

THE EDIBLE GARDEN



DECEMBER 2014

©Jon Last

FOR THE GARDEN

Gardening tools are a personal choice. Gardeners come in many shapes and sizes so choosing tools that are ergonomic for your body and gardening style is important. Also, tools that suit a plot of land may not suit gardening in a container. Here are some of our favourites:

- Stirrup handle spade (sharp end of blade is flattish) for digging, turning and moving soil. These come in small and large sizes.
- Flat rake for levelling soil, disturbing weeds, and making seed drills. These also come in more than one size.
- Lawn edger to define edges and keep the grass out. A six inch blade is the most effective.
- Hoe for keeping weeds down. There is large variety of design. A loop hoe is useful for tight spaces.
- Coarse metal file to sharpen spades, edgers and hoes.
- Garden literature - books or magazines covering basic gardening techniques and topics of special interest.
- Handcart for moving heavy stuff.
- Padded kneelers or a knee pad.
- Plant markers for remembering, recognising and differentiating varieties.
- Seed pots and trays – good for starting plants indoors.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Native Americans used cranberries for food, medicine and dye.
- One of the traditional medicinal uses of cranberry juice is to support kidneys and the urinary tract.
- Forerunners to modern Brussel sprouts were likely cultivated in ancient Rome.
- Modern Brussel sprouts were grown as early as the 13th Century. Written references go date back to 1587.
- Brussel sprouts are ready for harvest 90-180 days from planting and taste better after a frost.
- Brussel sprouts are an excellent source of vitamins C and K, and moderate amounts of the B vitamins.
- Roasting Brussel sprouts brings out the flavour and overcooking renders the buds gray, soft and with a strong taste and odour!
- Brussel sprouts are hardy plants able to survive frosts and continue growing. Bury the stalks under hay and pick off the sprouts as needed through the winter.
- High fibre content of Brussel sprouts lowers cholesterol.
- Traditionally silver coins or charms were added to the Christmas pudding mixture. Each family member had to stir the mixture while making a secret wish.

Friends & Neighbours through the Years:

Companion Planting & Crop Rotation

Part 1 – Companion Planting

*Rebecca Last
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

If you do any reading on food gardening, you will soon come across these two terms. Companion planting refers to the practice of pairing plants that are compatible and avoiding putting plants that don't get along beside each other. Crop rotation is based on similar concepts but takes place over time and, unless you have a really good memory, requires



Basil and marigolds both help their tomato neighbours.

documenting your plantings through successive years.

What do we mean “plants don’t get along”?

Plants have differing requirements for soil nutrients, moisture, sun and various other growing conditions. Some plants, such as walnuts and sunflowers, have even evolved chemical warfare to ward off aggressive neighbours! When gardeners pay attention to the requirements of specific plants, we find that natural groupings emerge. We are unlikely to plant hostas, which prefer shade, next to daylilies that like full-sun; and we would never try to grow a cactus in the same environment as a water lily.

Good Neighbours

Beyond sharing similar environmental requirements, good neighbours

are considerate of each others’ needs and feelings, and try to help each other out. That’s true for plants as much as for people.

The Three Sisters

In traditional Native American culture, the three sisters are corn, beans and squash. These three plants are called “sisters” because they support each other’s needs. Beans are legumes and fix nitrogen, a plant nutrient that both the squash and the corn require. The corn makes a natural pole that supports the bean plant. Squash plant leaves shade the soil and help to conserve moisture, while its exuberant flowers lure pollinators that benefit the bean.

Here are several other examples of good neighbours:

- Members of the onion family repel aphids, and so make good neighbours for plants like roses that are susceptible to aphids. There’s even a book on companion planting called “Roses Love Garlic” (by Louise Riotte).
- Tomato plants shade carrots, which don’t like the heat, while the thick-rooted carrots make it easier for tomatoes to sink their roots deep into the soil.
- Growing lettuce between rows of onions helps to crowd out weeds that would interfere with the onions’ growth, while the strong-smelling onions repel flea beetles and other lettuce pests. By the time onions need more growing room the lettuce is usually finished for the season and can be removed.
- Many herbs are as useful in the garden as they are in the kitchen, enhancing the flavour of vegetables grown nearby. Basil is a classic companion for tomatoes for this reason.
- The strong aroma of herbs can also help to confuse pests and keep them away from crop plants. Sage, for example helps to reduce cabbage moth injury on cabbage and other brassicas.

Much of what we know about companion planting is based on centuries of informal garden observations but we don’t always know why combinations work. A very experienced Master Gardener taught me to plant radishes with cucumbers. There is evidence that radishes help to repel cucumber beetles, but they also seem to help prevent cucumber wilt. I have no idea why but it works. Regardless, numerous lists and tables on good and bad companions can be found on line, but beware because not all traditional companions actually do work well together. Recent organic research is helping us to better understand these relationships. It’s well worth following the free monthly bulletins of the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (<http://www.organicagcentre.ca/>) to track this research and gain a deeper understanding. For example, considerable research indicates that adding flowering plants to a vegetable garden is helpful for attracting pollinators. Certain flowers can also lure other kinds of beneficial insects such as parasitic wasps that predate on pest insects. Another function of companions is as a “trap crop”. Every year, I plant “sacrificial marigolds” around my vegetable garden. Marigolds are like candy to earwigs, so by planting them at some distance from more valuable plants, I can lure the pests away. Tracking what combinations work from one year to the next is the best way to add to the body of traditional knowledge and scientific research. We gardeners can become our own “citizen scientists” and draw conclusions from our own observations.

Part II, Crop Rotation, will appear in the January 2015 issue.

AN "I GREW IT MYSELF" CHRISTMAS DINNER

*Dale Odorizzi,
Master Gardener of Lanark*

It's time to start thinking about Christmas Dinner. When our family gathers, we like to show off our gardening successes and dine on a menu that we've mostly grown ourselves. This adds to the pleasure.



Wild Turkeys



High Bush Cranberry
(*Viburnum trilobum*)

For our clan, the star of the show is a Golden Roasted Turkey. Although wild Turkeys visit our garden more often than I like, we choose to go with one from a store. The day I saw twenty turkeys in my Cranberry Bushes, I did consider catching one for Christmas. The turkey stuffing makes up for this decision. It is generously flavoured with Onions from the cold storage and plenty of dried Thyme and Summer Savoury. There could still be some fresh Sage outside under the snow. If not, there is lots of dried sage inside. To complement the turkey, we will have Cranberry Jelly made from the High Bush Cranberries. Because of the pits in the High Bush Cranberries (*Viburnum trilobum*), we cannot make the traditional cranberry sauce. However I recently attended a Horticultural Society talk and learned that home gardeners can grow low bush cranberries (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*), the kind you see in the grocery stores, in a normal garden bed. Commercial growers need to use a bog. Maybe we will try that next year – the berries not the bog!

To accompany the turkey, we must have mashed Potatoes. They will be imported from the cold storage. We could add some of our garlic but Grandpa does not like anything with garlic in it. Too bad! The rest of the family loves garlic mashed potatoes. For additional vegetables, we have lots of choices. The Carrots and Rutabaga - aka turnip - in the cold storage are still sweet and crisp. Brussel Sprouts are waiting under a layer of snow in the garden. Peas, beans and broccoli keep each other company in the freezer and finally, the Butternut Squash is resting comfortably in a cool bedroom closet. Decisions, decisions, decisions! In the end we decide on Butternut Squash rolls and then have two additional vegetables with the main course-- Brussel Sprouts and mashed Rutabaga. Yum! We always like to have homemade pickles to accompany our meal. This year, we have Mustard beans, Dill pickles and pickled Beets. They are colourful and popular. I would like to make a cabbage salad but cabbage does not last in storage very long. Fortunately, we have cabbage rolls in the freezer that we can bring out to augment our Boxing Day meal of delicious leftovers.

The dessert highlight is Carrot Pudding. It is cook-friendly as it was been made a few weeks ago so that very little last minute prep is needed. We will also have Apple Pie made from apples that grew on our own Apple trees. Fortunately, too, the pies are made and sitting in the freezer anticipating their next destination, and only needing to be popped into the oven to bake - climate warming for pies. Maybe next year our Blueberries will finally produce enough berries so that we can add Blueberry Pie to our home grown Christmas menu.

Some folks like to wait to the last minute to start the Christmas preparations, enjoying the hustle and bustle. Other folks have all their Christmas shopping done in July. We gardeners like to start our Christmas prep in January as we peruse the seed catalogues and plan our vegetable gardens. On Christmas Day, when we sit down for our meal with our family, enjoying our harvest, the planting, weeding, harvesting and preserving are all worthwhile.

May you all have the pleasure of enjoying something from your own garden for your Christmas Dinner and may you and your family have a very Merry Christmas and a Great Gardening New Year.

Footnote: Next year mash a separate bowl of potatoes for Grandpa – a win-win situation.

BOOK REVIEW

*Edythe Falconer,
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

THE SIMPLY RAW LIVING FOODS DETOX MANUAL

Natasha Kyssa; Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver. 176 pages
ISBN-978-1-55152-250-0

You might well wonder about the “Detox Manual” part of this book in relationship to “The Edible Garden” where we concentrate primarily on the “how to” of growing food in our own backyards or in community gardens. However some of the motives that lead us to creating our own vegetable gardens are similar to those of the author of this fine little book. We want fresh healthy food that has not travelled thousands of miles to get here, and that is not coated with unknown substances that could harm us. Furthermore we enjoy the lifestyle that achieves this for us – getting out in the fresh air and moving our muscles in tune with our hoes and rakes is definitely a “feel good” experience.

“The Edible Garden” is all about production. “Simply Raw”, however, examines what we eat and why and comes down on the side of eating raw vegetables and fruits as much as possible. The author’s own personal journey underpins her enthusiasm and commitment to the ideas she puts forth. Changing one’s life style in order to achieve a happier, healthier way of living, as much as we might think we want to make those changes, can be very daunting. Switching to raw from a standard Canadian meal is no easy process. What we eat and how we prepare our food is fraught with ingrained habits – sometimes of a life time and even being handed down from previous generations. Natasha Kyssa is prepared to help us make those changes more readily and she provides a wealth of relevant information to assist us along the way.

What wins my attention – hands down – are the 135 raw food recipes that are included in “Simply Raw”. Who knew that eating raw vegetables could be so creative and so much fun! Yes, I eat a lot of fresh raw foods but I regularly run out of creative ideas as to how to present them. Who knew about all the nutritious and tasty substitutes there are for pie crusts and salad dressings! Therefore I’ve decided that this will be a winter of experimentation with raw foods. Putting aside the detox part – at least for the time being – here is what I have in mind.

I will do one “raw food day per” week. Those 135 recipes cover all aspects of any menu. This will take a little

RECIPE

*Edythe Falconer,
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

CARROT PUDDING with BROWN SUGAR SAUCE

Recipe from 1947 "Canadian Favorites" CCF Cook Book

Carrot Pudding

1/2 cup. butter
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 cup grated raw carrots
1 Tablespoon water
1.5 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon. soda
1 teaspoon. baking powder
1/2 teaspoon. cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
1/2 cup raisins
1/2 cup currants
2 teaspoon. thinly cut lemon or orange peel

1. Cream sugar and butter.
2. Add eggs and beat well.
3. Add grated carrot and water
4. Sift flour with all the other dry ingredients and add to mixture.
5. Lastly add floured fruit.
6. Steam for 3 hours.
5. Serve hot with brown sugar sauce.

Brown Sugar Sauce

1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup syrup
2 Tablespoon corn starch
Few grains of salt
2 cup boiling water
1 teaspoon. butter
1 teaspoon. vanilla

1. Mix sugar, corn starch and salt.
2. Slowly add water while stirring.
3. Cook until there is no taste of raw starch.
5. Remove from heat.
6. Add syrup, butter and flavouring

CELEBRATION LOAF

Natasha Kyssa

Celebration Loaf

1 clove garlic
1 small onion, chopped
2 cups apple (500mL) peeled and chopped
1 cup almonds (250 mL)
2 cups walnuts (500mL)

planning ahead but the shopping won't be difficult as most of the ingredients in Natasha's recipes are readily available at "stores close to you". An alternative way to ease myself into modified eating habits would be to create one raw meal per day.

Who knows where all this might take me? Since March I have lost several pounds and would be happy to lose another "several". The benefits in energy and creativity are quite evident – at least to me. Now I have an excellent reference book to help me along the way. I already have plans for growing even more of my own food in my backyard in 2015. "Simply Raw" has sent my motivation soaring!

PS. Since discovering the "Celebration Loaf" recipe in the Citizen a couple of years ago I have prepared it for two special occasions. It was and is a winner!

6 stalks celery, chopped fine
2 large Portobello mushrooms, chopped
1 carrot grated
4 tablespoons golden flax meal (65mL) from health food stores, or grind flax seed in a blender
2 tablespoons olive oil (25mL)
2 tablespoons wheat-free tamari (25mL), or substitute soy sauce
1 teaspoon fresh basil (5mL) chopped fine
2 teaspoons dry sage (10mL)
1 teaspoon (5mL) fresh rosemary, minced
1/2teaspoon black pepper (mL), ground
1 cup raisins (250mL)
1/4 cup walnuts (50mL) chopped (to mix in by hand)
Salt, to taste
Parsley, rosemary and sprouts for garnish

Cranberry Sauce

2 cups (500mL) whole cranberries
1/2 cup dates (125mL) soaked 30 minutes in water
Juice & zest of 1/2 orange
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon (2mL)
Dash, black pepper

1. For the loaf, in food processor process garlic and onion. Add apple, then nuts, and chop until well-mixed but not pureed. Transfer ingredients to a large bowl and mix in remaining loaf ingredients, except herbs garnish by hand.
2. To make the cranberry sauce, in food processor puree all ingredients together; set aside.
3. Transfer loaf ingredients to a round loaf pan about 7 inches (18cm) diameter, or 6 by 8 inches (15 by 20cm) rectangle, or casserole dish. Set in refrigerator or heat in low oven to warm slightly. Just before serving, top with cranberries or serve on the side. Garnish loaf with sprigs of parsley, rosemary and sprouts.

Serves 6 to 8 as main course

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

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

Photographs: Rebecca Last (Tomatoes and marigolds), Dale Odorizzi (Highbush Cranberry, Wild Turkeys)

The Edible Garden logo was created by Jon Last (jonlast13@rogers.com)

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton and the Master Gardeners of Lanark are member groups of Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc., a registered charity with the mission of providing gardening advice to homeowners

Need help? Contact us at: Telephone Help Line: 613-236-0034 - Wednesday and Thursday 1–3 pm (all year)

Ottawa E-mail Help Line: mgoc_helpline@yahoo.ca - monitored daily

Lanark E-mail help Line: lanarkmg@gmail.com