



# GROWING TIMES

## HELLO GARDENERS!

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#### I have tomatoes and....

That's often how a gardener's dinner plans start in September. I have tomatoes and basil I picked yesterday. I'm tired of tomato salad. What else can I make? I have tomatoes and four other veggies that I just harvested. How many of them can I use up in one meal? So much love and hard work goes into growing our own food that we cringe at the thought of wasting even a little of our hard-won harvest.

With that in mind, we want to help you put as much of your harvest to use as possible. This issue we're providing a handful

of recipes that all begin with just that phrase: "I have tomatoes and..." Some are quick and easy ideas. Others are formal recipes that would make great family dinners. And in the event that you still have more vegetables than you can eat, or you want to put some by for the winter months, we've included articles on food preservation and herb drying as well. We hope you'll give preserving a try this season.

As always, if you have questions about storing your harvest, talk to your mentor or give one of us in the office a call. We're here to help!



Mary Ellen and Niki show off their green bean harvest from the Sundial Community Garden.

Happy Gardening

#### YOUR FRIENDS AT GROWING PLACES

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### VEGGIE WRAP-UP

- SEPTEMBER IS ALL ABOUT THE HARVEST. ENJOY AS MUCH OF YOUR FRESH PRODUCE AS POSSIBLE BY TRYING NEW RECIPE IDEAS.
- TO CUT DOWN ON WASTED VEG, FREEZE AND STORE WHAT'S LEFTOVER. LEARN THE BEST WAYS TO PRESERVE YOUR HARVEST TO ENSURE THE BEST FLAVOR OVER WINTER.
- SAVE MONEY BY GIVING EASY HERB DRYING A TRY.

## HOW 'BOUT THEM TOMATOES?

Have just tomatoes? You can still make a quick and tasty lunch or a light dinner.

Cut a thin slice off the top of a large tomato to remove the stem. Scoop the insides of the tomato into a small bowl and **either...**

A) mix them with a can of tuna, some mayonnaise, and salt to taste. Return the tomato-tuna mixture to the

tomato shell and enjoy.

**Or B)** mix with a beaten egg or two and your choice of ingredients (green pepper, herbs, onion, bacon bits). Bake in a 350-375° oven until the egg is set.

Either option can also be topped with cheese and lightly broiled.

—Contributed by Donna M. and Janet O.



Sometimes the tomatoes don't make it all the way to the kitchen...



Green tomatoes ripening in Darla's backyard garden

## FRIED GREEN TOMATOES

By late September, green tomatoes won't have time to ripen on the vine. Pick them and give this classic Southern recipe a try.

### Fried Green Tomatoes

3 medium, firm green tomatoes, sliced 1/2" thick

Salt

1 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup milk or buttermilk

1 egg, beaten

1/3 cup cornmeal

1/2 cup bread crumbs

1/4 cup vegetable oil

Sprinkle tomato slices with salt and let stand 5 minutes. Meanwhile, arrange your dredging station. Place in three shallow bowls: the flour, milk and beaten egg, and cornmeal and crumbs.

Coat each tomato slice in flour, dip in egg, then dredge in cornmeal-bread crumb mixture.

Heat oil over medium heat in a skillet. Fry tomatoes in batches in oil 3-5 minutes on each side until brown. Drain on paper towels.

- Adapted from Elise Bauer's recipe on [www.simplyrecipes.com](http://www.simplyrecipes.com).

## NO TOMATOES?

TRY THIS TOMATO-FREE VEGETABLE BROTH AS A GREAT WAY TO USE UP YOUR OTHER VEGGIES. FREEZES WELL FOR LATER USE AS A BASE FOR SOUPS.

18+ CUPS WATER

3 CARROTS, SLICED

2 TURNIPS, SLICED AND DICED

2 ZUCCHINIS, SLICED

2 LEEKS, SLICED

1 ONION, COARSELY CHOPPED

2 CELERY STALKS, SLICED

1 SMALL LETTUCE OR A FEW LEAVES OF CABBAGE, COARSELY CHOPPED

4 BAY LEAVES

1 ORANGE PEEL, MINCED (OPTIONAL)

A FEW SPRIGS OF PARSLEY, TIED TOGETHER

SALT AND PEPPER TO TASTE

POUR THE WATER INTO A LARGE SOUP POT AND ADD ALL THE INGREDIENTS. BRING THE WATER TO A BOIL AND KEEP IT BOILING FOR ABOUT 30 MINUTES. STIR FROM TIME TO TIME. REDUCE THE HEAT TO LOW-MEDIUM, STIR SOME MORE, COVER THE POT AND LET BROTH SIMMER FOR ABOUT 2 HOURS. FILTER BROTH THROUGH A FINE SIEVE, STRAINER OR CHEESECLOTH. ALLOW IT TO COOL AND THEN STORE IT IN THE REFRIGERATOR OR FREEZER FOR FUTURE USE. MAKES ABOUT 12 CUPS.

- ADAPTED FROM THE TWELVE MONTHS OF MONASTERY SOUPS BY BROTHER VICTOR-ANTOINE D'AVILA-LATOURRETTE

SALTING EGGPLANT DRAWS OUT EXCESS MOISTURE AND BITTERNESS ALONG WITH IT.

## EGGPLANT-TOMATO CASSEROLE

### Eggplant-Tomato Casserole

1 large eggplant

2 teaspoons salt

1/3 cup Italian dressing

8 medium peeled tomatoes (see Preserving Your Harvest for how-to)

3 cups grated sharp cheddar

1/4 teaspoon paprika

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Lightly grease an 11x13-inch or 2 1/2-quart baking dish.

Cut eggplant crosswise into 1/4 inch slices. Cut each slice into quarters.

Meanwhile in a large saucepan, bring 2 quarts water with 1 teaspoon salt

to a boil. Add eggplant; boil (covered) for 5 minutes. Drain very well.

In a medium bowl lightly toss eggplant with dressing until well-coated, then drain.

Slice peeled tomatoes crosswise into 1/4-inch slices.

In the baking dish, overlap tomatoes and eggplant, alternating slices. Sprinkle top of casserole with about 1/3 cup of cheese, 1/8 teaspoon salt and a dash of paprika.

Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until eggplant and tomato are tender. Serves 8

-Contributed by Muriel K.



Congratulations to Darlene on her prize-winning tomatoes. She took first place at the Sterling Fair!

## ITALIAN VEGGIES WITH PASTA

### Italian Veggies and Pasta

1 eggplant, sliced 1/2" thick  
 1 tsp. salt, divided  
 3/4 lb. zucchini or summer squash, quartered lengthwise and sliced 1" thick  
 1 red bell pepper, seeded and quartered  
 Cooking spray  
 4 plum tomatoes, halved  
 4 cups (~2 bunches) green onions, sliced into 3" lengths  
 2 tbsps. olive oil

1 tbsp. grated lemon rind  
 1/2 cup thinly sliced fresh basil  
 6 cups hot cooked pasta (~12 ounces uncooked)  
 1/4 cup (1 ounce) grated fresh Parmesan cheese  
 Place eggplant in colander; sprinkle with 3/4 tsp salt. Toss gently to coat. Cover and let stand 30 minutes. Rinse eggplant with cold water, drain well. Prepare grill. Place eggplant, zucchini, and bell pepper on grill rack coated with cooking spray. Grill 10

minutes, turning once. Add tomatoes and onions; cook 5 minutes, turning often. Remove the vegetables from grill; cut all into 1-inch pieces except tomato. Cut tomato halves in half lengthwise. Combine 1/4 teaspoon salt, oil, rind, and basil in a large bowl. Add vegetable mixture, pasta, and cheese; toss well.

**Note:** If you don't have a grill, cut vegetables into 1" pieces in advance and stir fry in pan. Serves 6

—Contributed by GP staff



Lush peppers, squash and tomatoes tower above the colorful nasturtiums at Prescott Mill.

## FOOD PRESERVATION: YOU CAN DO IT!

Knowing how to store your harvest will help ensure you can enjoy it, even in the middle of winter. Here's how to store some of the most popular garden veg:

**Tomatoes** can be made into sauce and frozen in meal-sized portions. They can be frozen whole or diced. To freeze whole, core the tomatoes, place on a cookie sheet and keep in the freezer until frozen solid. Transfer frozen tomatoes to freezer safe containers. To freeze diced tomatoes, first remove their peels by placing tomatoes in boiling water for one minute. Immediately transfer to an ice bath; skins should split

and begin to peel. Peel completely, dice and store in freezer-safe containers.

To freeze **eggplant**, peel, slice and soak in salted water for about an hour. Rinse slices. Dip them in beaten egg and then herbed bread crumbs and pan fry until not quite done. Cool slices and store in freezer bags for use all winter long.

**Summer and zucchini squash** do not freeze well whole, but can be cooked, puréed and frozen for use in winter soups.

**Onions, garlic, and dry beans** can be kept in cool (32-50°), dry (60-70% humidity) conditions.

Onions in particular must be well-cured before storing. Lay out on a dry, airy floor until the necks are tight and papery. Braid and hang or store in crates or mesh bags.

**Winter squash and pumpkin** should be stored in moderately warm (50-60°), dry (60-70% humidity) conditions without lots of temperature fluctuations. A heated basement can work well. Cure squash in warm (75-80°) temperatures for 10 days before storage.

Check your Growing Guide for how to store more vegetable varieties!

—Contributed by Janet O.

AS YOU WEED AND PULL UP SPENT PLANTS, KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR WINTER SQUASH (DIVAS!) AND KEEP HARVESTING YOUR CARROTS AND BEETS!



Add onions on alternating sides as you braid and tie the braid off with string at the end. Photo credit: [www.thegardenerseden.com](http://www.thegardenerseden.com)

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## HERBS GOING INTO OVER-THYME

One of the pleasures of summer herb gardening will come to you late in the year as you plan your holiday menus. You'll happily realize that you have flavorful, homegrown dried herbs in stock and have no need to buy high-priced herbs from the market. What's more, drying your own herbs is fun, easy, and wonderfully fragrant!

**First:** Harvest your herbs in the morning when the oils that give them their flavor are most abundant in the leaves. You can safely harvest about three-quarters of the plant without killing it. What's left may overwinter if the herb is perennial, like oregano.

Annuals like parsley, however, can be harvested completely because they will not return next year. If the leaves you harvest are particularly dirty, wash and then pat dry.



Photo credit: [inmyhomeabide.blogspot.com](http://inmyhomeabide.blogspot.com)

**Second:** Bundle your herbs, leaving room for air to circulate around each sprig. This is important to prevent moisture from lingering and

creating good conditions for mold growth. Wrap string around the bottom of the bundle, leaving about 5 – 7 inches of string hanging before tying off a knot.

**Third:** Hang your herbs on a clothesline of string or closet rod in a dry location away from direct sun. Hanging herbs in your kitchen may seem like a good idea, but smoke, oil particles and the competing fragrances that come from cooking will affect their delicate flavors. What's more, direct sun will fade their colors. Best to find a spot in your home that's out of the way, like a dry attic, basement or closet. To keep dust off the herbs and

collect any falling leaves, you can place the herbs in brown paper bags as well. Be sure to poke holes in the bags to allow for air circulation. Tie your herb bundles/bags to the clothesline. Check your herbs for dryness every other day and once they crumble in your finger tips, they are finished drying. This usually takes 1-3 weeks. For long-term storage, transfer the herbs to containers. Old spice containers, re-sealable plastic bags and glass jars all work well. Herbs kept on the stem or in leaf form will keep for up to 3 years. Ground herbs will last up to 6 months.—Contributed by Janet O. & Mo S.