

THE EDIBLE GARDEN



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GARDEN ACTIVITIES

- Dig in compost or well rotted manure to the garden and work to a fine tilth before planting vegetables.
- Sow hardy or cold season vegetable seeds directly into the soil.
- Harden off frost tender plants by moving outside during the day when the temperature is over 10°C. At first for a couple of hours in the early afternoon into a shady, sheltered location; increasing the time spent outside gradually over 2 or 3 weeks before planting out after the last frost.
- When planting out or sowing seeds remember to label with the plant name, variety and the date.
- Mulch between the vegetable plants to help retain moisture and keep weeds down. If your lawn is chemical free thin layers of grass clippings can be used until the vegetables start to flower.
- Keep weeds down by hoeing carefully around your vegetables.
- Install pest deterrents such as floating row covers.
- Add supports for plants like beans and peas.
- It is still possible to spray fruit trees with dormant oil while the leaf buds are tightly shut and the temperature is over 4°C (40°F).
- Prune any dead, diseased or damaged branches from fruit trees and bushes; remembering to disinfect the pruning tools between cuts.
- Sow a second batch of cool season crops for a longer harvest period.
- Make sure that all fruit trees and vegetable crops receive enough water.
- Don't spray fruit trees when in bloom, to avoid killing honey bees and other pollinators.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Taking time to stretch before and after working in the garden helps reduce aches and pains.
- Wearing the correct clothing, closed toed footwear, long sleeves on shirts, long legs on trousers, gloves and a brimmed hat, not to mention sunscreen, will offer some protection from garden hazards.
- Wearing Safety glasses when pruning will protect the eyes.
- Marigolds, borage, basil, nasturtiums and members of the onion family (*Alliums*) are good companion plants for tomatoes.
- Spinach, lettuce and arugula will do well growing in the shade of tomato plants.
- The Tomato Hornworm (*Manduca quinquemaculata*) is the larva of the Hawk or Sphinx moth, also known as the Hummingbird moth.
- Beans belong to the **Fabaceae** family (legumes), which is renowned for its ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. The roots form nodules when they are infected with symbiotic bacteria called *Rhizobia* which produce the ammonium ion (NH_4^+ , a form of nitrogen that plants can use) from atmospheric nitrogen. These bacteria also increase the uptake of available nitrogen in the soil.
- The nodules containing *Rhizobia* are red or pink in colour when actively fixing nitrogen.
- Once the bean plant dies the nitrogen is returned to the soil as the plants decompose, making this a good plant to use in a crop rotation after plants that are heavy feeders such as potatoes, tomatoes and corn.
- Soil which has been heavily treated with synthetic fertilizers or pesticides or has had no **Fabaceae** family members grown in it for a number of years will be low in *Rhizobia*.
- Some bean seeds come inoculated with *Rhizobia* .or inoculates can be purchased.
- Usually the bean pods are eaten, but as they get older and stringy the bean seeds can be eaten or dried.

Tomatoes

*Gail Labrosse
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*



1 Sunshine!

Tomatoes need at least 6 hours of sun a day, especially afternoon sun but 8 hours is even better. Plant only when all risk of frost is over (after May 24th in the Ottawa area). Tomatoes love a warm location.

2 Plant Deep!

To maximize their potential, plant tomatoes in a well-drained, rich, organic soil that is somewhat acidic (pH 6 to 7). Plant seedlings deeper than they were in the pot you bought them in or, if leggy, lay them in a ditch on their side with the tip in front of

the stake. Back fill the ditch. Wrap the stem in brown paper to prevent cutworm nibbling and tie to the stake when necessary. Water and fertilize the ditch as directed in point 5. Plant basil near your tomatoes; it makes them taste better. Parsley and chives planted near tomatoes deter white fly.

3 You Have Choices!

Determinate tomatoes ripen all at one time & grow as a bush. Indeterminate varieties grow as a vine that need staking & produce nonstop from late summer until the frost. Heritage (or heirloom) varieties have been produced for generations & can be quite disease resistant without genetic manipulation. Hybrid tomatoes are a cross between two genetically different varieties & are usually disease resistant but less tasty. Seed usually cannot be collected from hybrids.

4 Pruning!

Pinch off suckers from between the branch & stem. These only drain energy from the plant. Suckers bear fruit usually every seventh leaf node. On the leader stem fruit is usually every 3 leaf nodes. Remove lower leaves once the plant is 65 to 90 centimetres because this is where fungus problems develop.

5 Fertilize twice Monthly!

First water then fertilize with 15-15-30 water soluble fertilizer.

6 Water regularly!

Early morning before the sun gets really hot is the best time to water tomatoes. A soaker hose is better than a sprinkler because backsplash of sprinkler water or rainwater onto leaves and fruit can transfer soil pathogens to the plant causing disease problems. Straw mulch is beneficial because it will help retain moisture and prevent rain backsplash.

7 Pollination!

Encourage pollinators like bees & butterflies. But if you need to you can pollinate tomato flowers of one plant to another with a Q-tip.

8 Enjoy your harvest!

Tomatoes should ripen on the vines for the best flavour. If there is a risk of frost put your green tomatoes & one ripe one in a paper bag to ripen (the ripe tomato will release ethylene gas that speeds the ripening of green ones). Refrigeration will

decrease tomato flavours. Store your tomatoes on the counter for fuller flavour.



Pole Beans Galore!!!

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

Jack had his priorities all wrong. He shouldn't have devoted so much time fighting ogres and running off with golden eggs and an angry goose. Instead he should have concentrated on his pole beans and their capacity to produce an abundant supply of healthy, tasty food. He should have noticed that they produce throughout most of the growing season while taking up only minimal space in a small vegetable patch or even in a large half-barrel.



We know better. We plant *Phaseolus coccineus* – also known as Scarlet Runner Bean - and sing the praises of all legumes because of their historical, economic and nutritional credentials as world food staples. The Scarlet Runner Bean grows and produces energetically but it isn't all take and no give. As a nitrogen fixer it regularly replenishes the supply of nitrogen in the soil. Nor is it solely utilitarian. Planted next to a fence it provides a beautiful display of delicate red flowers and lush green foliage. Those flowers are especially tantalizing to hummingbirds. It is quite something to work beside the vines as the hummers swoop in for lunch.

I like to grow pole beans in large half-barrels or in a vegetable patch next to a fence or supported by four stout poles in the shape of a tepee. The tepee can stand in the container or in the middle of a flower bed for that matter. The height of the bean poles is up to the gardener but I recommend no less than 5'. The poles can be metal or wood. The bottom of each pole needs to be firmly anchored in the soil. Where the poles join at the top they can be tied with twist tie, twine or willow switches.

It is fine to start beans indoors in late April or early May. When the seedlings have grown to a height of four or five inches I begin to acclimatize them by moving them outside during the day and bringing them in at night. Because beans are frost tender I wait until I'm fairly sure we're past the last frost date, usually late May in our planting zone. By the end of May I have either transplanted them into large containers or directly into the garden with support structure set up beforehand. Transplanting is easy. I remove seedlings complete with root ball and put them into their outdoor home. For me they have always been a "most likely to succeed" vegetable.

As much as possible I change their location each year as a modest form of crop rotation. Fertilization is mostly done using compost I produce on site. If I don't have enough of my own I purchase more from local sources. Top dressing with additional compost and well-rotted manure is done at least twice during the growing season, more if there has been a lot of rain. If Nature does not deliver the moisture the beans need I water from our barrel system. Beans in containers need more top dressing and more watering. They will not be quite as prolific, nor will they produce for as long a period as beans in the ground but if you have limited yard space this is a good alternative.

When pole beans are young and tender their flavour – raw or cooked - is quite extraordinary! However pods can be left to ripen and the dried beans can be used in cooking or saved for planting next spring. Nitrogen fixing, beauty, nutrition, disease resistance, low-maintenance and fun for kids to grow -what more can we ask from any plant?

Tip - If pole bean vines flop wrap them around the poles by hand. This works well with rough wooden poles. Mesh is helpful around smooth poles. There's a more elaborate system for getting beans to climb – a pulley system – good if the beans are growing up a sunny wall.

Tip – Decorative, tasty pole beans you might want to get to know: Kentucky Blue, Rattle Snake, Painted Lady, Stringless Blue Lake, Carminat and Monte Gusto.



BOOK REVIEWS

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

Vegetables From A Country Garden

Anstace and Larry Esmonde-White
1993 Lee Valley Tools Ltd.
ISBN 0-921335-32-6

For many years Larry and Anstace Esmonde White conducted regular broadcasts via PBS, entertained tour groups and produced large and productive vegetable gardens. They loved to grow and they loved to teach. When I retired and moved to the Kemptville area I attended some of their excellent hands-on workshops.

Their book is still available in many public libraries and if you enjoy cruising used book sales this is one to keep looking for. It functions as an easy to read textbook and an easy to follow procedural manual taking nothing for granted. The text is supported with many illustrations and photographs. *Vegetables From A Country Garden* is definitely a treasure!

Great Garden Companions

Sally Jean Cunningham, Rodale Press Inc. 1998
ISBN 0-87596-781-7

I have owned this wonderful little book for years. Currently I'm downsizing my collection of books but *Great Garden Companions* is definitely a keeper.

There are at least two aspects of Cunningham's book that have inspired me. First – she introduced me to the idea of hugels – a concept that I enthusiastically put into practice on our retirement property in the late 90's. Long practiced in European gardens it is now enjoying a renaissance in North America. This year's Canada Blooms Show featured a demonstration and promotion of the use of HugelKulture.

The second inspiration was more pervasive and that is Cunningham's sense of freedom, joy and experimentation. This feeling suffuses the whole book – and ultimately its readers.

As with the Esmonde-White book *Great Garden Companions* may still be available in local libraries. It is another treasure to hunt for at used book sales. See it – grab it!

RECIPE

*Edythe Falconer
Master Garden of Ottawa Carleton*

Cream of Tomato soup Circa 1930's

This recipe is from a very old cookbook that belonged to my Great, Great Aunt Violet – we think!

- 2 cups of milk
- 1.5 tablespoons of butter
- 1 tablespoon of flour
- 1 cup of tomatoes
- Salt to taste
- ½ teaspoon of soda
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Preparation

1. Put the milk in a double boiler.
2. Mix butter and flour. Add when the milk comes to a boil.
3. Cook tomatoes 20 minutes.
4. Strain tomatoes and add soda, sugar, salt and pepper.
5. Add to the milk and serve immediately.

<http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca/>.

Visit the Almonte online community newspaper '[The Millstone](http://millstonenews.com/)' - <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.