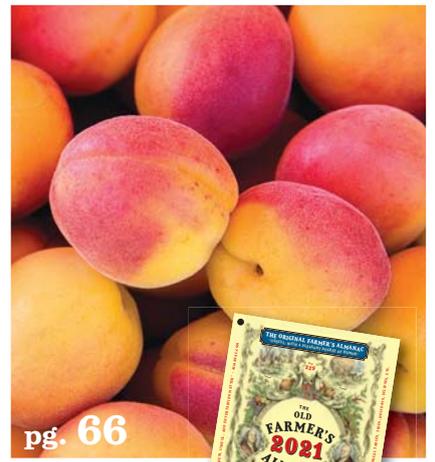
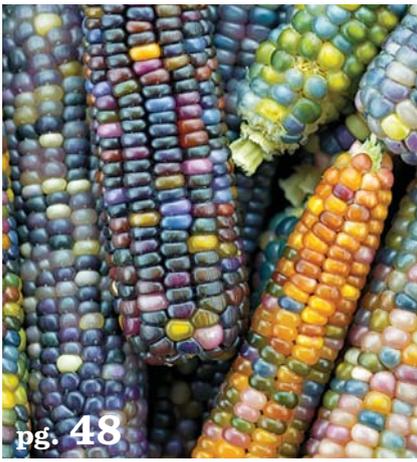
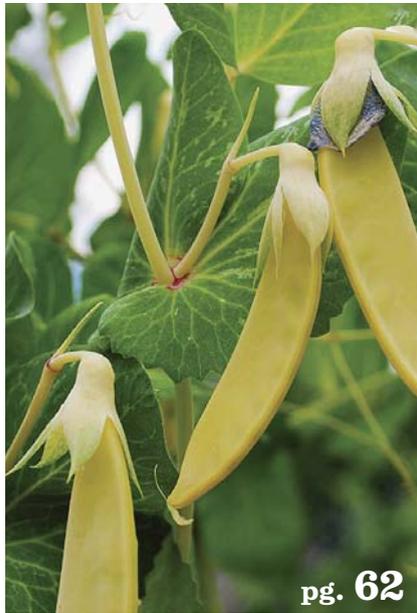


2021 EDITION



THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC Garden Guide

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Single Mix Aster



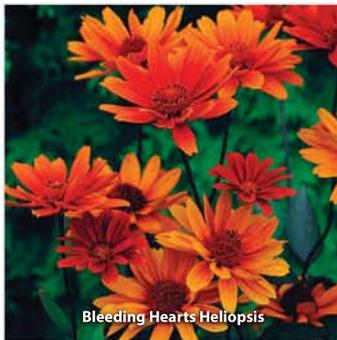
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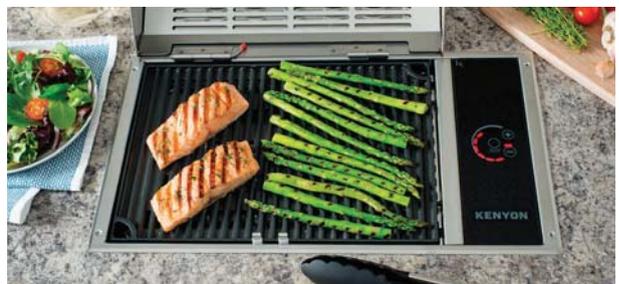
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DIRECT/RETAIL SALES MANAGER: Stacey Korpi, ext. 160 • staceyk@yankeepub.com

For U.S. orders only, go to Almanac.com/Shop or call 1-877-717-8924.

For Canada orders, visit Amazon.ca.

DISTRIBUTORS

NATIONAL: Comag Marketing Group, Smyrna, GA

BOOKSTORE: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston, MA

NEWSSTAND CONSULTANT: PSCS Consulting, Linda Ruth • 603-924-4407

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Dublin, NH 03444-0520. Contact us by phone at 603-563-8111,

by fax at 603-563-8252, or through Almanac.com/Feedback.

Research assistance provided by American Horticultural Society publications.

For more information, visit www.ahsgardening.org.

YANKEE PUBLISHING INC.

PRESIDENT: Jamie Trowbridge

VICE PRESIDENTS: Paul Belliveau, Jody Bugbee, Ernesto Burden, Judson D. Hale Jr.,

Brook Holmberg, Sandra Lepple, Sherin Pierce

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Thank you for buying this Garden Guide! We hope you find its garden wisdom useful and its pages entertaining. Thanks, too, to everyone who had a hand in its creation, including advertisers, distributors, printer, and sales and delivery people.

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TOGETHER, WE LEARN A LOT!

GARDENING IS LEARNING, LEARNING, LEARNING.
THAT'S THE FUN OF THEM. YOU'RE ALWAYS LEARNING.

—Dame Helen Mirren, English actress (b. 1945)

Here at *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, where this *Garden Guide* is produced, we love to garden. Although our staff members have different ages, home lives, and gardening spaces, we do have one common “ground”: growing! If it's gardening, you name it and we do it. We love getting our hands in the soil (or hydroponic solution!) and talking about it—among ourselves and *especially* with you.

This is essentially how the “plot” for every *Garden Guide* gets designed. For example, casual chats and meetings become the roots of articles about sharing vegetables via Instagram (*page 48*) and foliage bouquets (*page 72*). Fresh ideas from talks with gardening organizations, Cooperative Extensions, and folks like you produce stories on vertical planters (*page 24*) and how to paint in plant colors (*page 66*).

We treasure the input received through Almanac.com from *thousands* of you. For one thing, you want to grow food—lots of food!—so in this edition you'll find vining veggies (*page 62*), how to grow grains (*page 56*), and,

of course, tomatoes (*page 44*). Just think: This is but a fraction of what's growing within these pages.

Creating this *Garden Guide* is indeed like cultivating a garden. Every story starts as the seed of a concept and then gets the care and nurturing needed to develop into tantalizingly good food for thought and action.

Whether you already love gardening or have never tended a plant in your life, we believe that you'll learn a lot from the bounty of useful information herein—and we hope that you have fun along the way. For much more, check out Almanac.com/Gardening, where you can also sign up for our free email newsletter full of advice, encouragement, and ideas.

Thanks again for your ongoing assistance . . . and now, I need to go do some watering!

—Janice Stillman

P.S. Do you have a story idea or comment that you'd like to plant with me for our next edition? I'd love to hear from you at Almanac.com/Feedback!



I have developed the world's best soil nutrient!

One of God's greatest gifts to me is a tremendous curiosity and love for the soil. My formal and informal education have taught me so much about soil types, structure, physics, chemistry, and biology. All life on this Earth comes from the soil, water, and sun. **Most disease comes from an imbalanced soil.** Since the advent of chemical fertilizers and genetic engineering (byproducts of the two World Wars), **industry has focused only on greater yields** and has neglected the most important part of our foods and feeds: **NUTRITIONAL CONTENT.**

Our overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has imbalanced our soils, killed the micro life, and depleted what is most critical to life: minerals and trace minerals. My research has shown that **soils and plants need those missing nutrients to perform their best.** Soils respond to my product like a sick child responds to chicken soup, so I've named this product Chicken Soup for the Soil®. Now it is true that other companies have blended quality additives for the soil, amino acids, ancient seabed deposits, sea solids, soluble seaweed, organic acids like humic and fulvic, alfalfa, and other herbal extracts. However, the most important factor of our product is a discovery I made while blending these ingredients ...

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WE'RE PLANTING EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN IN 2021!

Social distancing has spawned unprecedented interest in nurturing all forms of plant life and connection with the creatures that thrive in the air and underfoot.

COMPILED BY STACEY KUSTERBECK



CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Our gardens are getting bigger, in both square footage and the purpose they serve. “People are thinking more of their landscape as an ecosystem with all life connected,” says Wendy Wilber, an environmental horticulturist at the University of Florida. Every inch of available space is being examined for what it can do for us—and for Mother Nature.

“Both new and experienced green thumbs realize that valuable space can be used for everything from growing food to attracting pollinators to filtering rainwater,” says Tara Nolan, author, *Gardening Your Front Yard* (Cool Springs Press, 2020).

“There is an overall trend toward **SELF-SUSTAINABILITY** and also stewardship,” says Linda O’Keeffe, author, *Inside Outside* (Timber Press, 2019).



CLEMATIS: CLIMBING INTO GARDENS EVERYWHERE

Clematis have a reputation as fussy plants, but new varieties get established more quickly than older ones due to stronger root systems and better flower production.

Spring Hill Nurseries suggests:

- double-blooming: ‘Chloe’, a nonvining bushy variety with purple-blue flowers
- double-petaled: **‘MARIA SKŁODOWSKA CURIE’**



GROWING KNOWLEDGE

Gardeners are upping their expertise. “There’s a robust renewed interest in botany and the science of how plants work,” says Leslie Halleck.

One intangible result: “Knowing that a seed will develop into a plant which then flowers and fruits in a predictable sequence is comforting,” says Joel Flagler, professor and agricultural agent at Rutgers University Cooperative Extension.



**IN THE LANGUAGE
OF FLOWERS,
CLEMATIS MEANS
“ARTIFICE,”
“INGENUITY,”
AND “MENTAL
BEAUTY.”**



THE FUTURE IS ROSY—AND COZY

Gardeners are seeking rose varieties that go easy on them. “People do not want to use pesticides and fungicides and are glad to have trouble-free roses,” according to Bob Osborne, author, *Hardy Roses: The Essential Guide for High Latitudes and Altitudes* (Firefly Books, 2020).

Roses are finding snug spots in containers and raised beds. “Increasingly, customers are growing stunning rose combinations on balconies and patios and in small spaces,” says Kelly Funk, president, Jackson & Perkins. Funk says that roses are sharing space with other sun-loving varieties . . .

- **in containers:** Compact roses—for example, ‘**SUN SPRINKLES**’, ‘Hot Tamale’, and ‘Cinnamon Girl’—pair with lantanas, heliotropes, summer snapdragons, and verbenas that fill in. Climbing roses go well with clematis (which uses the structure of the climbing rose as a trellis); for instance, ‘**TANGERINE FLAMES**’ rose works with ‘The Countess of Wessex’ or ‘Henryi’ clematis.

- **in raised beds:** ‘Mango Tango’ agastache, ‘Anouk’ French lavender, and ‘Denim ’n Lace’ Russian sage provide visual interest in summertime, when roses aren’t as showy. *(continued)*

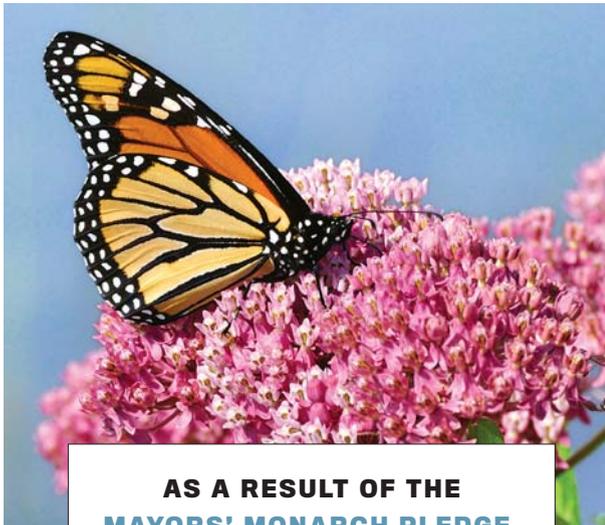
ROSE TIPS THAT REALLY WORK

Whether your roses grow in containers or the ground:

- If deer are a problem, plant **LAVENDER** at the base of rosebushes. Deer are attracted by rose scent, and lavender muddies the rose aroma.
- Scratch in 1/2 cup of rabbit food pellets around each rose and water well. It includes alfalfa meal, which supplies a growth stimulant, nitrogen, and trace elements to roses.
- Epsom salts make flower colors more intense. Scratch 2 tablespoons of the salts into the soil around a rosebush for best effect.

—*Almanac.com*





AS A RESULT OF THE MAYORS' MONARCH PLEDGE, 119 ACRES OF MONARCH HABITAT HAVE BEEN CREATED IN MANITOBA AND ONTARIO.

WELCOME, BENEFICIALS!

Pollinator gardeners are attracting more visitors by . . .

- choosing plant species that support certain types of butterflies (**MILKWEED FOR MONARCHS**) and “specialist” bees (native asters for *Andrena asteroides*, spring beauties for *A. erigeniae*, false indigo for *Colletes albescens*, and phacelia for *A. phacelia*)
- making the drip line of trees a “no-walk, no-mow” zone by planting the area with ground covers or shrubs (to allow caterpillars to spin cocoons and pupate to complete their life cycle)
- swapping white outdoor lights (which exhaust beneficial insects) for yellow LED bulbs

–Douglas Tallamy, author, *Nature’s Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* (Timber Press, 2020)

EASY DOES IT

“Gardens and landscapes are stepping away from formal planting styles and embracing a **NATURALISTIC FEEL**,” says Leslie Halleck, author, *Plant Parenting* (Timber Press, 2019).

What’s growing: native plants that are resilient to bouts of extreme heat, cold, drought, or excessive rainfall.

How they’re growing: through organic cultivation methods that promote wildlife, water quality, and soil health.



GOING WILD?

Seek safe, satisfying, nutritious, edible “weeds,” such as . . .

- **LAMB’S-QUARTER:** Look for bluish-green leaves that appear to be dusted with powder; use shoots and leaves in salads, cook mature leaves like spinach; it’s loaded with calcium.
- **PURSLANE:** Use its fat, succulent leaves and stems raw or cooked in salads or stir-fries; contains heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.
- **COMMON CHICKWEED:** Find it in shady/moist areas and toss its pairs of tiny leaves in salads; it’s packed with phosphorus, calcium, and iron.

Don’t eat it if you don’t know what it is!



FORAGE AHEAD!

Folks are paying closer attention to their natural surroundings—and this includes food that’s growing in plain sight. “There is a strong desire to learn how to identify, harvest, and process edible wild plants and mushrooms,” says Mike Krebill, author, *The Scout’s Guide to Wild Edibles* (St. Lynn’s Press, 2016). Fledgling foragers are posting photos of mystery plants on social media or using field guides, apps, blogs, or Web sites to ID their finds. (continued)

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The dangers of **tick-borne diseases** are on the rise.

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THE TREND IS TROPICAL

“People are gravitating to indoor gardening for aesthetics, for the health benefits, and as a hobby,” says Michael Wylie, merchant for live goods at The Home Depot Canada.

TROPICALS and succulents are top choices.

“There’s a spike in interest in any plant that looks or seems ‘tropical,’” says Randy Schultz, HomeGardenandHomestead.com. Gardeners are choosing tropical-looking plants that can actually grow in colder climates, such as cold-hardy banana plants, passion flowers, hardy ferns, and pindo palms.



A TASTE OF THE TROPICS

The orange-yellow, pectin-packed fruit of the **PINDO PALM** can be eaten raw or in jelly or wine, giving the plant its other names: jelly palm and wine palm.



LET’S GROW INDOORS!

Home owners are installing **LIVE GREEN PLANT WALLS** and indoor growing systems. “There is lots of interest in in-house systems, both for seedling development and production,” says Mark Lefsrud, Ph.D., associate professor of bioresource engineering at Montreal’s McGill University.

“High-end terrarium/aquarium combinations and indoor ecosystems under glass are the new ways to liven up dark apartments and condos,” says Jimmy Turner, executive director of Red Butte Garden in Salt Lake City, Utah.

HOW MUCH IS 5 GALLONS OF FOOD?

Here’s what you can grow in a 5-gallon bucket:

- 1 broccoli plant—try ‘De Cicco’ or ‘Green Comet’
- 1 eggplant—try ‘BLACK BEAUTY’, ‘Ichiban’, or ‘Slim Jim’
- 1 cherry tomato plant—try ‘Sungold’, ‘Sun Sugar’, or ‘Chadwick’
- 1 beefsteak tomato—try ‘Atlas’ or ‘Mortgage Lifter’

—*Almanac.com*



EDIBLES ARE EVERYWHERE

- **In containers:** “Whether you’re renting or have a sunny but paved space, growing your own food is possible if you learn how to do it in pots,” says Claire Ratinon, author, *How to Grow Your Dinner* (Laurence King, 2020).
- **In raised beds:** “Raised beds work well in small and large spaces, and they can be put on bad or rocky soil,” says Linda O’Keeffe.
- **On windowsills:** PanAmerican Seed’s **KITCHEN MINIS** series tomatoes and peppers were bred to bloom and ripen in small pots and lower light conditions, allowing you to have fresh veggies at any time of year.
- **In whiskey half-barrels:** “They can be planted up with large-foliaged plants like caladium and elephant ears, plus a dazzling assortment of favorite flowers. There is even room for a cherry tomato and some large herbs like basil and rosemary.” —*Joel Flagler*
- **In 5-gallon plastic buckets,** with drainage holes



WE LOVE PEPPERS!

“Vegetable breeders are expanding our pepper palates,” says Ball Horticultural Company’s Katie Rotella.

- Ball’s new varieties ‘**ROULETTE**’ habanero and ‘Sweet Poppers’ jalapeño have all of the flavor and less of the heat.

Pepper colors are changing elsewhere:

- Park Seed suggests ‘**NUMEX EASTER**’ peppers, which mature in pastel colors, and ‘Pretty N Sweet’ peppers that ripen in a rainbow of hues. ‘Black Hawk’ pepper fruit start out black and ripen to bright red.



BECAUSE WE SEDGE SOW

Attractive and easy-care ground cover sedges include:

- emerald green **BRISTLE-LEAVED SEDGE** (*Carex eburnea*)
- spring-flowering white-tinged, or oak, sedge (*C. albicans*)
- frondlike palm sedge (*C. muskingumensis*)

Avoid yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*), a resilient weed that resembles grass.

GROUND COVERS ARE GAINING GROUND

“Alternative lawns are drought-tolerant and pest- and disease-resistant, can outcompete weeds, and require minimal or no mowing,” says Daryl Beyers, author, *The New Gardener’s Handbook* (Timber Press, 2020).

- for quickly-spreading color: ‘**HAPPY CHAPPY**’ **ROSE**
- for between pavers: mother of thyme perennial
- for shady spots: baby blue eyes, aka nemophilia, tender perennial
- for a patriotic look in the U.S.: red, white, and blue varieties, grown together—red mother of thyme, jumbo snow-in-summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*), and hardy **PLUMBAGO** (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*)



PAMPER YOUR PEPPERS

To pick a peck, remember that peppers:

- need 8 hours of direct sunlight.
- easily succumb to wet feet.
- require sweet soil, with a pH between 6 and 8.
- like soil high in organic matter and phosphorous (bonemeal works well).



CALLING ALL POLLINATORS!

Gardeners are finding ways to benefit nature and the harvest by planting **EDIBLES** among in-ground **PERENNIALS** and surrounding small raised vegetable beds with blossoming plants. Pollinators, attracted to the flowers and shrubs, then pollinate fruit and veggie plants. *Learn which native plants bring beneficial insects into the edible garden on page 20.* (continued)

BY THE NUMBERS

U.S. GARDENERS

- 9% converted at least part of their lawn to a natural or wild-flower area
- 14% purchased at least one plant because it is native to their area
- 25% bought at least one plant because it benefits bees, butterflies, or birds

—2020 National Gardening Survey

CANADIAN GARDENERS

- 29% grow mainly edibles
- 26% believe that their plants are better than their neighbors'
- 11% say that their plants are worse than their neighbors'
- 12% visit garden centers several times a month



WANTED: SPEEDY SEEDS

Novice growers want quick results. “Fast-growing veggies distract new gardeners who are waiting for the rest of the garden to catch up,” says Garden Media Group’s Katie Dubow. She says that new gardeners are often impatient about how long it takes to get something to mature, so they are planting at least some quick-harvesting varieties.

- for seed-to-plate in under a week: microgreens and sprouts
- for seed-to-plate in under 50 days: ‘Prizm’ kale, Baby Leaf Zesty Mesclun Mix, **‘FRENCH BREAKFAST’ RADISHES**, ‘Seaside’ spinach, ‘Easy Pick Gold’ zucchini

SUPER-SMALL IS PRETTY BIG

Plant species and cultivars that stay very compact at maturity are in demand to display in homes and workspaces. “There are plenty of low-humidity tiny plants that can reside on your windowsill, plus high-humidity species that make the perfect addition to small glass cases or terrariums,” says Leslie Halleck.

Right now, we want micro-orchids, miniature ferns, teeny begonias, **MINUSCULE SUCCULENTS**, and micro-African violet cultivars—and we want them displayed in tiny handmade pots.



TERRARIUM TIPS

In a clear container, layer in this order:

- pebbles, small river stones, or the expanded clay balls used in hydroponics (for drainage)
- charcoal (additive-free activated, horticultural, or lump)
- well-draining potting soil (to prevent compaction and saturation)
- decor (wood, rocks, or other items)
- miniature plants

Handy planting tools include a spoon and long-handle tweezers or chopsticks (for narrow-mouth containers).

—*Almanac.com*

THE NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN

Many backyards are shady, so they’re not ideal for growing food. Often, the sunniest space—the front yard—is no longer off-limits to edibles.

“Growing a well-tended **FRONT YARD VEGETABLE GARDEN** is a smart way to help yourself and your community,” says Shawna Coronado, author, *The Wellness Garden* (Cool Springs Press, 2017).

(continued)





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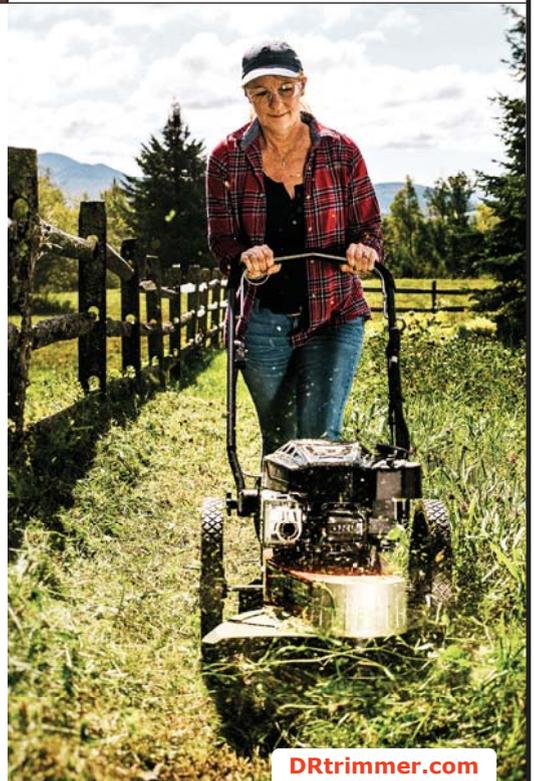
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(MANY) MORE TREES, PLEASE!

“Even with the smallest of yards, doorsteps, or balconies, you have the opportunity to enjoy a tree of your own,” says Kevin Hobbs, author, *The Story of Trees* (Laurence King, 2020). All can be managed in containers with some effort and deliberate pruning, including these compact varieties:

- *Ginkgo biloba* ‘**PRINCETON SENTRY**’, in columnar form
- *G. biloba* ‘Mariken’, low- and slow-growing
- *Liriodendron tulipifera* ‘Little Volunteer’, a dwarf tulip tree cultivar
- *Taxus baccata* ‘Icicle’, a form of yew
- *Ulmus x hollandica* ‘**JACQUELINE HILLIER**’, a dwarf elm
- *Styrax japonicus* ‘Angyo Dwarf’, aka Japanese snowbell
- *Acer palmatum* ‘**RED PYGMY**’, a red maple
- *Zelkova serrata* ‘Goblin’, a dense, vase-shape tree

Learn about trees and shrubs in the landscape on page 86.

FEASTS FOR THE EYES

“We are seeing a spike in edible gardening—vegetables, fruit, herbs, berries,” says Paul Cohen, director of research at the National Gardening Association. Ideas include:

- **hanging baskets:** for example, ‘**YELLOW PATIO**’ cherry tomatoes



- **perennial fruit and vegetables:** rhubarb, horseradish, asparagus, sorrel, and strawberries.

“These crops are the economizers of the kitchen garden as an important supply for our kitchens during the ‘shoulder seasons’ of spring and fall,” says Chicago Botanic Garden’s Lisa Hilgenberg.



- **vining veggies:** for instance, ‘**TREASURE ISLAND KAUKURA**’, a bright orange sweet potato with deep purple leaves
- Learn more about growing up with vining veggies on page 62. ■

Stacey Kusterbeck is a frequent contributor to Old Farmer’s Almanac publications.



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THREE C’S OF A GARDEN

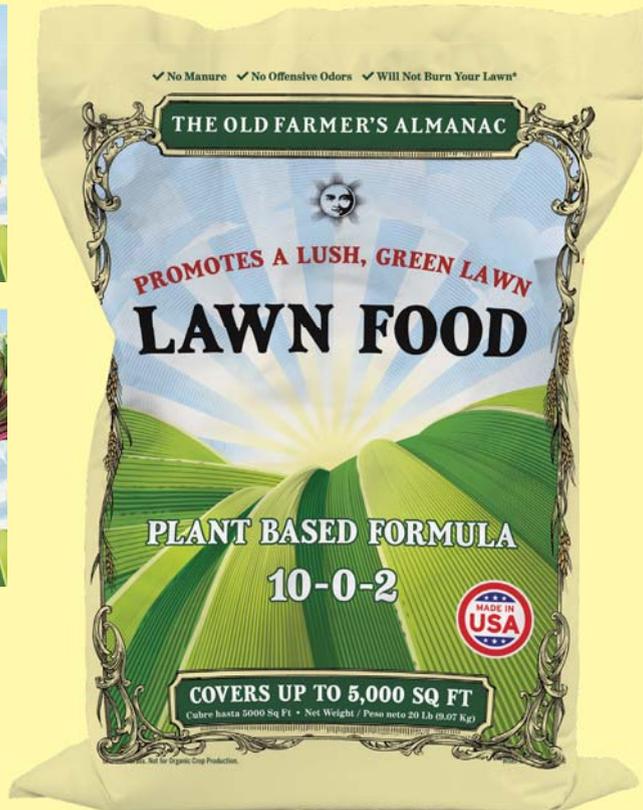
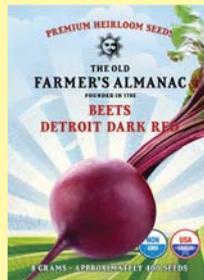
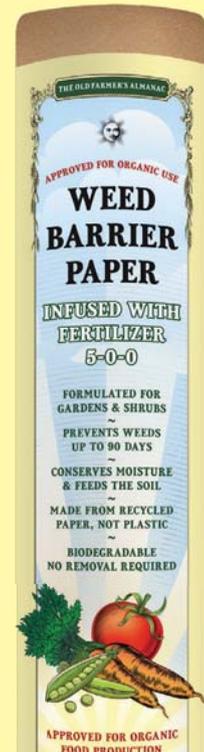
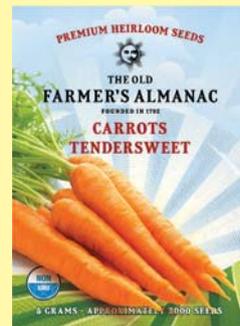
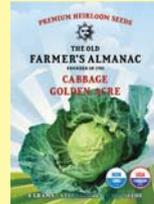
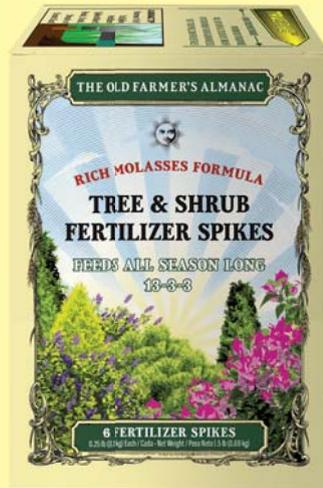
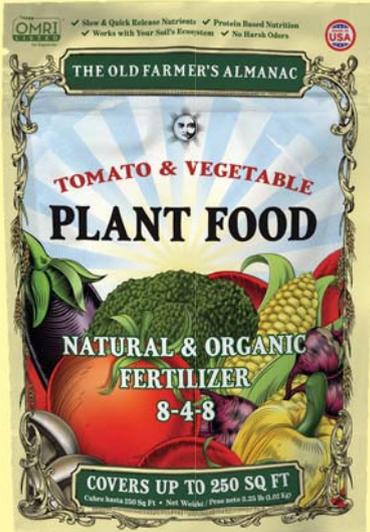
“A garden is not just a place for plants. It can be a special place for people—for improved **composure**, greater **confidence**, and **coping abilities**,” says Joel Flagler. He recommends that a garden have . . .

- **visual definition:** for example, from tall ornamental grasses and/or upright junipers
- **soothing sounds:** wind chimes and/or a **WATER FEATURE**
- **natural fragrances:** for instance, from heliotrope, mock orange, or wave petunias





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NATIVE PLANTS TO THE RESCUE!

HOW TO USE WILDFLOWERS AND INDIGENOUS SPECIES TO ENCOURAGE INSECTS AND DISCOURAGE PESTS

Growing our own food connects us to nature. Gardening is a harmony of soil, sunlight, rain, gardener, and seed. Our gardens are delightful testaments to humankind's positive relationship with the natural world. We use the earth's gifts to create beautiful spaces that sustain

Signs of pest damage kick off a quest for solutions now and methods for avoiding problems in future. Best management practices like scouting, exclusion nets, natural remedies, and even removing insects by hand are all techniques that gardeners employ in this struggle, and rightfully

for beneficial insects such as these near the vegetable garden is a fantastic way to provide a long-lasting, sustainable form of pest management, and you can do this with native plants!

WHY AND WHERE NATIVES WORK

Native plants can be beautiful, but their benefits

pollinating insects to crops like cucumbers, squash, pumpkins, blueberries, and strawberries.

These helpful insects can be even more effective when you bring them into close proximity with your vegetable crops. By drawing these insects into the garden, you increase the population and diversity of



LADYBIRD BEETLE



GREEN LACEWING



MASON WASP



ASSASSIN BUG

our nutrition and serenity . . . and then a squash vine borer comes along and makes us question everything!

Pests can be one of the biggest challenges in vegetable gardening. Aphids feed on a plant's sap, transmitting viruses. Cucumber beetles decimate crops by spreading bacterial wilt while feeding on flowers and fruit. Cutworms chew through plant stems and quickly destroy entire plants.

so because these methods can be effective! But native plants can work just as well or more so.

As gardeners, it is important to always remember that our gardens are interconnected to the ecological world around us. Pests have predators, too. Aphid wasps, ladybird beetles, and lacewing larvae eat aphids. Mason wasps attack cutworms. Green lacewings and assassin bugs wreak havoc on cucumber beetles. Creating habitats

go far beyond aesthetics. They have co-evolved with the other plants, animals, fungi, and bacteria as well as the climate, light, and soil conditions in habitats and regions. They provide food, nectar, and shelter for a wide array of important insects. They play meaningful roles in keeping ecosystems stable.

By selecting and planting native flowers and grasses that attract beneficial (aka pest-controlling) insects, you can then bring in native bees and other

these valuable assistants.

Placing native plants in or very near your garden—for example, in “pockets” on the edges of a bed or in one or two rows as an insectary strip right through the middle of your garden—improves pest control and your crops' pollination. Choosing a diversity of plants with different bloom periods will provide continuous flowering throughout the year. For example, mason bees are present in early spring, whereas

bumblebees are present throughout the growing season. Providing an uninterrupted supply of food throughout the year will ensure that they are all happy, and you will enjoy the aesthetic side benefit of yearlong blooming flowers.

When choosing native plants, you'll find that there are numerous options. Some lettuce farmers in California use sweet alyssum to increase the biological control of aphids. Nonnative annuals and biennials like cilantro, dill, and alyssum grow quickly and are excellent in attracting beneficial insects.



SWEET ALYSSUM

However, these plants might not last more than a season or two. Perennial native plants provide insect habitat year after year, with no need to till or replant. They are long-term investments for your garden.

Not just any natives will do—there are a few considerations. Plants set close to crops, such as in beds within the growing area (aka “insectary strips”) should be sturdy-stemmed, cast little shade, and tolerate full sun and hot conditions.

Choose plant species that ideally stand 1 to 3 feet tall at maturity; taller plants may cast shade or fall over into the vegetable rows. In general, native plants can be spaced apart from each other according to their size at maturity.

Correct spacing allows them to be dense enough to suppress weeds while also giving each other room to grow. Use 12-inch spacing for plants less than 24 inches tall, 18 inches between plants 24 and 48 inches tall, and 24-inch spacing for those taller than 4 feet. (The tallest species may be better suited for



GOLDEN ALEXANDER

pocket plantings around the edges of the garden.) Plant guides and tags also often offer great guidance.

Wonderful choices for wildflowers include golden

alexanders (*Zizia aurea*), nodding wild onion (*Allium cernuum*), prairie sundrops (*Oenothera pilosella*), and Virginia mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum virginianum*).

THE ROOTS OF THE MATTER

Plant communities have two equally important parts. The aboveground photosynthetic component—the stems, foliage, and flowers—is the obvious one. However, the belowground system of roots and symbiotic fungi and microorganisms is equally important to the community. The structure of root systems is an



NODDING WILD ONION

important piece of how this underground community functions. For example, wildflowers tend to either have a prominent taproot with some side branches

or a coarsely fibrous root system. In contrast, grasses tend to have densely fibrous, fine-textured, deep roots that occupy more of the root zone, making them resilient, reliable soil stabilizers.

Because of this structural difference in the root systems, grass communities tend to be more stable and resistant to invasion by weedy species than communities dominated by wildflowers. The diversity and biomass of these root systems improve organic matter, water infiltration, and soil health.

Without question, the most stable herbaceous



SIDE-OATS GRAMA

plant communities contain wildflowers growing within a matrix of grasses typically seen in our native prairies. A good target for native plantings is 20 percent to 30 percent native grasses and 70 percent to 80 percent wildflowers.

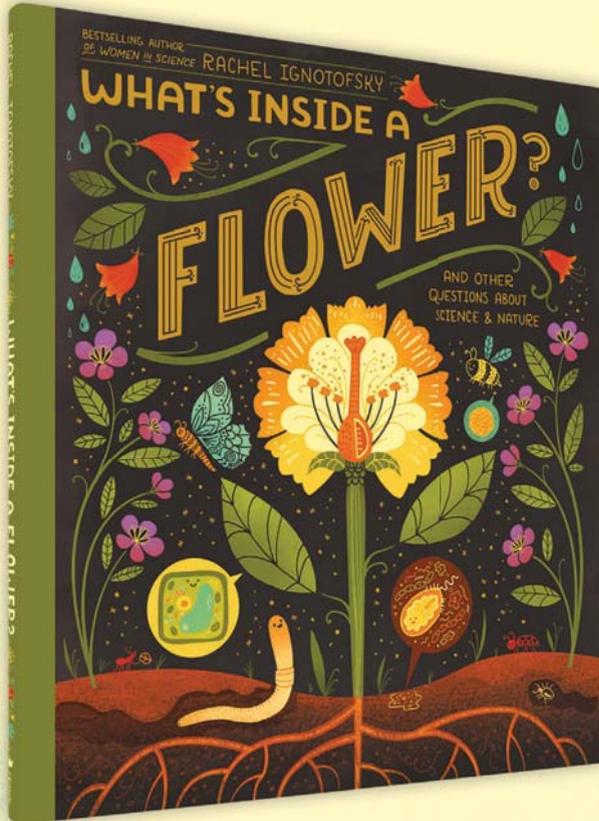
In a 30-inch-wide bed that runs the length of a garden, there is sufficient space for two rows of native plants. Group plants of the same wildflower species together, followed by a grass and then another

BEE KIND

Many of our native bees travel only short distances to find nectar and forage; this makes protecting their habitat in and around the garden important. Approximately 70 percent of native bees nest in the ground, a habitat that can be well protected by undisturbed native plantings. Approximately 30 percent of native bees nest in cavities, such as in wood or plant stems. Leaving native plants' woody stems erect throughout the winter provides habitat for these cavity-nesting native bees.

Photos, from left: Pixabay, Albert Herring/Wikimedia; fotolinchen/Getty Images; Krzysztof Ziarnek/Wikimedia

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ECO-GARDENING

group of wildflowers.

Good grasses include side-oats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), and prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*).

HOW TO NURTURE NATIVES

Prepare beds for native plants in spring, after hard frosts and before the heat of summer. Early fall is another golden time to plant native seedlings.

You can prepare native plant beds with the same measures used for any other crop. If you are planting native seedlings (not mature plants), sheet mulching techniques will help the soil to retain moisture and prevent weeds. Cover the planting area with a few layers of newspaper. Spread on this a layer of mulch—straw (not hay), composted shredded leaves, or 2 inches of shredded hardwood fines (aka shredded hardwood mulch). Spacing the seedlings as needed, push aside the mulch and cut through the newspaper into the soil to plant. Pat the soil and paper around the seedling and return the mulch near to but not touching the stem (touching could cause crown rot).

Water the plants regularly until they become established, and then afterward only in extremely dry periods. Some plants will flower during the first year, but in the second year, your native plant bed will really start buzzing! ■

Kevin Allison is the urban soil health specialist for the Marion County, Indiana, Soil and Water Conservation District.

QUESTIONS?

For more information on local native plant recommendations, contact your county's Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA-NRCS District Conservationist, or Cooperative Extension office. Great plant lists can be found here:

- marionswcd.org/native-plants/
- extension.entm.purdue.edu/publications/POL-6/POL-6.html
- *Farming With Native Beneficial Insects* by Eric Lee-Mäder (Xerces Society, 2014)



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GOING UP!

WHEN SPACE IS LIMITED, GO VERTICAL!



BAG IT UP



TIN CAN ALLEY



OFF THE HOOK

Wake up a boring wall with a cacophony of color, courtesy of wall-hugging pots and planters. Living walls are where space-strapped gardeners

get growing; there may be limited ground to work with, but vertically, only the sky's the limit!

Living walls have rocketed in popularity over recent years, in part as a

consequence of generally smaller garden sizes but also as a reaction to our insatiable appetite for more growing opportunities. Choose from ready-to-plant solutions or make your own

display by securing pots and tubs to walls and fences.

Sunny walls carry the advantage of absorbing heat during the day. This is then released at night to create a cozy microclimate ideal for gaining a head start for tender crops such as tomatoes and peppers. White walls reflect light back onto your plants, improving the quality of light for sun-craving crops.

Check that your wall or fence is strong enough for its living cloak. Plants and wet potting mix are a weighty combination! If you're unsure, build your vertical garden from the ground up so that its weight rests predominantly on the ground rather than the wall.

Here are some ideas:

- **Bag it up:** Give tired sacks a new lease on life. Plant directly into them or just drop in plastic pots of produce.
- **Tin can alley:** Use old tin cans for herbs and trailing flowers such as nasturtium. Drill drainage holes in their bottoms.
- **Off the hook:** Hang sleek and stylish planters from S-shape hooks on trellis or horizontal battens.

(continued)

Adapted from GrowVeg: The Beginner's Guide to Easy Vegetable Gardening © by Benedict Vanheems (Storey Publishing, 2021); used with permission from Storey Publishing.

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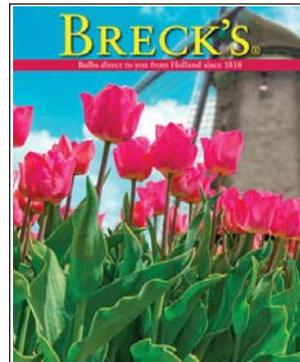
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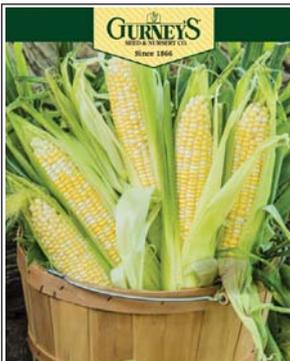


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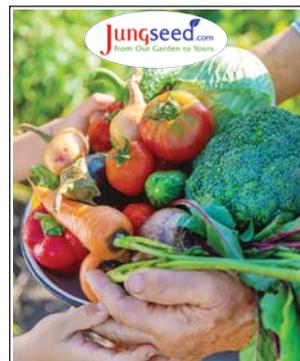
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DO-IT-YOURSELF

• *Got a weak wall?* Grow climbing vegetables such as beans, which simply cover the wall rather than lean heavily on it.

• *Homespun hanging gardens:* Think outside the box and repurpose old items into handy hanging homes for your wall-dwelling plants.

MAKE A LIVING WALL

This quick-to-set-up project turns a standard trellis panel into a thing of immense beauty! Use any combination of containers, which can be reconfigured as often as the mood strikes you. Plant the containers with a combination of vegetables, herbs, and flowers suitable for the space available. We're using salad leaves, radishes, kale, basil, and pea shoots, teamed with a splash of color from marigolds and dainty violas.

Raising pots off the ground makes them prone to drying out more quickly. Water regularly or consider setting up a simple drip-irrigation system.

YOU WILL NEED . . .

trellis panel
wood stain or paint
(optional)
drill and masonry drill bit
wall anchors
L-shape screw-in hooks
10- to 12-inch pots
potting mix
selection of plants and seeds

strong jute twine or wire

1. Leave your trellis panel as it is or spruce it up with a coat of stain or paint

suitable for outdoor use.

2. Drill holes in the wall with the masonry drill bit. Line them with wall anchors, then screw in L-shape hooks, ensuring that they're level.

3. Fill the pots with potting mix, then sow or plant. Our selection includes herbs, flowers, salad leaves, and leafy greens—a feast for eyes and bellies!

4. Hang up the trellis panel.

Now secure the pots to the trellis using the twine. Cut off any excess. Keep plants watered and harvest often.

BEN'S TOP TIP

Wrap the twine around both the pot and trellis at least twice to spread the strain and minimize the risk of the twine snapping.

TIMING

- Sow/plant outside from early spring to early summer.
- Harvest from late spring.



LIVING WALL

Photos: top row, Growing Interactive; others, Kim Lightbody



TUBULAR BELLES: COOL, CALM, AND COLUMNAR



IN YOUR POCKETS: FELT POCKETS PACKED WITH HERBS



STACKED UP: BUILT FROM THE GROUND UP

OFF THE WALL

If you don't fancy setting up your own vertical planting system, take advantage of the many plug-and-play planters. These off-the-shelf vertical planting solutions include woolly planting pockets, rigid plastic panels that slot together, and columnar planters with a built-in watering system.

Most vertical planters include all of the fasteners and wall anchors needed for installation. Or opt for stackable planters that start at ground level and then build upward.

CASCADE YOUR STRAWBERRIES

Strawberry cascades have head-turning appeal, especially in flower or fruit. Terra-cotta pots look wonderful but owing to their porous properties will need watering more often than plastic pots.

This cascade (*right*) is made up of three pots. Position your cascade in the sun and water with a liquid fertilizer high in potassium throughout the growing season.

Buy strawberries as potted plants from spring onward or as bare-root runners to plant in early spring or autumn.

YOU WILL NEED . . .

- 3 terra-cotta pots: 6, 10, and 14 inches in diameter
- potting mix
- short bamboo cane
- 10 strawberry plants
- liquid fertilizer

1. Fill the largest pot with potting mix, then push

the bamboo cane down through the middle so that it stands perfectly straight.

2. Thread the medium pot onto the cane through its central drainage hole, then fill with potting mix. Repeat for the small pot.
3. Plant four or five strawberry plants into the large bottom pot. Tamp down and water well to settle.
4. Plant three or four strawberries into the middle pot, then two strawberries at the top, in the smallest pot. Water and feed with a liquid fertilizer.



BEN'S TOP TIP

Plant at the right depth: too shallow, and the exposed crown (leaves and stems of the plant) will be prone to drying out; too deep, and the crown could rot. All of the roots should be completely covered.

TIMING

- Plant outside from spring on.
- Harvest from summer to autumn. ■

—Benedict Vanheems

Benedict Vanheems is a passionate home gardener specializing in organically grown fruit, vegetables, and herbs. He is a garden writer at GrowVeg.com and the face of their gardening videos.

5 EASY STEPS TO A CLIMATE-RESILIENT GARDEN

WITH ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE, YOU'RE DEALING WITH LOCAL PROBLEMS. ULTIMATELY, THEY'RE GOING TO BE MANIFESTED IN VERY UNIQUE WAYS, DEPENDING ON WHERE YOU ARE . . .

—Leonardo Martinez-Diaz, author, with Alice Hill, of *Building a Resilient Tomorrow: How to Prepare for the Coming Climate Disruption* (Oxford University Press, 2019)



More variable seasons, more heavy rainfall, warmer winters, hotter summer nights, more dry periods, and longer drought are increasing the challenges of gardening everywhere. How has your garden changed, and how is it likely to change in the future? What

can you do to help your garden to thrive no matter what the weather?

New kinds of gardening methods are making headlines as the solution to the challenges of gardening in a changing climate.

Regenerative gardening focuses on practices like cover crops and reduced tillage that increase soil and

plant storage of the carbon that is absorbed from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. These practices are well-known win-wins: They help to slow down climate change as well as grow healthy soils that buffer your garden from more variable temperatures and rainfall.

Climate-friendly **resilient**

gardening promotes regenerative gardening procedures but also includes practices to avoid or reduce the release of carbon to the atmosphere and increase carbon stored in soils and plants. These are actions such as replacing chemical fertilizers with composts, synthetic pesticides with plant diversity, and garden

Photo: sanjari/Getty Images

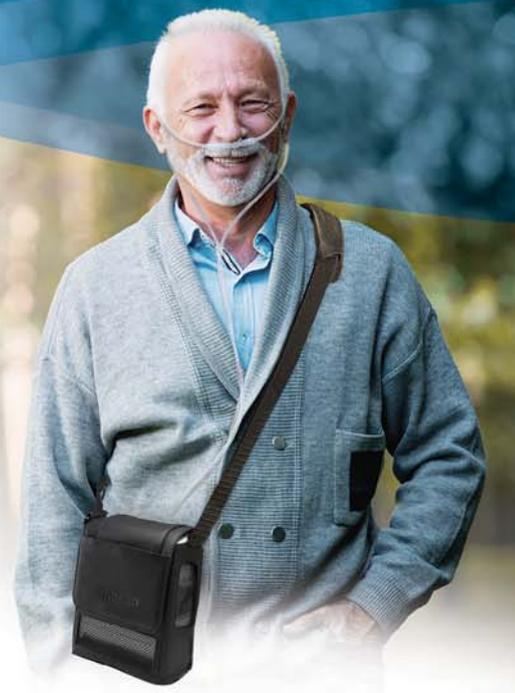


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tools that run on fossil fuels with human- and solar-powered options.

Although both of these new gardening methods can help to put you on the path to a climate-resilient garden, they are not enough. You must do more than simply adopt some new gardening practices. You must change the way that you think about gardening.

Resilient gardening is about a lot more than simply bouncing back from the damage caused by a flood, a late-spring freeze, or a prolonged heat wave. Swift and low-cost recovery from damaging weather is important, but the resilient gardener cultivates nature's ability to adapt to damaging weather-related events in ways that avoid or minimize damage so that there is never a need to bounce back! The resilient gardener also prepares for changes in weather patterns.

To begin cultivating your climate-resilient garden, follow these five steps. You'll be glad you did!

1. Cultivate healthy soils. Healthy soils are the resilient gardener's first line of defense against more variable weather. Healthy soils absorb more water during heavy rains, store more water for plants to use between rainfalls, and produce healthy plants that are more resistant to pests and disease, less sensitive to variations in temperature and rainfall, more productive, and more nutritious. Plus, healthy soils absorb and store



HEALTHY SOILS ARE THE RESILIENT GARDENER'S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST MORE VARIABLE WEATHER.

more carbon from the atmosphere.

These four keys to soil health will help you to cultivate healthy soils:

- **Minimize soil disturbance** by using tillage only when needed and choosing tillage options that do not mix different soil layers.
- **Keep soil covered** with

growing plants for as much of the year as possible and/or compost or mulch to feed soil life and protect the soil surface from damage by heavy rain and extreme temperatures.

- **Cultivate plant diversity** by growing a mix of plant types, such as warm- and cool-season annuals and

perennials from different plant families that produce a mix of benefits, including food and beauty, nutrients for your crops, habitat for beneficial wildlife, and protection from pests, diseases, and damaging weather. Rotate these plants in and around your garden.

- **Encourage wildlife** to live in and/or visit your garden. Welcome beneficial insects and birds and provide a healthy home for the diversity of microorganisms that create healthy soils. Enjoy the benefits of more traditional livestock, such as poultry and cattle, by using their manure in compost and/or, if possible, inviting them to graze cover crops and harvest weeds and insects.

2. Reduce energy use. The resilient gardener practices the four Rs—Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

- **Rethink.** Explore climate-friendly alternatives to your current gardening habits and materials: Rethink your need for pesticides and manage pests and diseases through resistant crop varieties, crop rotation, natural repellents, physical protection such as floating row covers, and insectary plantings that attract beneficial insects. Instead of spreading nitrogen fertilizers, grow legumes. Replace peat moss with compost or coir, plastics with compostable materials, and municipal water with rainwater. Trade in power tools for low- or no-emission alternatives. Consider ways to use

GROW WISER

- **Know your area's (USDA or Natural Resources Canada) plant hardiness zone:** Almanac.com/hardiness-zones
- **Learn about phenology, "gardening by the signs":** Almanac.com/natures-signs
- **Become a citizen scientist with the USA National Phenology Network (Usanpn.org/usa-national-phenology-network) or Budburst (Budburst.org)**
- **Teach yourself the basics of biointensive gardening:** Growbiointensive.org/Self_Teaching.html
- **Reduce the use of plastic in your garden:** Almanac.com/plastic-free and/or [share gardening practices through the lens of climate change mitigation and adaptation: Climatechange.cornell.edu/gardening](http://sharegardeningpractices.through.the.lens.of.climate.change.mitigation.and.adaptation.cornell.edu/gardening)
- **Learn how climate change is affecting our weather:** Nca2018.globalchange.gov

human power: Park your rototiller and prepare your soil with a broadfork and hand rake instead. Use a scythe, a push lawn mower, landscape fabric, and even freezing temperatures to manage cover crops and crop residues.

• **Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle** materials that you need but can't Rethink and check each year to see whether new alternatives are available.

3. Know your climate risk. Although climate change is global, your experience of climate change—aka your climate risk—depends on changes in regional climate, the position of your garden in the local landscape, and the sensitivity of your plants to more variable weather. The resilient gardener knows how regional climate has changed over the past century and how it is likely to change in the future; keeps careful records of local weather patterns; and uses this knowledge to design and manage for climate resilience. For example, if your garden is in an area that floods during heavy rains, select crops that are less sensitive to flooding, add drainage, or use landscape features to direct floodwaters away from your garden.

4. Protect, adapt, and prepare. The resilient gardener uses three strategies to reduce climate risk. One protects the garden with physical structures—for example, irrigation and drainage, garden fabrics,

and built structures like a windbreak, cold frame, or greenhouse. A second strategy better adapts the garden to current climate risks through practices that increase biodiversity, such as improving soil health, replacing sensitive crop species and cultivars with new ones that are more robust, and using plants to provide structural protection. A third strategy prepares the garden for future climate risks through practices that anticipate changes in regional weather patterns by, for instance, selecting fruit tree cultivars adapted to warmer winters.

5. Share and learn. The resilient gardener knows that local gardeners need to work together to help their gardens to thrive now and well into the future. Experienced gardeners in your area are a valuable source of information. They can tell you about the weather risks that have been most difficult to deal with over the years, how these risks may have changed over time, and some time-tested local solutions that you can try. Share your knowledge and learn from others by joining a local garden club, take a climate course, or participate in a citizen science project. ■

—Laura Lengnick

Laura Lengnick is the founder and lead scientist at Cultivating Resilience, LLC, a private firm that works with organizations of all kinds to integrate resilience thinking into operations and strategic planning.

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Are muscle and joint pains in your back, neck, shoulders or knees keeping you from enjoying daily activities? You should be aware of this new topical pain reliever that targets the source of the pain – inflammation, instead of masking it with artificial cooling or warming.

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DYEING FOR COLOR

EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNIT, FELT, OR CRAFT WITH NATURAL FIBERS, PLANTS USED FOR DYEING MAY THRIVE IN YOUR BEDS.

Coloring your textiles and yarns with homegrown plant dyes is a fun and ecological step in creating beautiful, one-of-a-kind projects. Creating a dye garden offers a source of desirable colors ready for the picking. Plant one now to use for dyeing this year or next—or just to enjoy, knowing that your garden is home to a rainbow of possibilities.



INDIGO

INDIGO

(*Indigofera suffruticosa*) Indigo, made from several plant species, is considered the royalty of all plant dyes: Its leaves were used to produce vibrant blue-tone garments for royalty and the wealthy as far back as 1600 B.C. During the Industrial Revolution, Levi Strauss popularized the color in denim jeans.

The tender shrub *I. suffruticosa* is a perennial in its native Mexico and the Caribbean and an annual

elsewhere. It performs best and produces optimum dye color if provided well-drained soil amended with compost and regular watering in areas with long, hot summers. Soak indigo seeds in water overnight before sowing directly into



SWEET FENNEL



PURPLE CABBAGE

the garden once the soil is warm and there is no risk of frost.

Indigo bears small, tan flowers in midsummer, which are followed by pea-like seedpods. For brilliant color, put only the freshly picked (not dried) dark green leaves into the dye pot.

Harvest leaves during summer or early autumn. Indigo produces a large range of blue and black shades.

ONION

(*Allium cepa*)

Onions have been cultivated around the world for



PURPLE BASIL



ONIONS

over 5,000 years. Ancient Egyptians buried onions with their pharaohs; to the Egyptians, the layers of peel and rings of a sliced onion symbolized eternity.

They are easy to grow in a sunny location in well-draining, sand-amended soil. Add a handful of

well-rotted manure or compost before planting. Thin onions for bigger bulbs and reduced infestations of onion flies and maggots.

Yellow or red onions consistently produce good yellow, orange, and brown colors. (Red onions do not produce a noticeably darker color than yellow onions.) Harvest when the tops yellow and droop. Store onions in a dry place with



SUNFLOWER

plenty of air circulation. Dyers treasure the vellum skins, or “paper”; when slicing onions, save these for use as dye.

PURPLE BASIL

(*Ocimum basilicum* var. *purpurascens*)

Named after the Greek word *basileus*, meaning “king,” this herb is valued for its culinary and medicinal properties. Over 150 species of basil exist, the best known of which is sweet basil. Purple basil and its many cultivars are

Photos: Wendy Cuttler/Flickr (indigo); Fir0002/Wikimedia (sweet fennel); Pixabay (all others)



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DO-IT-YOURSELF

hybrid forms of sweet basil, identifiable by their dark purple leaves and stems.

Annual purple basil can not tolerate cold weather. Sow seeds in full sun, in well-drained, compost-amended soil, when all danger of frost has passed. Or, start it indoors; basil transplants well. Once plants are established, apply nitrogen sparingly. Plant stems will weaken if given too much.

Collect purple basil leaves in midsummer, before the plants flower, and use fresh for a dye. Leaves will yield dye colors in brown to light purple shades.

RED CABBAGE

(*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* f. *rubra*)

Early Egyptians ate cabbage to cure a hangover, and ancient Chinese recommended it as an agent against baldness.

Cabbage is a heavy feeder and requires regular applications of compost. It is not drought tolerant; to conserve moisture, use mulch around the plants. Practice annual crop rotation, as planting

cabbage in the same location every year will invite unwanted pests and diseases.

Red cabbage produces colors ranging from lilac to bright blue, depending on the pH of the soil. Acidic soils will deepen the red leaf color. (Cabbage's edibility is not affected by pH.) Harvest red cabbage when the heads are fully formed and feel heavy and solid. Use only fresh leaves to make dye. Cutting the heads into 1- to 2-inch chunks will help to extract the color.

ROSEMARY

(*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Native to Mediterranean shores, rosemary was used to treat jaundice and to improve memory. Its aromatic, needlelike leaves were often burned as incense. In 14th-century Europe, rosemary branches were placed in homes in an attempt to ward off the Black Plague.

Rosemary is a perennial in warm regions; it may be best suited to overwintering in containers indoors in cold zones. It is a sun-lover and can not tolerate boggy soils.



ROSEMARY

Plants favor dry conditions and a lack of nutrients. In ideal conditions, rosemary can grow to 6 feet tall.

Fresh sprigs with gray-green leaves are best for dyeing. At any time during the growing season, carefully prune several woody sprigs and cut them into 2-inch pieces. Use both stems and leaves for shades of green to brown.

SUNFLOWER

(*Helianthus annuus*)

Sunflowers, which are native to North America, have been cultivated by indigenous peoples since 3000 B.C. They were introduced to Europe by Spanish explorers in the 16th century, and domestication of sunflowers began in the 1830s.

Plant sunflowers in full sun, in well-drained, compost-amended soil, and provide even, consistent moisture. To encourage more flowers and a bushier growth habit, pinch back the stems when the plants are young.

Select sunflower heads for dyeing when they are in full bloom and do not allow

them to dry. Sunflower blooms produce color in a yellow to green range. The seeds of the rare heirloom sunflower 'Hopi Black Dye' will yield vibrant purple and black shades in the dye pot; however, these plants are difficult to obtain.

SWEET FENNEL

(*Foeniculum vulgare*)

Fennel, with its strong anise flavor, has been prized in cooking and medicine since the time of the ancient Romans. They used it to treat bronchial ailments and colic in infants. Sack, a liquor made with honey and fennel, was popular in Elizabethan England and is still bottled today by meaderies.

Sweet fennel is easy to grow in full sun and well-drained soil. (It adapts and spreads so freely by seed that it has naturalized in certain states and, as a result, been declared invasive.) Florence fennel (*F. vulgare* var. *azoricum*, aka finocchio) is less aggressive. It produces a large, bulbous leaf base that you can eat.

Sweet fennel flowers, leaves, and stems are used for dyeing. Pick in the spring or early summer when leaves are tender and feathery, before the plants form seeds. Fresh fennel produces beautiful, soft gray-green to medium green to yellow-brown shades. ■

Sheryl Normandeau is an avid gardener, writer, and blogger from Calgary, Alberta. She grows a wide assortment of vegetables and herbs on her balcony and in several community garden plots.

Photo: Pixabay

DYEING DETAILS

There are many recipes for dyeing with plants, but most follow a similar process:

Place the harvested plant matter in a vat (dye pot), cover it with water, and boil until you achieve your desired color. You may add lemon juice or salt to enhance the color. Strain the plant matter from the dye.

When using natural dyes, you need a color fixative (mordant) to set the color. Mordants include alum (found in grocery stores), rhubarb, sumac leaves, and oak tree galls. Presoak the fibers in a mixture of water and a mordant before adding to the colored water (dye).

Submerge the presoaked fibers in the dye and simmer until they reach your desired color. Remove the fibers from the pot, rinse, and hang to dry before using.



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THE RAISED BED HEAT SINK

A PASSIVE-SOLAR SOLUTION TO EXTENDING THE SEASON

Many gardeners long for a greenhouse, but greenhouse growing brings challenges, what with regulating the ventilation, watering, pollination problems, the risk of fungal diseases and pests (aphids and whiteflies, to name a few). Not to mention the expense and the space requirements.

There is a low-cost alternative that avoids the pitfalls while providing many of the benefits of a greenhouse: a passive-solar heat sink, made by adding multiwall polycarbonate (PC) panels to a raised

bed. It is open to sunshine, rain, pollinating breezes, and beneficial insects and allows the soil to trap and hold more of the Sun's heat. The polycarbonate panels are fitted as closely as possible to the top boards of the raised bed. The hinged panels are flush-mounted on support posts so that when they are closed, the sides of the bed make continuous walls. This helps to trap heat.

the heat sink enables tender melons, winter squashes, cucumbers, peppers, and eggplants to produce more, faster, and with less stress. In generally frost-free zones, the heat sink could be used all winter to shelter frost-hardy crops like cabbage, kale, arugula, brussels sprouts, and carrots. Plus, anywhere (or -time) wind blows to excess, the heat sink's barrier configuration serves as an effective windbreak.

All this, and access to your plants is as easy as ever: The panels are hinged to let you weed, water, and harvest. The entire

structure is easily removed so that it can be stored in winter to extend its life and moved to a new bed each year for crop rotation.

This project typically costs under a few hundred dollars. The multiwall polycarbonate is available as 4x8-foot panels, sold by some suppliers of plate glass and most greenhouse supply stores. These come in various thicknesses (I used 3.5-mm); the thickest cost more but retain more heat. While these panels are the main expense, they are also

lightweight and almost indestructible, visible to birds, and trap more heat than glass. Vendors might cut them to size for you; to do it yourself, use a fine-toothed circular saw, a Dremel tool, or a straight-edge and strong box cutter. Use eye protection.

The other materials are found at hardware stores. Weatherproof hardware is best.

The directions here are for a 4x8-foot raised bed (any depth). Adjust accordingly for larger or smaller beds.

YOU WILL NEED:

- duct or greenhouse tape
- 3 sheets of 4x8-foot multiwall polycarbonate, cut to make 6 4x4-foot pieces
- 6 5-foot lengths of 1x3-inch wood strapping (aka furring strip board), for support posts
- 18 1½-inch deck screws
- 16 pan-head wood screws (length depends on thickness of panels)
- 8 flush-mount cabinet hinges with screws
- 4 4-foot lengths of wood trim (narrow but thick enough to hold the hinge screws)
- 4 bungee cords, each about 3 feet long
- 12 brass cup hooks
- cordless drill with screwdriver bits to match screws, plus a bit to predrill
- 5-foot wood strapping

TO MAKE THE HEAT SINK:

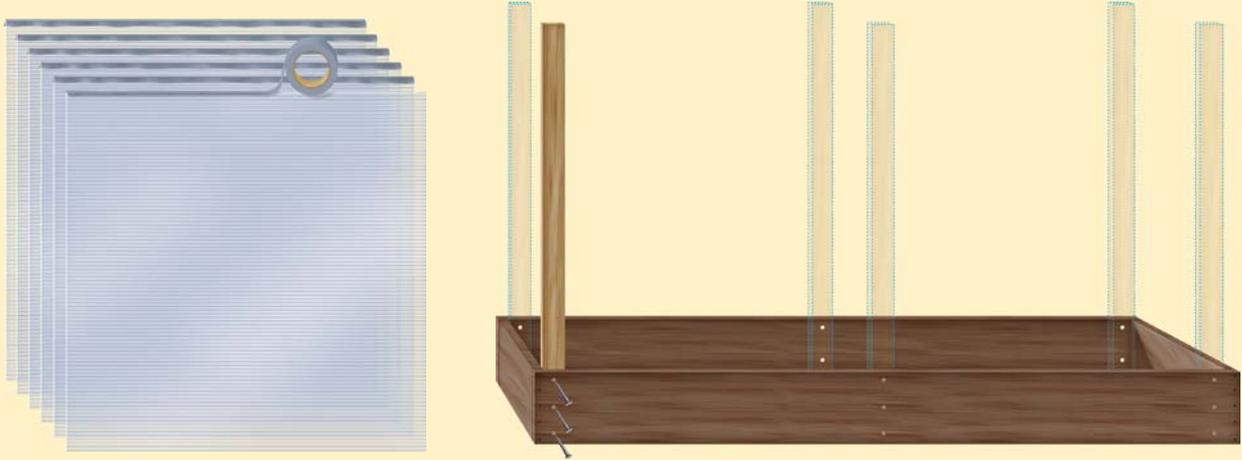
1. Cover the sharp edges of the polycarbonate with duct or greenhouse tape, pressing the tape evenly over the edges.
2. Secure the 5-foot-long support posts to the inside of the raised bed with three deck screws in each. Screws go through the wider, 3-inch side of the post. Leave a 4-foot-long portion of each post above the bed frame. (Predrill the screw holes to prevent splitting.)
- Secure four 5-foot-long posts at the corners, inside the 4-foot ends of the raised bed.

Attach the remaining two posts at the middle of the 8-foot sides of the raised bed, one on each side.

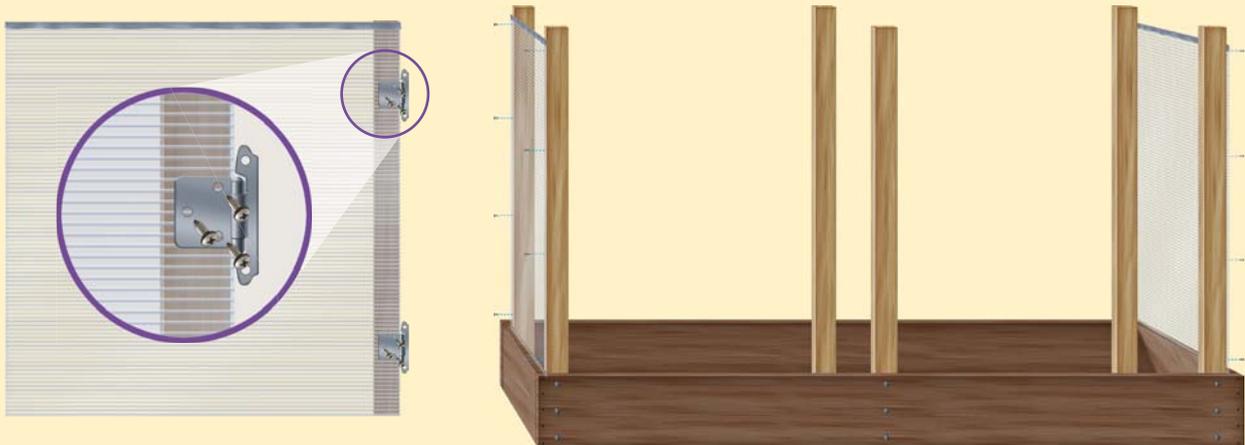
3. At a 4-foot side of the raised bed, rest a PC panel upright against two posts, with the bottom resting on the top board of the raised bed beneath. Attach the panel to the outside of each post with pan-head screws at 16-inch intervals, using a light hand on the drill.
4. Repeat on the other 4-foot end of the bed.
5. Attach the hinges to the remaining four panels: Place a panel on a flat surface. Lay a 4-foot length of wood trim under it, along one edge; match the edge of the panel with the edge of the wood trim. The hinges have a flat door-leaf side and a cylindrical pin

WANT TO BUILD A RAISED BED? GET COMPLETE AND EASY INSTRUCTIONS BY SEARCHING "RAISED BED" AT ALMANAC.COM.

Cover the sharp edges of the polycarbonate with duct or greenhouse tape, pressing the tape evenly over the edges. Secure the 5-foot-long support posts to the inside of the raised bed with three deck screws in each. Leave slightly more than 4 feet of each post above the bed frame.



Attach a panel to the 4-foot end of the bed, using screws at 16-inch intervals. Repeat on the other 4-foot end of the bed. Attach the hinges to the remaining four panels. The remaining panels go on either side of both center support posts.



Screw 3 cup hooks into each of the raised bed's 8-foot sides, at both ends and the middle. Put a cup hook near the top of each post, inside, where the wood is not covered by the panels. To keep the panels closed, fasten a bungee cord to the end hooks, top and bottom. To access your plants, fold a panel flat against the side of the bed and move the bungee cord to the middle hooks.



Illustration: Rob Schuster

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side. Place the door-leaf side so that its edge by the pin sits flush with the edge of a panel, 6 inches from the top. Using the screws that match the hinges, attach to fasten the door-leaf side to the panel and wood trim. These screws are so small that you may wish to do this by hand. They may go all the way through the wood.

Attach another hinge, 6 inches from the bottom of the panel.

Repeat until all four panels have hinges at the edge of one side, 6 inches from the top and bottom.

6. The remaining panels go on either side of both center support posts (you will need help at this stage). Rest the hinged side of a panel snug against the left side of a center post. The pin sides of the hinges will rest flat on the post, facing you outside the bed. The bottom of the panel should rest exactly on the top edge of the raised bed, with no overlap or gap. (Note that the unhinged side of the panel will extend slightly beyond the end of the raised bed's 8-foot side.) Have a helper hold the panel in place while you screw the pin part of the hinges to the center post. A second panel goes on the right side of this center support post. Repeat on the other side of the bed until all four panels are in place.

7. Screw 3 cup hooks into the outer surface of each of the raised bed's 8-foot sides, at both ends and the middle. Put a cup hook near the top of each post, inside, where the wood is not covered by the panels. To keep the panels closed, fasten a bungee cord to the end hooks, top and bottom. To access your plants, fold a panel flat against the side of the bed and move the bungee cord to the middle hooks.

Your heat sink will last 10 years or more. Heat-loving plants will flourish in its shelter. ■ *—Janet McNaughton*

Janet McNaughton, of St. John's, Newfoundland, is an award-winning author of children's books. She has a raised bed heat sink in the garden at her cottage in New Chelsea.

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SMALL GARDEN, BIG FLAVOR

CONTAINERS KEEP VEGETABLES COMING YEAR-ROUND.

My garden, the small-scale urban Heritage Cottage Urban Nano Farm (UNF) in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, encompasses my yard and landscape. The UNF's name comes from the street that my wife and I live on.

All of the gardening that I do at home—all of it—is in a variety of containers, and I'm committed to this method.

centers. These products are engineered to provide the optimum physical characteristics (water holding, air porosity, etc.) without the need for amendment with other materials such as peat, soil, or compost; amending alters the desired physical characteristics. Plus, because the peat container mix is inhospitable to common soilborne diseases, I found

limited-edition 'Four Roses Anniversary Rose', in 15-gallon containers, as well as citrus (satsuma oranges, Meyer lemons, and kumquats) and avocados in 25-gallon tubs. (I'm so excited about being able to make my first homegrown guacamole!)

My primary holders are 136 sub-irrigated containers, each with a 2-gallon reservoir that

garden. Simply choose a container; make a few holes in the bottom; add bagged container mix, a couple of transplants, and water—and you're gardening.

This being said, I don't advocate that every gardener should build their garden as I have mine. But I love to see novice gardeners be successful. In my role as host of "Southern Gardening," Mississippi State University



'FOUR ROSES ANNIVERSARY ROSE'



CITRUS IN 25-GALLON TUBS



RIPENING 'BHN 968' TOMATOES

Why containers? The soil in my neighborhood in south Mississippi is not the best (to say the least). Don't hate me because I don't want to put in the work to build a better soil; growing in containers is much easier for me. Containers allow me to grow in higher plant densities and with fewer weeds.

In the containers, I use a commercial peat-based professional container mix, the kind that's widely available at garden

that crop rotation is not as critical as it is in an in-ground garden. In fact, the potting mix does not have to be replaced between seasons or even years. I only have to amend it with some fresh potting mix and fertilizer, and I'm ready for the next crop.

Our plot is proof that you can grow just about anything in a container. We have 'Gertrude Jekyll' and 'Pink Enchantment' roses, along with my favorite,

maintains a consistent root zone moisture. I use automated drip irrigation because there isn't time in the day to water everything and I want to conserve precious water. This strategy has allowed me to grow a wide variety of vegetables and the companions that attract pollinators and beneficial insects.

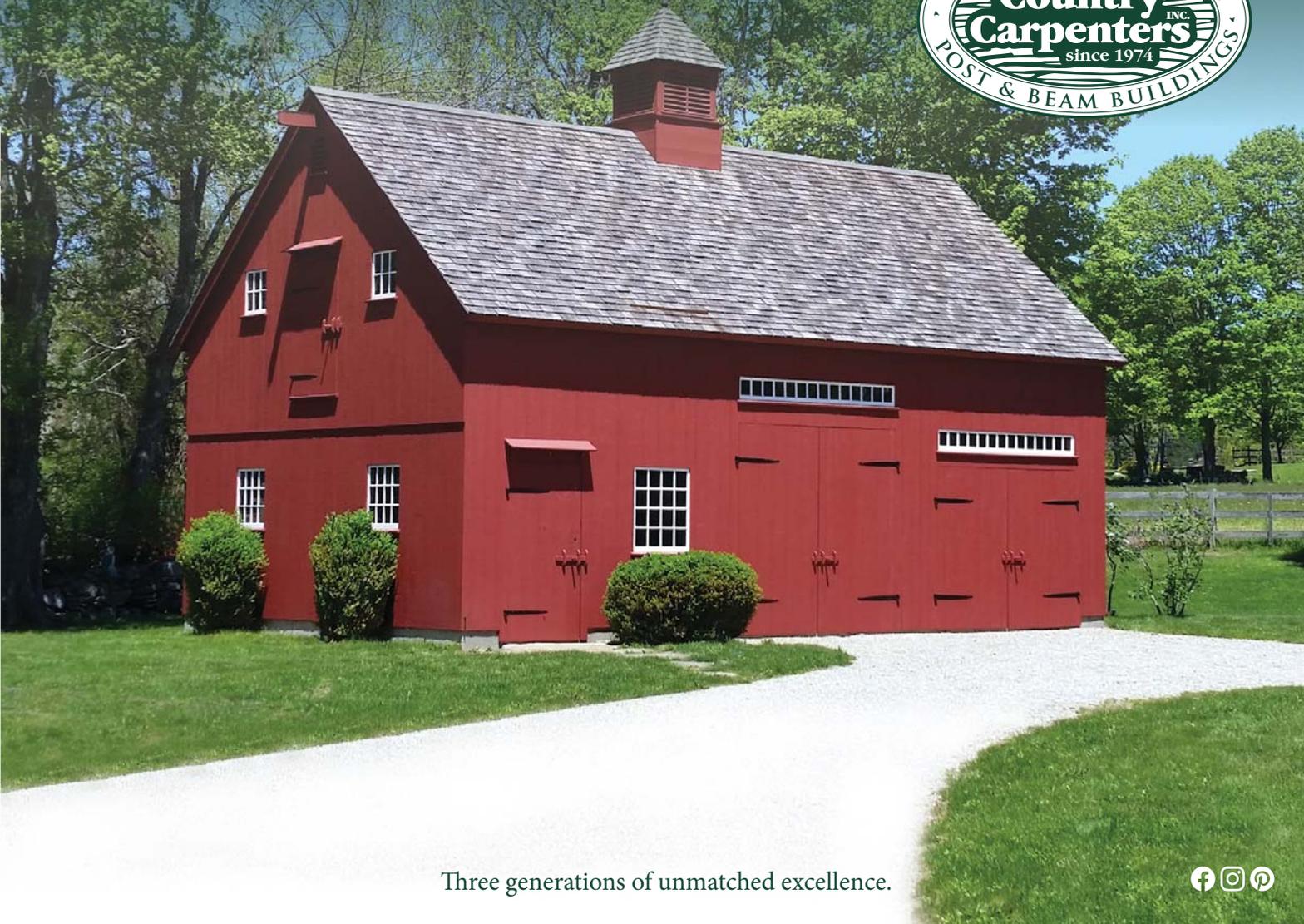
Growing in containers is a great solution for any novice gardener intimidated by starting their first

Extension's branded media, I want to share ideas that will make gardening easier and thus more enjoyable. This means trying different gardening methods, crops, and the like.

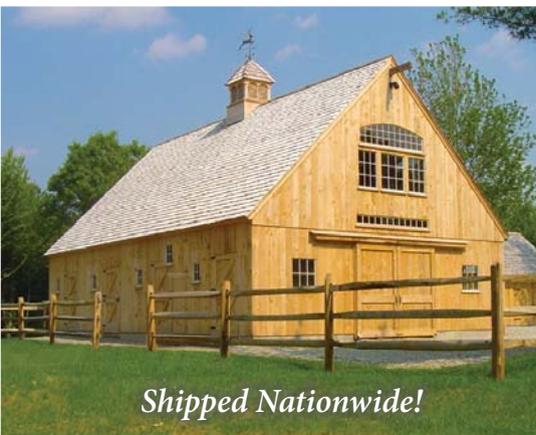
For example, I look for new vegetables that I just *have* to grow, and because popular new varieties can quickly sell out, I'll purchase the seeds I want for the entire year. My sources of inspiration include seed catalogs and TV cooking

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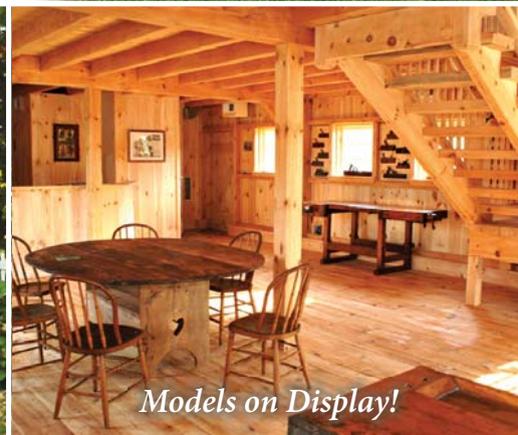
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THE PASSIONATE GARDENER

shows that use interesting vegetables.

My goal is to grow high-end, unusual varieties. Why grow plain old green beans when you can grow *haricot verts* (French green beans). Or ordinary hybrid tomatoes when you can grow heirloom tomatoes that have a story to tell, like ‘Cherokee Purple’, originally grown by the Native American Cherokee.

Over the past 10 years, I’ve trialed over 70 heirloom tomato varieties in search of those that thrive in our hot and humid environment. As a result, I grow primarily determinate tomatoes in spring and fall. Favorites include determinate ‘Siberian’, ‘Glacier’, ‘BHN 968’, and ‘Black Sea Man’. In summer, I grow indeterminate ‘Black Ethiopian’, ‘Angora Super Sweet’, and ‘Cherokee Purple’.

Another summer crop that I love to grow and eat, either fresh or cooked, is peppers in all the colors of the rainbow. From sweet bells to midrange hot peppers, I can’t grow enough! (I used to grow and eat the superhot varieties like the ghost pepper, but I just can’t handle that much heat anymore.)

A favorite treat is jalapeño poppers. For these, we grow a mild-tasting, extra-large selection called ‘Jalamundo’. Possibly even better than this is the ‘Shishito’ pepper, a thin-skinned fruit. (Blister them on the grill and serve with a peanut dipping sauce!) Moving up the Scoville

scale, I grow ‘Fresno’, ‘Big Jim’, and other medium-hot peppers to pickle.

We also grow cucumbers—‘Pickler’, ‘Garden Bush Pickle Hybrid’, and ‘Picklebush’—to make dill pickles. The vines grow vertically on trellises, sometimes with

leafy greens. Kale is an easy-grow, must-have crop—there’s such a variety, from ‘Toscano’ to the curly leaf ‘Winterbor’. Swiss chard is another ornamental and culinary choice. The brilliant-color stalks (orange, red, pink, golden yellow, and pastel) and

head knowing that it’s a perfect single-serving size.

You need to have radishes for salad, so these are must-haves in winter—especially an heirloom called ‘Cincinnati Market’. This variety was bred by Glass Gardeners near Cincinnati in the mid-1800s. In the early 1900s, the seed of this radish was sent to south Mississippi, where it was known as the ‘Long Beach Red Radish’, to be grown as a winter crop. The harvested radishes—enough to fill 300 railroad boxcars a year—were shipped to northern states for bar snacks.

Just as much as I love growing vegetables, my wife and I are committed to sharing and preserving our harvest. We routinely give transplants and freshly harvested vegetables to friends and neighbors, and we have a small planting bed near the sidewalk where we grow herbs and vegetables for neighbors to pick as they need or desire.

The point that I emphasize with all of this is that the garden doesn’t have to be a lot of hard work. Sure, it’s some work—but you do get some delicious vegetables!

—Gary Bachman



CONTAINER-GROWN HEIRLOOM TOMATO PLANTS



CURBSIDE CROPS FOR SHARING

assistance of greenhouse tomato clips. Last year, I planted 36 pickling cucumber plants (I may have overdone it!).

When winter comes, we start all over again with the cool-season vegetables.

We enjoy a good mix of

veining of ‘Bright Lights’ earn it a spot every year.

Like lettuce? Try ‘Tennis Ball’, an heirloom variety that can be traced back to Monticello, where it was grown by Thomas Jefferson. There’s nothing like harvesting a whole

Gary Bachman, Ph.D., CPH, is a production nursery/greenhouse-trained ornamental horticulturist with more than 30 years’ experience and the host of “Southern Gardening,” Mississippi State University Extension’s branded media concentrating on ornamental plant promotion.

Photos: Gary Bachman

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NOW, THAT'S A BIG TOMATO!

SIX TIPS FOR GROWING YOUR OWN PRIZEWINNERS



When I answer my office phone as an Extension vegetable specialist, from time to time it's someone asking how they can get recognition for growing a huge tomato, possibly the biggest one ever. When I ask how big a tomato we're talking about, and the caller says 2 or 2.5 pounds, I have to hold back my laughter and gently explain that this is nowhere even close to a record.

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So, just how big is “big”? Growers in various states have set various records: New Jersey was home to a 6-pound 2.5-ounce tomato, Oklahoma has boasted a 7-pound 12-ounce one, and Washington has topped that with an 8-pound 9-ounce specimen. According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, Steve and Jeanne Marley of Clinton, New York, are the current record holders, having produced a tomato tipping the scale at 9 pounds 10.4 ounces in 2019.

If you take this as a challenge to your own

tomato-growing prowess, read on for tips on how to nurture a massive tomato. The secrets are really nothing too obscure. What's important is checking off as many boxes as possible to optimize the fruit size. Each step is attainable for the home gardener, but missing out on certain ones will limit your results.

1. PICK A PROVEN PEDIGREE

Are some varieties better for fruit size? Absolutely. The best way to determine which ones to use is to look

at previous winners. Genes are important.

A cherry, grape, or plum tomato plant isn't going to yield a winner. Some varieties have a genetic potential to produce larger fruit than others, including 'Beefsteak', 'Delicious', 'Big Beef', 'Big Rainbow', 'Dinner Plate', 'Giant Belgium', 'Big Pink', 'German Johnson', 'T & T Monster', 'Bragger' (aka 'Braggar'), and 'Brandywine', among others. All of these big boys are in the category of beefsteak tomato: They have smaller seed cavities than other varieties and so proportionally more flesh than juice and seeds.

Since it would be hard to

**THE CURRENT TOMATO RECORD HOLDERS
PRODUCED A TOMATO TIPPING THE
SCALE AT 9 POUNDS 10.4 OUNCES IN 2019.**

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BASIC TECHNIQUES

find plants of most of these at your local garden center, you will likely have to order seeds from seed catalogs and start your own plants.

There's no guarantee that a plant of one of these varieties will be a winner. Although the potential for large size is in the genes, it will not be achieved unless the environmental conditions are optimized. And by that, I mean perfect.

2. SUPER SOIL

One of the most important tips is to start with great soil. All plants, not just tomatoes, will do much better if planted in properly prepared soil. The soil should be well drained, high in organic matter, and fertile.

Tomatoes thrive on animal manures. So if you have access to some composted (not fresh) manure, you might place some in the bottom of the hole and then cover it up before transplanting your seedling. This is a tried-and-true method for lots of old-time tomato growers.

3. A PLACE IN THE SUN

Like most vegetables, tomatoes need full sun. Anything less will decrease maximum photosynthesis, thereby limiting the growth of foliage and fruit. A tomato plant needs lots of leaves to catch as much sun as possible, manufacture sugars, and send those sugars to the developing fruit. They also don't mind the heat (up to a point), as long as there is plenty of

WHILE THESE TECHNIQUES MAXIMIZE FOR SIZE, THEY DO NOT MAXIMIZE FLAVOR.

water in the root zone to keep them from drying out.

When the temperature gets into the mid-90's F or above, that's when trouble can occur. Tomato pollen is sterilized at 94°F, so even if pollination occurs and pollen makes it from the male to the female parts of the flower, there won't be much fertilization since pollen has been killed. So higher temperatures limit fruit set, the transformation of flower into fruit. Fruit quality and size will also suffer at very high temperatures.

4. SPACE TO SPREAD OUT

Tomatoes need plenty of room to grow. Commercially, most growers use a 2-foot spacing within rows. If you want really large fruit, give them even more room. One of the most common errors by novice gardeners is planting tomato plants too close together. If you are just going for size, you need only a few good, healthy plants, with plenty of space around them.

Training plants to grow off the ground is a good idea to protect the quality of the fruit. Caging and staking are both fine. Just be sure to tie them frequently enough to support the plants. If you choose cages, you will need a mesh that is big enough to get your hand in and get that enormous tomato back out.

5. HYDRATED AND WELL-FED

Tomato plants need plenty of water, especially in hot weather, but will suffer if the ground stays saturated. As a rule of thumb, an inch and a half of water per week, from a hose or from rain, is about right. The soil must be able to drain this water within a reasonably short time.

Be sure to water the plants thoroughly right after transplanting. After plants are established, always water deeply, once or twice per week, rather than giving them a light sprinkle every day; shallow watering leads to shallow roots. A good, thick mulch will help to hold moisture in the soil around plants and also keeps the weeds down.

As for fertilizer, tomatoes need regular doses. Small, weekly amounts are better than large pre-plant amounts and one or two side-dressings. Liquid fertilizer is more quickly available to plants than granular forms. Some people like to use fish emulsion or "manure tea," but any complete garden fertilizer will work.

6. FOCUS ON ONE FLOWER

One other tip, and this is important: Remove the first flower cluster or two so that the plant will produce more leaves before

you allow it to set tomatoes.

Then, when the plant is big enough to set fruit, don't let all of the fruit mature. Remove all but one fruit per cluster. Usually, the first fruit to set on a cluster will be the largest, so snip off all of the other flowers or small fruit on that cluster. And don't let too many clusters stay on the plant either.

PREPARE FOR PRIZEWINNING

Once you've got your jumbo beauty, what about that big money? Start by looking for local, county, or state contests. Ask your State Department of Agriculture or County Extension agent.

Good luck, and remember to think big. The record continues to be broken every so often, which tells you that the upper limit has still not been found.

And if you just don't have much luck in growing gargantuan tomatoes, console yourself with the knowledge that while these techniques maximize for size, they do not maximize flavor. When plants get too much water, for example, the fruit can be bland. Your more average-size tomatoes may be more delicious at the table.

—Richard G. Snyder

Richard G. Snyder is a professor of horticulture and an Extension Vegetable Specialist at Mississippi State University.

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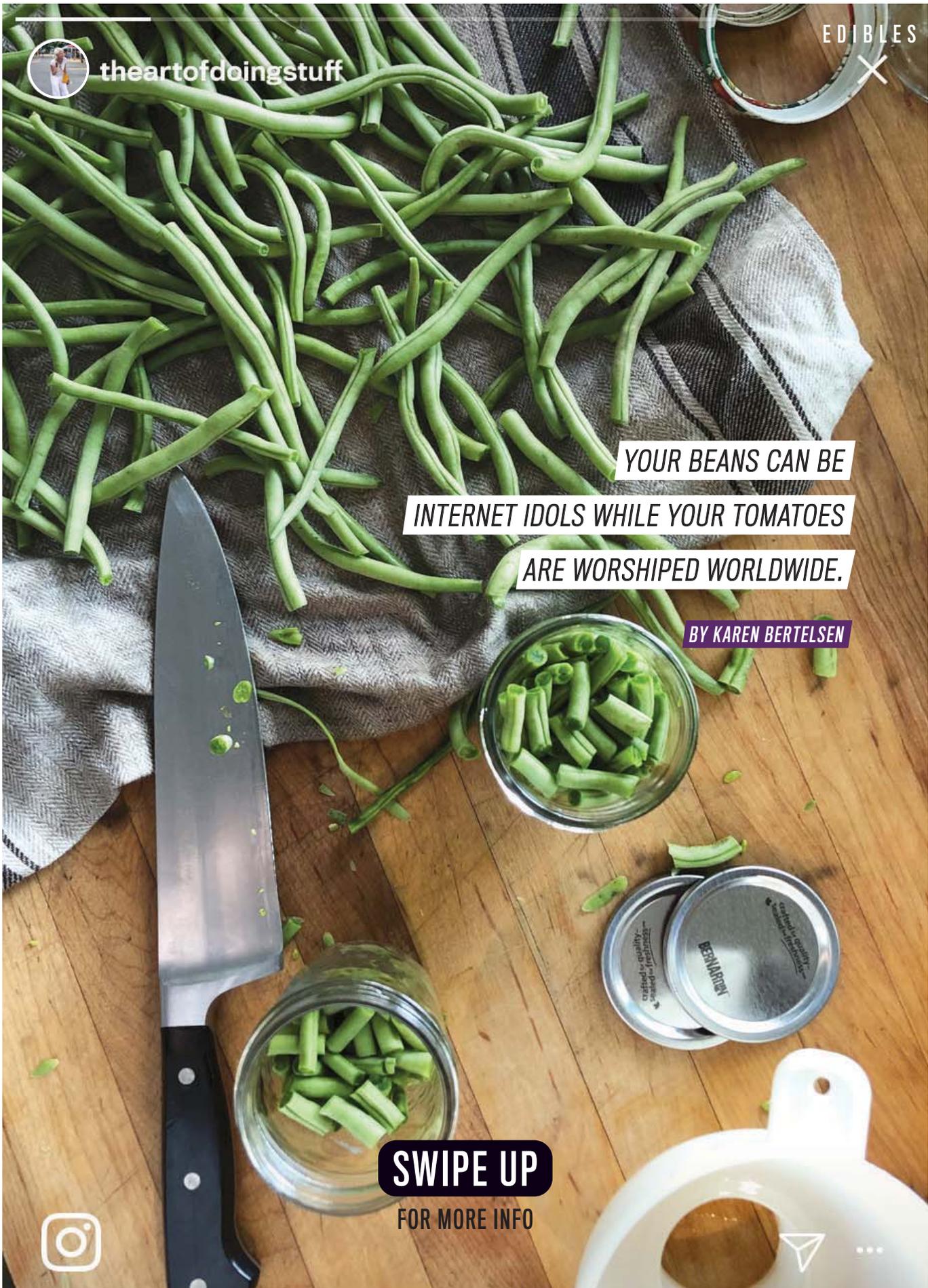
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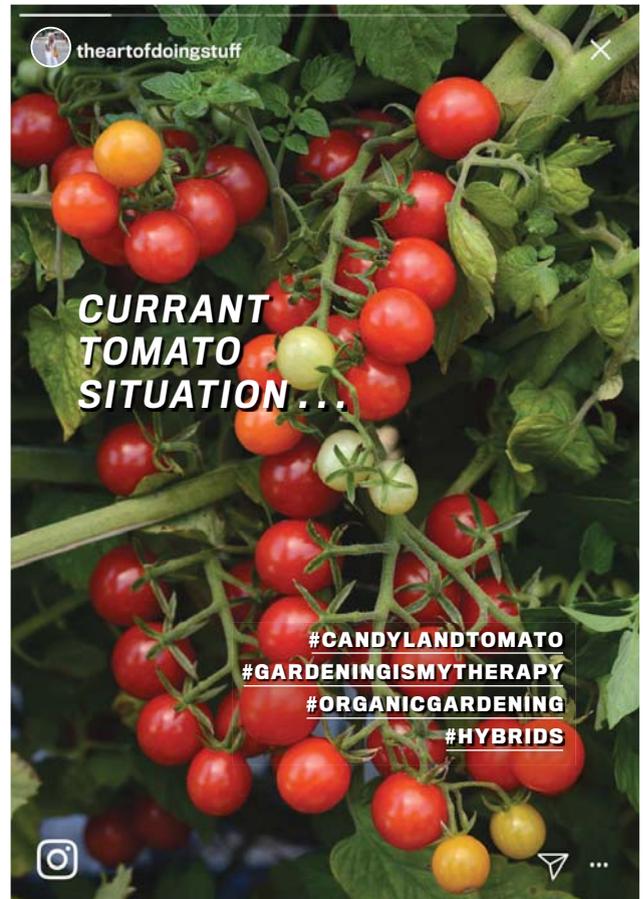


**YOUR BEANS CAN BE
INTERNET IDOLS WHILE YOUR TOMATOES
ARE WORSHIPPED WORLDWIDE.**

BY KAREN BERTELSEN

SWIPE UP
FOR MORE INFO





Millions of people share photos of their food every day on Instagram. Showing off pictures of our breakfast, lunch, and dinner has become an obsession. Exactly how popular are food photos on Instagram? The hashtag #foodphotography has been used over 57 million

RARE HEIRLOOM VEGETABLES ARE TO GARDENERS WHAT HAUTE COUTURE IS TO FASHION LOVERS: PART STATUS SYMBOL, PART BEAUTY, PART HIGH QUALITY.

times. For the same period, #petphotography has been used about 2.7 million times. Yes, if given the choice, we'd rather look at noodles than poodles.

While cooked food has been getting all of the glory lately,

some key ingredients have become objets d'art a little deeper in the hashtag domain. The carefully styled lump of mashed potatoes on the artisan-made dinner plate is pushed aside to make room for . . . the potato. Just the potato. Naked, in its natural state.

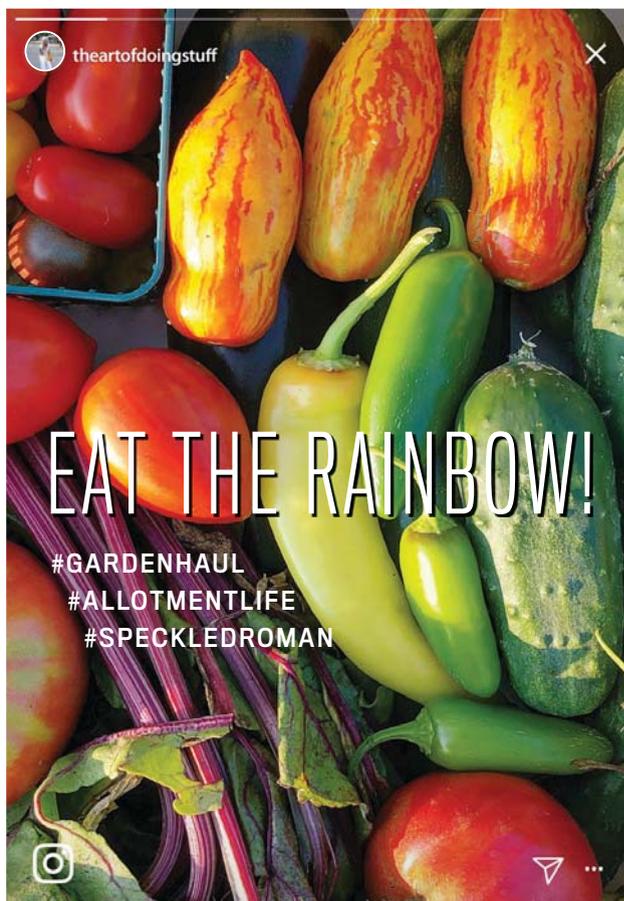
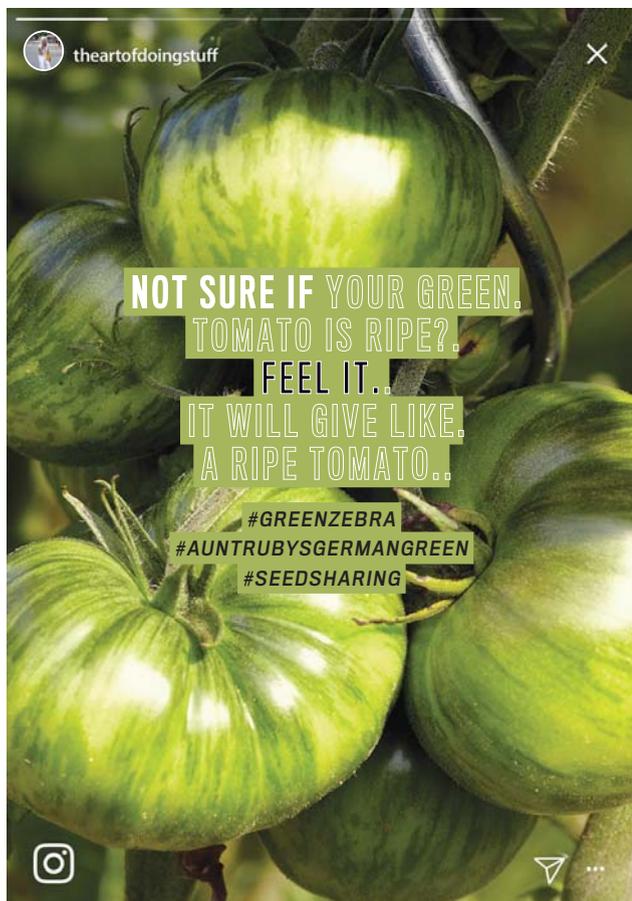
This is the underground world of Instagram-worthy vegetables, a place where rare, exotic, beautiful, and simply weird vegetables are showcased with reverence. Sometimes they're pulled fresh from the soil, and sometimes they're posed, styled, and lit like celebrities. Think county fair with better art direction.

My introduction to this world of heirloom and rare vegetables came 11 years ago at Wellandport, Ontario's Tree &

Twig farm, courtesy of Linda Crago, a CSA (community-supported agriculture) grower with a deep-seated (or, in this case, "-seeded") interest in rare and hard-to-find vegetables. Her main interest lies in tomatoes and the thousands of varieties to be found in this niche, but she has also been known to fly across the globe to buy one or two seeds from an exceptionally rare bean or pepper.

This is the level of enthusiasm (or lunacy) that we're talking about here. I count myself to be a proud vegetable lunatic, by the way. Why? Why such dedication to a dried bean or a pumpkin covered in warts?

Rare heirloom vegetables are to gardeners what haute couture is to fashion



lovers: part status symbol, part beauty, part high quality. Plus, like a hand-beaded Valentino pantsuit, they look great on Instagram. Plus, you don't have to be a professional photographer or grow extremely rare varieties to get in on the fun.

Think that your homegrown produce isn't "special" enough? Trust me, *it is*. Instagram-worthy vegetables can be anything from those haute couture heirlooms to this carrot that you grew that looks like it has legs. If this carrot is also a Tibetan heirloom variety whose seed you retrieved from the poop of a mountain goat after climbing up a rock ledge, well, that may get you bonus "likes" from your friends and followers. It will also get you people asking if you'd be

willing to share some seeds.

If you're looking to grow and share your own Instagram-worthy vegetables, you'll find that they typically fall into one of three categories: rare heirlooms, new discoveries, or things gone weird.

RARE HEIRLOOMS

Heirlooms are vegetables that come from seed that was passed down from generation to generation. When these seeds are planted, they produce an exact replica of the vegetable. Most important, heirlooms have unparalleled flavor.

The two easiest and most satisfying heirlooms to grow in your garden are dried beans and tomatoes because they're really easy to grow and are

stunningly photogenic. Many are covered in serendipitous stripes and dots, stunningly multicolor, and/or oddly shaped. Just 11 years ago, tomatoes like green-flesh 'Green

INSTAGRAM-WORTHY VEGETABLES CAN BE ANYTHING FROM THOSE HAUTE COUTURE HEIRLOOMS TO THIS CARROT THAT YOU GREW THAT LOOKS LIKE IT HAS LEGS.

Zebra', black-shoulder 'Black Krim', and deeply pleated 'Costoluto Genovese' (whose slices are flower-shape) were grown only by hardcore heirloom vegetable gardeners. Now, because of the increased interest in gardening—and specifically of heirloom varieties—you can get these and some of the other popular heirlooms at most local garden centers.

Tomatoes are probably

always going to be the most popular vegetable for home gardeners to grow. They're one of the most shared vegetables on Instagram because they're ubiquitous in the home garden. Add the fact that there are so many types of tomatoes that experts can only estimate the number at about 15,000, and you have endless photo opportunities.

Much the same is true of heirloom dried beans, which are more buttery, smoother, and tastier than newer, more common beans. For bean collectors, though, the taste is often just a happy bonus from these stunningly beautiful marvels of nature.

Specimens like 'Zuni Gold', with its raised white edges, or purple 'Bloomin' Prairie' would look just as at home in a jewelry box as in a pot of water. Dried beans are so spectacular that bean jewelry is a thing. Diamonds? No. More forward-thinking, ecologically aware brides are now sporting engagement beans on their

JUST SO YOU KNOW: IT WASN'T A KARDASHIAN THAT "BROKE" THE INTERNET, BUT A CORN. SERIOUSLY.

HOW TO POST YOUR PICS

Some hashtags to use:

#growyourown
#homegrownveggies
#myvegetablegarden
#oldfarmersalmanac
#uglyproduce

Some accounts to follow:

@blackgirlswithgardens
@humanswhogrowfood
@savvygardening
@theartofdoingstuff (the author's)
@theoldfarmersalmanac
@uglyproduceisbeautiful

fingers. Actually they aren't, but multistrand necklaces of bright-color beans are for sale online at this very moment, most often on Etsy.

Part of what attracts people to just staring at dried beans and using them for decorative purposes is knowing that when you cook dried beans, no matter how colorful they are, they almost instantly lose their looks—all but the 'Orca' bean, which was bred specifically to maintain its orca whale-like black and white spots when cooked.

FANCY NEW DISCOVERIES

Just so you know: It wasn't a Kardashian that "broke" the Internet, but a corn. Seriously. In 2012, Greg Schoen, a corn-growing prodigy (yes, there is such a thing, and if you didn't know this, you obviously aren't ready to hop on a plane and go digging through goat poop just yet), shared a photo of a corn variety that he had been developing. It had originally been developed by his corn mentor (again, yes, this is totally a thing), Carl Barnes, who in the 1980s got in touch with his indigenous heritage and started growing older Native corn as a hobby.

The result of the work done by these two men was 'Glass Gem', the corn that "broke" the Internet in 2012 when Schoen posted a photograph of it on his Facebook page.

I've been growing 'Glass Gem' corn since 2014, when someone who follows me on Instagram shared her seeds with me. This is part of the thing about Instagram vegetable nerds. Veggie photos and their corresponding seeds get

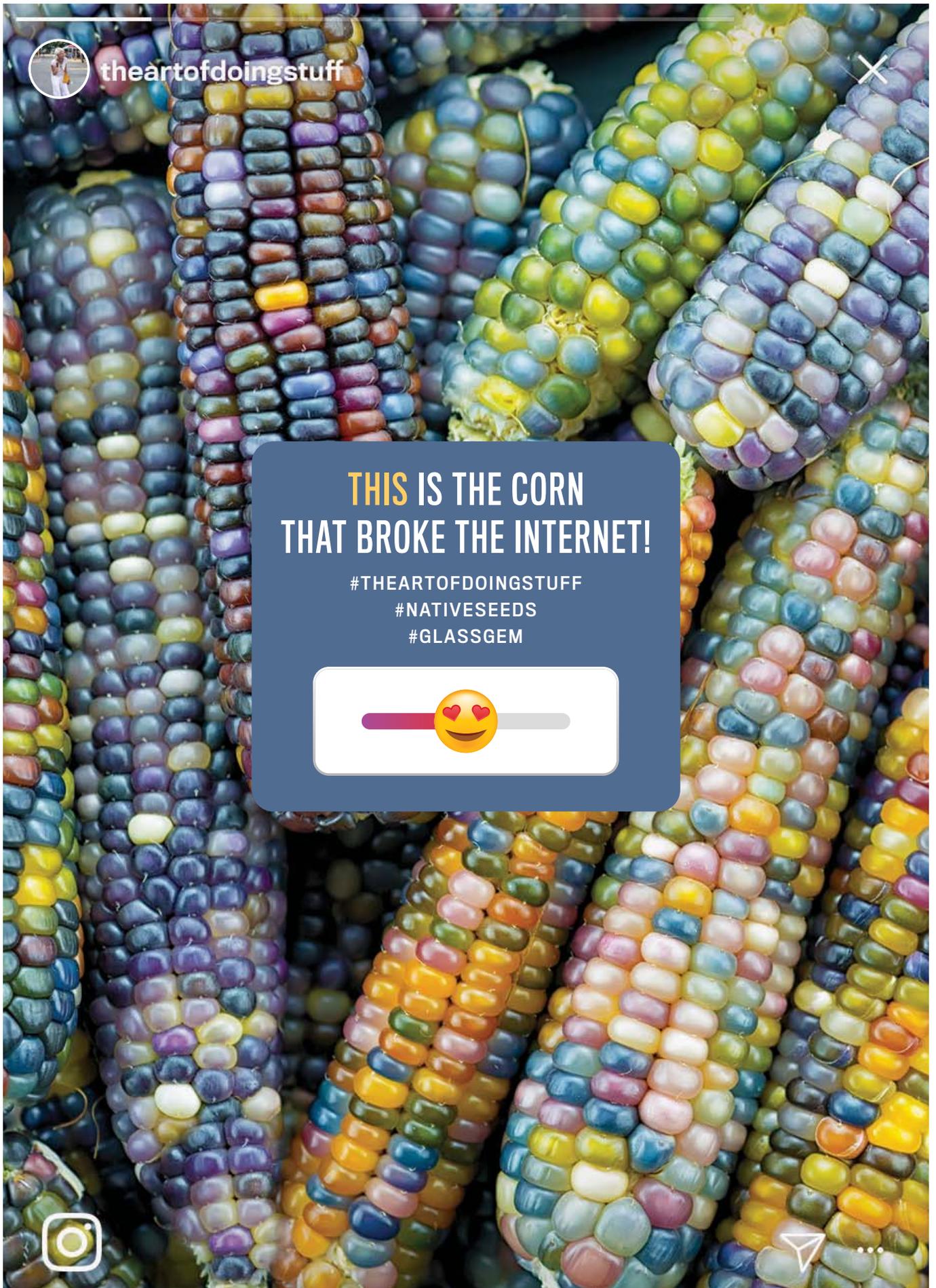
shared and traded around the world without a single ticker-tape, commission, or opening bell. We don't need the fanfare. If someone messages us asking for a seed, we stick it in an envelope and send it their way.

'Glass Gem' is the most spectacular vegetable that I've grown and shared on social media. With its translucent kernels in hues of pinks, blues, and greens, it's the epitome of Instagram starshine.

New varieties of tomatoes such as currant-like 'Candyland' are also social media-ready due to their unique size. Plus, they're still new and novel enough to surprise and delight people when seen.

'Dropshot' (*Tagetes filifolia*), a variety of the common marigold, is a ferny-looking plant with unremarkable flowers that is native to Latin America and Mexico but new to North America. It's pretty but not a specimen that you'd instantly think of as Instagram-worthy. I mean, it's no 'Glass Gem' corn. But this is where the captioning on Instagram comes in—because Instagram isn't just about the photos, it's about the stories. Good photo descriptions can take a veggie that might appear bland and mundane and make you realize that the thing at which you're looking is in fact extraordinary.

The greenery of this marigold, for example, is plain and wouldn't attract a lot of attention on its own in the world of Instagram. To give a better understanding of the plant, you have to describe in the caption what makes it unique. And just what *does* make this marigold

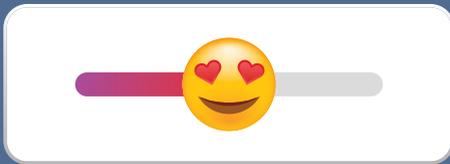


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**THIS IS THE CORN
THAT BROKE THE INTERNET!**

#THEARTOFDOINGSTUFF
#NATIVESEEDS
#GLASSGEM





unique? This mundane floral greenery is not only edible but also explodes in your mouth with an incredibly strong, sweet, black licorice flavor.

Part of what makes a vegetable great for social media—sharing is introducing people to foods that they’ve never seen or heard of.

THINGS GONE WEIRD

We’ve all grown something that turned weird. A tomato that looks like it has a nose, carrots with legs, or, as in my case, sweet corn that

THE SENSE OF PRIDE YOU FEEL UPON POSTING A PHOTO OF A DEEPLY DEFORMED CARROT IS UNPARALLELED: YES, I GREW IT MYSELF! YES, IT LOOKS LIKE A BUM! AND YES, I AM UNDENIABLY PROUD OF IT!

looks a little smutty. It doesn’t matter—this is all perfect for posting on Instagram, and it’s not about just the Instaglamor. Insects, diseases, and individual triumphs like your very first homegrown lettuce will be appreciated.

Corn smut is a corn disease that spreads rapidly, covering the cobs with a fungus. I had this on my corn a few years ago and posted a picture of it on Instagram because it was so terrifyingly hideous. It was then that I learned from a fellow Instagrammer who commented that while corn smut is indeed a disease, it’s also a fungal delicacy called “huitlacoche” that you can use in quesadillas, eggs, or anything else in which you like to put . . . well . . . fungus.

Yes, Instagram is great for showing off whatever it is that you want to show off, but it’s even better for learning. If you post a photo of a never-before-seen insect, disease, lump, or bum in your garden, someone out there will know exactly what it is.

Yes, “bum.” It’s a carrot I grew that literally looks like it has legs and a bum.

The sense of pride you feel upon posting a photo of a deeply deformed carrot is unparalleled: Yes, I grew it myself! Yes, it looks like a bum! And yes, I am undeniably proud of it! Does this make sense? Not necessarily, but neither does wanting to show off a big scratch or bruise, and many of us love doing that.

You don’t even have to grow

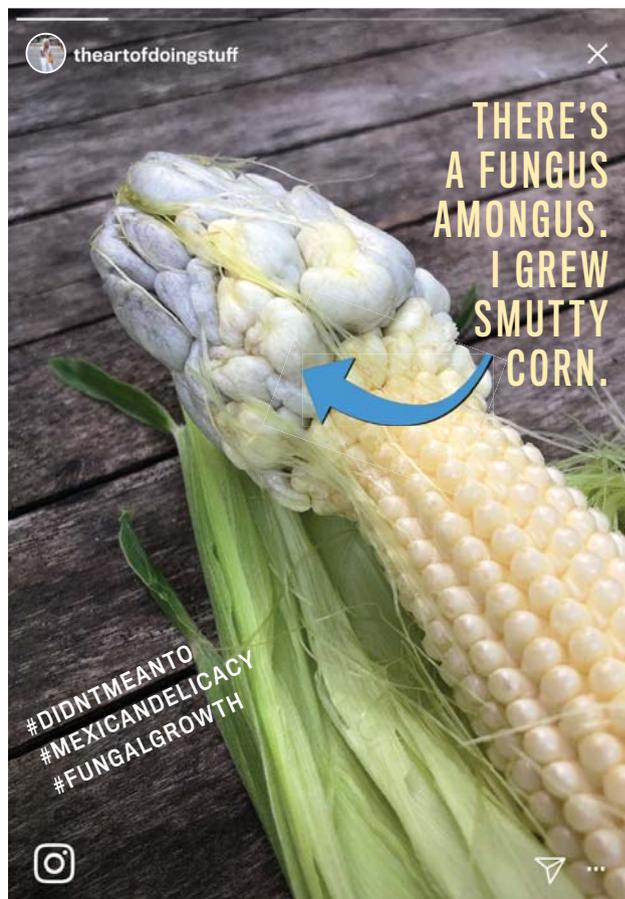


photo opportunities yourself. Walk around any farmers' market and you'll be able to pick up all kinds of Instagram-worthy vegetables. Heirloom tomatoes, specialty onions, or 2-foot-tall stalks of brussels sprouts covered in those firm little devil heads (my term of endearment for them). Interesting pumpkins and squash seem to be crowd favorites at markets not just because of how unique they are but also because they serve double duty in acting as both decoration and food. That stunning 'Fairy Tale' pumpkin you bought for your front porch last year also happens to make delicious ravioli or soup.

Vegetables are not beaded, don't cost thousands of dollars, and would rot to liquid if you

hung them in your closet, but Instagram-worthy veggies and produce have one quality that haute couture doesn't: You can reproduce them just by sticking a tiny piece of them—a seed—into the dirt. Sharing photos of heirloom and unusual vegetables in the raw leads to sharing seeds for them.

Those rare, jewel-like 'Zuni Gold', 'Stangenbohne Whitsenhausen', and 'Blooming Prairie' bean seeds? A gardener whom I follow on Instagram sent me those seeds when I promised to plant, nurture, and pass along the seeds from their resultant plants. I did this in 2020. And those 'Black Futzu' and 'Hopi' pumpkins? I got those seeds from a gardener on Instagram as well.

By sharing photos of these

unadorned, raw, dirt-covered, freshly picked vegetables—the ones passed down from generation to generation and the newer varieties from pioneers like Carl Barnes—we're keeping foods from

INSTAGRAM-WORTHY VEGGIES AND PRODUCE HAVE ONE QUALITY THAT HAUTE COUTURE DOESN'T: YOU CAN REPRODUCE THEM JUST BY STICKING A TINY PIECE OF THEM—A SEED—INTO THE DIRT.

disappearing in a way that previous generations never could: by giving them worldwide recognition in an instant, one photo and one seed at a time. ■

Karen Bertelsen, of Hamilton, Ontario, is the founder of the lifestyle blog The Art of Doing Stuff.



EDIBLES

GO WITH THE GRAIN

WHETHER FOR BREADS OR BRAGGING RIGHTS, YOU'LL GET A RISE OUT OF GROWING GRAINS.
BY SARA PITZER





**GRAIN BY GRAIN, A LOAF;
STONE BY STONE, A CASTLE.**
-YUGOSLAVIAN PROVERB

Grains are among the easiest plants to grow in home gardens—and growing may be the easiest part of it. Before dropping the first seed to the ground, consider this:

- How much grain do you want or need to harvest: enough to make bread for a year, or are you experimenting with a new crop?
- Do you have the proper conditions: sun from dawn to dusk, an inch or so of rain or irrigation per week, and well-drained, moderately fertile soil?
- Can you buy equipment jointly with other growers or borrow or rent what you'll need—for example, seed cleaners, seed hullers, winnowers, flour mills?
- Will you have the time, energy, equipment, and muscle to harvest, thresh, winnow, and hull the grain?
- Do you have storage space that is dry, and free of insects and rodents and where the temperature is consistent and no higher than 70°F?

HOW MUCH TO GROW

Start small. Growing grains is easy. Threshing, winnowing, and hulling them takes raw, brute energy. As a beginner, it's likely that you'll lose a lot of grain in these final steps. Consider a trial area in the first year so that you can learn how the grain behaves, what its cultivation problems are, how long it takes you to handle it, and how it is affected by varying climate conditions. *(continued)*

FIEL(D)ING YOUR OATS?
Let us know how your grain's growing at [Almanac.com/Feedback](https://www.almanac.com/Feedback) or post pics and tag us [@theoldfarmersalmanac](https://www.instagram.com/theoldfarmersalmanac).

**NEXT TO THOROUGH PREPARATION OF THE SOIL, THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN SECURING
A GOOD CROP IS THE PROPER SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF THE SEED.**

—FACTS FOR FARMERS, 1870

WHICH GRAIN TO GROW

AMARANTH AND QUINOA

Amaranth does best in warm climates; quinoa, in cool regions. Both are large, broadleaf, native American plants high in protein and other nutrients, easy to grow, and useful as grains or vegetables.

BARLEY

Barley is a fast-maturing grain that thrives in cool weather, does well in alkaline soil, and contains more soluble fiber than do oats.

BUCKWHEAT

Buckwheat improves soil as you grow it. The seeds grind into a strongly flavored flour.

CORN

The taste of homegrown cornmeal is delightful. To harvest corn as a grain, let a few ears go past their prime, then simply twist the dried corn off the ears.

MILLET

Millet thrives in hot, dry climates. Although the seeds are encased in hulls, the hulls are easy to remove: Rub a handful of grain between your palms, and the thin hulls will slip off.

OATS

Oats are best suited to cool climates and have traditionally been one of the easiest grains to grow yet one of the hardest to hull. A new, hull-less oat strain solves this problem. If you're growing old-style oats to eat, find a method of hulling before you sow.

RICE

Rice requires wet soil and a long, hot growing season. It's the perfect crop for those low spots in your yard that never dry. You could also start out by growing rice in pots.

RYE

Rye is almost immune to failure. It's hardy, so you don't have to worry about frosts, and it will grow in poor soil. It's also a good cover crop for the garden.

WHEAT

Wheat is a cool-season crop that is easy to grow, harvest, thresh, store, and grind in small amounts. In most regions, it is planted in fall and harvested the following spring.

If you plant so much that you're unable to stay ahead of the weeds, provide enough water, or harvest before the birds get to the grain, you'll be disappointed. And you're apt to lose steam halfway through threshing a huge plot of grain. Worse yet, the hard work could drive out all interest in growing grains, and this would be a shame.

You'll get a better yield and less grief from a modest-size, manageable row in the garden—say, a 100-square-foot planting. This size of bed (10x10 or 20x5 feet) fits nicely in a typical backyard, is manageable for planting and harvesting, and provides a decent yield. Your first harvest of wheat may give you 4 pounds of grain, which will grind into 14 cups of flour, enough for three or four loaves of bread. As you gain experience, this same plot could yield as much as 26 pounds of grain or about 90 cups of flour and enough bread for half a year.

However, even when you can't harvest what you plant, your efforts won't be wasted. Most small grains make a fine cover crop that cuts down on weeds and reduces erosion while it is growing and a nutritious green manure that enriches the soil after you till the plants under.

PREPARING THE SOIL

It takes no more work to prepare the soil for grains than it does for any other garden plant. Most grains thrive in a loose, well-drained, moderately fertile soil in a spot that receives full sun all day. To ensure that your crops get a good start, send a soil sample to your Cooperative Extension service to learn whether any nutrients are in short supply. (See page 110.)

SOWING STYLES

Like vegetables, grains are sown in narrow or wide rows or solid blocks. Because some grains are tall, run your rows north and south. This ensures that each plant in the row receives an equal amount of sun. When the rows run east–west, taller plants often shade their shorter neighbors.

Narrow rows are the traditional planting pattern but not the most productive. In this case, you would dig long, shallow trenches with a hoe, spacing the rows far enough apart that you can walk between them to weed or run the rototiller alongside them to cultivate. Because so much space is devoted to paths between rows, you lose productive ground. In addition, you must prepare the soil in the entire bed, not just the areas you plant. To sow, you would sprinkle seeds evenly into the trench and then cover them with soil.

Wide rows are a great way to start for a first-time grain grower. With this method, you create 3- to 4-foot-wide beds that are about 18 inches apart. The width depends on how far in you can reach to weed from both sides of the bed and the amount of space the plants need while they grow. (continued)



1 AMARANTH 2 QUINOA 3 BARLEY 4 BUCKWHEAT 5 CORN



6 MILLET 7 RICE 8 RYE 9 WHEAT



WHEAT STALKS HEAVY WITH GRAIN LEARN HOW TO BOW THEIR HEADS.

-CHINESE PROVERB

SEED-STARTERS

Locate garden seed companies that offer grains in small quantities or search online for “cover crop seed” and “wildlife seed.” It will be easier to find unnamed varieties than named cultivars.

Save seeds from each year’s harvest to plant in the next year. Choose the plumpest seeds or seeds from the most productive plant (or earliest or most pest-free), and you’ll one day be planting your own “improved” variety.

FACTS AND FOLKLORE

- The wedding cake is thought to have originated with the Egyptians as a cake of wheat or barley that was broken over the bride’s head to signify fertility.
- At one time, it was common to use rye stalks as drinking straws, but they cracked easily and were not clean.
- To cure a headache, place a buckwheat cake on your head.

Planting in wide rows has several benefits. Because you never have to walk on the bed to weed, the soil in the rows stays loose and perfect for root growth. You’ll save money on amendments with this method because you need to work only the soil in the planted rows. And since so much less space is used for paths between rows, you can fit more plants in the same amount of space for a somewhat larger harvest. A wide row accommodates two or more rows of grain, depending on the spacing that the plants require.

Some crops, such as wheat and especially corn, can be grown in a **solid block** pattern. Essentially, this is a mini-field in which you broadcast the seed evenly over the planting area.

Measure and mark out the rows with twine and stakes, then build up their height a few inches by scooping soil from the path onto the beds. Spread amendments over the rows and till them in. Finally, shape the rows so that the top is flat and level and the sides flare slightly at the bottom. Apply a thick layer of mulch on the path between beds or grow a cover crop such as clover to keep mud and weeds at bay and to help feed the soil for next year’s garden.

Sow by digging trenches with your hoe, sprinkling in some seed, and covering it. Alternatively, lightly scatter or broadcast seed by hand across the rows. After the seed is sown, work it into the soil with a rake. How deep to rake it in depends on the grain. Depths can range from ½ to 2½ inches.

In order to get a good stand of plants, seeds and soil must be in contact. To ensure this, make a pass over the planting area with a lawn roller. No roller? Put down a plank and walk on it for the same result.

HARVESTING A SMALL PLOT

To harvest a small plot (up to 150 square feet), break the heads off the stems. Drop them into a bucket as you work, then spread them out to dry for several days before threshing. Otherwise, you could cut the grain with pruners, leaving a 12-inch stem; bundle a few stems; and hang the harvest to dry, as you would to dry herbs and flowers.

A sickle is a traditional tool that is well suited to small spaces and easy for a novice to use. Cutting with a sickle is a matter of grab-and-cut, grab-and-cut. If you’re right-handed, hold the stalks of grain in your left hand and swing the sickle with the right to cut at ground level. (Left-handed sickles are not as easy to find.) You’ll want to kneel or crouch as you harvest so that you won’t tire too quickly. Lay the cut grain in windrows (small piles along the row), with all heads pointed in the same direction. Let the grain dry for several days before threshing. For larger plots, try harvesting with a blade trimmer.

Although just basic guidelines, these are enough to get you started. And sow it goes! ■

Excerpted from Homegrown Whole Grains (Storey Publishing, 2009) by Sara Pitzer and used with permission.

WHEAT IN THE DUST, AND OATS IN THE DAB. (THAT IS, SOW WHEAT DRY AND OATS WET OR DRY.)

-TRADITIONAL PROVERB



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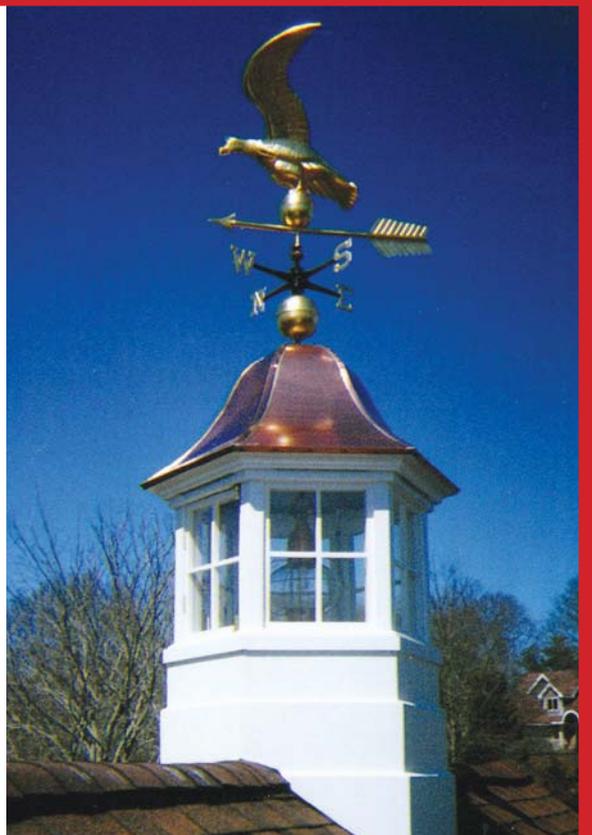
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There are plenty of reasons to plant veggies that grow as climbing vines. Vining vegetables produce more per square foot than bush-type varieties, their leaves are easier to monitor for pests, and they ripen near eye level, which makes them easy to pick. Tall trellises in the garden draw the eye upward, expanding the view, and they make a lush backdrop for smaller plants.

Vining vegetables do have a few drawbacks. They may cast unwanted shade on their neighbors, so companion crops must be carefully chosen. You also must provide a sturdy trellis or other support that matches how the plants grow and allows easy access at harvest-time, but this is part of the fun of growing vining vegetables. The tastiest vining veggies include peas, Malabar summer spinach, beans, cucumbers, long-vine tomatoes, and winter squash and small pumpkins. Here's how to grow each of these crops as a towering success.

WINNING VEGGIES!

NO SPACE TO SPREAD? GROW UP INSTEAD.

BY BARBARA PLEASANT



'GOLDEN SWEET'

PEAS

Snap peas, snow peas, and shell peas are cool-season crops that are planted in early spring and form a wall of green in early summer. They prefer to grow straight up, reaching out with curled tendrils to grab tightly to string, netting, or wire fencing. Upright trellises work best. Pea vines can run to 6 feet, with vigorous lateral branches that may require supplemental stakes and strings on the outside of the planting to keep the vines in bounds.

In a sun-drenched garden, you may be able to grow beets on the sunny side of peas, with lettuce on the shady side. After peas pass their prime, try growing a late crop of cucumbers on the same trellis or sow a follow-up crop of Malabar summer spinach (*see page 64*).

VARIETIES: Mildew-resistant 'Super Sugar Snap' is the most productive pea that you can grow, with 6-foot vines producing fleshy pods for 3 weeks or more. The eye-catching purple flowers of 'Golden Sweet' snow pea are followed by buttery yellow pods. Most shell peas grow to less than 4 feet tall, but 'Tall Telephone' will turn a 6-foot trellis into a panel of peas. Always check your seed packet for specifics about the variety you choose. *(continued)*

TOMATOES PRUNED
AND TRAINED
PROPERLY WILL TOP
A 6-FOOT TRELLIS.

EDIBLES

MALABAR SUMMER SPINACH

Beautiful, nutritious, and easy to grow, 'Red Malabar' summer spinach (*Basella alba* var. *rubra*) is a delightful addition to the garden. Its twining red stems studded with glossy green, edible leaves grow more vigorously the hotter summer gets, with pink flowers and purple berry clusters appearing by early fall. Malabar summer spinach will grow on any trellis and can be used to form a green sun screen by being allowed to run up strings. Lower pillar-type plantings are gorgeous, too. Seed germination can be slow, but in many climates Malabar summer spinach reseeds itself after the first year.



BEANS

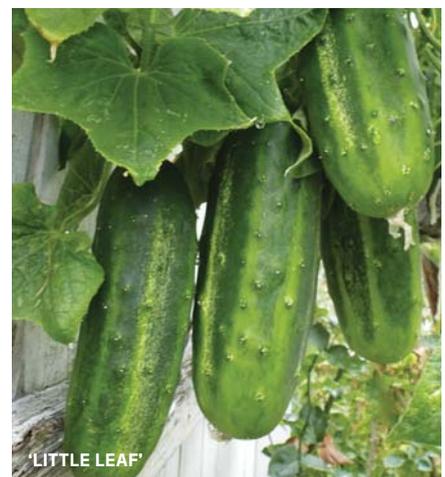
Long-vine pole beans and scarlet runner beans twine themselves up posts, fences, or strings and need minimal help in finding their way up. Beans' broad leaves quickly form a dense, top-heavy mass, which is why a tepee or tripod trellis is a good match. The increasing weight of the plants pushes down on a well-balanced tepee trellis, enhancing its resistance to wind. Pole beans cast too much shade for close companions, but adjacent rows of potatoes or peppers may benefit from being in their afternoon shadow.

VARIETIES: The 'Fortex' and 'Cobra' varieties set a high quality standard, with crisp, stringless, green pods that are best picked young, as filet beans; they can also be left to grow into full-size snap beans. But while 'Cobra' tops out at 5 feet, making it good for tight spaces, 'Fortex' vines run 8 feet or more. 'Dow Purple Pod' has flat, Romano-type, purple pods that turn green when cooked. Where nights are cool, scarlet runners make beautiful edible ornamentals much loved by hummingbirds and bumblebees. Yardlong beans like 'Red Noodle' make excellent crops in hot, humid climates.

CUCUMBERS

To grow as many cucumbers as possible in a limited space, put them on a trellis. Trellising increases cucumber yield by 50 percent, even when low tepees or arches are used. Although cucumbers are able scramblers, they are clumsy climbers that often need help in finding their way up trellises made from string, netting, or fencing. Plan to gently poke cucumber stem tips through to the next level to train them up a vertical trellis. Within a day, curled tendrils will secure the vine in place.

VARIETIES: Pickling cucumbers like disease-resistant 'Little Leaf' are hard to pick when they are grown on the ground because of their small size, so they should always be trellised. Curved 'Armenian' cucumbers and extra-long varieties like 'Tasty Green' are rarely seen in stores because they are hard to pack and ship, but they are great fun to grow on a sturdy fence.



ALL OF THE TRELLISED CLIMBERS MENTIONED TURN AIR SPACE INTO GROWING ROOM, SO REACH FOR THE SKY!



'JASPER'

TOMATOES

Tomatoes lack the ability to twine or grow tendrils, but they often use their curved leaf stems to hook into trellises. Consistent pruning and tying is required to grow a wall of tomatoes, and you will need a long-vine, indeterminate variety.

The most popular pruning practice is to limit plants to two “leaders” by pinching out all side branches from two main stems until the plants are 2 feet tall. As the stems grow, they are tied to their trellis with strips of soft cloth, with training and tying ebbing as flowering starts so that there will be plenty of leaf cover for ripening fruit. Tomatoes handled in this way will top a 6-foot trellis. Be sure to use fencing or other sturdy materials with wide openings for harvesting your crop.

VARIETIES: Work with long-vine, indeterminate varieties that continue to grow and set fruit over a long season. ‘Better Boy’ often performs well on trellises, and ‘Triple Crop’ beefsteak grows vines more than 10 feet long. The 15-foot vines of unstoppable ‘Jasper’ red cherry, an All-America Selections winner from 2013, make it a top choice for overhead arbors. To grow a head-high hedge of cherry tomatoes, try ‘Super Sweet 100’.

SQUASH

One of the most desired add-ons for intensive raised-bed gardens are wire arches or A-frame trellises that bridge the space between beds. Spaghetti squash, winter squash, and small-fruit pumpkins are well suited to growing on high arches because they are naturally long-vine plants that grow fast in warm weather. Plus, the fruit are not harvested until early fall, so it doesn’t matter if they are hard to reach.

Popular and inexpensive, 4x16-foot feedlot or cattle panels can be bent into an arch that is secured to a metal T-post at each end. Some farm supply stores sell half-size “handy panels” that can be fastened together in minutes with zip ties to form a steeple-shape trellis. You also can fashion overhead arbors from fencing attached to flexible hex pipe secured to PVC posts or by tying bamboo rods together into a temporary pergola.

VARIETIES: Open-pollinated spaghetti squash is well endowed with curling tendrils and is a vigorous climber once it finds its support. Among pest-resistant butternuts, ‘Lil’ Dipper’ produces personal-size fruit on full-size vines. Mini-pumpkins and petite pie pumpkins like ‘Baby Pam’ work well on arbors, too. ■



'BABY PAM'

Barbara Pleasant is the author of numerous gardening books, including Homegrown Pantry (Storey Publishing, 2017). Her Web site is BarbaraPleasant.com.

INTERIOR DESIGN

COLORFUL INSPIRATION



**TO ENJOY YOUR GARDEN
YEAR-ROUND, BRING
NATURE'S HUES INDOORS
TO YOUR WALLS.
BY RACHEL PERLS**

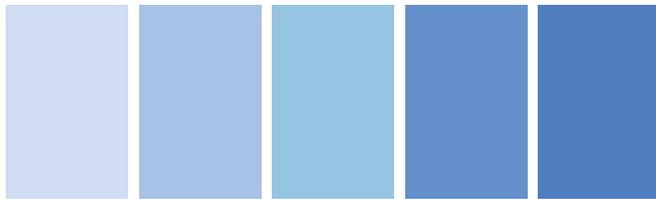


Photo: yanikap/Getty Images



WHERE DO YOU GO FOR COLOR INSPIRATION

when you consider painting an area of your home? Some people choose colors that complement the art on their walls, the oriental rug on the floor, or the pottery in the kitchen cabinets. Others dig a little deeper into their passion or pastime to identify colors that resonate with them. A gardener, however, needs to look no further than the landscape around the house: It is blooming with color ideas.



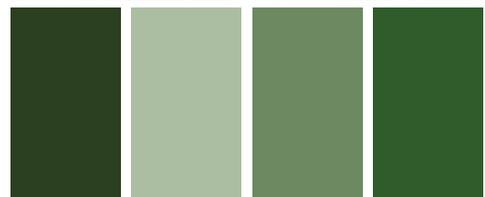
CHOOSE THE MOOD

An essential question when picking an interior paint color is, “How do I want to feel in this room?” Paint color can reinforce the desired mood and function of a space, whether you want relaxed and calm or energized and uplifted. Color can also suggest warm or cool temperatures; studies have shown that while the physical temperature in a space does not actually change, people subjectively perceive a room as warmer or cooler depending on the wall color surrounding them. Yellows, oranges, and reds can be experienced as warming a chilly space, while blues and greens visually induce the effect of coolness in a room that feels too hot and sunny.

We all experience color in our environment on many different levels, both consciously and subconsciously. Whether we are attracted to super-bright jewel tones or find comfort in muted, softer colors, there is a palette to support our preferences. Take the time to notice the colors to which you are drawn, and then you can browse your garden for the perfect paint colors.

THE GARDEN'S NEUTRALS

Notice the profusion of greenery in the garden; green is a neutral. Think about it this way: Have you ever seen a color that clashes against the greens of foliage? Whether ripe chartreuse, deep hunter, or soft moss, green is the perfect backdrop for any other color. So, why not bring this versatile hue inside for a similar effect? Greens can infuse a space with a sense of optimism and vitality. Whether light and bright as tender pea shoots or earthy and deep like a sprig of basil, green is a grounding, livable color; everyone can relate to it. Greens in a space can have the effect of pushing back the walls around your windows to let nature inside.





THE PLACE FOR PASTELS

If the desired mood is a serene space, look at soft, light colors. Think about the muted lavender blues of delphiniums and hyacinth or the mix of orange, pink, and yellow blush on the skin of an apricot. This apricot tint could even replace ubiquitous beige. These colors could bring a refreshing, airy ambience to a breakfast nook or inviting bedroom space. When selecting colors, lean toward the more muted, desaturated versions of color that you like, the ones with more white or gray in them; these tend to be more versatile as backdrops in any space. An example would be silvery sage green lamb's ears.



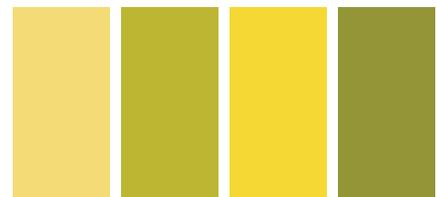
GARDEN JEWELS

If you are drawn to dark, elegant, jewel tones, Mother Nature does not disappoint. Indigo blackberries, glossy purple eggplant, wine-red heirloom tomatoes, and ruffly green kale are all colors in your garden that support this sophisticated palette. Like the tangy, tart taste of a plum or berry, these colors are bold. Imagine a lacquered front door, a tiny powder room, or a formal dining room done up in one of these beauties.

BRIGHT AND BOLD

Your garden would not be complete without bright colors and neither would some of your rooms. Powerful, strong colors like fuchsia salvia, yellow marigold, and red habanero pepper are wonderful in small doses. Daffodil yellow is joyful and cheery, especially when the paint color is a golden yellow mixed with white or peach.

Consider the proportion of color to a plant's naturally green surroundings. If paint colors are too bright and intense, your interior surroundings can feel overwhelming—almost vibrating with energy. This energy can



be successfully harnessed where motion and momentum are the function of the space, such as, for example, in a corridor or stairway where people are simply moving through the space, not spending any period of time in it.

Statement walls are also a great opportunity for a stronger color, as they can be balanced, visually, with calmer-color adjacent walls. It's important to note that everyone has different tolerances for color saturation. What feels intense and overwhelming to one person may be just right for another. *(continued)*



AUTUMNAL OPTIONS

The warm tones of orange pumpkin, yellow ochre squash, red apples, and wheat grass make an edible bounty and complementary palette of colors. Even the golden browns of dormant plants can be translated into gorgeous wall color. This look is earthy, cozy, and inviting.

FROM BOTANICALS TO BRUSHOUTS

Once you have harvested your garden's range of colorful options, it's time to translate these colors into paint samples. In preparation for your paint store trip, you may snap some pictures of your inspiration items (leaves, flowers, fruit) to use as references or bring in a sample to compare against paper color chips in the store.

Often, people struggle with how to make the jump from inspiration to paint. As a general rule of thumb, paint colors will appear more saturated and intense once they are covering a wall. When looking at a fan deck or strips of paint colors in the store, always lean toward the grayer, more muted options. They will always appear much brighter once you paint them up, and these are easier colors to live with while still inspiring the mood that you intended.

Just as the quality of light differs from dawn to dusk, so too does overhead or other bulb lighting. Take your samples home and look at the color chips in the spaces where you will be painting that specific color. Examine them at different times of day under natural lighting conditions. Colors will look dramatically different based on their context. Imagine how

a red tomato looks nestled amongst greenery versus against brown dirt beneath your feet.

Once you have settled on paint chips that you like, you can return to the store to purchase color samples of these same colors. Paint the sample colors on large pieces of cardboard. (The color of the board does not matter, as you will be fully covering it with two coats of paint, all the way to the edges.) By painting on boards, not directly on your walls, you are able to analyze a color without being influenced by the surrounding or adjacent colors currently on your walls.

As before with the paint chips, analyze the painted cardboard in the space for which you intend it, propped against the wall or taped up. This final step before actual painting should help you determine if the trial paint color fits your taste and goals for the room.

A rainbow of color options awaits in your garden. So, go ahead: Gather an armful of nature's colors and bring them indoors to enjoy year-round, painted on your walls. ■

Rachel Perls of Hue Consulting in the San Francisco Bay area is a color consultant (HueConsulting.com).



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CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Gleanings from the vegetable garden—especially kale, sage, broccoli, fennel, and peas—can feed your soul when tucked into a vase; branch out to snip bouquets from shrubs like winterberry, Japanese maple, redbud, and ninebark; a textural medley of perennial leaves, stems, and seedpods like hostas, campanula, Solomon's seal, lonicera, and painted ferns says volumes without flowers.

GREEN ENVY



**FUN AND
FASHIONABLE,
FOLIAGE
BOUQUETS FIT
IN ANYWHERE.**

BY TOVAH MARTIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KINDRA CLINEFF



RIGHT: For an exotic accent, harvest foliage from your tropical houseplants such as coleus, prayer plants, philodendrons, and papyrus.

OPPOSITE: After the bounty has faded, get mileage from the gleanings by gathering the dried remains of grasses, millet, okra, echinops, and weed seedpods for arrangements.



Having a party? Fresh cut-flower bouquets can be stunning and would certainly enhance any event. But here's an idea: Instead of a bounty of blossoms, decorate with greens instead! Increasingly, florists and party planners are forgoing flowers and focusing on other plant parts. Think lush foliage with different shapes and textures in varying shades of green. Imagine sculptural branches bearing berries, fruit, and/or seedpods. Foliage arrangements from sophisticated to simple are a budding trend!

Why go green? Foliage has remarkably intriguing and diverse forms: Options include small branches, leaves, fronds, blades, shoots, vines, and tendrils. Foliage is generally readily available and more reliable than flowers, which can have unpredictable or brief bloom times. Plus, foliage pairs well with almost any attire or decor, and a mass of greenery is relatively easy to arrange, even in the hands of a novice.

Foliage bouquets are novel but not entirely new; the formula for most arrangements includes some foliage. This trend tips the balance toward more greens and more interesting choices than a common filler like

TAKE CARE TO BE AWARE

Sensitivity and stewardship are critical to creating foliage bouquets. When collecting in the wild (especially seedpods!), get permission from the landowner and be careful to harvest only a small fraction of what you find. Never deplete nature. If necessary, identify plants before you touch them. You do not want to induce a dermatological reaction in yourself or some later party guest. For example, the herb rue (*Ruta graveolens*) can cause a potentially serious skin rash.

lemon leaf. It's an invitation to get creative, and foliage is just the beginning. Berries, bracts, husks, and seedpods might not be in every florist's cooler, but they're readily available outdoors. Here come some ideas to create your fairytale floral arrangement minus the flowers.

GATHER MATERIALS

Where to start foraging for foliage? Your garden is probably overflowing with bouquet material. Walk, pause, and look around. Consider possibilities and get out the shears to clip and cut as your heart desires. Basically, you'll be using the same design skills that you tap when you put a garden together, but on a smaller scale. Do you love the blue hosta whose rippled leaves resemble corduroy? Hold that thought as you assess the options—or reap a few leaves and you're under way.

See your trees and shrubs with fresh eyes. Within the green palate, you'll find a range of hues from the chartreuse of certain Japanese maple trees through the chalky blue/green of eucalyptus. You can layer them like nature does in a forest. Look for interesting shapes. Find colorful varieties of dogwood and other small shrubs. If you have it, prune some brilliant orange spirea foliage and/or ninebark branches bearing bronze leaves. Mix in the textures and weights of evergreens. Want to make a bouquet of boxwood? Consider going with a variegated cultivar.

(continued)





LEFT: Silver leaves like those in this clutch of different dusty millers last for weeks if you scrape the felt from the stems to encourage water uptake. Pick up the shimmer with the silver-sheen of faded rose bracts.

OPPOSITE: Berries are beautiful! A few clipped branches of thornless 'Chester' blackberries, blueberries, and viburnums stolen from your berry patch will never be missed.

BROADEN YOUR VIEW AND VISION

Reimagine ornamental grasses and trailing vines such as clematis. Houseplants can get into the act—especially tropicals such as bromeliads, air plants, and palms: These create a strong visual statement.

You can even raid the vegetable patch! Pea vines' curly tendrils are lovely in arrangements. In fact, tendrils peas, such as 'Feisty', are grown specifically for cut-flower work. Asparagus spears introduce a distinctive form. Kale comes in all sorts of colors, with curly or smooth leaves. And don't overlook rhubarb. Or broccoli! The result can be cleverly personal yet subtly sophisticated—your choice.

To go beyond green, think berries. Berry canes stand up as strong accents in a bouquet. If the arrangement is going into a vase, raspberries and gooseberries (harvested gingerly and with gloves) could be an option. For a handheld bouquet, try thornless blackberries or

branches of blueberries. Viburnums and winterberries (available in gold and yellow, as well as traditional red) are wonderful resources in autumn and winter; harvest them before the birds strip your branches. If the leaves have fallen on deciduous berried shrubs like winterberry, you need not worry about wilting. Keep in mind that not all berries cling reliably to the branch; for example, beautyberry (*Callicarpa*) will shed instantly. Test your choices so that you are not disappointed.

ENGAGE THE SENSES

Artful arrangements are restful to the eye, but foliage, perhaps more than flowers, begs to be touched. The leaves and stems of hardy geranium are as soft as velveteen; honeysuckle vines are similarly rich. Even coleus feels good in your hands. Make space for the soft, pettable leaves of lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*), rose campion (*Lychnis coronaria*), dusty miller (*Jacobaea*

maritima), or mullein (*Verbascum*) in a bouquet. With the right ingredients, this can be a hands-on experience.

Consider giving your bouquet an olfactory accent: Herbs add aroma like flowers add fragrance. Sage, rosemary, thyme, oregano, marjoram, lavender, and scented-leaf geraniums are all apropos. The more senses you invite, the more memories you'll stoke. Herbs carry symbolism as well. Rosemary is a symbol of remembrance, lavender is associated with devotion and grace, sage suggests wisdom and long life, and other herbs have meanings both ancient and modern, adding yet another dimension to your display.

Scavenge seed heads—sedums, echinacea, meadowsweet, poppy pods, to name a few—to diversify an arrangement with intriguing forms. Dried sea holly is almost identical to the live flower, less the color; ditto for globe thistle. Use these accents sparingly as focal points or make seedpods the theme. Remember, wilting is not a worry.

PULL IT TOGETHER

When it comes time to build the bouquet, keep this in mind: If it's for a vase, will it be seen from all sides or only one side? Will the vase's design or color(s) compete with your cuttings? Can the vessel carry the bulky weight of leaves and stems sturdily and gracefully?

Beyond this, all of the rules of great design come into play when working with leaves and branches. You want the bouquet to have rhythm flowing throughout and accents to lead the eye. Berries (even green ones) can serve this function, as can seedpods. If accent berries or seedpods are small, bundle them together for impact. Consider staging them asymmetrically. Experiment. Mix it up. Let the action of working with branches and leaves lead you to a calming place. Pulling together an arrangement can feel like a walk in the woods. ■

*When she's not writing for print media or lecturing, **Tovah Martin** posts on Facebook at "Plantwise by Tovah Martin."*



CUTTING CARE

The best times to harvest are on cool mornings before the heat of the day or in the morning after rain, when moisture is still in the stems. For best results, cut stems that are less than ½ inch in diameter but avoid tender new growth. Submerge the branch in water immediately and keep it there until you can get it inside to a cool place away from sunlight. Once it's indoors, make a fresh cut at a sharp slant and remove any lower leaves that are immersed in water. Put the branches and stems in fresh cool water and store for a day while they drink. When in doubt, make test cuttings of materials to be sure that they will hold up for a period of time; not all stems are equal to the task when making an arrangement.

THE PLANTS THAT

OUT-OF-CONTROL
CAT'S CLAW

GET AWAY

Once you say
“hello” to these
invasive thugs,
you may never get
to say “good-bye.”

BY STEVE BENDER



1. RUNNING BAMBOO (*Phyllostachys* spp.)
2. ENGLISH IVY (*Hedera helix*)
3. ASIAN WISTERIA (*Wisteria sinensis*)

4. ORIENTAL BITTERSWEET (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)
5. CAT'S CLAW (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*)
6. KUDZU (*Pueraria lobata*)

Don't! Don't plant that running bamboo. For if you do (with apologies to *Casablanca's* Rick Blaine), you'll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow, but soon—and for the rest of your life.

Running bamboos (*Phyllostachys* spp.) are the poster children for plants that get away—invasive plants that people stick in the ground or water that know no bounds and conquer all. Many bamboo species are the fastest growing plants on Earth, adding nearly 4 feet a day. They spread via rampaging rhizomes as thick as a man's arm. Plant them in your yard now, and resentful neighbors will curse both them and you by next week. Had Dale Carnegie planted bamboo, his landmark book would have borne the title *How to Lose Friends and Outrage People*.

Invasive plants are botanical plagues. They become this way by locating spots (often not in their native habitats) they like so much that they decide to force out every other plant. Seeds, rhizomes, stolons, rooting stems, and bulblets are their ammo. The result can devastate native plants and wildlife.

Vines and ground covers are frequent offenders due to their proclivity for climbing and/or spreading until the end of time. English ivy (*Hedera helix*) blankets tree trunks and carpets woodlands across this land. Asian wisterias (*Wisteria floribunda*, *W. sinensis*) turn entire mountainsides blue and white when they bloom near my home in north-central Alabama. Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)—its red-and-yellow seedpods the darlings of holiday decorators—grips trees so tightly with its muscular stems that it chokes them to death. Yellow-blooming cat's claw (*Macfadyena unguis-cati*) absorbs entire houses in Florida. And do I really need to warn anybody about kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*), “The Vine That Ate the South”? Touted years ago as a source for quick shade for Southern porches, it did that

spectacularly. Then it went on to shade everything else.

No invasive plant is more poorly named than tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), whose weediness and noxious odors tell us that it belongs in a much hotter place. Native to China and Korea, it became a favorite urban street tree in Europe because of its tolerance of heat, drought, pollution, and the worst soil imaginable. By 1784, seeds sent to Philadelphia had begun a coast-to-coast onslaught in the United States. Suckers punching up through concrete and asphalt amazed city dwellers. In 1943, novelist Betty Smith immortalized it in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Today in Pennsylvania, it's the preferred host of spotted lantern fly, another Chinese import that poses a serious threat to agriculture. Tree-of-heaven is truly a tree from Hell.

Not all invasives are as cosmopolitan. Many torment only certain parts of the country that offer a suitable climate. For example, Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is a hated menace in the arid West. A member of the pea family, it takes nitrogen from the air, so nutrient-poor soil is no problem. Showy yellow blossoms can annually drop more than 10,000 seeds that remain viable for 50 years. In my garden, though, the plant rots. Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), once hailed for beautiful spires of blossoms that fed pollinators, has a similar story. Favoring sun and wet soil, it turned wetlands in the Northeast and Upper Midwest into monoculture seas of purple and pink. Most states outlawed planting, growing, or selling it. But I could never get it to last more than a year in my garden, no matter how I babied it.

Marauding plants gain a foothold in our gardens by different vectors. Local nurseries are a major one. Look at a map showing territories subdued by privet

- 7. TREE-OF-HEAVEN (*Ailanthus altissima*)
- 8. SCOTCH BROOM (*Cytisus scoparius*)
- 9. PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE (*Lythrum salicaria*)

- 10. PRIVET (*Ligustrum* spp.)
- 11. HONEYSUCKLE (*Lonicera* spp.)
- 12. JAPANESE BARBERRY (*Berberis thunbergii*)



ORNAMENTALS



13



14



15



16



17

13. ICE PLANT (*Carpobrotus edulis*)
14. CHINESE TALLOW (*Triadica sebifera*)
15. MAIDEN GRASS (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus')

16. SCOURINGRUSH HORSETAIL (*Equisetum hyemale*)
17. JAPANESE KNOTWEED (*Reynoutria japonica*)

(*Ligustrum* spp.), honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), ice plant (*Carpobrotus edulis*), Chinese tallow (*Triadica sebifera*), maiden grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus'), and other villains, and you'll notice that they're usually near a big city. Why? Because these are the locations of most of the nurseries that sold these monsters. Many nurseries still sell them.

Another source is "pass-along plants"—starts of weird or hard-to-find plants shared by gardeners and friends. Most pass-alongs are treasures, but some are downright evil. If someone offers you a start of the hideous scouringrush horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*), fearsome Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), or satanic chameleon plant (*Houttuynia cordata* 'Chameleon'), they aren't being nice. They're getting even. Just say "no."

Of course, many invasives are things that we innocently plant ourselves in blissful naiveté. Writer and photographer Heather Blackmore-Varkalis rues the day when she planted yellow creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea') in her Chicago garden. "I planted thinking that she would make a nice ground cover in combination with 'Black Scallop' ajuga," Heather recalls. "Then she smothered everything. I pull her up every year, but she won't stop. She's a real bully."

California writer Chris McLaughlin committed the cardinal sin of planting notoriously invasive mint. "Waaaaaay back in the day, I was obsessed with herb gardening," she says. "Someone gave me a mint plant because I 'definitely' needed it. I was *so* sorry that I planted it. If I ever have it again, it will sit in a pot in cement."

Nandina domestica is Austin, Texas, garden designer Jenny Peterson's anathema. Nicknamed "heavenly bamboo" for its bamboo-like foliage and showy red berries, nandina spreads by seeds and roots. Removing it from the ground is harder than uprooting Uncle Charlie from his favorite recliner. "You can never get rid of it," she warns. "You can clear the bed five times,



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ORNAMENTALS

18. CHAMELEON PLANT (*Houttuynia cordata* 'Chameleon')

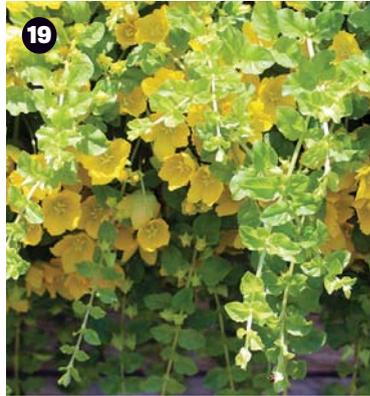
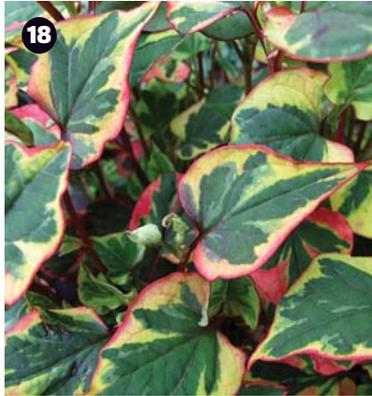
19. CREEPING JENNY (*Lysimachia nummularia* 'Aurea')

20. HEAVENLY BAMBOO (*Nandina domestica*)

21. HIMALAYAN BLACKBERRY (*Rubus armeniacus*)

22. MIMOSA TREE (*Albizia julibrissin*)

23. 'BRADFORD' CALLERY PEAR (*Pyrus calleryana*)



and it still pops up the next season!"

However, let us not be too hard on ourselves. Some truly renowned horticulturists have introduced horribly invasive plants. Among the most loathsome weeds of the Pacific Northwest, Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*) was set loose in the late 1800s by none other than plant breeder Luther Burbank. It grows into a huge, arching shrub. Each cane that touches the ground roots at the tip. (In its defense, its berries are delicious.) The South's ubiquitous mimosa tree (*Albizia julibrissin*) entered this country in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1785 under the auspices of noted French botanist André Michaux.

Worst of them all, in my opinion, is 'Bradford' Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), a gift from John Creech, former director of the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. He had become smitten with this Chinese pear for its nonfussy nature, tidy form, beautiful spring flowers, and glorious red fall foliage. It was seedless, too—or so he thought. Planting began in 1954 near the University of Maryland. Shortly thereafter, the tree revealed its Achilles heel—a terribly weak branching structure that led it to break easily in high wind. New cultivars lacking this weakness soon came to market. When they cross-pollinated with 'Bradford', boom! Suddenly, 'Bradford' was fertile, producing dense thickets of viciously thorny seedlings that crowd out all other trees. Their flowers stink, too.

Are there lessons to be learned from all of this? Yes. First, favor plants native to your area of the country. They're less likely to take over. Second, don't believe it when "experts" claim to know all about what a new plant will do. They probably don't. Finally, if a neighbor or friend seems a bit too eager to give you a start of a plant that you haven't heard of, be afraid. Be *very* afraid. ■

A garden writer for nearly 40 years, **Steve Bender** is from Hoover, Alabama, and author of *The Grumpy Gardener* (*Southern Living*, 2017).

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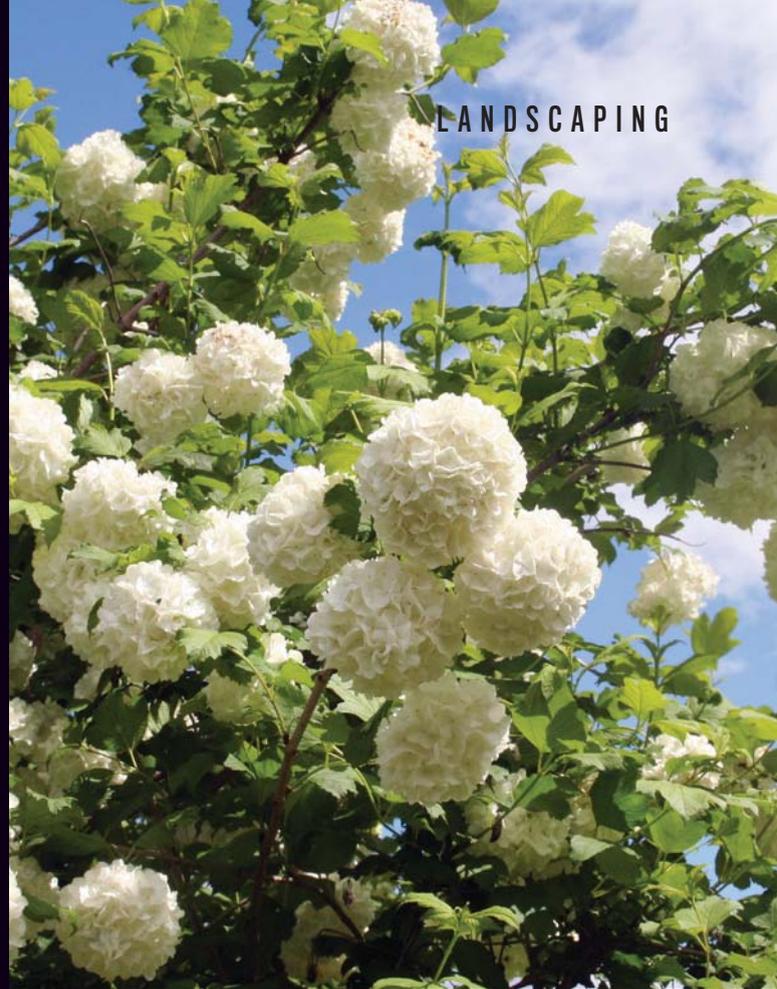
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BUILDING THE BONES





LANDSCAPING

OF A PLACE

HOW TO USE TREES AND SHRUBS TO ADD
STRUCTURE AND FORM TO YOUR PROPERTY

BY JAMIE GIBBS



T

rees and shrubs define our landscape and surroundings more than most of us realize. They can complement a structure or space, provide scale or alter perception, shelter or mask, decorate or coordinate—and more—depending on the cultivars chosen and how they are used. Consider your surroundings, even your neighborhood, and before you buy and begin digging, think about how various plants mature and the care that they might need.



DAWN REDWOOD



EUROPEAN HORNBEAM



KATSURA

THE GRANDEUR OF BIG TREES

Large specimen trees are those that outlive us and add the greatest value to a home. Typically, they are selected for fall color or hardiness or because they are evergreen. A specimen tree can mature at 40 to 50 feet tall or more and have a canopy as much as 30 feet in diameter. These trees should not be planted within 30 feet of a house or power lines to ensure a natural growth habit and prevent damage to property. Most create

shade, so shallow tree roots, under-planting possibilities, mulch, and the risk of decreased lawn vigor should be considered.

Be aware that unusual trees add diversity to a neighborhood's tree inventory, and diversity helps to prevent the spread of disease and blight. Decide how much shade, shape, and color you wish to create by using trees in your landscape and/or consult a local arborist or nursery to determine

their appropriateness for your site.

The following large specimen trees have a 30- to 40-foot spread. Although most are hardy from USDA Zones 3 to 8, they would be unusual additions because they are not commonly seen:

- **Cryptomeria**, or Japanese cedar (*Cryptomeria japonica*): pyramidal
- **Cucumbertree magnolia** (*Magnolia acuminata*): layered; flowering
- **Dawn redwood**

(*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*):

pyramidal deciduous

- **European hornbeam**

(*Carpinus betulus*

'Columnaris' or 'Fastigiata'): spreader; interesting bark

- **Golden larch** (*Pseudolarix amabilis* [kaempferi]):

pyramidal deciduous; golden fall foliage

- **Katsura tree** (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*): spreader; caramel-color leaves in fall and subtle caramel scent

NOT-SO-BIG TREES

Smaller trees suit small spaces or small suburban properties. These trees top out at 20 to 30 feet, with a drip line (canopy) of about the same diameter. The proportion of house and lot to tree size becomes visually important in smaller, sometimes confined spaces. When selecting a tree, keep in mind that you don't want one that will require extensive pruning to keep its branches away from the house or utility lines.

On the subject of pruning: Consider removing the lower

branches (paradoxically called "high pruning") of some trees to allow for people and machinery to pass under the canopy. This creates a narrower top for some species and with it the opportunity to plant understory shrubbery, perennials, and ground covers. High pruning can help to maintain a pleasant canopy while at the same time permitting some light to filter under the tree and perhaps create an area for sitting or a shade plant garden. Some to consider . . .

• **Japanese snowbell**

(*Styrax japonicus*): compact, deciduous; horizontal branching; rounded crown; bell-shape white flowers

• **Paperbark maple** (*Acer griseum*): spreader; colorful, curling bark

• **Pawpaw** (*Asimina triloba*): deciduous; purple flowers yield to edible fruit

• **Red buckeye** (*Aesculus pavia*): deciduous clump-forming shrub/small tree; irregular rounded crown

• **White fringe tree** (*Chionanthus virginicus*): spreader, rounded habit; showy white flowers



POND CYPRESS

OPTIONS FOR WETLANDS

Many trees will not be happy in areas that retain moisture, but these large cultivars love a boggy environment:

Bee bee tree (*Evodia daniellii*): spreader, umbrella-shape; fragrant white flowers; 25 to 30 feet at maturity

Pond cypress (*Taxodium distichum* 'Nutans'): pyramidal deciduous; roots protrude aboveground when in/near water; 30 to 70 feet tall at maturity

Weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*): spreader; stout trunk, with crown of downward sweeping branches; 30 to 50 feet tall at maturity



PAPERBARK MAPLE



WHITE FRINGE TREE



WEeping WILLOW

FINICKY FAVORITES

We all drool over rhododendrons, azaleas, Japanese andromeda (*Pieris japonica*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), and Oregon hollygrape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), but they can be finicky. They do not thrive in heavy clay or alkaline soils. They don't like wet conditions or drought stress. Most prefer partial shade. For best results, create an amended soil area with a soil pH below 5 by using compost and peat moss, which these plants love. Mulch heavily and maintain moist (not wet) soil.



'ELF' MOUNTAIN LAUREL



JAPANESE TREE LILAC



'FORT MCNAIR' RED HORSE CHESTNUT

ORNAMENTAL TREES

“Ornamental” refers to a tree with attractive characteristics such as overall shape, foliage color, flowers, or unusual seedpods. These low- to medium-height trees (10 to 20 feet and 20 to 25 feet tall, respectively) require less maintenance and do not shade large areas. Cultivars not commonly seen include . . .

- **Cockspur hawthorn** (*Crataegus crusgalli*): dense, low-branched, broad-rounded crown; seasonally orange to scarlet to purple-red foliage; white flowers
- **Japanese tree lilac** (*Syringa reticulata*): oval/rounded crown; fragrant, creamy white flowers
- **Paperbark birch** (*Betula papyrifera*): vase shape; exfoliating white bark
- **Ruby red horse chestnut** (*Aesculus carnea*): deciduous; oval/rounded habit; red flowers
- **Saucer magnolia** (*Magnolia x soulangeana*): spreader, rounded crown
- **White fringe tree** (*Chionanthus virginicus*): See “Not-So-Big Trees” on page 89. (*continued*)

BORDER TREES

Tree and shrub borders define a property, create a windbreak, and serve as a backdrop for lawn and flower or ground cover beds. Large pyramidal cultivars of these evergreens can be border plantings:

- **American arborvitae** (*Thuja occidentalis*)
- **Austrian pine** (*Pinus nigra*)
- **Leyland cypress** (*Cupressus x leylandii*)



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BORDER SHRUBS

Growing to eye level or slightly taller, shrubs form the character, “rooms,” and visual appeal of your landscape. Their shapes add form and definition year-round, create views, guide the eye, and even hide “mechanicals” (e.g., air-conditioning units). Select shrubs with these criteria in mind: height

variation; foliage (e.g., evergreen vs. deciduous; variety in leaf shape and texture), flower color; blooming season; winter interest; and compatibility with your soil and moisture conditions. To reduce pruning chores, select a shrub with a natural shape that fits your design. These reliable

performers mature at around 15 feet:

- **Golden vicary** (*Ligustrum x vicaryi*): multistem; vase shape; deciduous; flowers attract bees and butterflies
- **Harry Lauder’s walking stick** (*Corylus avellana* ‘Contorta’): multitrunked, suckering; unusual shape
- **Ninebark** (*Physocarpus*):

upright; spreader; deciduous; pink or white flowers

- **Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier*): vase shape; slightly fragrant white flowers
- **Viburnum** (*Viburnum*): many hybrids; genus of 150 to 175 species vary in height, spread, and flowers



‘SNOWBALL’ VIRBURNUM



‘MR. BOWLING BALL’ ARBORVITAE

SMALL SHRUBS

Any shrub that naturally grows to less than 18 inches tall can be considered a woody ground cover. These are more low-maintenance than annual or perennial flowers, help to control weeds and soil erosion, reduce the need for mulch, and serve as year-round design features. Many have trailing, creeping, or cascading habits. These dwarf shrubs are useful cultivars in flower borders, rock gardens, or the crevices of stone walls. They will add hardy height variation, color

variation, texture, and winter interest, along with subtle fruit and flower interest. These include . . .

- **‘Bobozam,’ aka ‘Mr. Bowling Ball,’ American arborvitae** (*Thuja occidentalis*): dense; globular; yellow and green foliage
- **‘Everlow’ yew** (*Taxus x media*): wide spreader
- **‘Grey Owl’ red cedar** (*Juniperus virginiana*): spreader; vase shape; gray-green foliage
- **‘Monloo’ Japanese yew** (*Taxus cuspidata*): spreader; compact; dense
- **‘Tiny Tim’ American**

arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*): conical; aromatic yellow-green to green foliage

Use this information as a shopping list to do online research that will help you to make successful long-lasting decisions. ■

Jamie Gibbs is the principal designer at Jamie Gibbs Associates, a landscape architecture and interior design firm that specializes in the renovation and restoration of period properties. He has offices in Indianapolis, Indiana; New York City; and Amsterdam, Netherlands.

FOUNDATION PLANTINGS

Use varieties of boxwood (*Buxus*) shrubs as foundation plantings and in borders. Boxwood is easy to maintain and adaptable to various soils and moisture conditions. To prevent winter burn and avoid some varieties that have an unpleasant odor, consider these boxwoods:

‘Aureovariegata’ (*Buxus sempervirens*): rounded to broad-rounded; variegated foliage

‘Green Mountain’ (*Buxus*): upright; naturally conical

‘Green Velvet’ (*Buxus*): evergreen; foliage turns bronze in winter

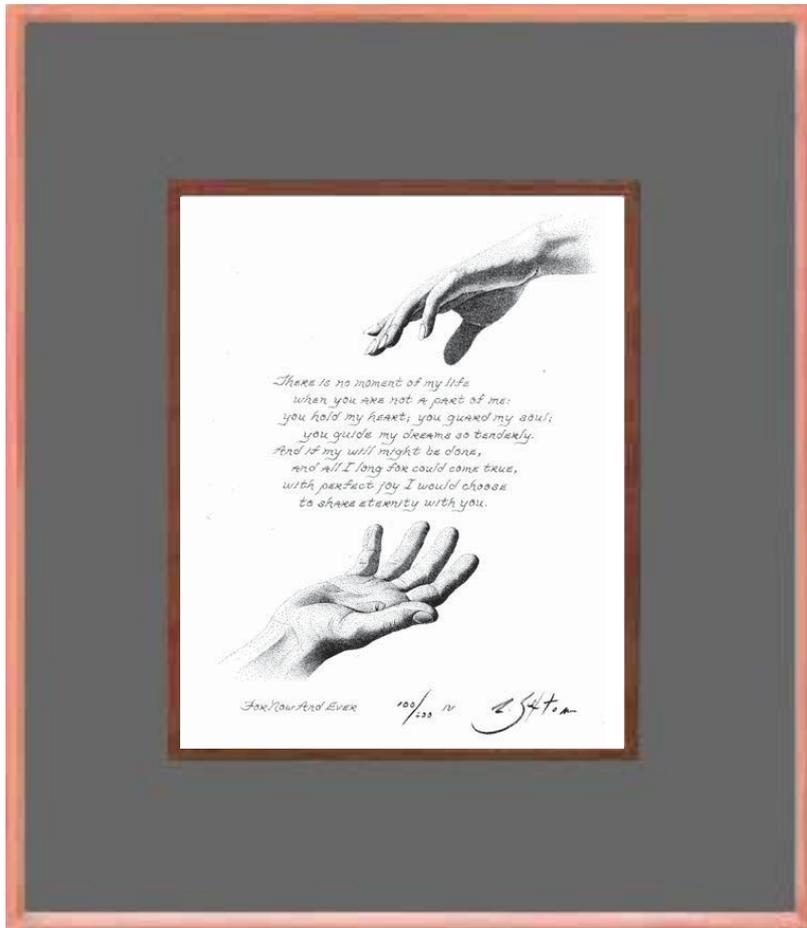
‘Winter Gem’ (*Buxus sinica* var. *insularis*): compact; many-branched; mounded; evergreen



‘GREEN VELVET’ BOXWOOD

For Now And Ever

A Most Unusual Gift of Love



THE POEM READS:

“There is no moment of my life when you are not a part of me; you hold my heart; you guard my soul; you guide my dreams so tenderly. And if my will might be done, and all I long for could come true, with perfect joy I would choose to share eternity with you.”

Dear Reader,

The drawing you see above is called *For Now and Ever*. It is completely composed of dots of ink. After writing the poem, I worked with a quill pen and placed thousands of these dots, one at a time, to create this gift in honor of the love of two of my dearest friends.

Now, I have decided to offer *For Now and Ever* to those who have known and value its sentiment as well. Each litho is numbered and signed by hand and precisely captures the detail of the drawing. As an anniversary, wedding, or Valentine's gift for your husband or wife, or for a special couple within your circle of friends, I believe you will find it most appropriate.

Measuring 14" by 16", it is available either fully-framed in a subtle copper tone with hand-cut double mats of pewter and rust at \$145*, or in the mats alone at \$105*. Please add \$18.95 for insured shipping. Returns/exchanges within 30 days.

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Forcing the Issue

WEARY OF WINTER? BRING ON SPRING WITH INDOOR BLOOMS!

By Tovah Martin

PHOTOS BY KINDRA CLINEFF AND TOVAH MARTIN



INDOOR GARDENING

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Narcissus 'Martinette';
yellow twig dogwood;
Bellis 'Tasso Strawberries
and Cream' (front); *Euphorbia*
'Ascot Rainbow'; *Tulipa*
'Princess Irene' (front);
flowering quince branches
THIS PAGE: Forsythia
branches with daffodils





AS GARDENERS, WHETHER INDOORS OR OUTSIDE, we all realize the importance of winter (some plants need a cold spell!)—but at times those dark days can seem interminable. For those of you who twiddle your thumbs while waiting for the snow to melt and spring flowers to burst forth, here are ways to use those idle hands to make, or “force,” vernal buds on twigs, perennials, and bulbs to awaken in your home. It’s surprisingly easy. All that you need is some space in the refrigerator and a plan.

A green thumb is not a prerequisite and, actually, you only need the fridge if you’re forcing bulbs. For twigs and perennials, you just need to think ahead. Basically, you’re tricking plants into performing precociously by fiddling with their environment. They assume that an accelerated winter came and went and now it’s spring, even though the calendar says that it’s February.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
Tulipa praestans ‘Shogun’; *Iris* ‘Eye Catcher’; *Tulipa* ‘Estatic’;
Iris ‘Harmony’

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
Heuchera ‘Sugar Plum’;
Muscari (grape hyacinths);
Lamium ‘Shell Pink’

BRANCHING OUT

Okay, this is really about “branching in,” and anyone can do it. Branches to be forced need to have experienced about 6 weeks of winter’s cold. Collecting them in February usually ensures the necessary chill period. Make a foray outdoors with pruning shears specifically to fetch forcing material (of course, ask the owner’s permission if the plants are not your own). Look for slender tips rather than thick limbs—branches less than ½ inch in diameter are ideal. Forsythias and pussy willows are perfect candidates that are ubiquitous across the United States and Canada; what’s more, forcing them is a tradition. Also apropos are flowering fruit trees of any type, as well as redbuds and serviceberry. Did your magnolia take a hit during that last wind event? Gather the fallout. Flowering quince is also frequently enlisted for forcing, and pruning this bush that tends to look disheveled will lead to a more shapely shrub.

Forsythias and pussy willows are **PERFECT CANDIDATES** that are ubiquitous across the United States and Canada; what's more, **FORCING THEM IS A TRADITION.**

Got nothing to prune? Not a problem! After a brutal winter storm, walk around your neighborhood and gather the twigs and branches littering the streets and sidewalks. Of course, not all spring bloomers work for this purpose. Lilacs can be stubborn. But if a lilac tree is toppled in a blizzard, it's worth a try. All of these broken and pruned branches will be recycled into bouquets.

So how do you make this happen? Take those branches—whether they bear flower buds or not—recut the stems at a sharp slant, and place them in a vase of water. Put the vase in a cool window (50° to 55°F is ideal) and wait 2 to 4 weeks, changing the water weekly to keep it fresh. You should begin to see the promise of buds slowly swelling, and you will have your mini spring preview.



FORCING FLOWERS

Forcing bulbs is a tradition that has been practiced by Europeans since the late 17th century (long before refrigeration); today, a fridge with a constant temperature of approximately 40°F streamlines the process. The goal for us and our ancestors has always been the same: to trick the bulbs into thinking that winter happened and spring is here by delivering a teeth-chattering interlude followed by a period of relative (50° to 60°F) warmth.

Choose and buy the bulbs you want to force in October or November and store them in their mesh or paper bags in the refrigerator's crisper drawer, away from food (especially apples), until early December. Then they need to begin forming roots; your next step depends on





which bulbs you are growing.

Let's start with the simplest bulbs to force, hyacinths. For these, it helps to have an hourglass-shape forcing vase for each bulb. Take the bulbs out of the refrigerator and add water to the vase. Place the bulb in the vase so that it sits pointed end up with the bottom just grazing the water. Then put the vase on a cool (below 65°F) windowsill and wait for the roots to plunge down. Flower clusters form in a few weeks. Replace the water every week or so, and you're in for a long duration of colorful beauty, plus nirvana for your nose. Caution: Wear gloves when working with hyacinths—some people can get a dermatological reaction—and be careful not to touch your eyes.

Early-blooming *Iris reticulata* cultivars are equally copacetic, but they perform best in potting soil—any bag of potting medium will do. Pot them by clustering several bulbs shoulder-to-shoulder in a shallow container with their necks poking just above the potting soil, water them lightly, and tuck the whole package in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 weeks, or until you see green growth. Then take them out for your instant spring: the windowsill version.

The process is the same for hardy narcissus (aka daffodils). Keep them in the refrigerator in a mesh or paper bag until December and then pot them by placing the bulbs pointed end up nestled closely together, burying them an inch below the surface of the potting soil. Refrigerate for 8 to 10 weeks, or until you see green growth, and then liberate them onto your win-

FORCING BULBS has been practiced by Europeans since the **LATE 17TH CENTURY** (long before refrigeration).

You can also force your favorite **EARLY-BLOOMING SPRING PERENNIALS**. Shade-lovers such as hellebores, heucheras, columbines, lamiums, tiarellas, primroses, Jacob's ladder, bugleweed, and lungwort **ARE THE EASIEST TO FORCE**.

dowsill. Note that paperwhites are nonhardy narcissus; they do not require (or want) any chilling period. Pot them immediately when purchased.

Tulips are another story—or two stories, actually. The first tulips are the large-flower hybrids that practically define spring. You know: the welcome brigades of bright color that are popular in parks and other public displays. These can be forced by putting them into the refrigerator when purchased in October or November; potting them in December (pointed end up and an inch below the soil surface); returning the planted pot to the refrigerator for another 12 to 15 weeks; and then bringing them out and enjoying flowers after about 2 weeks.

Want tulips faster? Try the second type, species tulips such as *Tulipa clusiana* 'Cynthia', *T. linifolia*, and *T. batalinii*, available through most specialty mail-order bulb purveyors. These look like someone shrank the hybrid tulip: All parts—including the bulb, the foliage, and the flowers—are downsized. So, they're not as flashy, but they require the cold treatment for only 8 weeks or less after potting them in December. When you see green coming from the bulbs, bring them out of the refrigerator into sunlight to brighten your life.

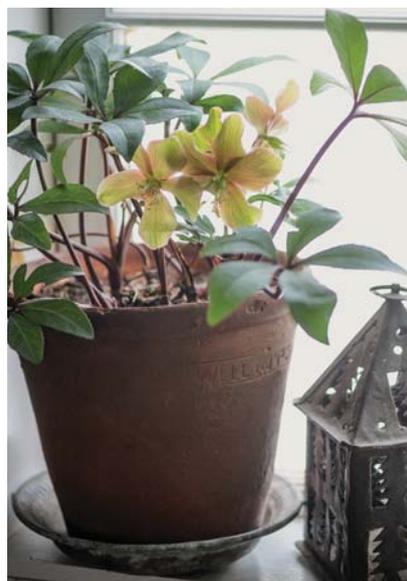
BUDDING BLOOMS

You can also force your favorite early-blooming spring perennials. Shade-lovers such as hellebores, heucheras, columbines, lamiums, tiarel-



OPPOSITE: *Salix gracilistyla* 'Melanostachys' (black pussy willow) and *Salix discolor*

THIS PAGE, FROM TOP: *Aquilegia canadensis* 'Little Lanterns' (columbine); *Helleborus*



las, primroses, Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium*), bugleweed (*Ajuga*), and lungwort (*Pulmonaria*) are the easiest to force. Dig a clump from your garden in autumn (or buy the plants during autumn sales), pot them up (a generous container will produce best results), set them in a sunny window, and water when their soil is dry. Sometimes they go dormant, but don't let this spook you. Stay the course, and they will sprout up again in late winter long before the snow and ice have melted outside. By early March, as the days get longer, they will start brandishing spring flowers.

Once you get your mojo going with the shade-lovers mentioned, try some easy, fast-blooming, sun-loving spring performers like English daisies (*Bellis*) and euphorbias. Given a bright south-facing window, these might just supply a dose of all that we love about the upcoming growing season.

Place them as close as possible to the windowpanes. Rotate the plants often to expose all sides equally to light and water when the soil is dry. They might not bloom as abundantly indoors as they typically would outdoors, in real time, but one flower in your windowsill brings bliss and gives you boasting rights for having accomplished your own personal spring preview! Talk about a force of nature! ■

Tovah Martin's most recent book, *The Garden in Every Sense and Season* (Timber Press, 2018), won the Gold Medal from Garden Communicators International.

PRESERVE YOUR HARVEST THE TASTY WAY!

Whether you grow your own or reap the bounty of a farmers' market, put aside a portion to make these peak-season specialties.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAMANTHA JONES, QUINN BREIN COMMUNICATIONS

SHERRIED JALAPEÑO PICKLES

These fiery peppers can be eaten plain or chopped and added to guacamole, salsa, or other dishes. The juice alone makes a fine hot sauce for table use.

fresh, firm jalapeño peppers
sweet or dry sherry
apple cider vinegar

With the tip of a sharp paring knife, pierce each pepper in several places to allow the vinegar to penetrate. Pack peppers tightly into half-pint jars and add 2 tablespoons of sherry to each (double this if you are using pint jars). Fill the jars with vinegar and cover. Do not process. Store in a cool, dark place for 1 week, then add more vinegar to replace what has been absorbed by the peppers. These pickles do not need processing, but they should be stored in the refrigerator to be kept crisp.



PEACH-RED ONION-TOMATO SALSA

1½ cups peeled and finely diced fresh, ripe peaches

1½ cups cored, seeded, and finely diced tomatoes

½ cup finely chopped red onion

½ cup finely chopped bell pepper

¼ cup chopped pickled jalapeños, plus 1 teaspoon juice

1 to 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil

1 tablespoon chopped fresh Italian parsley

2 to 3 teaspoons sugar

salt, to taste

In a bowl, combine all of the ingredients. Refrigerate for several hours. Stir and taste occasionally, adjusting the seasonings as needed.

Transfer to one or more jars with a lid. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

Makes about 4 cups.

(continued)



DILLED GREEN BEANS

- 2 heads fresh dill**
- 2 long hot peppers**
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled**
- ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper, divided**
- 1 pound small fresh green beans**
- 1 cup apple cider vinegar**
- 2 tablespoons salt**

Place one head of dill in each of two sterilized pint canning jars, along with one hot pepper, one garlic clove, and ¼ teaspoon cayenne. Pack the beans upright, dividing evenly between the jars.

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, combine vinegar and salt with 1½ cups of water. Bring to a boil, then pour into jars, leaving ½ inch of headspace. Seal and process for 15 minutes.

Makes 2 pints. ■

(Turn page for Recipe Contest winners)

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THE 2020 SWEET POTATO RECIPE CONTEST WINNERS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SAMANTHA JONES, QUINN BREIN COMMUNICATIONS

**FRIST PRIZE: \$250
SWEET POTATO
OVEN FRIES WITH
SPICY CREMA**

FRIES:

1½ pounds sweet potatoes, preferably similar in size

3 tablespoons olive oil

¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese

¼ cup panko bread crumbs

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1½ teaspoons salt

¾ teaspoon ground cumin

¾ teaspoon chili powder

1⁄8 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste

CREMA:

1 cup sour cream

1 teaspoon minced jalapeño pepper, or to taste

½ teaspoon fresh lime juice

¼ teaspoon salt

FOR FRIES: Preheat oven to 425°F. Get out a large baking sheet.

Peel and cut sweet potatoes in half lengthwise, then cut into equal-size strips or wedges about ½ inch thick.

Place sweet potatoes in a single layer on baking sheet. Drizzle with oil and toss to coat.

In a bowl, combine Parmesan, bread crumbs, brown sugar, salt, cumin, chili powder, and cayenne.

Sprinkle bread crumb mixture over the fries and toss to coat. Place in a single layer on baking sheet.

Bake on center oven rack for 30 minutes, or until tender and well browned, turning once or twice during cooking.

FOR CREMA: In a bowl, combine sour cream, jalapeño, lime juice, and salt.

Chill until ready to serve with fries.

Makes 4 servings.

—Bonnie Aeschliman, Collierville, Tennessee



SECOND PRIZE: \$150
SAVORY
SWEET POTATO
FLATBREAD

- ¼ cup panko bread crumbs**
- 1 can (13.8 ounces) refrigerated pizza dough**
- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, softened**
- 2 teaspoons dried dill, divided**
- 1 teaspoon dried chives**
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice**
- 2 cups peeled and finely sliced raw sweet potatoes**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- ¾ cup thinly sliced scallions**
- ½ teaspoon dried thyme**
- ¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese**

Preheat oven to 425°F, or according to pizza dough package directions.

Spray a 15x10-inch baking sheet lightly with cooking spray. Sprinkle evenly with bread crumbs. Press dough into pan. Cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until edges are slightly brown and center is dry to the touch.

In a food processor or blender, process cream cheese, 1 teaspoon of dill, chives, and lemon juice until ingredients are well incorporated.

In a bowl, toss sweet potatoes with oil, scallions, thyme, and remaining 1 teaspoon of dill.

Spread cream cheese mixture onto slightly cooled pizza dough. Evenly place sweet potato mixture over cream cheese mixture.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until sweet potatoes are slightly softened.

Sprinkle with Parmesan and allow to cool for 5 to 10 minutes. Cut into 12 squares and serve warm.

Makes 12 servings.

—Arlene Erlbach, Morton Grove, Illinois

(continued)



THIRD PRIZE: \$100
**MAPLE BASIL SWEET POTATO,
 PEAR, AND GLAZED PECAN SALAD**

DRESSING:

- ½ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- freshly ground black pepper,
to taste
- ⅓ cup fresh basil, chopped

SALAD:

- ⅓ cup pecan halves
- 4 teaspoons honey
- sprinkle of cayenne pepper,
or to taste
- 2 medium sweet potatoes
- 1 bag (8 ounces) mixed
baby greens
- 1 Bartlett pear, cored and diced
- 4 slices bacon, fried crisp and
chopped
- 2 ounces crumbled blue cheese

FOR DRESSING: In a bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, maple syrup, salt, and pepper. Stir in basil.

FOR SALAD: Grease a baking sheet or line with parchment paper.

In a skillet over medium-high heat, combine pecans, honey, and cayenne. Cook for 3 minutes, or until mixture simmers and is foamy. Spread onto prepared baking sheet, separating slightly with a fork; set aside to cool completely.

Pierce sweet potatoes and cook in microwave on high for 4 to 5 minutes, or until tender. When cool enough to handle, remove skins and chop into ½-inch cubes.

In a large salad bowl, mix together greens, pears, and sweet potatoes.

Pour dressing over salad and toss to coat.

Top with bacon, blue cheese, and pecans before serving.

Makes 4 servings.

—Patricia Harmon, Baden, Pennsylvania

TOMATO RECIPE CONTEST

Send us your favorite recipe using tomatoes. The recipe must be yours, original, and unpublished. Amateur cooks only. Enter at Almanac.com/ Tomato or send your recipe to Garden Guide Recipe Contest, P.O. Box 520, Dublin, NH 03444. Include your name and mail and email addresses. We will pick three winners and award cash prizes: \$250 for first prize, \$150 for second prize, and \$100 for third prize. The deadline for entries is July 30, 2021. All entries become the property of Yankee Publishing, which reserves all rights to the materials. Winning recipes will appear in the *2022 Garden Guide* and on Almanac.com. ■

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Water worries evaporate and plants thrive when they're in a **LECHUZA POT**, with its proprietary self-watering system: Choose from four liners, depending on plant needs; a water-level indicator "reads" the reservoir in the bottom and tells you when to add water and how much. Numerous pot shapes, sizes, and styles; from \$14.99 at Lechuza.us.



HELLO, HEDGEHOG!

To brighten spirits and its surroundings, this **LIFELIKE RESIN STATUARY** sports solar-powered white LED lights in the center of its succulents! It's sure to add whimsy and charm to flower beds or borders, patio or porch. Requires 6 to 8 hours of sun/light; includes a weatherproof battery box. About \$40 at Plowhearth.com.



SOAK WITH STYLE

Let **DRAMM COLORSTORM GARDEN HOSES**, in a rainbow of colors (blue, green, orange, berry, yellow, and red), put pizzazz into plant watering times! Need to target pots or planters? Add a Rain Wand (several models, same or different color). Made in the USA, each has a lifetime warranty. Everyone will want to water! About \$65 for a 50-foot hose and \$25 for a wand at garden supply stores and Amazon.com.



REAL ESTATES FOR THE BIRDS

Our feathered friends will nest in comfort when they land in a yard with a hand-built and -painted **WOODEN EXPRESSIONS BIRDHOUSE**. Constructed of 3/4-inch medium-density overlay and with a copper or aluminum roof, these avian abodes are easily cleaned out and can be left outdoors year-round; most can be post-mounted or hung. Created with common birds in mind: eastern bluebirds, chickadees, tufted titmice, swallows, nuthatches, downy woodpeckers, finches, and more. Single-nest styles include Hut, Lodge, Rustic Cabin, Post, Loft, and Manor (\$35–\$119); four-nest: Estate (\$189–\$229); eight-nest: Haven (\$359). Made in the USA; free shipping. WoodenExpressions.com.





TESTING, 1, 2, 3

The success of any plant depends on the proper combination of soil, sunlight, and moisture. Take the guesswork out of growing with the **ALTREE 3-IN-1 SOIL METER**. In 10 minutes, it reveals soil pH (acidity or alkalinity) and moisture level (so that you know when it's time to water), as well as the light intensity. (Not suited for testing grow lights or liquids.) No batteries or electricity needed! About \$16 at Amazon.com.



A GROW HOME

Plants and people thrive in **FREEDOM GREENHOUSES**. Made of eastern white cedar, with innovative ventilation designs, optional automatic watering benches, solar panels and battery, and triple-wall polycarbonate glazing, each is self-contained, self-tending, and customizable. Available in many sizes, including “lean-to” for attachment to existing structures. Made in Maine by Mainegarden.com.

HAPPY FEET

Being outdoors, working or walking, has never been so comfortable! Muck Boot Company's new **OUTSCAPE FOOTWEAR**, in two lightweight, slip-on styles—sneaker (Low) or boot (Chelsea) for both men and women—sports a 100 percent waterproof Muckskin finish; breathable mesh lining; memory foam footbed; self-cleaning rubber sole for surefooted traction; and more in a choice of earth tones. From \$100 (Low) to \$120 (Chelsea) at Muckbootcompany.com.



A GROW DOME

Plants soak up rays all day long under the dome of a **SUNBUBBLE**. Compact when folded, a roundhouse when set up. Made of UV-stabilized PVC and flexible fiberglass rods. A zipper door allows entry, and adjustable vents enable control of temperature and airflow. Comes in a storage bag; stakes/pegs secure it to the ground. Two sizes, both 6 feet 5 inches high, from \$210. Made in the UK and available at Amazon.com.



REEL EASY

Mowing the lawn is like a walk in the park with the **SCOTTS 2000-20S CLASSIC PUSH REEL LAWN MOWER**. Its wide (20-inch) cutting width and relatively light weight (34 pounds) make it easy to maneuver. Adjustable for a 1- to 3-inch cutting height, plus it's cordless and quiet. Preferred for small, flat lawns (less than ¼ acre). About \$150 at Amazon.com.



A IS FOR APRON

This carryall concept borrows from the beloved kangaroo: The cotton canvas **ROO APRON** has pockets in the bib and a lined pouch at the waist that opens to release fresh vegetables into the sink, deadheaded flowers into the compost heap, weeds into the trash, or whatever you please. The **Joey Apron** (named for a baby kangaroo) has no bib. One size fits all. Roo (\$36) and Joey (\$34) are available at Rooapron.com. ■

5 WAYS TO TEST YOUR SOIL

USE LABWORK AND NATURAL CLUES TO GROW BETTER PLANTS.



FROM THE SIMPLE TO THE SOPHISTICATED, SOIL-TESTING KITS HELP YOU TO TEST YOUR SOIL YOURSELF.



Are your vegetables not producing as they should? Perhaps the soil lacks potassium. Are your perennials underperforming? They could be begging for organic matter. How's your grass compared to the proverbial "other side of the fence"? Time to check the soil's acidity.

A soil test can resolve these questions and many more. Adding organic compost or fertilizer or any other supplement makes sense only if the soil needs it. Here are some ways to test your soil.

LABORATORY TEST

It's best to have the test done in a laboratory close to where you live so that the recommendations you receive make sense for your soil and climate. Most state Cooperative Extension services have labs or a list of labs that they recommend. A standard garden soil test (usually less than \$20) will measure your soil's pH level (acidity or alkalinity), nutrient content (calcium, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, and sulfur), and percentage of organic matter. The soil test report will be customized with suggested amendments for what you plan to grow—vegetables, flowers, lawn, trees.

Photos, from top: Thomas Alamy/GAP Photos; Michael Howes/GAP Photos

NATURAL CLUES TO YOUR SOIL'S HEALTH
WEEDS HELP YOU TO ASSESS YOUR SOIL'S CONDITION.

IF YOU HAVE . . .	YOUR SOIL IS . . .
bracken fern, dock, horsetail, stinging nettle, Virginia creeper	acidic
broom sedge, burdock, horsetail, stinging nettle	calcium-deficient
cattail, horsetail, Joe Pye weed, marsh mallow	wet or poorly draining
common mullein, mugwort	infertile
crabgrass, field bindweed, plantain, quackgrass	hardpan or compacted
dead nettle, lamb's-quarter, pigweed, purslane	nutrient-rich
knapweed	nutrient-deficient
lamb's-quarter, wild mustard	alkaline
lamb's-quarter, ox-eye daisy, wild buckwheat	phosphorus-deficient

AS WEEDS GRADUALLY DECOMPOSE, THEIR NUTRIENTS ARE RECYCLED BACK INTO THE SOIL.

IF YOU HAVE . . .	YOUR SOIL HAS . . .
comfrey	nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus
dandelions	iron, potassium, and phosphate
legume-type weeds like vetch and clover	nitrogen
stinging nettle	iron and nitrogen
yarrow	iron and phosphate

Most labs recommend that you take samples from six to eight spots in the garden or lawn area that you want tested and then mix these samples together to create a representative sample of the area. Samples should be taken from a depth of 6 inches for gardens, 3 to 4 inches for lawns, and 6 to 8 inches for trees and shrubs. Each sample should be taken with a clean spade, shovel, or trowel. Mix the soil samples in a clean plastic bucket. Air-dry the soil and remove any stones and other debris. When ready, mail about 1 cup of soil to the Extension service or lab. Check your Extension service's Web site for forms to fill out,

cost, and more specific instructions for taking and mailing a sample. Find the service nearest you at Almanac.com/cooperative-extension-services.

SELF-TEST KIT

You can test your soil yourself with a self-test kit. Available at garden centers, hardware stores, and online, these kits generally test the soil's pH level and nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium content. Basic kits run from \$10 to \$25, while more comprehensive ones can cost more.

When using a DIY soil-testing kit, you mix a small soil sample with water and then add different chemicals from the kit

to the mixture. The soil sample will change color. A color chart in the kit will tell you the pH level and nutrient content in your soil. Most kits also include instructions for adjusting the soil condition.

EARTHWORM TEST

The best time to check for earthworms is in the spring when the soil's temperature has reached 50°F and its surface is moist. Use a shovel to dig up about 1 cubic foot of soil. Put the soil on a piece of cardboard, break it apart, and look for earthworms. If your soil is healthy, you'll find at least 10 earthworms. If your soil has fewer than 10 worms, add more organic matter to it.

PANTRY pH TESTS

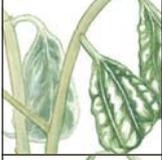
- Place 2 tablespoons of soil in a bowl and add ½ cup vinegar. If you find that the mixture fizzes, then you have alkaline soil.
- Place 2 tablespoons of soil in a bowl and moisten it with distilled water. Add ½ cup baking soda. If the mixture fizzes, you have acidic soil.
- If it does not react to either test, the soil has a neutral pH.

LEARN THE pH LEVELS OF PLANTS

To see the pH preferences of a wide variety of trees, shrubs, flowers, and vegetables, turn to page 116. ■

—Mare-Anne Jarvela

WHAT'S WRONG WITH MY HOUSEPLANTS?

	SYMPTOM Long, pale leaves; small new leaves	CAUSE Not enough light	CURE Give plant more light		SYMPTOM Leaf edges are crinkly and brown	CAUSE Lack of humidity	CURE Mist leaves, or place pot on tray of moist pebbles
	Leaves curl under or have yellow or brown spots	Too much light	Move plant away from light source, or shade plant with blinds or sheer curtain		Lower leaves turn pale and drop off	Lack of fertilizer	Fertilize plant regularly during growing season
	Mushy stems; lower leaves curl and wilt	Too much water	Water only when soil is dry to touch; make sure drain hole is not clogged		Leaves turn yellow or curl and wilt	Too much heat	Move plant to cooler spot in house; be sure plant is not close to heat vent or on top of TV
	Leaf tips are brown and leaves wilt	Not enough water	Soak pot for 20 minutes in water and let drain; water when soil is dry to touch		Plant wilts between waterings; roots growing out of drainage hole	Pot too small	Repot plant into a container one size larger

illustrated by Kathleen McKeehen

—courtesy Hermann Engelmann

GOOD IDEAS FOR INDOOR HOUSEPLANTS

TAKE CARE OF YOUR POTTED FRIENDS.

HEAT AND LIGHT

- Windowsill plants that get leggy may be getting too much heat, not too little sun. For even growth, set up a table by your sunniest window and turn the pots regularly.
- Most flowering plants need to be within 3 feet of a sunny window and require 9 to 12 hours of light per day.
- Do not put flowering houseplants near drafts or heat from registers. They are very sensitive to changes in air temperature.

WATER

- Give plants room-temperature water. Cold water can injure the roots and leaves.
- Save water from cooking pasta or vegetables, cool it, and use it to water houseplants.
- If household succulents, such as jade plants, won't bloom, stop



watering, keep the plant root-bound, and increase the light.

- Do not overwater. More houseplants die from overwatering than from anything else.
- When the humidity is low, especially in winter, cluster houseplants together and mist them more frequently.
- Give your houseplants an occasional bath. Put them into the tub or

shower and rinse gently with tepid water, using the showerhead or a handheld sprayer.

FERTILIZER

- Feed flowering houseplants a high-phosphorus mix and foliage plants a high-nitrogen blend. Do not fertilize any houseplants during the winter months.
- When potting plants, add crushed eggshells to the soil to improve drainage and to supply lime and other nutrients.

ENCOURAGE GROWTH

- For healthier plants, pick off dead leaves and faded flowers.
- To encourage bushiness, pinch off up to 1 inch of new stem and leaf growth.
- Repot houseplants in the spring, when the days are getting longer.

FLY, AWAY!



LEAVE IT TO THE VICTORIANS TO FIND A DELICATE WAY TO ELIMINATE ANNOYING INSECTS.

Glass flycatchers originated in Europe in the late 1800s and were used in and around Victorian homes for years. They hung from an available tree branch or a hook on a porch or were placed indoors on a table or counter. In southern plantation homes, they were often covered with a lady's handkerchief to block the view of the dead insects. In Mexico and Mediterranean countries, they were baited and hung in orchards or set in fields to capture fruit flies.

Early examples were hand-blown. Their irregular shape, plus any air bubbles produced in the glass-making process, added to their desirability. By the 1930s, catchers



were formed using automatic bottle machines. They were produced in a variety of translucent colors (light and deep amethyst, amber, and aqua green), and many were embossed with designs or initials.

All operate on the principle that flies are attracted to food. The bottle has a narrow neck and relatively wide body, in a shape similar to that of a cider or vinegar jug. The bottle's footed bottom has an inverted funnel that sticks up into the inside and thus creates a moatlike circular reservoir in the base of the bottle. The moat is filled with a sweet mixture that lures the flies. (Years ago, a mixture of milk and water, with a dash of arsenic, was sometimes used.) Flies enter the trap through the bottom of the funnel, ingest the sweetened solution, and, unable to find the small funnel opening again to escape, drown in the reservoir. A cork placed in the bottle's mouth seals the top (which originally needs to be open to allow for pouring the sugar mixture).

A glass flycatcher makes an attractive, safe, and beneficial addition to an outdoor living area, capturing flies, fruit flies, hornets, and yellow jackets. Antique and reproduction flycatchers can be purchased for about \$20 to \$90, but you can make one for pennies.

In the homemade version explained here, flies are attracted to the sugar solution, enter the jar through the holes in the lid, and drown in the liquid.

—David McCormick

YOU WILL NEED:

- widemouth glass jar with lid
- hammer and nail
- sugar
- water

1. Remove the lid from the jar and make holes in it that are large enough for a fly to crawl through.
2. Make a solution of one part sugar and four parts water.
3. Pour the solution into the jar, filling it one-third full.
4. Screw on the lid, then hang or place the jar in the problem area.

As often as needed, the contents may be added to your compost pile. After being washed with hot, soapy water, the flycatcher is ready for use again.





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GARDENING BY THE MOON

The Moon is that mystical, spherical body that revolves around Earth every 29 days or so. It passes from its “new” phase, when it is missing from the evening sky, to full, when it is a glorious, golden disc lighting the landscape on its nighttime journey, and then back to new again. This dance, during which the Moon visits the entire zodiac 13 times each year, influences plant growth, the harvest, and produce preservation.

PLANTING

Earth is most fertile and receptive to the planting of seeds when the Moon is in a water or earth sign. Check the phase of the Moon when you are consider-

ing the type of crop to sow or plant: Aboveground crops grow better if they are sown or planted in the light of the Moon, or its waxing phase, and root and underground vegetables are favored in the dark of the Moon, when it is waning.

HARVESTING

Harvesting crops follows a similar schedule. The earth signs are best, but water signs are also good. Consider the Moon’s phase before you begin gathering from your garden. Plants that produce leafy, fruity parts above the ground are best picked during the Moon’s waxing phase, while plants such as potatoes and carrots, which produce bulbous, dense, underground

WAXING AND WANING

THE MOON’S WAXING PHASE: between the new Moon and the full Moon

THE MOON’S WANING PHASE: between the full Moon and the new Moon

MOON SIGNS

WATER SIGNS:

Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces

EARTH SIGNS: Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn

FIRE SIGNS: Aries, Leo, Sagittarius

AIR SIGNS: Gemini, Libra, Aquarius

parts, are at their peak of perfection during the Moon’s waning phase.

PRUNING

Pruning bushes and trees “flows” best when the Moon is in a fire sign. When your goal is to encourage growth in hedges and ornamentals, prune when the Moon is waxing. When you want these plants to retain their shape for as long as possible, prune when the Moon is waning.

DESTROYING PESTS

The fire signs are excellent times to get rid of pests and weeds. Fire transmutes, so this energy takes unwanted insects and plants and reduces them to their innate and reusable form (in the compost pile).

DRYING HERBS

The fire signs are also arid. Herbs picked especially for drying will dehydrate well when harvested at these times.

PRESERVING

Vegetables and fruit that you want to preserve by canning, pickling, or fermenting (as in sauerkraut) will do best when you undertake these activities during the Moon’s waning phase. The water signs are also ideal for preserving. ■

—Celeste Longacre

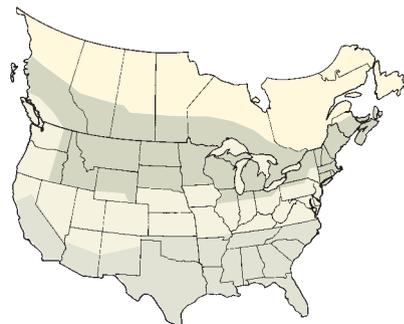
GARDENING BY THE MOON'S SIGN, 2021												
	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
1	LEO	LIB	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	ARI	TAU	CAN	LEO	VIR	SCO
2	LEO	LIB	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO
3	VIR	SCO	SCO	CAP	AQU	PSC	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR	LIB	SAG
4	VIR	SCO	SCO	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR	SCO	SAG
5	LIB	SCO	SAG	AQU	PSC	ARI	TAU	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP
6	LIB	SAG	SAG	AQU	PSC	TAU	GEM	CAN	VIR	LIB	SAG	CAP
7	SCO	SAG	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU
8	SCO	CAP	CAP	PSC	ARI	TAU	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP	AQU
9	SAG	CAP	AQU	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN	VIR	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC
10	SAG	AQU	AQU	ARI	TAU	GEM	CAN	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU	PSC
11	CAP	AQU	PSC	ARI	TAU	CAN	LEO	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU	PSC
12	CAP	PSC	PSC	TAU	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	ARI
13	AQU	PSC	PSC	TAU	GEM	CAN	VIR	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	ARI
14	AQU	ARI	ARI	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR	SCO	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU
15	AQU	ARI	ARI	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU
16	PSC	ARI	TAU	GEM	CAN	VIR	LIB	SAG	AQU	PSC	ARI	TAU
17	PSC	TAU	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR	LIB	SAG	AQU	PSC	TAU	GEM
18	ARI	TAU	TAU	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU	GEM
19	ARI	GEM	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN
20	ARI	GEM	GEM	LEO	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN
21	TAU	GEM	CAN	LEO	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU	ARI	TAU	GEM	CAN
22	TAU	CAN	CAN	VIR	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	ARI	TAU	CAN	LEO
23	GEM	CAN	CAN	VIR	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	TAU	GEM	CAN	LEO
24	GEM	LEO	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP	AQU	PSC	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR
25	GEM	LEO	LEO	LIB	SCO	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU	GEM	LEO	VIR
26	CAN	LEO	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB
27	CAN	VIR	VIR	SCO	SAG	AQU	PSC	TAU	GEM	CAN	VIR	LIB
28	LEO	VIR	LIB	SAG	CAP	AQU	ARI	TAU	CAN	LEO	VIR	LIB
29	LEO	–	LIB	SAG	CAP	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO
30	VIR	–	SCO	CAP	AQU	PSC	ARI	GEM	CAN	LEO	LIB	SCO
31	VIR	–	SCO	–	AQU	–	TAU	GEM	–	VIR	–	SAG

PLANTING BY THE MOON'S PHASE, 2021

- Plant annual flowers and vegetables that bear crops above ground during the waxing of the Moon.
- Plant flowering bulbs, biennial and perennial flowers, and vegetables that bear crops below ground during the waning of the Moon.
- The Planting Dates columns give the

safe periods for planting in areas that receive frost. The Moon Favorable columns give the best planting days within the Planting Dates based on the Moon's phases for 2021.

- Aboveground crops are marked *.
- (E) means early; (L) means late.
- Map shades correspond to shades of date columns.



	Planting Dates	Moon Favorable	Planting Dates	Moon Favorable	Planting Dates	Moon Favorable	Planting Dates	Moon Favorable
* Barley	2/15-3/7	2/15-27	3/15-4/7	3/15-28	5/15-6/21	5/15-26, 6/10-21	6/1-30	6/10-24
* Beans	(E) 3/15-4/7	3/15-28	4/15-30	4/15-26	5/7-6/21	5/11-26, 6/10-21	5/30-6/15	6/10-15
	(L) 8/7-31	8/8-22	7/1-21	7/9-21	6/15-7/15	6/15-24, 7/9-15	—	—
Beets	(E) 2/7-28	2/7-10, 2/28	3/15-4/3	3/29-4/3	5/1-15	5/1-10	5/25-6/10	5/27-6/9
	(L) 9/1-30	9/1-5, 9/21-30	8/15-31	8/23-31	7/15-8/15	7/24-8/7	6/15-7/8	6/25-7/8
* Broccoli plants	(E) 2/15-3/15	2/15-27, 3/13-15	3/7-31	3/13-28	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
	(L) 9/7-30	9/7-20	8/1-20	8/8-20	6/15-7/7	6/15-24	—	—
* Brussels sprouts	2/11-3/20	2/11-27, 3/13-20	3/7-4/15	3/13-28, 4/11-15	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
* Cabbage plants	2/11-3/20	2/11-27, 3/13-20	3/7-4/15	3/13-28, 4/11-15	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
Carrots	(E) 2/15-3/7	2/28-3/7	3/7-31	3/7-12, 3/29-31	5/15-31	5/27-31	5/25-6/10	5/27-6/9
	(L) 8/1-9/7	8/1-7, 8/23-9/5	7/7-31	7/7-8, 7/24-31	6/15-7/21	6/25-7/8	6/15-7/8	6/25-7/8
* Cauliflower plants	(E) 2/15-3/7	2/15-27	3/15-4/7	3/15-28	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
	(L) 8/7-31	8/8-22	7/1-8/7	7/9-23	6/15-7/21	6/15-24, 7/9-21	—	—
* Celery plants	(E) 2/15-28	2/15-27	3/7-31	3/13-28	5/15-6/30	5/15-26, 6/10-24	6/1-30	6/10-24
	(L) 9/15-30	9/15-20	8/15-9/7	8/15-22, 9/6-7	7/15-8/15	7/15-23, 8/8-15	—	—
* Collards	(E) 2/11-3/20	2/11-27, 3/13-20	3/7-4/7	3/13-28	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
	(L) 9/7-30	9/7-20	8/15-31	8/15-22	7/1-8/7	7/9-23	—	—
* Corn, sweet	(E) 3/15-31	3/15-28	4/1-17	4/11-17	5/10-6/15	5/11-26, 6/10-15	5/30-6/20	6/10-20
	(L) 8/7-31	8/8-22	7/7-21	7/9-21	6/15-30	6/15-24	—	—
* Cucumbers	3/7-4/15	3/13-28, 4/11-15	4/7-5/15	4/11-26, 5/11-15	5/7-6/20	5/11-26, 6/10-20	5/30-6/15	6/10-15
* Eggplant plants	3/7-4/15	3/13-28, 4/11-15	4/7-5/15	4/11-26, 5/11-15	6/1-30	6/10-24	6/15-30	6/15-24
* Endive	(E) 2/15-3/20	2/15-27, 3/13-20	4/7-5/15	4/11-26, 5/11-15	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
	(L) 8/15-9/7	8/15-22, 9/6-7	7/15-8/15	7/15-23, 8/8-15	6/7-30	6/10-24	—	—
* Kale	(E) 2/11-3/20	2/11-27, 3/13-20	3/7-4/7	3/13-28	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-15	6/10-15
	(L) 9/7-30	9/7-20	8/15-31	8/15-22	7/1-8/7	7/9-23	6/25-7/15	7/9-15
Leek plants	2/15-4/15	2/28-3/12, 3/29-4/10	3/7-4/7	3/7-12, 3/29-4/7	5/15-31	5/27-31	6/1-25	6/1-9, 6/25
* Lettuce	2/15-3/7	2/15-27	3/1-31	3/13-28	5/15-6/30	5/15-26, 6/10-24	6/1-30	6/10-24
* Okra	4/15-6/1	4/15-26, 5/11-26	5/25-6/15	5/25-26, 6/10-15	6/15-7/10	6/15-24, 7/9-10	6/15-7/7	6/15-24
Onion sets	2/1-28	2/1-10, 2/28	3/1-31	3/1-12, 3/29-31	5/15-6/7	5/27-6/7	6/1-25	6/1-9, 6/25
* Parsley	2/20-3/15	2/20-27, 3/13-15	3/1-31	3/13-28	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-15	6/10-15
Parsnips	1/15-2/4	1/29-2/4	3/7-31	3/7-12, 3/29-31	4/1-30	4/1-10, 4/27-30	5/10-31	5/10, 5/27-31
* Peas	(E) 1/15-2/7	1/15-28	3/7-31	3/13-28	4/15-5/7	4/15-26	5/15-31	5/15-26
	(L) 9/15-30	9/15-20	8/7-31	8/8-22	7/15-31	7/15-23	7/10-25	7/10-23
* Pepper plants	3/1-20	3/13-20	4/1-30	4/11-26	5/15-6/30	5/15-26, 6/10-24	6/1-30	6/10-24
Potatoes	2/10-28	2/10, 2/28	4/1-30	4/1-10, 4/27-30	5/1-31	5/1-10, 5/27-31	6/1-25	6/1-9, 6/25
* Pumpkins	3/7-20	3/13-20	4/23-5/15	4/23-26, 5/11-15	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-30	6/10-24
Radishes	(E) 1/21-3/1	1/29-2/10, 2/28-3/1	3/7-31	3/7-12, 3/29-31	4/15-30	4/27-30	5/15-6/5	5/27-6/5
	(L) 10/1-21	10/1-5, 10/21	9/7-30	9/21-30	8/15-31	8/23-31	7/10-31	7/24-31
* Spinach	(E) 2/7-3/15	2/11-27, 3/13-15	3/15-4/20	3/15-28, 4/11-20	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-25	6/10-24
	(L) 10/1-21	10/6-20	8/1-9/15	8/8-22, 9/6-15	7/17-9/7	7/17-23, 8/8-22, 9/6-7	7/20-8/5	7/20-23
* Squashes	3/15-4/15	3/15-28, 4/11-15	4/15-30	4/15-26	5/15-6/15	5/15-26, 6/10-15	6/1-30	6/10-24
Sweet potatoes	3/23-4/6	3/29-4/6	4/21-5/9	4/27-5/9	5/15-6/15	5/27-6/9	6/1-30	6/1-9, 6/25-30
* Swiss chard	2/7-3/15	2/11-27, 3/13-15	3/15-4/15	3/15-28, 4/11-15	5/1-31	5/11-26	5/15-31	5/15-26
* Tomato plants	3/7-20	3/13-20	4/7-30	4/11-26	5/15-31	5/15-26	6/1-15	6/10-15
Turnips	(E) 1/20-2/15	1/29-2/10	3/15-31	3/29-31	4/7-30	4/7-10, 4/27-30	5/10-31	5/10, 5/27-31
	(L) 9/1-10/15	9/1-5, 9/21-10/5	8/1-20	8/1-7	7/1-8/15	7/1-8, 7/24-8/7	—	—
* Watermelons	3/15-4/7	3/15-28	4/15-5/7	4/15-26	5/15-6/30	5/15-26, 6/10-24	6/1-30	6/10-24

pH PREFERENCES OF TREES, SHRUBS, FLOWERS, AND VEGETABLES

An accurate soil test will indicate your soil pH and will specify the amount of lime or sulfur that is needed to bring it

up or down to the appropriate level. A pH of 6.5 is just about right for most home gardens, since most plants thrive in the 6.0 to 7.0 (slightly acidic to neutral)

range. Some plants (azaleas, blueberries) prefer more strongly acidic soil in the 4.0 to 6.0 range, while a few (asparagus, plums) do best in soil that is neutral to slightly

alkaline. Acidic, or sour, soil (below 7.0) is counteracted by applying finely ground limestone, and alkaline, or sweet, soil (above 7.0) is treated with ground sulfur.

COMMON NAME	OPTIMUM PH RANGE	COMMON NAME	OPTIMUM PH RANGE	COMMON NAME	OPTIMUM PH RANGE
TREES AND SHRUBS					
Apple	5.0–6.5	Black-eyed Susan	5.5–7.0	Tulip	6.0–7.0
Azalea	4.5–6.0	Bleeding heart	6.0–7.5	Zinnia	5.5–7.0
Beautybush	6.0–7.5	Canna	6.0–8.0	VEGETABLES	
Birch	5.0–6.5	Carnation	6.0–7.0	Asparagus	6.0–8.0
Blackberry	5.0–6.0	Chrysanthemum	6.0–7.5	Bean	6.0–7.5
Blueberry	4.0–5.0	Clematis	5.5–7.0	Beet	6.0–7.5
Boxwood	6.0–7.5	Coleus	6.0–7.0	Broccoli	6.0–7.0
Cherry, sour	6.0–7.0	Coneflower, purple	5.0–7.5	Brussels sprout	6.0–7.5
Crab apple	6.0–7.5	Cosmos	5.0–8.0	Cabbage	6.0–7.5
Dogwood	5.0–7.0	Crocus	6.0–8.0	Carrot	5.5–7.0
Fir, balsam	5.0–6.0	Daffodil	6.0–6.5	Cauliflower	5.5–7.5
Hemlock	5.0–6.0	Dahlia	6.0–7.5	Celery	5.8–7.0
Hydrangea, blue-flowered	4.0–5.0	Daisy, Shasta	6.0–8.0	Chive	6.0–7.0
Hydrangea, pink-flowered	6.0–7.0	Daylily	6.0–8.0	Collard	6.5–7.5
Juniper	5.0–6.0	Delphinium	6.0–7.5	Corn	5.5–7.0
Laurel, mountain	4.5–6.0	Foxglove	6.0–7.5	Cucumber	5.5–7.0
Lemon	6.0–7.5	Geranium	6.0–8.0	Eggplant	6.0–7.0
Lilac	6.0–7.5	Gladiolus	5.0–7.0	Garlic	5.5–8.0
Maple, sugar	6.0–7.5	Hibiscus	6.0–8.0	Kale	6.0–7.5
Oak, white	5.0–6.5	Hollyhock	6.0–8.0	Leek	6.0–8.0
Orange	6.0–7.5	Hyacinth	6.5–7.5	Lettuce	6.0–7.0
Peach	6.0–7.0	Iris, blue flag	5.0–7.5	Okra	6.0–7.0
Pear	6.0–7.5	Lily-of-the-valley	4.5–6.0	Onion	6.0–7.0
Pecan	6.4–8.0	Lupine	5.0–6.5	Pea	6.0–7.5
Plum	6.0–8.0	Marigold	5.5–7.5	Pepper, sweet	5.5–7.0
Raspberry, red	5.5–7.0	Morning glory	6.0–7.5	Potato	4.8–6.5
Rhododendron	4.5–6.0	Narcissus, trumpet	5.5–6.5	Pumpkin	5.5–7.5
Willow	6.0–8.0	Nasturtium	5.5–7.5	Radish	6.0–7.0
FLOWERS		Pansy	5.5–6.5	Spinach	6.0–7.5
Alyssum	6.0–7.5	Peony	6.0–7.5	Squash, crookneck	6.0–7.5
Aster, New England	6.0–8.0	Petunia	6.0–7.5	Squash, Hubbard	5.5–7.0
Baby's breath	6.0–7.0	Phlox, summer	6.0–8.0	Swiss chard	6.0–7.0
Bachelor's button	6.0–7.5	Poppy, oriental	6.0–7.5	Tomato	5.5–7.5
Bee balm	6.0–7.5	Rose, hybrid tea	5.5–7.0	Watermelon	5.5–6.5
Begonia	5.5–7.0	Rose, rugosa	6.0–7.0		
		Snapdragon	5.5–7.0		
		Sunflower	6.0–7.5		

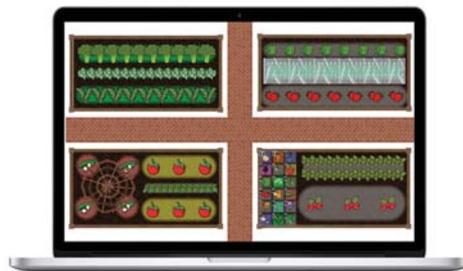
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FROSTS & GROWING SEASONS

Dates given are normal averages for a light freeze (29° to 32°F, or -2° to 0°C); local weather and topography may cause considerable variations. The possibility of frost occurring after the spring dates and before the fall dates is 30 percent for the U.S. and 33 percent for Canada. The classification of freeze temperatures is usually based on their effect on plants. A light freeze kills only tender plants, with little destructive effect on other vegetation.

UNITED STATES (alphabetical by state abbrev.)				CANADA (alphabetical by province abbrev.)			
CITY	GROWING SEASON (DAYS)	LAST SPRING FROST	FIRST FALL FROST	CITY	GROWING SEASON (DAYS)	LAST SPRING FROST	FIRST FALL FROST
Juneau, AK	168	Apr. 27	Oct. 13	Calgary, AB	99	May 29	Sept. 6
Pine Bluff, AR	226	Mar. 26	Nov. 8	Edmonton, AB	123	May 15	Sept. 16
Denver, CO	153	May 4	Oct. 5	Red Deer, AB	108	May 24	Sept. 10
Hartford, CT	159	May 1	Oct. 8	Dawson Creek, BC	76	June 8	Aug. 24
Wilmington, DE	202	Apr. 12	Nov. 1	Kelowna, BC	150	May 8	Oct. 6
Athens, GA	214	Apr. 3	Nov. 4	Prince George, BC	120	May 20	Sept. 18
Cedar Rapids, IA	157	Apr. 30	Oct. 5	Vancouver, BC	180	Apr. 21	Oct. 19
Boise, ID	152	May 7	Oct. 7	Victoria, BC	208	Apr. 14	Nov. 9
Chicago, IL	193	Apr. 18	Oct. 29	Brandon, MB	92	June 6	Sept. 7
Indianapolis, IN	171	Apr. 25	Oct. 14	Lynn Lake, MB	87	June 10	Sept. 6
Topeka, KS	173	Apr. 22	Oct. 13	Thompson, MB	58	June 18	Aug. 16
Lexington, KY	183	Apr. 20	Oct. 21	Winnipeg, MB	116	May 21	Sept. 15
Worcester, MA	167	Apr. 28	Oct. 13	Fredericton, NB	125	May 22	Sept. 25
Baltimore, MD	234	Mar. 27	Nov. 17	Saint John, NB	165	Apr. 30	Oct. 13
Portland, ME	152	May 5	Oct. 5	Gander, NL	115	June 6	Sept. 30
Lansing, MI	147	May 9	Oct. 4	St. John's, NL	117	June 11	Oct. 7
Willmar, MN	146	May 5	Sept. 29	Halifax, NS	164	May 8	Oct. 20
Jefferson City, MO	189	Apr. 14	Oct. 21	Sydney, NS	135	May 27	Oct. 10
Helena, MT	123	May 19	Sept. 20	Truro, NS	103	June 7	Sept. 19
Bismarck, ND	122	May 19	Sept. 19	Fort Simpson, NT	81	May 31	Aug. 21
North Platte, NE	146	May 6	Sept. 30	Yellowknife, NT	102	May 31	Sept. 11
Concord, NH	127	May 19	Sept. 24	Kapusking, ON	75	June 18	Sept. 2
Newark, NJ	209	Apr. 8	Nov. 4	Kingston, ON	161	Apr. 28	Oct. 7
Albany, NY	153	May 4	Oct. 5	Ottawa, ON	135	May 13	Sept. 26
Cincinnati, OH	175	Apr. 23	Oct. 16	Sudbury, ON	124	May 21	Sept. 23
Tulsa, OK	210	Apr. 4	Nov. 1	Timmins, ON	86	June 13	Sept. 8
Portland, OR	255	Mar. 11	Nov. 22	Toronto, ON	161	May 4	Oct. 13
Williamsport, PA	164	May 2	Oct. 14	Charlottetown, PE	142	May 20	Oct. 10
Kingston, RI	142	May 12	Oct. 2	Summerside, PE	154	May 13	Oct. 15
Rapid City, SD	146	May 7	Oct. 1	Montréal, QC	168	Apr 25	Oct. 11
Memphis, TN	225	Mar. 27	Nov. 8	Québec, QC	129	May 17	Sept. 24
Amarillo, TX	179	Apr. 21	Oct. 18	Roberval, QC	117	May 25	Sept. 20
Cedar City, UT	122	May 28	Sept. 28	Trois-Rivières, QC	128	May 19	Sept. 25
Richmond, VA	202	Apr. 10	Oct. 30	Prince Albert, SK	88	June 7	Sept. 4
Burlington, VT	145	May 10	Oct. 3	Regina, SK	91	June 1	Sept. 1
Seattle, WA	243	Mar. 17	Nov. 16	Yorkton, SK	106	May 26	Sept. 10
Parkersburg, WV	179	Apr. 23	Oct. 20	Watson Lake, YT	83	June 6	Aug. 29
Casper, WY	107	May 31	Sept. 16	Whitehorse, YT	72	June 12	Aug. 24

For more locations, go to Almanac.com/FrostDates.

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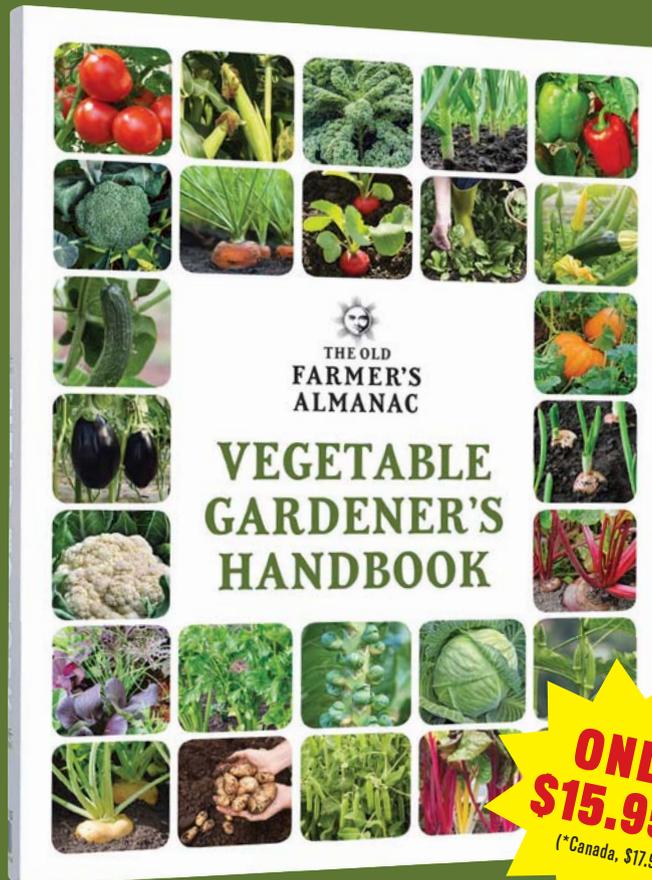
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Ancient god of the *tomatl*,
Cousin of Quetzalcoatl*:
Bless these seeds that I have
chosen

To sow in pots while fields
are frozen.

Concentrate your sacred
power

On every sprout and leaf
and flower,

Let the vines through summer
shoot,

And load them up with
shining fruit:

Sweet Million, with its long
cascades

Of rubies interspersed with
jades.

Hearty *Striped German*,
Slice it like bread; the inside
Is yellow, all marbled with red.

Delicious *Favorita*, resistant
to disease,
There's no resisting
Cherries sweet as these.

Jutland was bred by the Danes,
And its genes are designed so
it goes

With rye toast and sardines.

Big Beefs a belle
With old-fashioned taste,
Round in the shoulders,
Generous in the waist.

Fine *Brandywine*, both red
and yellow,
With creamy flesh so rich
and mellow,

Heavy beauties lobed and creased,
So luscious that each fruit's a
feast.

Cherokee Purple's dusky pink,
From Native fields, or so some
think,

A smoky taste, a globe oblate,
And brick red sliced upon
a plate.

Black Krim, whose home's
The cold Black Sea,
Dark glossy green, mahogany;
When halved, its seeds like
orbs appear

To swim in night's vast
hemisphere.

Old *Golden Queen*, discovered
in 1882,

"Has never been improved
upon,"

If what we read is true;
"A faint blush on the blossom
end,
Extending to the stem,
Like sunrise in a golden dawn,"
One seedsman wrote of them.

Great *Mortgage Lifter*, meaty,
mild,
Almost as large as a small child;
As beautiful a beefsteak fruit
As can be found, the absolute
Tomato—or so a man named
Charlie

Thought, and soon so many
others sought
His plants he sold them
From his house for profit—
Until he'd lifted the mortgage
off it.

Sungold! You'll think
You've struck it rich,
Or seized at last the Golden
Snitch!***

Cherries of brightest tangerine,
Bursting with sugars and
carotene—

Their "tropical taste" is so intense
That you may need to build a
fence

To keep the neighbors out!

And yet,
So thickly do the clusters set,
So freely bear once they begin,
You might as well just let them in.

Cousin of Quetzal! Join with Plato
And bring me the ideal tomato
Of every cultivar I'm growing.
I ask you on this day of sowing.
I know you will not mind it's
snowing.

I promise to do all the hoeing,
And mention you when I am
showing
The garden off to all my friends—
And here my invocation . . . ends. ■

—Phil Holland, Pownal, Vermont

*Quetzalcoatl (conceived of as a "plumed serpent"), the major Aztec deity of wind, air, and wisdom, derived its power from its place in connecting two worlds: the sky or heavens (represented by the feathers of the beautiful *quetzal* bird) and the earth (represented by *coatli*, the snake).

**A walnut-size golden orb with wings, the Golden Snitch was the third and smallest type of ball used in the fictional sport of Quidditch created by J. K. Rowling in the Harry Potter fantasy novel series.



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