

What's Sprouting!

September 2015



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Garden Announcements

CONTINUING Garden Workdays, first Saturday of each month

Thanks to those who attended our September workday held last Sunday. Special thanks to two Oxford residents, Jeanne and William, for helping. It was a pleasure to meet you and we hope to see you again soon! This workday, we focused on the front landscaping beds. You may notice that garden plots inside the fence are visible from University Avenue now. We're working on a plan to keep it that way.

FALL PLANT AND SEED SWAP

September 19, starting at 11 am

At the Oxford Community Garden

(next to the new pavilion at the corner of Bramlett and University Ave.)

Fall is the right time to thin and transplant! Please bring your perennials, fall seeds, or extra vegetable transplants you have, or just stop by to socialize and check out the garden.

When you aren't working in your garden you could attend one of these nearby festivals...

TALLAHATCHIE RIVERFEST

Arts, Food, Faulkner and Music

September 25-26

Park Along the River, New Albany, MS

<http://www.tallahatchieriverfest.com/>

BODOCK FESTIVAL

September 28-29

Downtown Pontotoc, MS

Arts and crafts, food, bike tour motorcycle tour car show, kids' games and music.

What to Plant Now

The glorious rush of spring into summer brought a freedom cold and an increase in the number of thriving plants. We calculated the days until we could safely put out tender plants. Since the end of August we are living this plan in reverse. Now we are moving toward cold weather. Instead of anticipating the last frost date, now we count the days until the first average annual frost. In our county, that is generally around October 27th, although the actual date has varied wildly in the last 20 years. Many fall crops have just enough time to get to harvest if we plant them now. Some plants, like pumpkins, take about 100 days to mature, so you will be unlikely to get pumpkins before a frost. Other plants are hardier, and can tolerate a little cold. Now is a good time to plant more greens, like collards or spinach. If you are missing lettuce and radishes, those will mature quickly and continue on for a while into the colder months. The important thing to remember is that they must be watered regularly, upfront, in the heat.

September Garden Chores

Just like last month, **watering** continues to be your most important garden chore in September. However, it is also time to think about cleaning up for Fall. **Clearing away dead and diseased plants is important to breaking the disease cycle.** Spores and bacteria overwinter in piles of decaying plants and will re-infect next year's crops if you don't dispose of them carefully. **DO NOT PUT DISEASED PLANTS IN THE COMPOST BINS!** Throw them in the trash pile if a lot, the trash can if a few, or pack them into a bag and take them far away from the garden. Tomato blights and wilts that were widespread this year probably are due to the prolonged heavy rains we had this summer, but we definitely don't want to create a disease reservoir for next year's crops. Feel free to chop up healthy dead plants and pile them up in the compost bins. Give it all a good mixing to promote faster decomposition.

Your next chore is to **ask yourself if you have finished gardening for the season.** If so, you need to clean up your plot. Pull weeds or hoe them, then add a thick layer of leaf mulch. Alternatively, consider sowing a cover crop like clover or ryegrass, hairy vetch or field peas. They are bulky and keep out the weeds, and most importantly, they set nitrogen in the soil. You might try mustard or turnip greens to deliver some natural anti-fungal compounds to the soil. Or try a mixture! Whatever you choose, if you plant cover crops, turn them into the soil in the spring well in advance of planting. If you have a larger plot, feel free to use the Community Garden tiller. If a small plot, a shovel will make quick work of it. Locally, the Barn or Oxford Farm and Ranch have good selections of cover crop seeds or online, try Johnny's Selected Seeds. Late September is a good time to plant them by placing 1 lb. of seed per 1,000 square feet

Now is also a good time to **collect herbs for the winter**. I have so many that I like to dry them and put them in attractive small jars to use as Christmas presents. Basil, sage, oregano and tarragon are good for drying. I just lay them out on paper towels on a dry sunny day in the shade or put them in an oven that was heated to 200 degrees and shut off. If your Rosemary froze like mine did the winter before last, you can root six-inch cuttings in water or moist potting soil. Now is also the time to divide mint family plants like oregano and pot them up to keep in your kitchen for the winter. Keep them outside until frost is a danger and then overwinter them on a sunny kitchen windowsill for fresh herbs all winter long.

Community Harvest Needs You

Vicki Reithel has been working tirelessly for multiple seasons to grow, harvest, and deliver fresh vegetables and fruits to the Pantry. Her circumstances are changing and she is no longer able to direct this effort. We need new volunteers to participate in this important service to the Oxford-Lafayette Community. Some gardeners have expressed an interest in helping, but if you have not, and want to become more involved in Community Harvest, please contact Tiffany Bensen (tiffanybensen@gmail.com).

From the Garden Committee

- Your September chores may have you wondering about some of the following materials.
Wood chips: OPC brought us a fresh load of wood chips, but because of work on the Pavilion, had to drop them outside the fence. Please don't leave cardboard exposed in the garden, cover it up with a good thick layer of wood chips.
Leaves: we are out of leaf mulch but as soon as leaves start falling within City limits, we'll have the city deliver some to us.
Compost: earlier this summer, we purchased 6 cubic yards of compost from The Garden Gin. There's probably about a yard left though it's not obvious because the pile has flattened and is partially hidden by grass. Look for it in front of the giant shrub at the back of the fence. Add some to your plot for your fall plants or in preparation for spring planting.
- This was an exceptional summer for disease and warrants a reminder to all gardeners about keeping **your plots clean and tidy**. Because of the close proximity of our plots to each other, we have a responsibility to our neighbors to stay on top of diseased plants and fruits. Please be conscientious and quick to remove your diseased plants to help prevent spreading in the garden.



Recipe of the Month

Lavonne's Fried Rice

When I was a kid my Dad was in grad school at the University of Minnesota. We lived in campus apartments called "Married Student Housing." Our neighbors were from Surinam, and they taught my parents to cook many things. It was my parents' first exposure to multicultural cooking, since Lavonne and her family were part south American native, part Asian Indian and part Chinese and Dutch. They often made this recipe to use up leftover meat, but it is also a good way to use up lots of greens and make them really tasty.

Fry 1 small chopped onion in oil for a few minutes. Add 1-2 cloves of minced garlic and 3 cups of finely chopped or shredded greens. (I usually use cabbage, but this is good with kale). Sprinkle in a few pinches of red pepper flakes. Next, add chopped carrots, celery or mushrooms if you like them. Fry for about 5 minutes. Then add your diced leftover meat and 2 cups of cooked rice. (Alternatively, add beaten egg instead of meat.) Cook for a few more minutes to heat everything through and pour lots of soy sauce over it. This is a lot like the hibachi cooking you see at Japanese restaurants, except that you're virtuously using up leftovers and not spending \$80. Knife juggling and egg spinning are at your discretion.



A summary of our August OCGA Seminar:

Dr. Jeff Wilson, MSU Extension (662-566-8019)

“Fruit & vegetable gardening for the home, and fall/winter gardening”

8/18/2015, Oxford Public Library

Dr. Wilson’s territory is northeast MS; the specialists dedicated to Lafayette County (662-234-4451) are Margaret Webb (mwebb@ext.msstate.edu) and Lance Newman (lancen@ext.msstate.edu)

General Gardening Recommendations

- * Consider planting fruit trees and shrubs for landscaping and shade trees because they provide multiple benefits.
- * Dr. Wilson first emphasized maintenance of fruit trees and shrubs, making recommendations for pruning, spacing, fertilization, watering
- * Regarding watering, he recommends 1 inch per week, perhaps increasing to 2 inches per week during fruit set. Mississippi receives about 1 inch of rain per week on average, but it is not always at the right time.
- * To decide if/how to fertilize, ideally you would submit a soil sample to the testing lab at MSU Extension, and they can tell you if/how your soil is deficient in particular nutrients. Focus your fertilizer on those deficiencies.
- * When choosing a fertilizer, choose one that is slow-release, contains micro-nutrients (e.g., magnesium, manganese, iron, copper, calcium) rather than just the macronutrients (N/P/K), and by a known name-brand (e.g., Stay-Green or Osmocote)
- * The MSU Extension website has lots of information about recommended varieties and other tips
- * For example, their “Garden Tabloid” publication (available at the office or online: <http://msucare.com/lawn/garden/vegetables/>) provides specific recommendations on how many plants of each vegetable are needed to feed a family of a particular size. This is important to consider when planning your garden. You should also consider when your vegetables will be ripe, so that you will not be on vacation when everything is coming on.

Fruit Gardening Tips

- * Recommended varieties of blueberries for our area include Climax, Tifblue, and Powderblue. Blueberries should be pruned soon after harvest.
- * Recommended variety of persimmon is Fuyu
- * Recommended varieties of blackberries are thornless, and include Navajo, Arapaho, Apache, and Ouachita

Vegetable Gardening Tips:

- * For fall/winter gardening, you should plant seeds by Sep. 1. Can plant transplants/starts several weeks later. Note that the average first killing frost happens on October 26.

* Examples for planting now: Carrots (seed), lettuce, arugula, collards, kale, radishes (seed), turnips (seed), chard

* Mulching (e.g., with a layer of dead leaf mulch) is an important strategy for keeping down weeds and holding moisture in the soil. When buying wheat straw for mulching in the garden, make sure you buy from a field that was not treated with herbicides or pesticides; otherwise, runoff from the straw may kill your other plants.

Q&A from the audience:

* **Question:** If you are not going to plant a fall or winter crop for harvest, what should you do?

* **Answer:** Best alternative is to plant a cover crop (e.g., hairy vetch or cowpeas), and then till it into the soil in late winter / early spring, about 1 month before you plant your spring/summer garden. Such legume cover crops will not only conserve your soil, but will also add nitrogen to it. Vetch may need to be weed-whacked each month to prevent it from seeding.

* **Question:** We had a lot of disease in the garden this year, especially blight on tomatoes; any suggestions?

* **Answer:** This year we had weather that particularly favored disease, with lots of rain. But for disease control, it's important to harvest quickly and remove diseased plants and fruit. Do not allow diseased fruit and plants to persist in the garden area, as they will spread disease to other plants by the wind. It is also important to rotate tomatoes among different places in your plot each year. Fungicide can also be really useful for controlling blight, but is most effective when applied early and regularly, as a preventative measure.

* **Question:** How should we maintain our pathways, as a community garden?

* **Answer:** For controlling bermuda grass in pathways, mowing is not a good idea because that will create a very tough turf, and it will get stronger and stronger. A one-time application of Round-up is a possibility, but would likely have side-effects on crop plants being grown at the time. Mainly, what we are already doing (hand-weeding, cardboard, and (non-treated) woodchips) is the best approach.

* For controlling all weeds, it's really important to pull them when they are small, to stay ahead of them. If you let them get big, it is exponentially more work to control them.