



What's Sprouting?

The Oxford Community Garden Newsletter
Ashley Brewer, Editor (msglyptodon@gmail.com)

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Thinking about Tomatoes? Try a Podcast

One of the great frustrations of gardening here in the mid-south is that much of the information from gardening books and magazines does not apply to us. There are two podcasts from Mississippi State University that you can listen to for information more specific to our state. One is *Southern Gardening Radio*, with Dr. Gary Bachman. The other is called *Gardening Through the Seasons* with Dr. Gary Nagel. One recent podcast from Dr. Bachman is entitled "Top Tomato Tips." These tips summarize some of the most important things to remember when growing tomatoes.

- **Consistent watering is key.** Inconsistent irrigation will lead to blossom end rot and "cat facing," as well as lower crop yields. A general rule is to apply one inch of water weekly and two inches when fruit are set. How can you tell? Stick a knife or stick in the ground. You can see how far down the dampness goes by looking at the blade.
- **Use mulch.** Mulch helps keep the moisture in the soil. It also prevents splashing of the soil (and therefore disease organisms) onto the plant leaves.
- **Practice crop rotation to help ward off disease.** If your plot is small, that means considering container gardening for alternate years.
- **Solarize your soil.** You can do this by putting down plastic over the soil for a few weeks to kill disease-causing organisms and weeds. Something to consider--realize that by solarizing, you are killing everything, including beneficial soil microbes and insects.
- **Plant at the right times.** According to the MSU website: "Most Mississippi gardeners know to have their tomatoes planted by Easter, but not everyone realizes a second crop can be grown, too. Fall tomatoes grow very well in Mississippi. Depending on the planting zone,

fall tomatoes should be transplanted sometime in July.” It’s good to know that our climate gives you another chance if your spring crops are wiped out. Easter is a little early this year, so check the weather forecast a week in advance and postpone planting until after temperatures below 34 degrees are predicted.

Note: *Gardening Through the Seasons* is no longer produced, but has online archives. *Southern Gardening Radio* is produced every weekday. You can subscribe to it wherever you get your podcasts, but, in order to access shows older than last week, you’ll have to look at the MSUCares website and search for *Southern Gardening Radio*. “Top Tomato Tips” is from Friday, March 27th.

So Many Gardening Events!

Don’t forget our Seed and Plant Swap: Saturday, April 4th, 11:00 a.m.

Come to the Oxford Community Garden to trade your extra plants or seeds with other gardeners for something new. This is a good time to bring a friend or neighbor who wants to visit the garden. Good selections of transplants and seeds are now available at several places in town: The Barn on West Oxford Loop, Home Depot, the Farmer’s Market store on CR 101, and Oxford Farm and Ranch on Hwy 30 just east of Hwy 7. Dash for Cash on North Lamar typically has a nice selection too.

Lafayette County Master Gardeners Lecture Series: April 9, 16, 23rd, and 30th

Time: 12 noon to 1 p.m.

Place: University Museum, south Fifth St and University Ave.

Each of the four programs features a different speaker. None of the talks are specifically about vegetable gardening. All of them are designed to give you ideas about what to grow in your home landscape and how to do it. There’s nothing on the LCMGA website about it so far. Look for posters around the square and campus for more information.

New Albany Home and Garden Show: April 10 & 11, 2015

Time: April 10 at 11:00 am & April 11 at 8:00 am

City: New Albany, MS

Facility: Union County Fairgrounds

Additional Information: Free Admission & Free Parking: two days of Educational Presentations, Demonstrations, Exhibits, Gardening Vendors, Arts, Crafts, Food and Entertainment. Rain or Shine, Activities are under cover.

More information is at msucares.com/calendar/april15/show.html

Felder Rushing from MPB’s “Gestalt Gardening” is the featured guest. There will be many other speakers. The Master Gardeners will have plants for sale.

Lee County Master Gardeners Annual Plant Sale: April 18, 2015

<http://www.leecountymastergardeners.com/> Their website does not say where or what time the plant sale takes place, but this address is listed at the bottom of the page: MSU Lee County Extension Office, 5338 Cliff Gookin Blvd., Tupelo, MS 38801)

Good news!

- The garden was awarded a Sow It Forward Grant of \$300 from Kitchen Gardeners International, which will support the Community Harvest plots.
- Despite the cold and threat of snow, a group of 40 Chi Omega sorority sisters were at the garden on Saturday, March 28 as part of the University of Mississippi's Big Event day of service. These energetic young women did an extraordinary amount of weeding in the Community Harvest plots, the pathways, the common spaces, the perimeter landscaping beds, and the blueberries. As well, they helped garden supermember Kathy Wachter plant a number of asparagus starts, and worked to prepare some plots that are going to new plot holders. What a great group! All showed a genuine enthusiasm for helping and an interest in gardening. A hearty thanks to our garden members for coming out and supervising.

Meet a Gardener

This month I visited with **Vicki Reithel**, who has been gardening with the Oxford Community Garden since it began in 2009. She is the coordinator for the Community Harvest plots. All the produce from these plots is donated to the Pantry in Oxford. I talked with her while she directed the youth group of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford as they worked to clear out a vegetable bed. Vicki told me that she has been gardening all her life, since she was a child in New Mexico. There they grew potatoes, peppers and tomatoes as well as okra. For several years, she and Walter Flaschka worked a large Community Garden plot together, but recently she gave it up to concentrate on the Community Harvest plot.

Because the Pantry clients really appreciate getting fresh greens, Vicki tries to grow a lot of these. Greens that have done well include turnip greens, Kale, collards, mustard, and chard. Greens, along with cucumbers, are Vicki's suggestions for the easiest-to-grow vegetables in our garden. Right now the main Community Harvest bed contains kale, rosemary and oregano, but when the temperatures warm up, tomatoes and pepper seedlings will go into the spaces that the youth have cleared. After reading this, like me, you may be wondering about getting into growing greens. You can look to the Community Harvest plots, located right inside the front gates of the garden, to see what is doing well. And don't worry if the greens "take over" and you have too many. Every Wednesday during the growing season, Vicki or another volunteer deliver a harvest to the Pantry. If you have extra you'd like to donate to the Pantry, contact Vicki at **662-801-7143**. (She says a text is best, but you can call, too).

Here are some ways to help our community garden feed the hungry in Oxford:

- Water whenever you think the Community Harvest bed plants look droopy. (Yes! you have Vicki's permission to work in the plots in this way!)
- Weed the paths around the Community harvest beds.
- Donate your produce. When you have extra, mark your plot with a pole with flowers tied on it (find in the front of the shed). Then mark the plants to be harvested from with ribbon (in the shed, on the work bench). Vicki or a volunteer will check the garden on Wednesdays in the growing season and harvest for you. Do this when you will be away on vacation and don't want your produce to go to waste.
- Help deliver produce to the Pantry on Wednesdays. Contact Vicki at the number above for more information.

Garden Practicalities

- **Weed is a Verb:** With the recent rain we've had, now is the perfect time to get ahead of the weeds in and around your plot. The soft, saturated ground means it's easy to pull even deep-rooted plants out of the ground. Getting rid of the little problems now means not having to wrestle with monster weeds later!
- **Resources:** In the back of the garden, you'll see that we have two big piles of leaves from last fall as well as dwindling pile of wood chips. The leaf pile next to the old armory has decomposed quite a lot. Dig down and you'll find some leaf compost to add to your plot. We'll work on getting a load of compost brought in as well as work to get some more wood chips. We've got a healthy stack of cardboard for the pathways in the southwest corner underneath a tarp.
- **Upcoming work day:** Watch for an email in a couple of weeks announcing our first official work day of the 2015 gardening season.

(see last page below for the **Recipe of the Month**)

Recipe of the Month

I developed this recipe because I was looking for a way to use the kale and herbs that are the only things many people have in their plots right now. Although some of my kids actually like vegetables, my family has never gotten in on the kale trend. When I brought home the gray, rubbery leaves, the kids flapped around the kitchen in a terrified way and announced that they would not eat that stuff. As a mom, I knew I had to pretend I wasn't scared, too. Breathing deeply, I resolved to cover the kale with all the highly flavorful things that they liked (that happened to be lying around the kitchen). I was relieved to see that once you sauté the kale, it cooks down into something that looks like spinach. I don't know if it's the cheese, garlic or spices, but this thing is delicious and the kids liked it, too.

Crustless Spring Garden Quiche

Ingredients

2 tablespoons butter, one for sautéing and one to grease the pan
1 bunch green onions, minced
1 garlic clove, minced
3 cups chopped kale
1 can of mild Rotel tomatoes and chiles, drained of juice
1/2 cup shredded carrots
5 eggs
3/4 c. milk
7-8 oz. Cheddar cheese, shredded
Salt and pepper, and any herbs you have in your garden, such as rosemary, chives or parsley

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9-inch pie plate with some of the butter. Heat the rest of the butter in a skillet over medium heat; cook and stir the onion and garlic until fragrant, about 2-3 minutes. Add kale, salt and pepper; cook, stirring occasionally, until kale is wilted, about 5 minutes. Stir Rotel and carrots into kale mixture, cook for 5 more minutes. Remove skillet from heat. Whisk eggs and milk together in a bowl. Stir cheese, kale mixture, salt and pepper, and herbs into egg mixture; pour into prepared dish. Bake in the oven until quiche is set in the middle and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean, about 35 minutes. Cool 5 minutes before slicing.