

# THE MAPLE STREET RAG

Forest Grove Community Gardens News

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## Soil Preparation Vital for Success

The 2010 growing season at the Forest Grove Victory Garden began with a planting festival May 15.

For returning gardeners who found their plots in poor condition or new gardeners looking to get the best crop production from their plot, proper soil preparation is crucial.

The soil at the garden is mostly clay and lacks good levels of calcium. Low calcium content can cause blossom end rot on tomatoes.

The soil is rather heavy and acidic. It can produce good crops, as gardeners found last year, but tends to form large clods when worked and turns hard as it dries out.

Soil amendments can help with both problems. Adding organic material, such as composted leaves, aged manure or

commercial compost, can lighten the soil and make it easier to work. Added nutrients will increase earthworm production and aid the activity of beneficial micro-organisms.

Adding agricultural lime (calcium), either powdered or granulated, can make the soil less acidic and produce better crops.

Lime is available in the garden tool shed. Follow the instructions on the bags. Less than a quart should be enough to cover one 250-square-foot plot.

Once the soil is in good condition, mulch plants with leaves, newspaper or bark chips.

A layer of mulch around vegetable plants will help prevent moisture from evaporating quickly—requiring fewer waterings—and will insulate plant roots. Mulching also keeps weeds down.

## Become a Volunteer

Forest Grove Community Gardens continues to look for people who are willing to donate time to help with maintenance and planning of the garden. As little as a half-hour a week is useful.

If you want to participate in garden stewardship, attend a Planning Committee meeting every other Thursday at 7 p.m. or call 503-357-4577.

## Keep Garden Site Debris Free

There is no garbage disposal at the Victory Garden. Gardeners are asked to pack out their garbage when they leave.

Whenever possible, compost green waste at your garden plot. Decomposing plant matter feeds the soil and returns nutrients from plants you already have invested in with time and resources.

Sod and noxious weeds should be hauled to the debris pile at the back of the garden at the end of the main path. It is clearly marked with a sign reading: “Debris Goes Here.”

Pile debris up along the fence so it does not spread into the garden or block maintenance trails.

## Security Is Everyone’s Affair

Forest Grove Community Gardens does not provide security at the Victory Garden. The city of Forest Grove and Community Gardens are not responsible for loss of crops or equipment, personal injury or vehicle vandalism.

A signed release of liability is required for all gardeners. If you did not receive a liability release form, call 503-357-4577.

If you witness illegal activity at the Victory Garden, report it to the police. Call FGPD dispatch at 503-629-0111. The garden address is 2301 Maple St. For emergencies, dial 911.

These numbers are posted on the information kiosk by the tool shed.

**Water conservation is a tenet of sustainable gardening. Watering efficiently reduces stress on the environment and helps Forest Grove Community Gardens manage the city water bill it pays. An upcoming workshop on installation of a drip irrigation system will be offered at the Victory Garden. T-tape hosing is available for people who want to try installing their own drip system. For more information, call 503-357-4577.**