

What's Growing On in the garden?

Germantown Hills School Garden Newsletter

April 30, 2007

Carrots



The name "carrot" comes from the French word "carotte." Carrots originated in the Mediterranean. Around the first century, Greek doctors used carrots as a stomach tonic. They were used as food during the 13th century in Europe. The early

colonists of Jamestown, Virginia brought them to America and Native Americans learned how to grow carrots.

When to Plant: Plant 2-3 weeks before the average date of the last 32°F freeze in the spring. For our area, that would be the last week of April or the first week of May.

How to Plant: Plant seeds one-quarter to one-half inch deep with no more than 3 seeds for every inch. Space rows 12-18 inches apart. It may take two weeks for carrot seeds to come up.

Special Care: Dig up soil 8-9 inches deep. Break up hard clods in soil. Plant the round (Thumbelina) or short (Finger) carrots. Plant a radish seed every 6-12 inches to mark the carrot row. Radishes come up in a week and mark the row. This is a good example of intercropping two crops in the same row at the same time. Keep weeds out.

Harvesting: Pull carrots when the roots are at least 1/2 inch across.

Radishes



Radishes are native to China. Egyptian writing reports that radishes were a common food in ancient Egypt before the pyramids were built. In Greece, radishes were so highly valued that imitations of them were made of gold. In 1544, a German botanist reported seeing radishes that weighed about 100 pounds. Radishes were grown by the first English colonists in America.

When to Plant: Plant radishes in very early spring (March/April) as soon as you can dig up the soil. They love the cool weather.

How to Plant: Plant the seed 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. After the radishes have come up, then thin out so they are about 1/2 to 1 inch apart.

Special Care: Radishes grow super fast! From seedling to harvest is usually about 25-30 days. Keep them watered and check them often. They will be ready to eat before you know it.

Harvesting: Pull the radish when the root is less than one inch in diameter. Do not leave ready-to-eat radishes in the ground too long or else they will become hot to the taste and hard

Tomatoes



Tomatoes were grown for hundreds of years in Central and South America and Mexico. In the mid 1500s, tomatoes were grown in Spain, France and Italy. In colonial America, tomatoes were thought to be poisonous and were grown as an ornamental plant called the

"love apple." The odor of the leaves made people think it was poisonous. The royalty and upper class in Spain died after eating them, but the peasants didn't. The pewter dishes with the acidic tomatoes proved to be a poisonous combination! Meanwhile the peasants who ate on wooden dishes were just fine! By the mid 1800s, tomatoes were accepted as an edible vegetable.

When to Plant: Tomatoes like warm weather. Plant tomato transplants after the average frost free date in your area. For our area, that would be after May 15.

How to Plant: Dwarf tomato plants should be planted 12 inches apart in the row. Staked or caged plants should be 15 to 24 inches apart and plants allowed to spread on the ground should be planted 24 to 36 inches apart.

Special Care: Give your plants a boost when you plant them by applying a starter fertilizer. Keep watering especially when weather is hot and dry. Fertilize when first tomatoes are the size of a golf ball.

Harvesting: Pick when tomatoes are firm and fully colored.

Lettuce



Lettuce is one of our very oldest vegetables. It is native to the Mediterranean and Near East. It was grown in China in the fifth century. Lettuce was grown in royal gardens of

Persian Kings (Iran) over 2000 years ago. Columbus brought lettuce to the Bahamas in 1494. Colonist John Winthrop, Jr. brought lettuce seeds to America in the 1600s.

When to Plant: Leaf lettuce can be planted in the spring when the soil is dry enough to be worked. They can be planted two or more times every 10-14 days. Lettuce is a cool season vegetable.

It cannot stand warm temperatures. Do your last planting of lettuce about 30 days before the hot days of early summer.

How to Plant: Sow seeds 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. Sow about 10 seeds per foot of row. If your lettuce row is 3 feet long, how many seeds would you need? Thin lettuce seedlings to about 4 inches apart.

Special Care: Lettuce has shallow roots, so be careful when weeding. Do not overwater.

Harvesting: Cut the lettuce when it's large enough to use. Lettuce will reach its largest size about 50-60 days after seeding.

Green Onions



The common onion comes from Asia. Onions were fed to the builders of the Egyptian Pyramids and were shown by drawings on their buildings. During the Civil War, General Ulysses S. Grant said in a message to the United State War Department, "I

will not move my army without onions."

When to Plant: Green onions are easy to grow from sets. Sets are small onion bulbs. Plant the onion sets in late March or early April.

How to Plant: Sort the sets into two sizes—those larger than a dime and those smaller than a dime. Use the larger sets for green onions. You can use the smaller sets to grow dry onions like the kind you would use to put on your hamburger. To grow green onions, plant the larger sets 1 1/2 inches deep and close enough so they are touching each other.

Special Care: Keep onions weed free! To grow nice, long, white stems for green onions, hill the row by pulling the loose soil toward the onions with a hoe when the tops are 4 inches tall.

Harvesting: For green onions, pull them out of the ground when the leaves are 8 to 10 inches tall.

Peppers



Pieces of peppers were found in 2000 year old Peruvian ruins. Columbus discovered peppers growing in gardens in the Carribean area. He brought the pepper back to Europe where it became very popular. Fifty years later, peppers were growing in England.

When to Plant: Peppers are a warm season vegetable. They come in many different colors—yellow, red, green, brown and purple. They must be planted when both the soil and air temperatures have warmed in the spring. They will be injured or die if exposed to frost.

How to Plant: Plant pepper transplants 18 to 24 inches apart in a row. Rows should be 14 to 18 inches apart. Plant pepper transplants 18 to 24 inches apart in a row. Rows should be 14 to 18 inches apart.

Special Care: Use a starter fertilizer. Add additional fertilizer/ side dressing after the first new peppers arrive. Be sure to water during dry spells.

Harvesting: Bell peppers should be picked when they are firm and 3 to 4 inches long. Do not pull the peppers off the plant. Pulling can hurt the plant. They need to be cut off the plant.

Pumpkins



Pumpkins are native to the Western Hemisphere. References to pumpkins date back many centuries. The name pumpkin originated from the Greek word for "large melon" which is "pepon." The French changed it to "pompon." The English changed "pompon" to "Pumpion." American colonists changed "pumpion" into "pumpkin." The "pumpkin" is referred to in The Legend of Sleepy Hol-

low, Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater and Cinderella.

When to Plant: Pumpkins do not like cold weather. Young plants will be injured by frost. Do not plant until all danger of frost is past. The soil should be warm so the pumpkin seed will germinate.

How to Plant: Vining pumpkins need lots of space, at least 50 to 100 square feet per hill. Plant seeds one inch deep (four or five seeds per hill). Space the hills five to six feet apart. When the young pumpkin plants are two to three weeks old, thin to the best two plants per hill. Miniature pumpkins should be planted one inch deep with two or three seeds planted every two feet in the row.

Special Care: Keep the pumpkin plants free from weeds. Water during long, dry spells during the summer.

Harvesting: Harvest pumpkins when they are a deep, orange color. Harvest before heavy frosts. Cut pumpkins from the vine carefully and leave three to four inches of the stem attached. Pumpkins without stems may rot. Pumpkin stems have sharp prickles on them. Wear gloves when you pick them. Pumpkins grow from seed to harvest in 100 - 110 days.

Sunflowers



Native to North America. The name sunflower comes from the Greek helios "sun" and anthos "flower." Sunflower got its name because the flowers turn toward the sun. Some kinds of sunflowers are grown for food, seeds and oil. A sunflower head can produce up to 1,000 seeds. Argentina and Russia grow the most sunflowers. Kansas is the "Sunflower State."

When to Plant: Plant the seeds after the frost free date. For our area, that would be after May 15.

How to Plant: Plant seeds 1/2 inch deep. Thin the seedlings to about 2 feet apart. Sunflowers love and grow best in full sun. Some sunflowers will grow to 10 feet tall.

Special Care: Birds and squirrels will try to eat the seed before they ripen. Cover the flower heads with your Mom's panty hose to keep birds and animals away. Morning glories and pole beans will grow up the stalk of a sunflower.

Harvesting: Harvest the seeds when the back of the head is brown and dry; most of the yellow petals have dried and fallen; the seeds are plump and the seed coats are black and white striped. Cut the main stem about one foot below the head before the seeds start to loosen and shatter. Rub the seeds loose by hand, then dry and store for future use.

Eating: Sunflower seeds can be roasted (do this with an adult). They will have a nut-like flavor. To roast sunflower seeds, cover the seeds with boiling water and allow to stand for five minutes. Drain and dry the seeds. Spread in a thin layer in a shallow pan. Sprinkle with salt and heat at 350–375°F for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. If desired, add two teaspoons of melted butter or oil to each pound of seeds. Drain on paper towels.

Marigolds



Marigolds have a very strong odor. Because of this odor many 16th century gardeners thought they were poisonous. The plant was named for the Virgin Mary — “Mary's Gold.” Marigolds are native to Mexico. Illinois Senator Dirksen in the 1960's tried to make the marigold the national flower. In India an indication of

friendship was to present a friend with a lei of marigolds.

When to Plant: Plant after all danger of frost. For our area, that would be after May 15.

How to Plant: Plant in full sun. Marigolds are sold as transplants and can be started from seed outdoors. The shorter kinds of marigolds should be spaced about 12 inches apart. The taller African kinds should be spaced two feet apart.

Special Care: Marigolds are care-free. Deadheading can help to make them bloom all summer long. Water when the soil is dry.

Grade School Teachers' ABC Garden:

Yes, the Flowering Almonds are definitely blooming!

Tis for tulips, there still are a few, but we'll need to plant more in the fall. “T” is also for tree...do you remember what type it is? Korean Sun Pear...a small tree which doesn't grow more than 12-15 feet tall, which is perfect for this space as the phone wires are hanging just above the area.

We are taking suggestions for the letter “U” on what to add. Please call!!!

Websites and Resources

<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies/>

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/state/hort12.html>

<http://www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/firstgarden/>

http://www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com/Diggers_Rest-diggers-rest-10.html Check this out for a very good explanation of Gardening by the Phases of the Moon (Science link for sure!)

<http://www.kidsgardening.com/family.asp> Contains much garden info for families and kids

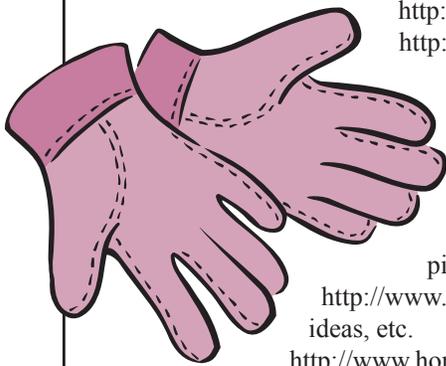
<http://www.kidsgardening.com/Dig/dig.asp?cs=t> Search for a variety of articles and classroom activities and ideas

http://www.diynetwork.com/diy/gr_kids_gardening/0,2028,DIY_13851,00.html Again, many ideas for lesson plans and activities....The dirt on gardening with kids, including a cute idea for a pizza garden planted in a plastic kids' swimming pool!

<http://www.gardenandhearth.com/300-Children-Garden.htm> Many articles, science project ideas, etc.

<http://www.homeandfamilynetwork.com/gardening/kids.html> great ideas for fun with kids in the garden

Please feel free to contact either Cathy or Linda with your garden questions and comments. We encourage you to use the garden as the valuable educational resource that it can be.



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