

THE EDIBLE GARDEN

AUGUST 2018

HEAT AND DROUGHT BUSTING STRATEGIES

Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton

If you're looking to beat the heat, then select plants that thrive in hot, sunny conditions. Besides cacti and succulents, my own preference is to plant herbs that come from the Mediterranean region. They thrive in dry, hot conditions. While other plants are drooping, my English lavender is in full bloom and loving the heat. I have it planted in various parts of the front yard, mixed into perennial beds. I gave up long ago on growing grass with our hot Ottawa summers. Sages and oreganos are also doing well. Herbs are easy to care for and have the added benefit of snipping for tasty and healthy additions to summer salads and marinades. Bees love them. Save water and time by selecting plants carefully to ensure they're the right plant for the right place. Most herbs don't like their feet wet so avoid them in clay soil.

Julianne Labreche

Our water strategies during a prolonged hot, dry spell include spot watering at base of plants. Anything that is still drooping in the morning is eligible for a "drink" – a nice deep drink. The gardener does the same thing to get herself loosened up and ready to tote the watering cans.

We work from six barrels – four of which are connected to the eaves of our house and two that stand alone at key points in the yard. When the latter two are emptied we siphon water from the others in preparation for the next rain. If we completely run out we use city water. We also make use of indoor water which otherwise might go down the drain – for example water from the dehumidifier.

As Julianne has noted plant choices are key to long term survival and I put that into practice as much as possible. Along with this principle is "Leave no ground uncovered." Fallow parts of the garden offer less protection to the microorganisms beneath and encourage the intrusion of numerous weeds – which if you don't stay on top of them – rob soil of moisture and nutrients.

Planting rows closer together may afford additional protection from moisture evaporation in that it also discourages the intrusion of weeds. Removing damaged or sunburned leaves concentrates plant energy on the healthy part of plants. The damaged parts are eligible for composting.

For sustained resistance I've been creating microclimates, constructing smaller areas of shade and sun and taking advantage of both morning and afternoon sun. My microclimates are similar to the guilds that are practiced in permaculture.

No discussion re beating the heat is complete unless soil is considered. Well maintained soil catches and holds moisture. Mulching increases its effectiveness and organic mulch eventually becomes part of the fertilizing process.

When we use our imaginations we can discover ingenious ways of providing temporary and even decorative shade to prevent sun and heat damage – never forgetting the gardener – I work outside in the morning and inside in the afternoon and I keep hydrated!

Edythe Falconer



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Telephone help Line: Wednesday and Thursday 1–3 pm (all year) :

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EXTEND THE EDIBLE SEASON

*Dale Odorizzi
Master Gardener of Lanark County*

BREAKING NEWS June and July have been extremely hot and dry months. In almost all areas across Ontario our gardens are crying out for water. Many of our edible crops are drying up or producing extremely small crops. Rural gardeners are afraid to water too much as their wells might run dry. Urban gardeners have water restrictions or are worried about their next water bill. I know you all know about the drought but is the whole garden season lost? Being ever an optimist, I think not.

August is often the time we can plant plants that we often plant in April. The days are getting shorter and hopefully the nights are getting cooler and that means many plants that bolted, like spinach and lettuce or dried up like peas can be given a second chance. The plants that can be started now are the shorter growing season plants and plants that can tolerate a light early frost.

- **Lettuce**—flourishes in cool weather. The seeds like it cool to germinate so you may want to start them in a cool shady spot until they appear or cover them with a damp floating row cover to get them going.
- **Spinach**—much like lettuce.
- **Kale**—takes fall frosts in stride and keeps on growing. The leaves become

As I grow a lot of my flowers and vegetables in pots I find that I am always worried about water. The large-leafed plants in particular look terrible as they sit gasping in the sunshine. I have a couple of different ways that I use to keep the edge off. I have a large planter pot that does not have drainage and I fill it halfway with wood chips. I place my potted plant on top of the wood chips and water the plant deeply. The extra water goes through and sits in the chips instead of making my plant moldy or full of fungus. For my hanging baskets I take a plastic pop bottle, cut the bottom off and place it with the mouth side down in the planter near the roots. I fill the bottle with water and it drains slowly into the planter. I place these bottles around my cucumbers and zucchinis as well.

Judith Cox

GOJI BERRIES AKA WOLFBERRIES

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

Many years ago when we were living out in the country – the country now being a part of rural Ottawa – I was invited to attend a one-of-a-kind meeting in order to learn about the wonderful curative powers of the goji berry. Although I wasn't particularly interested in yet another miracle cure I was interested in how such a meeting would be conducted.

The event took place in a residence – a beautifully designed bungalow of the 50's era – albeit a bit dark in its décor. Reasonably comfortable seating had been provided and refreshments were in the form of goji products. What I learned from my companion was that many people in the audience had serious and even life threatening illnesses and that many were hoping for salvation of some kind in the form of this little oval shiny red berry.

I never dreamed that several years later I would grow a goji tree/vine in my back yard, and that not only is it easy to grow, it is hard to stop once it gets going! All of which is fine with me because I love the look of it and the beauty of the berries as they ripen and dangle like chains of rubies on narrow silvery leaves. Occasionally I'll have a bite and the berries are fine raw – a wee bit tart but an acceptable nibble as I make my rounds.

In the late 90's and early 2000's I wasn't doing internet research. I do now. This is what I've found out about goji berry – *Lycium barbarum* or *chinense*:



Goji berry flowers

L Bennett

NATURAL HABITAT – They are native to China and are a member of the nightshade family.

AVAILABILITY - I purchased mine at a local garden centre. Berries can be purchased at some health food stores.

PLANT MANAGEMENT – I transplanted mine into fertile soil but it did not do well in the first year. In the second year it thrived and now requires regular pruning.

PROCESSING GOJIS - They can be dried or cooked. The Chinese still use them in tonic soups, herbal tea and wines.

PROPAGATION – I plan on trying cuttings this summer.

TOUGHNESS – I have found them to be drought resistant and fine with Ottawa winters.

NUTRITION - Have they lived up to the claims made at that meeting so many years ago? Apparently their medical benefits are still not clear. However they do contain an impressive list of vitamins and minerals – Vitamins A and C, Iron, Zinc, Anti-oxidants, eight essential

sweeter when nipped by cold.

- **Peas**—soak the pea seeds overnight to give them a start on germination. I like to grow snow peas as the pods are so sweet and delicious.
- **Carrots**—are ready to eat as soon as their shoulders appear. You won't get the large, winter storage carrots but will enjoy them at their sweetest best.
- **Bush Beans**—start to produce very quickly but they will be killed by frost. You can prolong their lifespan by covering the plants with a floating row cover. I did not believe one of my neighbours who told me she always tried to grow fresh beans for Thanksgiving. I tried it and I did too!
- **Beets**—you may not get full fledged beets, but you can definitely enjoy the tasty and nutritious leaves.
- **Radishes**—spice up your salads and are fast growing. Eat them when they are tender and small.

Before you start your seeds, take a little time to rejuvenate your soil. Clean out the finished crops and weeds and loosen the soil. Add some compost to give your plants their best start. The hardest part about growing the late crops is getting them started. Water the seeds and seedlings well. Fortunately, the seeds are not too deep, so they don't require the same amount of watering as established crops.

Hopefully August will bring us cooler nights and a return to regular rainfall to make our fall crops grow and extend our edible season.

JICAMA

*Faith Schmidt
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

The other day, while shopping to supplement our garden's slow production due to the intense heat and lack of rain, I bought a vegetable that I had first discovered by chance about a year ago. It is called Jicama (*Pachyrhizus erosus*) but is also known as Mexican yam bean or Mexican turnip. The name "Jicama" refers to the vine but it also refers to the tuberous, edible root of the plant. This plant is part of the Fabaceae Family and is grown in southern climates as it requires nine frost free months to grow for harvest. **The plant itself (vine, leaves, pods and beans) is poisonous** except for the tuberous root.

amino acids, and surprisingly, 4 oz of these shiny red berries can provide 10% of our daily protein needs.

Caution – When we try something new it's best to taste just a little at first. The goji berry is, after all, a member of the nightshade family, but then so are some of our favorite foods – the humble potato for example. And some of us are allergic to potatoes. I grow my gojis mostly for their beauty as demonstrated by my reluctance to strip them from their gracefully arched branches.

GARDEN SAGE

*Victor Wark
Master Gardener of Lanark County*

Sage represents a large genus comprising of more than 500 species of annuals and perennials of the Mint family. They are distributed all over the world and are cultivated as herbs for their medicinal, culinary and ornamental value.

Sage leaves grow in pairs on square stems. They are usually oval, or lance shaped and toothed and are sometimes hairy or woolly. Flowers grow in spikes and come in a variety of colours. Usually members of the genus grown for their flowers are known as salvias or flowering sage and those for seasoning or medicine, as sage. The ornamental varieties are very popular with pollinators and bloom for a long time with repeat blooms all summer.

Native to the Mediterranean, sage was used to treat certain illnesses, particularly those linked with aging. Sage was once believed to be a cure for tuberculosis and a treatment for snake bites. Its generic name, salvia means "health" or "salutation. With its medical compounds, sage is known to be used as a wash for treating mouth sores and as a gargle for sore throats. Sage tea has also been used as a home remedy for fever and nervous headaches.

The main culinary variety Garden Sage (*S. officinalis*) is a hardy perennial or partly woody shrub with woolly grey-green leaves and shorter spikes of purple, blue or white flowers.

Sage is propagated by seed, division, cuttings or layering. Garden sage grows best in full sun with moderately rich, well-drained soil. Protected with snow or a mulch of leaves or straw, it has been known to withstand temperatures lower than -18°C.



Sage leaves, crushed sage
Dale Odorizzi

The leaves of garden sage are delicious fresh and should be harvested before the plant blooms. If you grow your sage close to your kitchen and the snow is not too deep, you can use fresh sage for much of the winter. If you want to have sage all year long, collect and dry it. Spread the tops of the plants on screens and dry in a well-ventilated room, away from direct sunlight. When they are thoroughly dry, remove the stem and pack the leaves in closed containers. Use them in sausage making, poultry seasoning and stuffing and cheese spreads and with pork entrees or in your favorite recipe.

Watch for *Trowel Talk* the Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton electronic monthly gardening newsletter available on the 15th at <http://mgottawa.ca/>

Visit the Almonte online community newspaper 'The Millstone' - <http://millstonenews.com/> - for a column by David Hinks of the Lanark County Master Gardeners; under the Gardening tab.

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton and Master Gardeners of Lanark County are member groups of Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc., a registered charity with the mission of providing gardening advice to homeowners. The Edible Garden logo was created by Jon Last (jonlast13@rogers.com).

The tuber must be peeled revealing a white flesh. The root can be grated or julienned and used in salads, coleslaws, wraps and it is delicious in fish tacos. Its texture and taste is refreshing and somewhat similar to a Granny Smith apple. So ... I know we cannot grow this plant here but it is a tasty addition to our own garden fare plus ... it is always fun to try something different!



Jicama

Faith Schmidt

SHOVEL WISE OR SHOVEL READY

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

Here's a bit of shovel anatomy – handle or grip, shaft or handle, socket or collar, step, cutting edge, blade or tip. Every part of a shovel has an effect on the ease or lack of ease we experience while using one in our garden. My shovel is relatively short with a stirrup hand grip at one end and a fairly sharp tip at the business end. It is very old and has assisted me well during some pretty vigorous garden activities. It did have an accident at one time and had to have a shaft replaced. I had been too hard on it trying to dig up rhubarb roots. As a senior I let rhubarb stay where it wants to, and I take smaller scoops when digging and longer rests between workouts. A smaller shovel (not shorter) works well in tight corners and it too has the stirrup handle that I prefer instead of a long shaft with no special grip. The height of the step is important too. Both my shovels have steps that are low enough to allow me to put the full force of my weight downwards at a comfortable angle.

The moral of this little story is that it pays to persist until you have tools that suit your own height, strength, weight and age. With the right tools working in our gardens is likely to be safer and definitely more pleasurable.