

THE EDIBLE GARDEN



JULY 2014

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GARDEN ACTIVITIES

- Continue monitoring for insects and diseases
- Weed or at least remove flower heads, before seeds set
- Water deeply during dry periods
- Take notes about what worked and problems that arose and photographs for future reference
- Harvest fruits and vegetables as soon as they are ready: this will help keep fruit bearing plants such as cucumbers and beans productive
- Sow succession crops see the *Continuous Harvest* article

DID YOU KNOW?

- Bean pods can become stringy if left too long before harvesting, but if left too long, seeds can be harvested instead
- Garlic is ready to harvest when the cloves are a good size and can be felt through the wrappers, but before wrappers start to break down and the cloves split off; start checking the bulbs when the bottom leaves start to yellow by scraping the soil away and feeling for cloves

GROW ME – I'M A SWEET POTATO

Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton

Grow sweet potatoes in Ottawa? "Nonsense" I thought. Then a fellow master gardener mentioned that he was doing exactly that. I now order cuttings from Mapple Farm in New Brunswick. I pot them soon after they arrive. Early in June they are put out in rows 1 m apart in each direction. Then I water generously until they are well established after which a weekly soaking is sufficient.



My soil is regularly enriched with compost and manure. I also top dress a couple of times during the growing season. If I did use commercial fertilizer I would use a low N, medium P, high K formula for best results. However I continue adding compost to improve soil structure, aeration, moisture retention and drainage. Compost is also a source of trace elements: absent in standard NPK fertilizers.

Sweet potatoes can also be started from the tubers. My sweet potato mentor encouraged me to try that "root" as well. The tubers had already leafed out from several eyes. I sectioned them, like a regular potato, and potted them in preparation for milder weather. Sweet potatoes, both vines and tubers, are cold-sensitive. Whether in field or in pots I sink tubers approximately 3 inches into the soil.

Last year, due to landscaping disruptions, I needed to find alternative planting space. As a result some of my extra cuttings went into half barrels. Into each of these I put three well-rooted cuttings with marigolds in the centre. The result was both attractive and tasty. The tubers of sweet potatoes - both ornamental and agricultural - are edible. So are their leaves. Sweet potatoes are rich in Vitamin A and offer an almost complete source of nutrition.

I used half barrels which had been drilled for drainage and then filled with rocks, pruning cuts, surplus sod, dried leaves and surplus soil from the patio excavation, and "iced" with lovely ancient back yard compost. Containers need watering more frequently than beds and need more helpings of compost and manure during the growing season. Production is usually

modest compared to in-field. The next time I do this I'll install two vines per barrel rather than three.

In fall I pot vines and park them in the sunroom to over winter. In April I take several cuttings, root and pot them and then put them outside in June - a fine planting-harvesting loop.



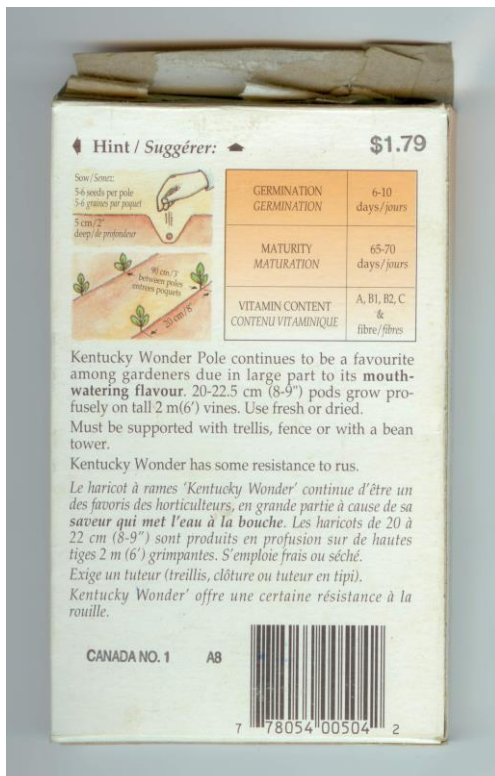
Sweet potatoes should be dug right after the first light frost to avoid chill damage. Curing should follow immediately. Properly cured they stay fresh all winter long. Curing involves subjecting tubers to temperatures between 30-32°C with 80-90% humidity for six or seven days. Putting them in paper bags will help preserve moisture. Do you have a second bathroom? It can be your curing station. After that the tubers store well in any cool part of the house at around 15-20°C. **Never refrigerate them!**

Whether in beds or containers the sweet potato makes a healthy and attractive addition to our gardens. Mine are almost always problem-free and vine canopies provide good weed control. So give your "Sweeties" as much sun as possible, provide them with all the basics, toughen up their winter coats and you will be richly rewarded!

CONTINUOUS HARVEST

*Dale Odorizzi
Master Gardener of Lanark*

In 1973 I started my first Vegetable Garden. I rented a 50 × 20 ft Allotment Garden Plot and on the May long weekend, filled it up with all of the seeds and transplants I could find. In no time at all I had more produce than I knew how to handle. Neighbours started not answering their doors or turning in the other direction when I came down the street with my bags of lettuce and radishes and beans. By late summer all that was left in the garden were tomatoes, potatoes and peppers and much of my earlier harvest had gone to waste. There had to be a better way.



There is a better way and that is to use Succession Planting. What this means is, rather than plant a full package of lettuce seed on the May long weekend, plant small batches of lettuce starting as soon as you can work the soil in your garden. In order to maximize production in your garden, you will need to know or estimate appropriate planting dates, the number of days to harvest and the length of the harvest from first to last picking. Your seed packet is a good source for this information or you can use the table included later in this newsletter.

These factors are very much impacted by weather. Appropriate planting dates are commonly scheduled around the average annual frost-free date in the spring and the annual freeze date in the fall. Check with your local Master Gardener group for your average dates. Weather has a big influence on seedling establishment and crop growth. For example, peas planted at the first possible planting date in the spring and then again two weeks later will usually mature only one week apart.

It helps to keep track of your planting dates and harvesting in your own garden and to adjust your planting schedule accordingly. For example, my seed packet tells me to plant bush beans mid-May and then to plant every 2 weeks until the end of July. My low-lying clay garden takes a while to warm up so often my second planting at the end of May grows more quickly than my first planting. I try

to start my first planting of beans around the 3rd week in May and then the second crop when the beans start to flower. I start my next batch of leaf lettuce when the current batch is about 2 cm high, radishes when the current batch is almost ready to eat and peas just as the flower buds appear.

When choosing a crop the estimated days to harvest is also important to consider. There is no point planting 2 or 3 crops of Winter Squash as it takes a long time to grow and it is frost sensitive. Leaf Lettuce on the other hand can be planted into August and still have time to produce. You may notice in the leaf lettuce table entry that it indicates you can plant leaf lettuce from April to July and then again in mid-August. Leaf Lettuce is a cool weather crop and the seeds will not germinate if the temperature is too high. If you want to try planting cool weather crops, try starting the seeds in the house, in a cool area and then transplant into the garden. I also like to cover them with a floating row cover (shade cloth) to help protect them from the heat of the sun.

Bottom line is plant only what you think you will be able to use or share before the crop bolts or goes to seed. Pick things like beans, peas and lettuce often to keep them producing. If all your radishes are ready but you cannot keep up with eating them, pick them and keep them in the fridge. They will last a long time. Above all—Enjoy!

GARLIC SCAPES

*Gerda Franssen, Dale Odorizzi
Master Gardeners of Lanark*

What are those strange curly green things growing from the top of my garlic?



If you were one of the gardeners who planned ahead last October and planted a variety of hard-necked garlic, right now you might be asking yourself just that question.

Garlic is one of the few plants that provides two harvests. The first crop is those strange curly things, known as Scapes. If you cut off the curly flower stems, your garlic bulbs will grow bigger. Once you have cut them off, they are a delicious addition to your early summer dining.

If you are picking your Scapes to energize your garlic, timing isn't too important but to enjoy the mild, tender stems at their peak, pick them early. Cut the Scapes as early as possible, once the flower bulb has begun to form but long before the flower blooms. The Scape should still be curly, not straight. Harvest the stem in the heat of the afternoon, when the sap dries more quickly. To harvest, simply snap the stalk with your fingers, just above the first set of leaves. Use scissors or a sharp knife if you don't want the smell of garlic on your fingers—but who doesn't want to smell like fresh garlic? If you do not grow garlic, Scapes are now a common produce item at local farmers market. The season is very short.

Recipe

*Gerda Franssen, Dale Odorizzi,
Master Gardeners of Lanark*

Preparing Garlic Scapes

Trim any woody part from the base of the Scape and treat the woody part as you would garlic.

Remove the part of the Scape above the flower bulb or pod.

Blanch Scapes in boiling water for 2 to 3 minutes, then rinse with cold water. The Scapes are ready to be used.

The following are a few suggestions:-

- Steam them like asparagus
- Saute in butter until tender
- Stir-fry—chop in 2.5 cm lengths and add to your favorite stir-fry
- Pickle them
- Grill them
- Add to soups, pestos, salsas

If you have more Scapes than you can use fresh:

- 1) Grind them up in your food processor with a little cooking oil. Put them in a 250 mL canning jar or freezer bag and freeze. When you need some garlic, take the jar from the freezer and use as much as you need. The oil prevents the scapes from freezing.
- 2) Cut into small lengths (2 to 5 cm) before blanching. Dry after cooling, bag or box in meal sized portions and freeze.

Guide to Succession planting

Crop	Estimated days to harvest	Interval between Plantings	Planting Dates	Soil Temperature Celsius
Beans, Bush	60	2 weeks	Mid-May to End July	18 Minimum
Beans, Pole	60-70	*	Summer	
Beets	40-70	2 weeks	Spring and Fall	4-30
Broccoli	60-70	2 weeks	Early May to Early June	
Cabbage	70-80	3 weeks	Early May to Early June	
Carrots	85-95	3 weeks	Mid May-July 15	16
Cauliflower	50-65	2 Weeks	Early May to Early June	
Corn	70-100	Weekly	Early May to Mid-June	10 Optimum temp 18
Cucumbers	60	*	Summer	19
Kale	55	2 weeks	Late June to Sept	Frost improves flavour
Kohlrabi	50-60	2 weeks	April to July	Harvest before frost
Lettuce, Head	70-85	2 weeks	April to July	
Lettuce, Leaf	40-50	2 weeks	April to July then mid-August	
Onions, green	65	2 weeks	Mid-April to End June	
Onions, dry	90-120	*	Apr 5-May 10	
Peas	55-70	2-3 weeks	April to Mid-May then Early August	16
Peppers	60-70	*	Early to Mid-June	Must be planted as Transplants
Potatoes	90	*	Spring	
Radishes	25-30	2 weeks	Avoid Mid-July to Mid-August.	Best in Cool weather. Adversely impacted by heat
Rutabaga (Swede Turnip)	90		May, also sow mid- to end of June	16-18
Squash, Summer	45-60	4-8 weeks	Mid-May-early July	
Squash, Winter	90-120	*	June 1	16-18
Tomatoes	65-90	*	Sumer	Must be planted as Transplants
Turnips (Summer Turnip)	50-60	2 Weeks	Best in Cool weather	

*Not appropriate for multiple plantings

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

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

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton is a member group of Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc., a registered charity with the mission of providing gardening advice to homeowners