

Notes from “Gardening Basics” workshop by Linda Boyd, sponsored by the Oxford Community Garden Association, June 28, 2014

A few introductory remarks:

1. It can be tough to grow veggies in our area, since the heat and humidity promotes disease & insect pests
2. When choosing a garden site, look for a spot that gets at least 6-8 hours of sun per day, has flat ground, drains well, has easy access to water, and is easy for you to get to

Soil is the most important component of your garden.

1. Remember that it is alive, and the living things in your soil are important.
2. You need to regularly add material, such as leaves and compost, to provide organic matter and nutrients.
3. You may also need a good slow-release fertilizer (e.g., and organic one such as Mighty Grow). Fish emulsion and liquid seaweed are also good fertilizers.
4. This year, Linda double-dug her soil and mixed in cow manure compost from The Barn.

What to grow?

1. Don't order too many kinds of seeds, or plant too much. Give adequate space for each plant.
2. Design your garden on paper before planting.
3. Make it pleasant to visit.
4. Consider the seasons when planting: Learn what grows well in the heat of summer, and what grows well in the cooler weather of spring/fall.
5. Learn what grows well in our local area and our region. Some catalogs have this information. For example, some heirloom tomatoes just don't grow well around here.
6. Recommended tomato varieties: Black varieties (e.g., Chocolate Stripe), paste varieties (e.g., San Marzano, Black Plum), cherry varieties (e.g., Sun Gold), Zebras, Cherokees

Garden Maintenance

1. When watering, water deep whenever possible, to encourage deep root development.
2. Look for signs of stress: yellowing may mean Nitrogen deficiency, leaf curling or browning may indicate disease. There is lots of info online about plant problems, but politely asking a farmer at the market, or a fellow gardener with lots of experience, is a good idea.
3. The best time to check your garden is in the morning, when pest insects are easier to see
4. Tomatoes can be harvested slightly before they are ripe, so they do not become a target for insects.
5. Keep your garden clean and free of rotten or infected fruit, and pull out your plants as soon as they are done.

Advice on starting plants from seeds indoors

1. Take good care of your extra seeds—keep them in the fridge or freezer, optionally inside a jar with some rice to keep them dry
2. To start seeds indoors, put seeds in a damp paper towel in a plastic bag, in a warm place until seeds sprout. Then transplant into sand, keep moist, feed once per week with dilute fish emulsion, and give them lots of light (daylight + soft white bulbs OK).
3. After transplanting seedlings into pots, feed every other week until transplant into field.