



Trowel Talk!

March, 2011

Time to Veg Out!

Do you think growing vegetables in your backyard is too much trouble? Think again. Vegetables freshly picked can offer a unique tasting experience. When I started growing vegetables in my first large country garden, my little four-year old neighbour used to hop over the fence regularly to get his treat of fresh sweet peas right out of the pods. To him it was the next best thing to candy! And, growing vegetables doesn't have to be just about red tomatoes, green beans and lettuce. Have you heard of lemon cucumbers, zebra tomatoes, and purple beans? If you grow these unconventional vegetables, you can put a whole new look on your plate and wow all your friends. What's even better is that all of them taste great as well.



Lemon Cucumbers
(Photo by Monique Paré)

Lemon cucumbers, which have the shape their name suggests, are one of the crispiest varieties I've ever eaten. Their skin will take a lemon yellow colour as they ripen,

but they are best picked when still creamy white - you don't even need to peel them.



Cherry tomatoes
(Photo by Monique Paré)

Tomatoes offer so much variety it is amazing that yellow tomatoes have only recently begun to appear in supermarkets. Last summer, I was served a Greek salad that looked like a rainbow combining yellow, dark purple, pink, zebra-striped green, and orange tomatoes mixed with a few red ones. All had been harvested in my friends' home garden. These colours come in a variety of shapes and sizes as well. In my own small garden, I harvest cherry tomatoes in white, yellow, pink, green and orange. The Green Grape tomato has one of the most interesting tastes and it is a prolific producer once established.

Beans can also add colour in your garden, not only with their pods but also when in bloom. Aside from the better known Scarlet runner, you can try purple-pod varieties that sport purple blooms, or Dragon's Tongue (also sold as Tongue of Fire) that produces countless flat yellow beans streaked with burgundy. It's too bad that these beans lose their nice colouring in the cooking process.

Lettuce has really evolved since the days when iceberg and green leaf lettuces were standard. Now you can grow all shades and mixtures of green and burgundy in the

form of loose leaf, tight curls, oak leaf, buttercrunch, or romaine. Oak leaf lettuce is one of the better ones for the home garden as it does better in the hot season.



Purple beans
(Photo by Monique Paré)

If you usually buy plants ready to go into the garden, it may be more difficult to get unusual varieties, but part of the fun in growing vegetables is scanning seed catalogues to discover new varieties every year. Seed for many of these unconventional vegetables can be obtained from suppliers who include heirloom varieties in their catalogues, or through seed exchange associations. As a start, you can check [Canada's Heritage Seed Program](#), and for additional sources, [Canadian Organic Growers](#).

In my shopping for the less common vegetable varieties, I usually have to order from various places to pick up a good assortment. Once you get started, you may want to join a seed exchange association to build up your collection and learn from other adventurous gardeners. You will be truly on your way to gardening with gusto.

Monique Paré
Retired Master Gardener

Trowel Talk!

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- Editor: Mary Ann Van Berlo
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March TO DO List

- Avoid walking on your lawn and garden as the ground starts to thaw. The soil is saturated with moisture and will compact very easily.
- Remove winter protection from trees and shrubs on an overcast, calm day. After protecting them all winter from desiccation by the sun and wind, they could be prone to sun scorch and wind burn.
- Have a gardening question or need to identify a plant or pest, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).

Tip of the Month:

More ideas for your vegetable garden:

- Start a few cool weather vegetables such as salad greens and onion sets in a sunny, sheltered flower bed. They will provide some welcome fresh greens and will be harvested by the time you want to plant annual flowers or you perennials start their spring growth.
- Start hot weather crops such as tomatoes, peppers and eggplants under lights to give them a head-start before being transferred to the vegetable garden after the last risk of frost.
- To avoid being inundated with ripe produce all at once, plan for a succession of plantings. For instance, plant beans every two weeks to stagger the harvest.
- Consider using floating row covers over cabbages, carrots and onions. If pests are unable to get to the crop to lay their eggs, maggots will not be a problem later on. Make sure the row cover is applied early and securely weigh down the edges to keep adult pests out
- Try something different! Vegetable seeds are available in the garden centres now.



Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton

Where to find us this month for free gardening advice!

ONGOING:

Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034

- Wednesday and Thursday 1-3 pm
- Saturdays 7-8 pm – April through September ONLY

E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca

- monitored daily
- send photos of garden pests, diseases or plants for ID

CLINICS:

March 24-27, 2011 – Ottawa Home & Garden Show – Visit us at our booth, all weekend at this annual Spring show, to have your gardening questions answered.

Byward Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 a.m. – 5 p.m.)

Parkdale Market: Saturdays, May through June (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.)

Carp Market: Saturdays, May through June (8 a.m. – 1 p.m.)

SPEAKING EVENTS:

Various topics – Ottawa Home & Garden Show – March 24-27, 2011

Master Gardeners will speak throughout the show on garden related topics
Lansdowne Park, 1015 Bank Street, Ottawa

Four Season Container Gardening – March 31, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Catherine Disley-Engler, Master Gardener
Rideau Branch of the City of Ottawa Library, 377 Rideau Street, Ottawa
Hosted by the Library (guests welcome – register at 613-241-6954)

Solutions to Some Common Garden Problems – April 4, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener
Community Centre, 220 Old Chelsea Road, Chelsea, Quebec
Hosted by the Chelsea Garden Club (guests welcome)

Shade Gardening – April 6, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener
Royal Canadian Legion, 177 George Street, Carleton Place, Ontario
Hosted by the Carleton Place Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Solutions to Some Common Garden Problems – April 18, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Ann Van Berlo, Master Gardener
4373 Generation Court, Ramsayville, Ontario
Hosted by the Gloucester Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Growing Vegetables in the Ottawa Climate – April 19, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: David Hinks, Master Gardener
Pretty Street Community Centre, Stittsville, Ontario
Hosted by the Stittsville Goulbourn Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Renovate – What to do with a Mature Garden – April 21, 2011 – 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Mary Shearman-Reid, Master Gardener
Cityview United Church, 6 Epworth Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario
Hosted by the Nepean Horticultural Society (guests welcome)

Roses – May 4, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener
Greely Community Centre, 1448 Meadow Drive, Greely, Ontario
Hosted by the Greely Garden Club (guests welcome)

Autumn Colour – May 10, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

Speaker: Edythe Falconer, Master Gardener
Champlain Park Field House, Cowley Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario
Hosted by the Champlain Park Garden Club (guests welcome)

LECTURE SERIES: Presented jointly by Friends of the Farm & Master Gardeners

Tuesdays in April Non FoF Members – \$15 for one talk, \$50 for four talks
FoF Members – \$12 for one talk, \$40 for four talks

7:00 p.m. – Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa
Reservations: www.friendsofthefarm.ca/events.htm#lectures (613-230-3276)

Designing a Garden – April 5, 2011 – Gaston Tessier

Sustainable Gardening – April 12, 2011 – Gillian Boyd

Organic Gardening – April 19, 2011 – Rebecca Last

Roses – April 26, 2011 – Edythe Falconer



For information on arranging a lecture for your group: 613-836-1491

For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website:

<http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca>



Rain Barrel Truckload Sale

sponsored by
Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton
April 17, 2011
10:00am – 2:00pm
parking lot at Building 72
Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm
(east off the roundabout on Prince of Wales Dr)



Over 95% Sold out

These rain barrels hold approximately 220 litres and come fully equipped with a leaf and mosquito filter basket, an overflow adaptor to connect barrels in series, 1.2m of overflow hose and a spigot.

\$55.00 each, taxes included

Reserve a barrel now: www.rainbarrel.ca/ottawacarleton

You can pay online by credit card or debit card.

Or you can order online and pay in CASH on pickup day.

Or call 613-236-0034 if you wish to prepay by cheque or have a volunteer assist you with making an online purchase.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Number of barrels: _____ Colours: _____

Paid by: cash or cheque Total: _____

Give this order form and your cheque (payable to MGOC - NOT post-dated) to any Ottawa-Carleton Master Gardener or call 613-236-0034 for mailing instructions.