plimpton) heard an interview of Michael Pollan by Bill Moyers about a large garden in Brooklyn in December of 2008, he thought, “Why not Robbins Farm!” Interestingly, there had been a cooperative vegetable garden in our Town connected with the Arlington Food Co-op, located in Patricia Watson’s yard near Spy Pond. A member of that garden (Alan Jones) helped organize a Garden meeting in the early summer of 2009. He alerted fellow gardeners, putting out the news of a new garden forming on the Menotomy Gardeners e-mail list. Nine gardeners answered the call. The group met a number of times to plot out the garden and decide how to proceed.

The group first proposed the garden concept to the Friends of Robbins Farm Park Board in August of 2009. The Friends Board made clear their desire for the garden to serve an educational mission for both children and adults, and for it to be an attractive element in the park. After assurance that these issues would be addressed, the Friends’ Board endorsed the cooperative learning garden concept.

The garden proposal was then presented to the Parks & Recreation Commission for consideration. Over a course of meetings, the Commission worked through the financial, safety and logistical issues with the garden group. In December 2009, the Commission accepted the proposal of the gardeners to cultivate a cooperative community garden at Robbins Farm Park as a pilot project with an educational focus. Their proposal was to locate the garden, a 25 foot by 40 foot plot, in a comparatively unused portion of park below the playground using recycled snow fence to enclose it. Announcements and presentations were made to attract interested people up to 20. Though 16 people were signed up initially, by the start of the planting season there were 14 committed gardeners. Each paid \$75, of which \$65 went toward garden expenses of soil amendments, seeds, seedlings, fence posts, locks and the like, while \$10 went into the Town’s Park Beautification Fund.

In February the gardeners met to decide as a group what to plant and how to proceed with the season. Vegetable types and varieties were discussed and selected for ordering seed. Choices in general favored variety of species for educational interest as opposed to limited species for high production. Included among these was the Crosby Egyptian beet—the provenance of which is tied to the cultivation history of the town of Arlington. It was agreed that 15 hours per month per person would be the baseline contribution either in gardening labor or educational writing and or outreach. Two workdays per week were scheduled, a weekday evening and a weekend morning, as times for gardeners to work together. Once the soil was thawed, a soil test showed low lead levels and moderately low pH, indicating that lime would need to be added. Ground breaking was set for the first week in April.

On a sunny day the first week in April the gardeners gathered with basic hand tools to layout the garden plot, shave off sod, and sink posts for the fence. The removed turf was relocated to a few sunken areas along the bottom fence of the park where it thrived and helped neighbors by detaining stormwater run-off. Perpendicular aisles of lawn 4 feet in width were purposely kept as part of the layout plan to accommodate visitors. Wood-slat snow fence, previously used to protect sleds, was gathered and carried across the hill to wrap around the garden plot. This was supplemented by a new roll of snow fence provided by the Town. A salvaged chain link gate and post was also installed. The following week work began on prepping the soil. Once the sod was removed a rented tiller was used to turn up the soil which proved somewhat clayey and compacted. It required several passes of the machine and hand digging as well to loosen the earth and pull up many stones small and large. Lime and compost were added as soil amendments and rows were laid out with string lines to receive the seeds and seedlings to come.

Initial planting began the third week in April. A few crops went in early as seedlings. These included lettuce and plants from the brassica family such as cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage. A few days later seeds were sown to grow kale, collards, lettuce, peas, beets and radishes among others. Composted cow manure and other organic fertilizers were added to the soil as the seedlings and seeds were planted. Some plants needed to wait until the soil was warmer later in May. These included varieties from the nightshade family such as eggplants, peppers, potatoes and tomatoes. While other vegetables included onions, summer squash varieties and soy beans, herbs and edible flowers such as sunflowers, nasturtium and calendula were planted as well.

Care was used to plant strategically to allow for a succession of new crops in places once cooler weather crops had reached their limit. Some crops such as lettuce were grown continually, nursed under shade structures, thinned and sometimes transplanted to spaces left by removed older plants. Several members of the garden cooperative were meticulous weeders, so the garden continually looked well tended. Hand-made signs clearly legible from the garden fence marked the different crops. A few trellis structures were made from locally harvested bamboo to support peas, beans and cucumbers. Indigenous compost was turned regularly, sifted and used around the garden.

For a few weeks the garden was irrigated by toting water from people's homes and later from an Eastern Ave. neighbor. The hope had been to have permission to connect to the fire hydrant but in mid-May the town installed a yard hydrant just 5 feet from the southwest corner post. It was luck that no woodchucks or rabbits or squirrels entered the garden to consume the veggies until late in the season since the fence was entirely pervious to rodents. The garden was also fortunate to have been spared any acts of vandalism.

In keeping with its educational mission, during the group gardening sessions and on several afternoons in between, the garden was open to the public. There were many visitors of all ages and from countries around the world. Gardeners reached out to them, inviting them in to look around and taking time to answer questions and carry on numerous conversations. Beyond these casual encounters, an open garden event scheduled to coincide with the Robbins Farm Park Movie night garnered a fair amount of attention as well.

Throughout the entire gardening season, in addition to the physical labor and care of the plot, a garden journal was collectively kept on the web accessible to the public. In addition to general resources such as seed sources and crop planting/harvesting lists, entries described in text and images the trials, successes, ruminations, and humorous encounters of the gardeners. Linked to this was a web resource entitled the Veggie School, created to introduce readers on an elementary level to a range of garden related information. It includes the description and history of the various vegetables and several essays on subjects from gardening history, to the process of photosynthesis, to garden bugs. Graphics were included that enlivened the space and helped to illustrate concepts. Building on this, the Veggie school creator (Dick Harmer) taught summer classes to groups of summer town recreation program participants. On occasion a few school groups were also brought in to tour the garden. In all cases the children were excited and engaged.

Now at the end of the gardening season, plants have been pulled and the soil turned over and sown with winter rye as a cover crop. In accordance with the group's original commitment, the fence was peeled away and the posts and gate removed. In general, the garden has met with a tremendously positive response. Visitors have been intrigued, affirmed and inspired by what they see and hear at the Robbins Farm Park Cooperative Learning Garden. And the gardeners in turn have been encouraged in their efforts. Looking forward there is hope that the project will be permitted to continue next year building on knowledge gained during the pilot year and improving in its practice, communication and public service to be an even better community resource.

2010 EXPENDITURES & REIMBURSEMENTS

	Date	Item	Seller	Amount	Acct	Reimb.	
Seeds	3.20	Seeds	Seeds of Change	58.37	A	ECJ	253.60
	3.20	Seeds	Johnny's Seeds	64.10	A	ECJ	
	3.20	Seeds	Burpee	57.05	A	ECJ	
	5.07	Seeds	Seeds of Change	7.58	A	AJ	
	7.28	Seeds + tom stakes	Hillside Garden Supply	10.71	A	AJ	
	8.24	Clover, Rye Seed	World Prairie Farm	37.80	A	MS	
	10.25	Seed, Tape	Hillside Garden Supply	17.99	A	AJ	
Seedlings	4.17	Seedlings	Waltham Comm Fields	24.00	B	AJ	35.13
	5.08	Seedlings	Busa Farm	3.00	B	AJ	
	5.16	Seedlings	Busa Farm	8.13	B	AJ	
Equipment rental	4.09	Tiller	Taylor Rental	85.37	C	MS	85.37
Soil amendments	4.08	40 lb lime	Wanamakers + tax	5.54	D	AJ	123.42
	4.08	3x40 lb lime	Wanamakers	15.91	D	AJ	
	4.17	3x40lb bgs lime	Wanamakers	15.91	D	AJ	
	4.20	Chicken fertilizer	Hillside Garden Sup +Tx	19.11	D	AJ	
	4.20	2x40lb manure	Hillside Garden Supply	7.38	D	AJ	
	4.20	Pellet limestone	Hillside Garden Supply	3.99	D	AJ	
	4.24	4x40lbs cow manure	Hillside Garden Supply	14.76	D	AJ	
	6.09	Grass seed + fertlizr	Hillside Garden Supply	23.35	D	AJ	
	6.24	Tomato tone + limest	Hillside Garden Supply	10.98	D	AJ	
	8.25	Innoculant	Outsidepride.com	6.49	D	MS	
Signage	3.08	RFG banner	VistaPrint	11.55	F	DH	49.92
	4.21	Veg Sch banner	VistaPrint	6.51	F	DH	
	4.22	White sign paint	Shattucks	9.55	F	DH	
	6.08	White cedar for signs	Reliable Fence	22.31	F	DH	
Educ materials	4.11	Veggie School cards	VistaPrint	6.57	G	DH	78.68
	4.22	Veggie School cards	VistaPrint	6.56	G	DH	
	5.23	RFG cards	VistaPrint	6.55	G	DH	
	5.23	RFG cards	VistaPrint	6.55	G	DH	
	7.19	Veggie School cards	VistaPrint	6.54	G	DH	
	7.23	VS, Parts cards	VistaPrint	7.89	G	DH	
	7.23	Then, Now cards	VistaPrint	9.03	G	DH	
	7.27	VS, Parts cards	VistaPrint	7.89	G	DH	
	8.14	RFG cards	VistaPrint	6.55	G	DH	
	9.24	RFG cards	VistaPrint	14.55	G	DH	
Miscellaneous	3.24	Marking chalk	Shattucks	19.09	H	MS	45.79
	4.06	Soil test	Umass + USPS	16.09	H	MS	
	6.10	Dog dish	Unleashed	10.61	H	SL	
Fencing	4.08	Wire for fence	Wanamakers	3.79	I	AJ	3.79
Compost bins	4.30	4 steel compost rods	Arlington Coal	9.52	J	AJ	9.52
Water equip	5.18	Lock for water	Wanamakers	23.14	K	AJ	44.90
	5.24	Sprinkler	Shattucks	12.74	K	AJ	
	7.10	17 gal tub	Wanamakers	9.02	K	AJ	
Regular hose, fittings	5.16	Hose	Sears	48.85	L	AJ	55.23
	6.10	Water wand	Ocean State Job Lot	6.38	L	AJ	
Soaker hose	6.11	Sprinkler hose	Shattucks	13.80	M	AJ	13.80
			Total	799.15			799.15