

April, 2009



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By The Yard...

HORTICULTURE

Fayette
County

Vegetable Gardens Special Edition

What the Heck is Mesclun?

Mesclun translates literally to 'mixture'. From a gardener's perspective the term usually refers to a mixture of young tender salad greens. The mixtures available range from mild flavored blends of red and green leaf lettuces to more varied, spicier mixes that often include mustards, beet greens, kales and even herbs. The mild mixture in your seed packet contains: Lettuce, Black seeded Simpson, Bronze mignonette, Red salad bowl, White Boston, Red Romaine and Prizehead.. Mesclun, like many lettuces and greens, grows best in cooler weather. You can plant every few weeks through the summer and harvest the tiny greens before they become bitter. Regardless of planting time, mesclun is best harvested when the leaves are small and tender. Essentially these are 'gourmet' salad mixes that are all the rage at expensive restaurants and sell for top dollar at your local grocery. Once you discover how easy it is to grow these tasty greens you will ever want to be without. Seeding dates in Central Kentucky begin in March and extend in to early September. If you want to experiment with coldframes, floating row covers or other means of frost protection, you can harvest greens as late as Thanksgiving. We, as a society, tend to be a couple of generations

removed from gardening as survival. Given the current economic situation and health scares, many folks are returning to the soil to produce some of their own vegetables. It is in this victory garden spirit that we are dedicating this newsletter to vegetable gardening and sending this packet of seeds that you may discover how easy and rewarding it can be to grow your own. I recently heard that on average our produce travels hundreds of miles to reach our supermarkets. That's a lot of wasted fuel if you can grow dinner in your backyard. The 'green' advantages to growing food (especially if you choose to garden organically) are not to be overlooked. The biggest advantage no matter what your reasoning for gardening will be the superior flavor and freshness of food that was growing only minutes prior to serving. Try growing these salad greens and see if you can resist growing a few other items down the road.

Bring in this coupon in to the Fayette County Extension Office and receive a free packet of Mesclun seeds.

Before You Begin

Every aspiring gardener should follow seven steps to have a successful gardening season:

1. Plan your garden on paper before you begin.
2. Select a good gardening site that is:
 - a. in full sun for at least eight hours each day,
 - b. relatively level,
 - c. well-drained, d. close to a water source, e. not shaded.
3. Prepare the soil properly and add fertilizer and lime according to soil test recommendations.
4. Plan only as large a garden as you can easily maintain. Beginning gardeners often overplant, and then they fail because they cannot keep up with the tasks required. Weeds and pests must be controlled, water applied when needed and harvesting done on time. Vegetables harvested at their peak are tasty, but when left on the plants too long, the flavor is simply not there.
5. Grow vegetables that will produce the maximum amount of food in the space available.
6. Plant during the correct season for the crop. Choose varieties recommended for your area.
7. Harvest vegetables at their proper stage of maturity. Store them promptly and properly if you do not use them immediately.



Choosing a Site

Your garden site should provide a sunny exposure, adequate moisture and fertile soil. Because of your property's limitations, however, you may be forced to select a less than ideal location. As much as possible, let the following suggestions guide you in choosing your garden site:



Avoid putting the garden in a low spot, at the bottom of a hill or at the foot of a slope bordered by a solid fence. Such areas, where frost settles because of lack of air drainage, are slow to warm up in the spring. High ground will enable the vegetables to escape "borderline" freezes for an earlier start in the spring and longer harvest in the fall.

If possible, choose an area with a southern

or southeastern exposure which warms up faster in the spring and receives the maximum amount of sunlight throughout the growing season. Midsummer vegetables, other than lettuce, should not be located on the north side of a building or on a northern slope of a hillside.

Plant your vegetables away from buildings, trees and other objects which would shade them.

Your plants need at least eight hours of direct sunlight each day. You can grow lettuce in the shade if you must locate part of your garden in a partially shaded area.

Your garden needs water, from rainfall or other sources. However, too much water can be just as damaging as too little.

- Examine your garden site to see how it drains and avoid areas that stay soggy after a rain.
- Avoid heavy clay soils in favor of loamy soil.
- Improve sandy soils by adding large amounts of organic matter. Adding organic matter can often solve minor drainage problems; however, if the poor drainage is caused by underlying layers of rock or hard clay (hardpan), correcting the drainage could involve the labor and expense of sub soiling with an excavator, laying tile or of building raised beds.
- Locate your garden away from trees as much as possible. Tree roots can compete with your vegetables for water and nutrients.
- Look for a site which supports lush vegetative growth, even if it is dark green, sturdy weeds. Although you can improve poor soil over a period of years, you can save much time and work if you begin with naturally rich soil.
- Make sure to use contour rows or terraces for hillside gardens.
- Avoid windy locations.

Finally, the closer the vegetable garden is to your back door, the more you will use it.

You can see when your crops are at their peaks and can take maximum advantage of their freshness.

Also, keeping up with planting, weeding, watering and pest control will be easier.



Preparing a New Garden Site

As soon as the soil is workable in the spring, turn over the sod of a new garden site by plowing, rototilling or hand spading. Prepare the soil at least 8 inches deep. Increase this depth each year until you reach 10 to 12 inches. Do not work the soil when it is very wet because you can damage its structure by compacting it. If the soil crumbles readily rather than sticking together, you can proceed safely. Continue to work the plot until the coarse, lumpy texture is replaced with a fine, granular one suitable for a seedbed. Do not overwork the soil to a powdery fine condition which will cause surface crusting. After you have appropriately tilled the soil, add organic material and fertilizer as recommended. If you want raised beds, throw the soil from the paths into 3- to 4-foot-wide beds after adding organic matter and the recommended fertilizer. This extra soil plus the added organic matter will raise the beds a few inches higher. If you like, boards or stones can hold the soil in place. For the last preparation step, rake the soil surface smooth and lay off rows. Now you are ready to plant seeds or set transplants.

Crop Rotation

As you continue your vegetable garden from year to year, try to avoid planting the same or closely related crops in exactly the same spot more than once every three years. Rotation helps prevent insect and disease buildups. The vegetables listed together below are subject to the same disease and insect problems.

- chives, garlic, leeks, onions, shallots
- beets, Swiss chard, spinach
- cabbage, cauliflower, kale, collards, brussels sprouts, broccoli, kohlrabi, turnips, rutabaga, Chinese cabbage, mustard
- peas, broad beans, snap beans, lima beans
- carrots, parsley, celery, celeriac, parsnip
- potatoes, eggplant, tomatoes, peppers
- pumpkins, squash, watermelons, cucumbers, muskmelons
- endive, salsify, lettuce

In addition, root and bulb crops are susceptible to many of the same soil pests so try to rotate these every year.

EARLIEST PLANTING DATES IN KY

CROP	CENTRAL KY
Asparagus (crowns)	Mar. 15
Beans (snap)	Apr. 25
Beans (lima)	May 1
Beets	March 15
Broccoli (plants)	April 5
B. Sprouts (plants)	April 5
Cabbage	March 25
Carrots	March 20
Cauliflower (plants)	April 5
Celery	April 5
Chard	March 20
Collards	March 10
Sweet Corn	April 20
Cucumbers	May 1
Eggplant (plants)	May 10
Kale	March 20
Kohlrabi	March 20
Lettuce (leaf)	March 25
Lettuce (bibb plants)	March 25
Lettuce (head plants)	March 25
Muskmelons	May 10
Okra	May 10
Onions (sets)	March 10
Onions (plants)	March 25
Onions (seed)	March 20
Parsley	March 20
Parsnips	March 20
Peas	March 1
Peppers (plants)	May 10
Irish Potatoes	March 15
Sweet Potatoes	May 10
Pumpkins	May 5
Radishes	March 10
Rhubarb (crowns)	March 10
Rutabaga	March 10
Southern Peas	May 5
Snow Peas	March 1
Spinach	March 1
Summer Squash	May 10
Tomatoes (plants)	May 5
Turnips	March 10
Watermelons	May 5
Winter Squash	May 10

Some Pest Management Tips for Home Vegetable Gardens

Now is a good time to start thinking about pest control for your home vegetable garden.

You can control pest problems, and perhaps prevent future difficulties, in your garden by doing some advance planning and following a few simple Integrated Pest Management practices. IPM promotes minimal pesticide use and emphasizes use of all available pest control methods including cultural, mechanical and biological practices to prevent pest problems. Examples of the IPM approach include using plants with natural disease tolerance or resistance, using mulch to control weeds or row covers to prevent insect damage and using naturally occurring organisms such as lady beetles or praying mantis.

Sanitation is another good IPM practice. Keep your garden well-groomed during active growth. Once you spot diseased plant material, remove it immediately to keep diseases from spreading. Also, promptly remove vegetable plants when they cease to be productive. Although you should clear out unproductive vegetable plants from the garden area, you can add this plant material to a compost pile. Be sure to eliminate dead vegetable plants in late fall because these can serve as overwintering sites for insects and disease organisms in your garden.

Before you buy seeds, plants or fertilizer, start your garden off right by answering these questions. Have you taken a soil sample to determine if soil fertility and acidity/alkalinity will meet plants nutrient requirements?

Soil test results will let you know how much fertilizer is required to provide plants with needed nutrients, while preventing excessive use that contributes to groundwater, stream and lake pollution. Plants that are stressed or weak from insufficient nutrients or a pH that's too low or too high are more susceptible to disease and can't readily tolerate insect damage. So, to give your plants a healthy start; soil test and apply the fertilizer and other amendments according to the recommendations.



Do you plant your garden crops in the same spot year after year?

Crop rotation can help prevent insect and disease build-ups. For example, potatoes, eggplant, tomatoes and peppers are subject to the same insect and disease problems. Therefore, none of these crops should be planted in the same location more than every three consecutive years. After three years, switch to a different crop like beans or corn. If you have limited garden space, plant some vegetable plants in containers such as large pots or half whisky barrels as a form of crop rotation.

Make a diagram of your garden each year to avoid planting the same or closely related crops in exactly the same spot too frequently.

How do you select a vegetable plant variety? Whether you are planting corn or tomatoes, check to see that the variety you are planting has some disease resistance or tolerance. For example, select tomato varieties labeled AVFN,@ as they're resistant to Verticillium Wilt, Fusarium and root-knot nematodes. Whereas, a tomato variety leveled AV@ is only resistant to Verticillium Wilt.

Do you buy the cheapest transplants?

When it comes to transplants, the best buys are the healthy ones. A healthy transplant was seeded at the right time, grown at the proper temperature, and received adequate light

and moisture. It will have a compact growth structure with very small distances between leaves. The leaves will be dark green, large and upright with no tendency to droop. Stems will be pencil thick and rigid.

Avoid transplants that are beginning to produce flowers or fruit. It might seem that buying a plant with blooms or fruit will give you a head start in the garden. However, plants trying to produce fruit or flowers are slow to develop the good root systems



(Continued on page 5)

Some Pest Management Tips for Home Vegetable Gardens (continued)



needed to support later fruit production. Never buy plants that have insects present or are showing disease symptoms.

Do you plan to use mulch in your garden?

Mulch helps prevent weeds that will decrease your gardens production by competing with the vegetable plants for water, nutrients and sunlight. In addition, some weeds harbor diseases and insects that attack vegetable plants. Mulch also helps conserve soil moisture.

Several types of commercial mulch are available, or newspapers for you can use newspaper for the mulch. Start with five to eight layers, adding more layers as the newspapers decompose to prevent weed growth throughout the growing season. Be sure to use only newspapers printed with soy-based ink and avoid using the glossy inserts. If you can't determine what is causing a pest problem in your established garden, contact the Fayette County Cooperative Extension

Service. We can help you discover what's causing the problem, or send the plant or pest to one of the University of Kentucky Plant Disease Diagnostic Labs for identification. For more information, request our publication, Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky@ (ID-128). It is available from your local Extension Service office, or from the UK Web site at <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id128/id128.htm>.

Remember, planning ahead and using IPM practices will help prevent pest problems in your home vegetable garden.

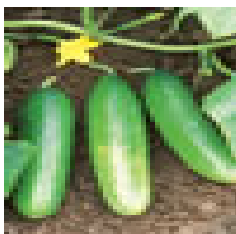
Sources: *Patty Lucas and Richard Durham*

The Kentucky Christmas Tree Association 5th annual plant auction Saturday, April 25th, 10:00 a.m. Fayette County Extension Office, parking lot at 1140 Red Mile Place. Perennials, balled and burlapped landscape trees and shrubs available.

April Featured Plant—Diva Cucumber

In the spirit of this month's vegetable garden focus, our featured plant is a sure winner for the garden. This particular variety has not only performed well across the country but also has done well in our UK trials. It has earned a spot in our recommended varieties list and was named an All American Selections winner in 2002. The variety was bred by Johnny's Selected Seeds in Winslow, Maine and offers many traits we encourage home gardeners to look for. By selecting disease resistant varieties home gardeners are more likely to succeed and utilize fewer chemical inputs. The variety matures in 58 days from seed. Here is what Johnny's has to say about Diva, **Delicious 2002 All-America Selections winner bred by Johnny's.**

AAS trial judges throughout North America agreed - Diva just might be the best-tasting cuke on the planet. Diva looks like a regular salad cucumber but with a much smoother, thin, no-peel skin.



Distinctly tender, crisp, sweet, bitter-free, and seedless; especially flavorful harvested small, about the size of a pickle. Plants are gynococious (all-female) and parthenocarpic (grow fruits without pollination). Resistant to both mildews and scab. Foliage is non-bitter, hence not as attractive to cucumber beetles as

some varieties. Adapted to open field production and under row covers or poly tunnels. For more information about recommended cultivars for Kentucky gardens check out our 2009 vegetable cultivar publication, ID-133 at <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id133/id133.pdf>

Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky, publication (ID-128), is available at the Fayette County Extension office for \$2.00 or can be printed from the UK Web site at <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id128/id128.htm>.

April Timely Tips

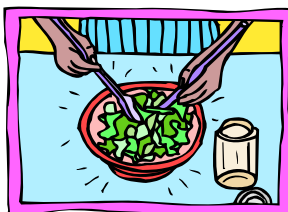


- If you haven't trimmed back ornamental grasses and perennials do so now.
- Remove flower stalks from bulbs. Apply fertilizer and make sure to leave the foliage to die back naturally. The leaves provide food for next year's flowers.
- Continue planting trees and shrubs.
- You can begin trimming evergreens now through late summer. Pruning after the spring flush of growth will result in less re-growth.
- Add organic matter to flower beds and garden plots. Incorporate into the soil where possible.
- Edge beds for a crisp clean look. This will also keep creeping weeds from encroaching as rapidly.
- Apply new mulch to beds as needed. Total mulch depth should not exceed 3-4" and a 2" layer is usually sufficient. Keep mulch away from tree trunks and bases of shrubs.
- If you have a spray program for fruit trees. Begin spraying after flower petals drop. As always follow label directions very carefully. Better yet, plant fruit trees with natural disease resistance.
- Sharpen mower blades. Clean cuts make for a healthier more attractive lawn.
- Crabgrass preventer should be applied by the middle of the month.
- If you start seedlings indoors gradually toughen them up with brief trips outdoors on nice days. Start with short times in a shady spot at first. They sunburn easily.
- In the vegetable garden you can plant potatoes now. You still have time for peas, lettuce and onions if you didn't plant in March. In late April you can begin planting beans.



Goat Cheese Salad

8 Cups Musclun Mix (1/2 to 3/4 lb)
 3 tablespoons red or white wine
 vinegar*
 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
 1 shallot chopped finely



1/2 C extra virgin olive oil
 6 ounces soft goat cheese
 Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

* You can use any vinegar in place of the wine vinegar or replace the vinegar with a citrus juice

Rinse and spin dry greens. Make vinaigrette in a small bowl. Whisk together shallot, mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper. Slowly drizzle in the oil, whisking until emulsified.

In a large bowl toss salad with vinaigrette and then portion the greens onto 8 plates. Place goat cheese on top of the salad greens and serve.

Yield: 8 servings

White House Reintroduces Victory Garden

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Not since World War II has there been a working Victory Garden on the grounds of the White House. This week, things changed. Clad in some great sturdy boots, First Lady Michelle Obama, along with students from local D.C. Bancroft Elementary School broke ground again, literally and figuratively, to begin a Kitchen Garden on the South Lawn, in which vegetables and fruit for meals at the White House will be grown; among other healthy taste treats, peas, arugula and blueberries will be on the menu. The photo captures activities that look a lot like the gardening that has been going on in my neighborhood lately, but on smaller plots. You can check out the garden layout, which includes over 50 varieties of veggies and fruit, as well as keep an eye on what's happening at the White House blog. Obama is quoted in Friday's Wall Street Journal as saying something which is very true, but that many people in the U.S. today don't really understand: "What I found with my girls, who are ten and seven, is that they like vegetables more if they taste good, right?" Right! But why is that so? It is not just that the food is fresher, it's that for marketability reasons, many of the fruits and vegetables delivered to grocery stores are picked before they're totally ripe, so they haven't had the chance to develop a full, rich flavor. The selection of produce grown for that market segment, to be



delivered to stores, is also chosen for its ability to maintain freshness for a long period, but because the compromise results in often less-than-wow flavor and texture, we've turned to making other more flavorful and appealing food choices. There are many other varieties you could grow which are much more delicious and tempting, but also more fragile and susceptible to bruising and rot when carted thousands of miles to market. Growing vegetables at home or in community gardens allows a world of choices that you just can't get at the grocery, and the "harvest-to-mouth" time can be a matter of seconds. White House chefs, as well as local harvest advocates like Alice Waters and Michael Pollan, are in accord about the great benefits that can be reaped from growing your own food. The White House Kitchen Garden reflects a trend in home vegetable gardening, which is remarkably up this year. We Americans are getting excited again about growing our own food. Fueled by economic concerns and food-safety issues, as well as an increased interest in greener landscapes, much attention is being given to this opportunity. This is a perfect time to dig in and begin replacing some lawn with luscious edibles.

*Reprinted with permission from the Herald-Leader
www.gardening.bloginky.com*



Victory Gardens - Did you know?

- John Adams was the first President to plant a vegetable garden at the White House.
- Thomas Jefferson expanded the garden and planted an orchard. The garden and greenhouse were destroyed when the West Wing of the White House was added.
- Jimmy Carter grew herbs among the flowering perennials.
- Bill Clinton grew vegetables and herbs in pots on the roof of the White House .
- Eleanor Roosevelt worked in the White House Victory garden herself.
- During the World War II era, 40% of the nations produce came from citizen gardens. There were approximately 20 million gardens.
- The Victory gardens were not only in people yards but also in public places, i.e., Chicago County Jail, the zoo in Portland, Oregon and a downtown parking lot in New Orleans.
- In addition to a garden, during World War I President Woodrow Wilson also had sheep grazing on the White House Lawn.



Antique Classes

Wednesdays, June 3 - July 22, 2009
Mornings (10:00 a.m.—Noon)
Evenings (6:30—8:30 p.m.)

Fayette County Cooperative Extension Office
1140 Red Mile Place
Lexington, KY 40504
(859) 257-5582

R.E. Wells, noted antique authority from Versailles, Kentucky will be at the Fayette County Extension Office on Wednesdays during June – July to present an 8-week course on “Antiques”.

	Topics will include:
June 3	Introduction
June 10	Victoriana
June 17	Majolica & European Folk Pottery
June 24	Buying American Furniture
July 1	Wills and Estates
July 8	Selling Antiques
July 15	American Glass
July 22	Road Show

Eight-week course for only \$45. Limited class size, first sign-up basis. Make check payable to: **Community FCS Programs** and return to Fayette County Extension, 1140 Red Mile Place, Lexington, KY 40504-1172, by **May 29, 2009** and select morning or evening session.

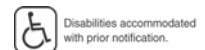
You may bring one item to be appraised each week.

Name _____ Daytime Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ E-mail _____

I will attend the: _____ Morning Session _____ Evening Session



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