

THE EDIBLE GARDEN

NOVEMBER 2018



EXPLORING THE WORLD OF INDOOR GARDENING - PART 2: HOW TO SET UP A GROW TENT

*Andrew Fleming
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

In Part 1 ([October 2018](#)) we discussed the benefits of growing inside our homes using a grow tent, how to choose an LED light, and how to choose an inline duct fan and carbon filter. These are the cornerstones of our operation, and now it's time to get the show on the road.

Note: *If using the tent for the propagation of vegetables, fruits, flowers or other plants, and not for the purpose of growing cannabis, a venting system is not essential, and one could simply place their tent, set up their light and fan, and get started.*

What are the materials and tools needed to set up our space?

The materials we will need to set up our space are as follows:

- 4ft x 4ft x 6ft grow tent
- 4" diameter inline duct fan
- 4" diameter charcoal filter
- 4" diameter dryer vent hose (flex hose)
- 4" diameter dryer vent cover (exhaust cover - exterior to the room)
- foil tape or duct tape
- speed regulator for inline duct fan
- LED grow light
- timer for LED light
- 6 adjustable grow light hangers (may also be called grow light ratchet, rope hangers or something similar)
- small clamping fan
- plywood or other suitable material
- power source

The tools we will need to set up our space are as follows:

- jigsaw or hole saw or suitable tool to cut 4" diameter hole in plywood
- drill or screwdriver to affix vent cover to board and board to window frame (if necessary)
- scissors to cut tape

Note: *Grow tent frames will usually snap together and lock, requiring no tools*

Now that I have everything in front of me, what do we do?

The following twelve steps will guide you through the process of setting up your tent:

Step one: Decide on where the tent will be placed. Find a suitable space with access to a window where air can be vented from the tent.

Step two: Measure and cut the board to fit the window opening.

Step three: Cut the hole in the board for the dryer vent cover.

Step four: Affix the dryer vent cover to the board and secure board to the window opening; often times dryer vent covers come with a small rigid piece of 4" ducting, which will act as a union between the dryer vent cover and dryer vent hose. If not an additional piece may need to be purchased.

Step five: Attach the dryer vent hose to the dryer vent cover using tape.



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Telephone help Line: Wednesday and
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LAUGHING AT WEEDS APRIL

*Edythe Falconer
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton*

I grew up on the prairies where my parents stressed the importance of “rogueing” our grain crops, especially wheat. My siblings and I would be lined up at the edge of a field, each equipped with a bag to hold our stricken weeds. I remember in particular the aptly named sow thistle. I, being the eldest, carried a flask of water for our communal use. We were proud little soldiers marching off to war – The War on Weeds. The spoils of this “war” were considerable. We enhanced the grade of our wheat by rogueing while at the same time providing salads for our pigs who were especially fond of sow thistle. They thrived on these summer salads and later became the source of the most delicious pork I have ever tasted, or ever will.



Sow Thistle—*Sonchus arvensis*

Susan Bicket

Step six: Set up your tent following the manufacturers directions.

Step seven: Feed the dryer vent hose, now attached to the dryer vent cover, into the tent.

Step eight: Place inline duct fan in tent and secure it to the tent frames upper perimeter using two adjustable grow light hangers. Ensure the airflow is being directed to move air outside the tent; there is usually an arrow on the inline duct fan indicating the airflow direction.

Step nine: Place the carbon filter in the tent and secure it to the tent frames upper perimeter using two adjustable grow light hangers. At this time attach it directly to the inline duct fan with tape or leave a gap and add an additional run of dryer vent hose between the inline duct fan and the carbon filter. Attach these pieces together using tape.

Step ten: Affix two adjustable grow light hangers to the tent frames upper central frame piece and hang the LED light.

Step eleven: Secure the clamping fan to the tent frame high enough that it will direct air across the top of the plant canopy and angle the fan accordingly.

Step twelve: Plug the LED light into the timer and then into your power source. Plug the inline duct fan into the fan speed regulator and into the power source. Plug the clip fan into power source.

Now that we are set up and ready to go, it's time to start planning the indoor garden. Will it be a canopy of White Widow? A dense jungle of Mediterranean herbs? Or perhaps the scorching heat of Scotch Bonnet peppers? There are thousands upon thousands of options and limitless combinations to discover, so have fun exploring!

Happy growing!

UNUSUAL VEGETABLES PERENNIAL ONIONS

Esther Bryan
Master Gardener of Ottawa Carleton

For this article on unusual edibles, we are going to focus in on two unknown onion relatives that can be easily grown in the average backyard garden. In both cases the yield of these crops is often superior to the more commonly grown *Alliums* and both are perennial in nature, eliminating the need for buying sets or seeds each year.

Our first unusual *Allium* is Potato Onions, *Allium cepa* var *aggregatum*. The common name comes from the similarity to potatoes in that you plant one bulb and harvest a whole bunch at the end of season! Alternatively they are called “nest onions” or “multiplier onions”. The latter term is often used for spreading green onion crops as well so I'll stick with the name potato onion in discussion.



Potato Onions

Esther Bryan

The botanical name savvy gardener may have noticed the Latin name is the same as shallots, and that is correct. But while closely related to shallots, potato onions have some differences. They are typically larger as well as more pungent in taste. They also store better than shallot.

This heirloom crop has plenty of history too, being common in gardens in olden times. Unfortunately the clumps that form are not suited to mechanical harvest meaning their popularity likely waned in modern times as industrial agriculture favoured the uniform large-bulb of the common onion.

Fortunately potato onions seem to have regained some popularity recently and they can

Ridding fields of noxious weeds increased our profits when we brought grain to the elevator in Daphne. Grain contaminated with weed seeds sold for less than “clean” grain. Every little bit counted as grain prices were very low in the 30's and 40's. We may have been feeding the world but at times we were barely feeding ourselves.

Today I'm thankful I'm not dependent on a backyard garden for any part of my livelihood. However this can change in the event of war as was evidenced during WW1 and WW2 in victory gardens grown on both sides of the conflicts. Either way weeds are still very much with us. Because weeds are pioneer species they are usually the first plants to cover the barren tracts of a battle worn land.

I have eaten many weeds out of curiosity and while not always thrilled with their taste I know I could use them if necessary. It was common on the prairies to use Lamb's Quarters as a substitute for greens at a time when other sources of vitamin C were not available. Lamb's Quarters are not bad at all – touched up with a bit of salt and homemade butter. Some of my other spring substitutes have included dandelions, yellow mustard and garlic mustard.



Lambs Quarters—
Chenopodium album

Susan Bicket

COVER UPS

In our retirement gardens one of the most effective ways of controlling weeds was the use of small square bails of straw which were easily separated into straw pads to cover the soil between rows. Straw did double duty, breaking down to enrich and improve the structure of the soil. Bare soil is an open invitation to weeds.

be treated as a perennial in permaculture. A bed of potato onions can be left for years to grow and spread and used at the convenience of the gardener. All that is required is thinning to relieve congestion of the bulbs. These tough little onions have a lot going for them!

Starting your own potato onions may require some searching for sources but once you have them, you can keep saving your own bulbs to replant. While they can easily be treated as a perennial, they are usually planted in spring as bulbs and the whole clump is harvested in fall. Plant them in early May and watch them grow quickly into vigorous spikes of green, outpacing the slower common onion sets. Each individual stem indicates where a daughter bulb will form, this will become more obvious as the season progresses and you can guess how many will form! The number of daughter bulbs is variable and dependent on the size of the starting bulb but will be from 2 to 10 usually.

Just like common onion, when they are approaching optimal harvesting the bulbs will surface and dry out. If harvested at this point they should be lifted and allowed to dry out and cure for storage. Otherwise leave them in the ground and they can be harvested anytime.

The onion greens can also be used at any time. Make sure to save some bulbs for next year however, if you are harvesting the whole clump.

In my experience they are relatively pest-free with the exception of leek moth and a vulnerability to standard onion pests. The sheer ease and speed with which they grow is a welcome alternative from standard onion sets.

Our second *Allium* to be discussed is Egyptian or Tree Onion (*Allium x proliferum*), notably and appropriately also named Walking Onion for its peculiar method of spreading itself by bulbils on the top of its stem. The weight of the bulbil mass on the stem causes the stem to bend over to stem level where the new cluster roots. Hence the “walking” description.

Often the bulbils will sprout while still attached to the parent and create another “tier” with more bulbils on another stem. They are certainly a conversation starter in the garden with their unique appearance.

Walking Onions are a cross between common onion (*Allium cepa*) and Welsh Onion (*Allium fistulosum*) and retain the bunching habit of the latter. They spread from the roots to form a cluster of bulbs as well as spreading by the aerial bulbils described. They were popular in the 19th century and are another rediscovered perennial vegetable. The entire plant can be used at any time of year for its greens, bulbs at the base and bulbils. The plants vary in taste but tend to be more pungent, like onions.

Starting a new planting is as simple as finding some bulbils or basal bulbs and planting them at any time of year. Give them the fertile well-drained soil that standard onions love and watch them go! Leek moth do like them so be vigilant

for the leaf-mining inside the hollow stems. Overall Walking Onions are a very productive and easy to grow addition to the home garden.



Walking Onion

Esther Bryan

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).

“Cover ups” come in a variety of forms – old rugs, newspapers, cardboard, old tarps, landscape fabric, and planks. However plants themselves make good covers when we plant rows of vegetables close together so that their foliage blocks sun and discourages weeds.

I like planks. They make terrific paths in vegetable gardens and last for a long time. Ideally they should be untreated wood. Planks smother weeds, let us keep our shoes clean and dry and reduce soil compaction.

RECYCLING WEEDS

Composting weeds is a great way to recycle nutrients and some of the moisture they’ve consumed before being yanked out. Adhering to the rule “Weed Before Seed” is doubly worthwhile. Weeds that have already formed seed should never go into your compost. Weeds left to go to seed will happily fill your plot with more of themselves and will increase weeding chores for many years.

Even more care is needed with respect to perennial weeds. They should never get into your compost - never. Well hardly ever, as you’re still okay using just leaves. However, even small bits of root are capable of regenerating themselves.

Our strategies are many – We can fertilize with weeds. We do this with composting, manure tea, green manure and cover crops. As well, we can eat some weeds, feed them to livestock or pet bunnies, smother them, or attack them directly with appropriate tools.

THE RIGHT TOOLS

The pleasure of good weeding implements that respect our height and level of strength is part of the pleasure in gardening. We work and we see a result. We keep tools clean and sharp. Some of my favorites are push pull hoes that weed and cultivate at the same time. Hand held hoes for tricky locations are another favorite. If you like to kneel when you weed good kneeling pads are a must. Many of us will already have noted that pulling weeds after a rain is easier than when the ground is dry.

Many of our most beloved plants were once “weeds”. Many of our cultivated plants have become “weeds”. Everything is relative.