



Delaware ranks 4th in the nation for school gardens!

Veggies Matter: Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids

Healthy Foods for Healthy Kids, or HFHK, is a school vegetable gardening program in Delaware that was inspired by a visit to The Edible Schoolyard in California in 2003 by founder Dr. Thianda Manzara.

Today HFHK celebrates 50 partner schools in Delaware, with 21,000+ participating students and 17 years as a nonprofit. Schools use volunteers to help plan and implement the gardens. HFHK's mission is to inspire healthier lives by providing youth with joyful school gardening experiences and opportunities to eat the garden-fresh vegetables they've grown. Data shows that gardening education increases science knowledge and life skills and encourages students to try new vegetables and recipes.

Coastal Gardeners became involved with HFHK in 2017, when Sally Scarengella, a founding member, volunteered our services to the Phillip C. Showell Elementary School in Selbyville. After pledging a \$5,000 commitment over a five year period, we raised the money (which included a \$1,000 grant from NFGC) in four years. In 2021, we installed four raised garden beds and a 7x7 garden shed. We also donated tools and gloves, and an irrigation system. The first plantings were done in October, 2021.

The school receives seed packets from HFHK for planting that usually include cold weather crops like lettuce, kale, collards, spinach and radishes that are planted in fall or early spring to harvest in late spring. Children in different grade levels have different roles in the gardens—2nd graders prepare the soil and do end of season work, kindergarteners and 1st graders plant, 3rd graders water, and 4th and 5th graders harvest.

Our commitment to the school continues, albeit in a lesser capacity as the students and teachers have learned how to manage the gardens. Originally, Coastal Gardeners helped open the beds, plant, harvest and close. Today, we open and close and perhaps something in between if needed. Principal Christy Kerr and 2nd grade teacher Donna Mallet play a crucial role in the project's ongoing success.

Coastal Gardeners is the first garden club in Sussex County to work with HFHK, so hats off to current and past members who have helped support this worthy program!



Photo courtesy of Phillip C. Showell Elementary School

Upcoming Events

5/19 6:00pm
Special Monthly Meeting [Bearhole Farms](#) – bring a 6" to 14" container for a planting party! \$25 – bring a check to participate. CG meeting starts at 7pm.

6/16 5:00pm
Get together at [Salted Vines winery](#). Pot Luck dinner. Bring a dish to share! No meeting. This is open to family and friends! Let Joyce know so she can get a head count. Also, speaking at the get together will be Gregg Tepper, Senior Horticulturist at the Arboretum at Laurel Hill.

Newsletter Committee

Pat Rainer
Linda Barbour
Tina Siatkowski

I like gardening—it's a place where I find myself when I need to lose myself.

~Alice Sebold

In the Garden



Photo virginiawildflowers.org



Photo GardenBeast.com

Brown Eyed Susans

Black Eyed Susans

Meet the Susans!

For gardeners looking to add cheerful bursts of yellow to their landscapes, *Black-Eyed Susans* and *Brown-Eyed Susans* are two classic choices. While their names and appearances are strikingly similar, these North American native wildflowers have key differences that can influence where and how you grow them.

- **Appearance:** Both plants have bright yellow petals surrounding a dark central cone (black or brown), making them popular pollinator-friendly flowers.
- **Native Origin:** Each is native to North America and well-suited to native and prairie-style gardens.
- **Pollinators:** They attract bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects, making them valuable in any eco-conscious garden.
- **Low Maintenance:** Both thrive in full sun, are drought-tolerant once established, and do well in average soil without much fuss.

Black-Eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) are biennial or perennials and grow to a height of 1 to 3 feet while Brown-Eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia triloba*) are perennials and grow much taller. Black-Eyed Susans bloom mid to late summer with larger blooms up to 3-5 inches, and Brown-Eyed Susans can bloom well into fall with smaller, more profuse blooms. The leaves of the Black-Eyed Susan are elongated while the leaves of the Brown-Eyed Susan are often three-lobed.

Which should you choose? Choose Black-Eyed Susans for bold, eye-catching blooms in more compact spaces or formal beds. Choose Brown-Eyed Susans for naturalized or prairie-style gardens where taller, more freely blooming plants can shine.

Getting to Know ...



Photo courtesy of Cheryl Quirk

Cheryl Quirk

Cheryl and husband Mike, both former teachers and native Pennsylvanians, have lived in the Salt Pond community since 2018, but have been residents of Delaware since 2016. Their garden features many deer-resistant plants, a necessity where they now live.

Upon retiring in 2014, Cheryl was an arboretum assistant at Swarthmore College's Scott Arboretum. Realizing she was happiest when outside, this was a perfect fit.

Once settled in Delaware, Cheryl became founding member of Coastal Gardeners and was its first Vice President. In December 2016, she attended the groundbreaking of Delaware Botanic Gardens and the following Spring volunteered at its Piet Oudolf meadow. She is currently a point of sale docent and greeter and gives golf cart tours of the gardens. Her passion for DBG is obvious, and it's her hope that all Coastal Gardener members and friends will come to appreciate this gem among us.

Q&A Corner

What is the Sussex County grow zone?

Most of Sussex County's hardiness zone is 7b. Directly along the coast from Milford south to the MD border the zone is 8a. You may grow any plant that is in our zone number, or lower, with confidence. Any "higher zone" plant needs extra steps to protect it from winter cold.

For grasses, Delaware is located in the transitional zone, a part of the U.S. where warm and cool-season grasses have less than ideal growth patterns.

Source: USDA

Sussex County's Inland Bays: How Homeowners Can Help Protect, Preserve and Restore Our Inland Bays

At our March 17th meeting, Lisa Swanger, Director of Outreach and Education for the DE Center for the Inland Bays, gave an informative presentation on how we can help preserve Sussex County's inland bays.

The inland bays consist of three coastal region watersheds: Rehoboth Bay, Indian River Bay and Little Assawoman Bay. The bays have immense ecological, environmental and economic significance, generating \$4.5 billion dollars annually and supporting 35,000 jobs! Yet, they are in peril. As environmental and humanmade changes occur (like more impervious surfaces created and the removal of more forests/wetlands), our watersheds suffer.

You don't have to live directly on the water to impact the bays. Runoff from lawns, driveways and streets flow into stormwater management ponds, which flow directly into the bays. Pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, oil, grease, biological contaminants like bird/dog waste and salt all have negative effects on water quality, leading to the death of underwater grasses that filter water. Fertilizer runoff promotes algae growth making it "bloom." The growth of algae blocks sunlight to the underwater grasses, killing them, and also decreases oxygen in the water leading to fish kills.

So what can we do? Begin new techniques to maintain your lawn. Decrease the use of fertilizers and other harmful lawn treatments. Use a natural weed killer (see article below.) Plant native trees and plants. Remove invasive species. Support nonprofits like The Center for Inland Bays and others who are leading the charge on protecting, preserving and restoring our natural resources.

Learn more by visiting [Delaware Center for the Inland Bays | Volunteer, Donate, Learn](#), [Delaware Livable Lawns | Healthy Lawns & Clean Waterways](#), and [Lawn and Garden | Cooperative Extension | University of Delaware](#).

And spread the word! Let your neighbors and community associations know what is at risk and how they can help save our bays!

*****The Center for the Inland Bays is having a native plant sale at James Farm from 10am-2pm on May 3rd.*****



Combating Weeds ... Naturally.

To help recover bay health, here are ideas to help kill those pesky weeds naturally.

- 1) Use a vinegar solution: 1 gallon vinegar/1 tbsp dish soap/1 cup salt. Spray on weed when it's sunny. This will not kill the root, and may affect pH of your soil. Use sparingly.
- 2) Spray rubbing alcohol on weeds. 1 quart of water to 2 tbsp of rubbing alcohol. Make sure cultivated species are not sprayed. Alcohol can leave the soil infertile when absorbed.
- 3) Use boiling water. This is effective as a spot treatment for sidewalks, driveways and patios. Deep roots will not be affected by the boiling water.
- 4) Pull by hand! 😊 A no-brainer, but your back may complain!
- 5) Plant ground cover plants that don't give weeds a place to grow.