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Hello Gardeners!

The gardening season is well underway and you should be seeing lots of green in your garden by now – tiny shoots, small seedlings, and if you are lucky maybe even some lettuce or spinach to harvest! As the weather continues to become reliably warm, the pace of the plants' growth will really pick up. How exciting it is to see the changes in the garden as you nurture and care for it.

With the dedication and support of over **100** fabulous volunteers, we have reached our goals and successfully completed the installation of this season's raised bed and container gardens. A huge thank you to everyone who has generously donated their time and talents to help us achieve our mission of feeding families together! If you are interested in becoming more involved with Growing Places, we have several openings for board members to help with strategic planning for the organization.

Don't forget, please give us a call if you have questions, concerns, successes or funny stories. We are here to help you.

Your Friends at Growing Places

What's Happening...

The first crops you will find ready in the garden are those that prefer cool weather. There should be plenty of those!

- Radishes grow *fast*, and you'll be able to pick some about 30 days after you sow them (Note that the green tops can be washed and stir fried)
- Many leafy greens, like lettuce and spinach, should be ready to be harvested. Instead of pulling out the whole plant, you can trim off leaves for a fresh salad or steamed greens every day.
- Is that weed? It can sometimes be difficult to tell the difference between a weed and a newly sprouted plant. A good rule of thumb is to wait until you see a lot of the same looking plant in the area where you believe you planted the seeds. Small "weedlings" can be readily pulled once you have identified the seedlings and will not take up too much of the seedling's nutrients in that short a time. Once your seedlings begin to grow, it is important to keep your squares weed-free since weeds can crowd out your plants, and steal their water and nutrients.
- Stake those tomatoes! (*see article inside for details*)

Tips for a Better Garden...

- Weed one square a day – doing a little bit every day is more enjoyable than doing a lot at once.
- Consistency in watering is key. Lack of water can cause a break in the growth cycle – the plant will restart growing once water is available, but the crop produced won't be as tasty or the yield as much.
- Water greens and root plants (spinach, lettuce, carrots, radishes) every other day or so. Water fruiting plants, deeply, 2 to 3 times per week
- The best times of the day to water are early morning or early evening. More water will evaporate and less will stay in the garden with midday watering, when the sun is strongest and the temperature hot.
- Water at the base of the plant – not the leaves. Wet leaves are likely to spread disease and plants take up water through their roots.
- Thin lettuce and radish seedlings. Toss washed thinnings into your salad!



Succession Planting – Extending the harvest

Isn't it such a treat to begin harvesting those tasty vegetables? If you have the feeling that you'd like harvesting a particular crop to never end, you can plant again in an empty square. Then in a few more weeks you'll have a new crop ready. This is known to gardeners as succession planting. Here is how it works:

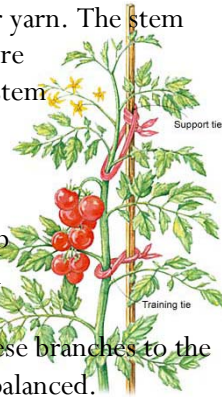


1. Start with an empty square. It's okay if the square is empty because you have just harvested something from it.
2. Dig in a little compost – old leaves, eggshells, composted manure – anything you have available.
3. Plant more of the crop you are interested in. Some good candidates are greens (lettuce, spinach), radishes, bush beans, and carrots.
4. Remember, as the weather gets hotter it will become more important to keep those tiny seedlings moist.

Staking Tomatoes

Late in the season, tomato plants become so large and heavy that they fall over and their fruit can become damaged. There's nothing worse than seeing a tomato eaten away by bugs just because it was touching the ground. Staking the plants will help prevent that. You can use tomato stakes specifically designed for the job, or improvise with a tall sturdy stick, old broomstick handle, unused ski pole or just about any straight, strong pole.

To do this, tie the main stem of the tomato to the stake very loosely with strips of soft rags, old panty hose or very soft string or yarn. The stem needs to remain about 1 inch or more from the stake. If you tie the plant stem too tightly to the stake, the tomato will not be able to grow properly. See the picture to the right to get a better idea. Often tomatoes develop many branches from the main stem and these tend to put a heavy load on the plant. You can also tie up these branches to the stake to help keep the entire plant balanced.



Insect Pests in the Garden

Examine plants in and around the garden throughout the season at least twice weekly. Use magnification to aid in identifying insects and mites. Examine a few plants of each type thoroughly, searching under leaves, inside developing fruit, along stems and at the plant crown. Note feeding damage signs such as insect excrement, holes in leaves or fruit and/or twisted or deformed leaves. Make notes indicating the number or extent of damage from week to week to aid in determining whether insects and/or damage is increasing.

Color photos of the most common insect pests can be found in your Growing Guide. Once you have identified the pest, you should classify the type and amount of damage it is causing.

Identifying the Damage

Damage is classified by how the pests feed.

Chewing damage - Insects with 'cutting' mouthparts tear off plant tissue and chew it. Examples include beetles, caterpillars and grasshoppers that feed on fruit or leaves and often leave holes in the plant tissue or foliage. These insects defecate on plants and soil leaving, excrement that may be brown, black or green in color and resemble small flecks or balls.

Piercing, sucking damage - Insects and mites with piercing mouthparts insert their mouthparts into the plant tissue and 'suck' liquids from the plants. Examples include squash bugs, aphids, stink bugs, thrips and mites. Many of the insects that feed in this manner defecate a sticky liquid (honeydew) that often builds up on leaves or fruit, leaving a shiny residue that may support the growth of a black or gray sooty mold. Damaged foliage often will turn yellow and eventually brown in color or become malformed in shape.

Controlling Pests – The best control is prevention. Pest problems can often be prevented by developing and maintaining healthy plants through composted soil, proper irrigation, and by removing small infestations before they become a problem.

(Excerpted from Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, EPP-7313, Home Vegetable Garden Insect Pest Control)

Recipes...

Dressing up those fresh salads!

One joy of having your own vegetable garden is being able to prepare a unique salad for dinner almost every evening, with absolutely the freshest ingredients possible. Most people expect to find lettuce, carrots, and radishes in their salads, but you can also add your peas and green beans – so sweet when they come right from the garden. And with all that freshness happening, you might want to try making your own salad dressing, too. Here are two simple recipes from Country French Cooking, by Jerry Anne DiVecchio.

Housewife's Dressing: Mix 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard, 1 tablespoon minced shallot or red onion, 3 tablespoons wine vinegar, and ½ cup olive oil until well blended. Makes ¾ cup.

Dordogne Dressing: Mix 3-4 tablespoons wine vinegar, ½ cup salad oil or walnut oil, and 2 tablespoons coarsely chopped walnuts until blended. Makes ¾ cup.

Using these recipes as a base, you can experiment by substituting lemon juice or other flavored vinegars (such as cider or balsamic). But to let the fresh vegetables shine through, don't 'drown' your salad in dressing. Toss a few tablespoons into your salad just before serving. Leftover dressing can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days, as long as it's brought back to room temperature before serving.

Radishes with Butter Dressing

(from Molto Gusto by Mario Batali)

6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
2 tablespoons very warm water
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1 pound fresh radishes, trimmed* and halved lengthwise
Salt

Whisk the butter, water and oil together in a small bowl until emulsified. Put the radishes on a serving plate, drizzle with the dressing, season with salt and serve. Or serve the dressing alongside for dipping.

Serves 6

(*Toss trimmings into a salad)



Garden Spot Light

A community of gardeners in Lunenburg!!

There are over two dozen raised beds at this senior housing complex. Some of the gardeners are brand new this year, and others have been square foot gardening for several years. Look how the abundant sunshine and cooperative spirit of the gardeners are nourishing their gardens!



A bevy of delicious vegetables are well on their way to harvesting!



Growing Places on the web

Our Website:

www.growingplaces.org

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Volunteer Opportunities

Do you want to get more involved in Growing Places Garden Project? Contact us at staff@growingplaces.org to learn more about our volunteer opportunities.

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Things to Remember

Gardening is a never ending science experiment!



This newsletter is dedicated to Herbert Read a lifelong gardener. He was the very special uncle of one of our volunteers. Herb, as he was called by friends and family, passed away in May 2011.

We are especially thankful to his friends and family who have honored his memory by donating to Growing Places. Through his memory we will continue to grow more gardeners and feed more families!

