



Mahopac Falls F.D. Wins Parade Award

The Mahopac Falls Volunteer Fire Department was named "Best Appearing Engine 10 Years and Older" at the Mamaroneck firemen's parade June 28. Here, Louis Scagnelli Sr., foreman of MFFD engine company 1, holds up the department's trophy. In addition, the Carmel Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary won "Best Appearing Auxiliary" at the parade. Photo courtesy of Facebook.

Be Wary of Safety & Germs When Swimming

Swimming and other water sports are a great way to cool off in the hot, humid days of summer.

These activities also provide exercise, and thousands of Putnam County families and visitors swim safely every year.

At the same time, problems can arise if a person is not careful. Drowning is a risk even for good swimmers in some situations, and water can carry germs that make a person sick.

"Putnam County offers residents and visitors wonderful places to swim and hike," said County Executive MaryEllen Odell. "But when swimming in natural water, everyone must be careful – especially if you are not familiar with the water. We have lifeguards at our public beaches to protect everyone's safety."

"Drowning happens quickly," added Interim Health Commissioner Dr. Michael Nesheiwat. "A child should never be left alone even for a moment near any water. Swimming pools are a big concern for young children who cannot swim, or swim poorly. Adults watching children should not be reading or talking on the phone."

Broken or faulty fencing and open gates, as well as missing drain covers, all increase the chance of tragedy.

For backyard pools, fencing must be installed on all sides with self-closing, self-locking gates that open outward. The fence should be at least 4 feet tall and ladders should be removed after using an above-ground pool. If

your fence attaches to your house, an alarm system must be installed.

The complete New York State building code requirements for pools are available at www.dos.ny.gov/DCEA/currpoolreq.htm.

Water illnesses are also a problem, because swimmers share the water – and the germs in it. Germs can be swallowed or inhaled through splashed water or mist. People can get these illnesses after swimming in any water – pools, water parks and sprays, lakes, rivers, and even oceans.

This can result in a variety of stomach, skin, ear, lung, eye and wound infections. The most common are illnesses that cause diarrhea, and chlorine does not kill all these germs. For example, Crypto (short for Cryptosporidium) can live in chlorine for an extended period of time.

The best prevention is good hygiene. All swimmers should stay out of the water when they are ill with diarrhea, even if they are wearing swim diapers or swim pants. People with a diarrhea-related illness should not return to swimming for two weeks afterward. Children should take bathroom breaks every 60 minutes, and hands should always be washed after changing diapers.

Take a shower with soap before swimming, and pay special care not to swallow the water you swim in. Parents of young children should check all diapers often and change them in the restroom facilities – not poolside,

where germs can wind up in the water.

Blue-green algae that has bloomed in Putnam's lakes in previous summers can make humans and animals sick, as well. They usually do not arrive until later in the season, but can occur at any time. The Putnam County Department of Health monitors the public beaches and closes them if necessary.

For more information about healthy swimming, visit www.ocd.gov/healthywater/swimming.

Tips for Urban Gardening This Summer Season

(Family Features) City dwellers often think gardening is only for those who live in suburbs or rural communities, but planting an urban garden can be easy. Whether you are planting a garden for yourself or your family, you can do your part to create a more sustainable and green future.

These steps recommended by Arjan Stephens, executive vice president at Nature's Path Organic Foods, can help you on your way to greening your thumb and the planet:

* **No Space, No Problem** – Not everyone has a backyard, roof or balcony. To overcome this issue, start a container garden.

While decorative pots can be lovely, they don't improve the quality of your plants and can be expensive. Instead, use a large bucket from a garden store, which is a low-cost and effective option. Or upcycle containers not in use, such as crates, old toys or paint cans.

* **Plant Selection** – There are vegetable, flower and herb varieties that are easy to grow in urban spaces. When planning your garden, think about what to plant – shallow-rooted veggies, such as herbs, lettuce and radishes typically do better in small confined spaces.

* **It Takes a Village** – In addition to establishing your own garden, another way to plant is by getting involved with community gardens.

Each year, Nature's Path Food's Gardens for Good program supports community gardens that make fresh, organic food more accessible in local neighborhoods. Three \$15,000 grants are available to gardens that demonstrate high community support and a viable plan for the urban agriculture project.

* **Plant Eight** – Potting your plants takes a few simple steps: Put some gravel in the bottom of your container to help with drain-

age and fill with soil, tamping it a bit; leave 1 inch at the top for watering; and tamp the soil after the plants are in place and water gently.

* **Portable Planters** – An advantage of container gardens is that they allow you to easily move them in and out of the sun. If your plants seem to dry out in one window area, you can try different areas to adjust to what works best for you.

* **Grow Up** – Small spaces make it ideal to grow vertically, which means planting tall plants like squash, cucumbers, beans and tomatoes.

* **Drain Gain** – Whatever container you choose for your garden, remember drainage holes are essential. Without proper drainage, soil can become waterlogged and plants may die. The holes need to be large enough to allow excess water to drain out.

* **Water Wise** – Hand-water every morning. Once the plants are large and summer is hot, they will probably need watering in the evening, too. A little afternoon shade can keep them from drying out too quickly.

* **Soil Smart** – A common mistake urban gardeners make is not making sure their soil is good quality. While those made with pesticides promise great results, they are loaded with chemicals. Go for organic soil and grow well from the beginning.

* **Have Fun** – Gardening not only results in food or flowers, it is a great way to relieve stress, have fun and get in touch with nature. Just because you live in an apartment doesn't mean you can't experience the joy of eating what you grow.

Grab your container, select your seeds, and see how beautiful, nutritious and delicious your results could be! Find more details about Gardens for Good and urban gardening at naturespath.com.

Source: *Nature's Path*.

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