

North State
Gardener

FALL 2020



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A Kitchen Herb Garden

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Chili, Anyone?

NSG Fall Calendar

October – Tree & shrub pruning. Preparing turf for fall & winter with pre-emergents and fertilizers.

November – Plant winter flowers. Pruning. Installation

December – Leaf clean up. Pruning.



A WELCOMED CHANGE OF SEASON

The daylight hours are getting shorter, and there is a distinct chill on the night breeze. Autumn is creeping toward us like a turtle, but it is definitely coming and bringing change in its wake. And change is welcome. Change is a gift that reminds us while we cannot control what happens outside of us, we can always control the way we respond. Our response is to plant fall flowers such as pansies, violas and snapdragons for color that lasts into the colder months, and fall herbs like mint, chives, tarragon and parsley. We also long to create outdoor areas to entertain family and friends safely, and to start spending more time in the kitchen cooking tempting dishes for everyone to enjoy. On page 6, you can find a sample of what is coming out of our kitchen these days. Here is to a welcomed change!



Hello Friends,

We find ourselves at the end of a season like no other. I am very thankful that we have been able to stay healthy and work through this pandemic. As soon as directives came down from the governor, we implemented them at North State Gardens and so far so good. Access to our office is limited, masks are worn when we can't social distance, and quarantines are in effect if someone is exposed. I keep reminding my employees that even though things are opening back up, the danger is far from over. We firmly believe that with everyone working together, we can protect each other and help to mitigate the dangers of this virus.

On the bright side, at the end of the 3rd quarter we are set to have a record-breaking year. It seems that a lot of clients are investing in their outdoor living spaces where they can socialize safely. We are doing more with hardscapes and firepits and low-voltage lighting than ever before. I recently added a *Breeo* smokeless fire pit at my home which has features for cooking. In the image (*right*), we are searing some beef kebabs on the flat plate around the fire box, and the system really works quite well. The *Breeo* also comes with a cooking grate. We like to cook on the firepit and then watch a movie outside with our home movie projector system. This is also a fun, safe, and socially distant way to visit with friends. Give us a call if you would like to talk about an outdoor living and entertaining space for your family!



Later in the newsletter, we will be talking about irrigation efficiency. If your irrigation system is over 10 years old, it may be time to consider an irrigation audit. With the cost of water these days, system upgrades that lead to more water efficiency can pay for themselves in no time - not to mention the water-saving benefits to the planet.

We will also look at our featured project – an elegant 100 year-old-home in Wilmington that has been beautifully updated inside and out – now with a landscape to match!

I want to thank each of you for your continued support. We sincerely appreciate the trust and confidence you have placed in us. I promise you that we are continually striving to improve our service and our know-how to serve you better.

Please stay safe and keep those around you safe. And as always, thank you for your support.

Matthew

 Make sure to follow us on Instagram @ [north_state_gardens](https://www.instagram.com/north_state_gardens). We regularly post our landscape creations, gardening tips, and interesting information about plants and local wildlife.

A CLASSIC REVIVAL



I was excited when we got a call from the new owners of an old home in Wilmington. The yard needed a make-over and new hardscapes, and the tired plantings needed refreshing. It was invigorating to know that the results would be a dramatic change.

The owner wanted a simple and elegant look in the front with a new walkway. We replaced the broken concrete walk with a bluestone walk and matching mowing strip to delineate the front lawn. This was a new type of hardscape for us to build, and it turned out even better than anticipated. As providers of totally custom landscaping, we often do things that are new and unique. I am always amazed at the capabilities of our installation team when it comes to these projects. They pull off whatever I can dream up and design, creating lasting beauty and versatility for our clients.



I really enjoy landscaping in town because the palette of plants we can use is much broader than on the barrier islands. In this case, Hedges of Ilex 'Nellie R Stevens' provide screening along both sides of the property. Biloxi Crape Myrtles and Limelight Hydrangeas add summer color along with annual flowers in planters. The result is classic, elegant, and sophisticated.



A small sideyard leads to the large fenced back lawn. The existing covered terrace was a bit undersized for the owners' lifestyle, so we extended the terrace out into the open with brick pavers as well as creating a smaller brick surface for grilling. While matching existing pavers can sometimes be a problem – especially when those particular pavers are not offered anymore – we do everything we can to make sure that the end result flows seamlessly from one area into another. This new patio (*left*) is plenty big for entertaining, dining, and relaxing around a fire pit. With the welcomed cooler weather, our clients will surely be doing just that!

Time for an Irrigation Audit?

Let Us Help Save You Money!



Although 70% of the earth's surface is covered by water, **only 0.4% of this water is fresh and accessible for use by humans.** Obviously water is an essential and scarce resource, and the prices we pay for it are beginning to reflect this issue. Irrigation systems often get a bad rap for being water wasters and that can be the case. However, well maintained and thoughtfully designed irrigation systems can deliver water where it is needed very efficiently.

This is the time of year to think about an audit of your irrigation system to identify and correct inefficiencies in water use before next season. Many customers do not notice when their system has broken components or is running inefficiently. Like all mechanical things, sprinkler heads wear out and can begin leaking. Spray patterns can lose adjustment or need changing with the seasons. Rodents can chew holes in drip pipe! When needed, some zones can be turned off

completely depending on the plant material being watered. These are all reasons to regularly have your system checked by a professional who knows what to look for and how to properly manage your vital resource.

In recent years, the irrigation industry has rightly placed more emphasis on water efficiency. As a result, the available technology and best practices have evolved exponentially. At North State Gardens, we employ many tools and principles to be efficient stewards of your water supply, helping to tame your bill by watering precisely when and where needed. Some of our measures include using:

- ▶ New wifi enabled controllers allowing us to quickly and inexpensively adjust watering programs with an app when the weather changes
- ▶ Sensors that suspend watering after sufficient rainfall
- ▶ Drip irrigation in plant beds that places a measured amount of water exactly on the plant
- ▶ The latest sprinkler nozzles, which are up to 30% more efficient than older designs
- ▶ Sprinkler head placement that achieves "head to head" coverage for an even distribution of water
- ▶ Maintenance practices that keep systems operating as intended as the landscape grows and changes

Conservation in landscape irrigation depends on the intelligent use of water resources. If you have an older system, please consider having us perform an irrigation audit to see if we can save some money on your water bill and help save the planet's water supply. Fall and winter are ideal times to plan an irrigation audit as we have more time in our normally busy schedule.



THE AUTUMNAL HERB GARDEN

While it may seem counter-intuitive, fall is prime planting time for shrubs, perennials, - and herbs.

Yes, herbs! The ornamental and aromatic qualities of herbs lend aesthetic beauty and fragrance to any landscape or kitchen counter. Think soups and chilis, stews and roasted meats. Every season has its dishes, but autumn is the time when a cook's kitchen can sing with heady aromas enticing us to indulge and enjoy.



The Indoor Herb Garden

Having access to fresh herbs in winter helps stave off the seasonal blues. Customize your kitchen herb garden with herbs that you regularly use, such as parsley, oregano, basil, and mint ... these are also some of the easiest to grow! You can grow kitchen herbs in a windowsill, on a countertop, or try a hydroponic kit for faster, soil-free growth. Place herbs in a south or west-facing window that gets at least 4 to 6 hours of direct sunlight a day or use supplemental lighting. A grow light will increase yields and allow you to locate an herb garden in a darker part of the house. Use a high-quality potting soil that drains well. Allow the soil to dry out somewhat between watering. If the soil is dry to 1 inch deep, it's time to water your herbs. The morning is the best

time to harvest your herbs. Snip the plants regularly to stimulate new growth, up to a third of the plant at a time. The leaves have the best flavor when cut just before the plants flower. If you're using the flowers, wait until peak bloom. Seed heads can be harvested once they begin to turn brown.

The Outdoor Herb Garden

There are endless ways to grow your kitchen herbs just outside the door – in raised boxes or garden beds, containers, or even in hanging baskets. In zone 8, we can grow basil, sage, mint, thyme, parsley, lavender, Greek oregano, lemon balm, coriander, cilantro, dill, marjoram, and French tarragon well into the cooler months. Outdoor gardens benefit from the sunshine but can be susceptible to cold and wind. Place your herb garden in a sunnier area of your yard or deck. Amend the soil so it matches the herb's specific water needs. Herbs are sensitive to moisture conditions and many herbs such as parsley, chervil, basil, and mint prefer a moist well-draining soil. On the other hand, lavender, rosemary, and thyme prefer to be drier, so be sure to group these herbs together.



Harvest plants depending on your need. Plants can be harvested at almost any time if used immediately. If you plan on storing the herb, wait until the plant begins to flower. Make sure to wash dirty leaves in cold water before drying or freezing.

Once you've tasted the difference between fresh and dried herbs, you'll never go back! Not only are fresh herbs more nutritious and better tasting, they are less expensive to grow and harvest yourself compared to buying them at the grocery store. And with fall just around the corner, all thoughts are turning to the delights and comforts of a warm kitchen.

A TASTE OF AUTUMN – NSG STYLE

There is a distinct chill in the air in the early morning. The breeze seems a constant, and the camellias are beginning to show their buds. This is the time when our thoughts turn to heavier, denser dishes that stick with you longer. Matthew and I love to cook, in fact, we tend to cook together most nights, and one of our favorite family dishes for cooler weather is **Green Chicken Chili**. This recipe incorporates some lovely herbs and spices – notably ground cumin and fresh cilantro – bringing a bit of warming sunshine to dinner.

Ingredients

- 1 ½ lbs. boneless chicken breasts
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cans cannellini beans
- 4 cups chicken stock
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground cumin*
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 fresh limes, juiced (more to taste)
- ¼ cup chopped cilantro
- 2 poblano peppers
- 4 Anaheim peppers
- 1 jalapeño
- Salt & pepper



Directions

- **Roast** the peppers either on a grill, under the oven broiler, or on a gas burner. Char all sides until the skin bubbles. Put the peppers aside to cool, then peel, stem and remove the seeds. Chop the peppers coarsely.
- **Heat** the olive oil in a large Dutch oven. Sear the chicken and brown on all sides, 2 – 3 minutes each side. Remove to a plate.
- **Add** the onions and garlic to your Dutch oven and cook until soft, about 4 minutes. Add the cumin and coriander and allow the spices to toast lightly. Add the chicken stock, the beans, and the chicken, allowing everything to simmer on medium heat for about 20 minutes.
- **Check** the chicken to make sure it is fork tender. Remove the chicken breasts to a plate to cool.
- **Add** the chopped peppers to the pot and stir. Remove half of the mixture and blend in a blender until smooth or use an emulsifier to blend up about half. Add the blended mixture back into the pot.
- **Shred** the chicken breasts with a fork. Add the chicken, lime juice, and cilantro to the pot and heat through. At this point, taste for salt and pepper – this amount could vary depending on the chicken broth used. We usually add more lime juice here and sometimes more heat in the form of red pepper flakes or hot sauce. Top with tortillas, sour cream, cheese – your choice! Serves 4.

* We buy whole cumin seed, toast it in a dry frying pan, then grind it in a spice grinder for the freshest, most flavorful cumin possible!