



Backyard Views

The Backyard Gardeners

Spring, 2010

The Backyard Gardeners, Inc. was established in 2007 as a non-profit organization to provide free education to homeowners in the Hampton Roads area on gardening and horticultural practices, designs and techniques in order to encourage conservation of our natural resources, the enjoyment of gardens, garden-related activities and creative garden art.

Calendar of Events

Garden Talks, 7-8:30 pm
Chesapeake Library
298 Cedar Road

March 16

"Spice Up Your Life"
Elizabeth Meska

April 20

"Theme Gardens", Ginny Moritz

May 18

"Meet the Natives"
Vickie Shufer

Special Events

Va. Beach Spring Craft Market
March 19-21, 10 am-6 pm
Va. Beach Convention Center

Fred Heutte Plant Sale
April 17-18, 9-4 pm
Fred Heutte Center, Norfolk

TBG Spring Garden Faire
April 24, 9:30 am-3 pm
Chesapeake Library

Coastal Garden Festival
May 15, 10 am-2:30 pm
Kill Devil Hills, NC

Beginning Vegetable Gardens: A Primer

by Walt Baldwin, guest writer

Before you start gardening, ask yourself a few simple questions: Who will be doing the work? What veggies do you and your family like to eat? How much space do you have?

In placing your vegetable garden you will need at least five to six hours of sun. You should avoid low spots and the area should be free of tree and shrub roots.

We find that raised beds offer the best environment for growing vegetables in our area. Our simple rectangular design uses (2) 12 ft. 2 X 10 boards and (1) 8 ft. board, cut in half. Nail or screw the 4 ft. sections at each end of the 12 footers. Use treated lumber, but make sure it is not treated with dangerous chemicals. Bricks, rocks or metal can also be used. For best sun exposure, we face the beds North and South. Remove all vegetation on the soil 4" to 6" deep to eliminate roots and grass including that pesky Bermuda grass. Place the frame, dig the soil in the area to the depth of the shovel and mix in a cubic yard of potting soil. The best mix we've found comes from SunGro on Rt. 17 in Elizabeth City, NC. It is \$30 a cubic yard and contains pine bark, peat moss, peanut shells, perlite, vermiculite and a trace amount of fertilizer. It is sold in bulk, so you will save a significant amount over buying soil at a local store, but you do need a truck.

Using a soaker hose to water the beds when needed waters the roots and not the leaves. It saves about 80% of water use and gives the plant moisture where it is most effective. Check the schedule below for the best time to plant vegetables in this area. If space is limited, you can still have a vegetable garden by planting in containers.

Dig in, get started, you will be glad you did!

*For more information including tours of their gardens,
contact Walt & Aurie Baldwin at 421-3944.*

The Vegetable Garden Schedule

by Audrey Knall, TBG

For all of us who are itching to get our hands dirty in the veggie garden, here are the earliest planting dates for your spring and summer garden in our Zones 7b-8a. The veggies with a * can be planted 2 or 3 times at two week intervals to extend the harvest.

March 1 Lettuces*, Asparagus, Brussel Sprouts, Cauliflower, Onions*

March 15 Broccoli, Cabbage (summer), Kale, Leeks*, Carrots*, Peas, Potatoes, Spinach*, Turnips*

April 1 Beets*, Parsnips*, Swiss Chard*

April 15 Beans*, Cucumbers, Corn, Eggplant, Melons, Summer Squash

May 1 Tomatoes



Tomato Tips

Tomatoes can be planted as early as April 15th, a late frost is possible, holding off until May 1st (or later) is advised. Buy small transplants near planting time. Bury the plants deeply because they develop roots along their stem. Amend the soil in the hole with ¼ cup each of fertilizer and lime, 1 TBSP of sugar and some compost. Stake or cage plants to keep the fruit off the ground. Surround tomato plant's roots with newspaper to keep the cut worms away.

Tried and true tomatoes for Tidewater are **Sweet 100 & Sungold** (cherry), **Plum Dandy** (roma), **Better Boy**, and **Early Girl** (salad).

Spotlight on Gardens

by Shiela Strudwick, TBG

Organic, sustainable and local...what more can you ask?

This past fall I went to a church bazaar that touted vendors with natural remedies and organic produce. Here I first encountered New Earth Farm. I bought a selection of organic veggies and a six-pack of organically grown kale. I ate the veggies and planted the kale. Currently, my kale is snug under a winter row cover and from time to time, I peak in to see if it is still surviving. So far so good!

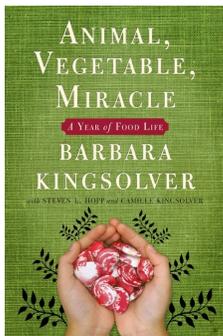


Curious, I looked at New Earth Farm's web site and learned more about the owner, John Wilson, and his edible garden. Originally from Indiana, he moved to Virginia Beach in 1979 and started a compost company on five acres of land. In 2006, he and his wife, Kathleen Fogarty, launched a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. John's interest in organic farming and sustainable practices spans nearly thirty years and he is happy to share his knowledge with the community through a variety of programs.

Since I have been gardening organically for a number of years, I am very interested in learning more about this farm and its products. John offers group tours and classes on organic gardening, so I plan to visit the farm to see how his crops are grown and managed organically. I am sure John would be glad to show you around his organic haven and share his passion. It is certainly worth a look.

For more information about this farm go to www.newearthfarm.org.

Book Nook



Review by Anne Rouquie, TBG

In her book Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life, Barbara Kingsolver journals how her family reduced their carbon footprint, with respect to their food choices. For one year they ate only food they grew themselves or was locally available to them in Southern Appalachia. They wanted “to spend one whole year in genuine acquaintance with our food sources.”

Barbara, her husband Stephen L. Hopp, and daughters Lily and Camille moved from Arizona to a farm in Virginia. Before the actual move, they spent four summers enriching the soil, planting fruit & nut trees, blueberries, raspberries, & an asparagus patch so they could reap the benefits of their labors sooner. The experience begins in March with the asparagus harvest and progresses through the growing seasons highlighting the vegetables grown in each season. Ms. Kingsolver writes with much humor and wisdom and weaves an easily read tale that challenges us to rethink the food experience. Stories of tomato and zucchini harvest and raising turkeys for reproduction are worth the price of the book. Her messages resound: it is important to know who is producing our food and where it is produced and supporting local farmers is vital to our health and the health of the farming economy.

Interspersed throughout the book are short articles about the business of food production written by her husband and recipes and meal plans from her teenage daughter, Camille. Even her younger daughter Lily, a third grader, contributes to the family experience by raising chickens for food and selling the eggs. This is a charming, well-written chronicle and even without “pretty pictures” you won't be able to put it down.

If you are inspired to become a locavore (eating locally grown products) check out www.buylocalhamptonroads.org and www.localharvest.org. You can search by zip code to find markets and local restaurants where local and organically grown foods are offered. These organizations support our local farmers.

You may request to be added to the newsletter mailing list at www.thebackyardgardeners.org or by emailing gardenguru@thebackyardgardeners.org.

Garden Hints

by Patty Bennett, TBG

- ✿ Marigold roots exude a substance scientists state repels and kills nematodes and repels slugs.
- ✿ Herbs like rosemary, sage, basil, garlic and chives give off heavy aromas that upset insects' sensory organs and drive them away.
- ✿ Legumes (peas & beans) produce extra nitrogen which spurs more productive development in other plants within root reach. So mingle them among your other vegetable plants.

"To get the best results, you must talk to your vegetables."

Prince Charles

