

BELLINGHAM



# GARDEN BEET

GARDEN PROJECT



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**AUGUST 2018**

# TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

## *Winter Gardening in the Summer*

*By Dyana Fiediga*

A year round harvest can occur in the Pacific Northwest Maritime climate, but we need to plan ahead and take action earlier than expected by many beginning gardeners. With moderate winter temperatures, we are able to harvest many crops throughout the colder, wetter season using the cooler outside temperatures to our advantage. Cool weather crops planted for a later harvest are less likely to bolt, can taste sweeter and many store well in the ground until we are ready to harvest.

The main timeframe for planting fall and winter gardens begins mid-July and finishes up in early September. Crops will have a difficult time receiving enough light and heat come October when the sun lays lower in the sky as winter makes it way. For a productive fall and winter garden, aim to have most plants well established, but not fully mature by the first frost.

*Now is the time* to plant cold hardy crops, (those which can withstand light frosts to freezing temperatures). By planting now, in the first two weeks of August, you are able to take full advantage of the summer heat and long daylight hours before it begins to wane. Cooler temperatures frequently arrive the second half of August.

## *Preparing Your Soil*

Clear out bolting and overly mature plants and weed unused space to prepare the soil for the next round of crops. Compost unwanted plants and place a thin layer of finished compost on the soil or add a small amount of organic fertilizer, such as pelletized chicken manure, at the base of each plant.

## *What to Plant*

Some plants can handle the cold and their flavor improves after a light frost, while others will literally melt, as their cell walls cannot handle the cold temperatures that occur with a frost. Earlier in the season, we planted our warm weather crops to ensure that they had plenty of time to reach their maturity. Any of these sensitive plants, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplant, summer squash, melons and peppers will need to have their fruits harvested when a frost is predicted.



*Floating row cover provides warmth & protection from pests.*

There is some wiggle room when planting, as each year the season is different. There are basic guidelines that let us know what to plant and when. Looking at the number of days it will take a plant to reach maturity tells us how long until we will be able to harvest a crop. This information can be found on seed packages and start tags. Local seeds and starts sold at the local farmers markets and co-ops provide season specific varieties that will grow well during the cooler wet months. Starts are appropriate to use for larger crops, since many of us do not have a greenhouse to jump-start our plants in mid-July nor the space to directly seed at that point.

Plants that are best directly seeded into the ground now include carrots, beets and turnips. All of these crops can be harvested come fall and stored in the ground over winter in a well-drained garden bed. Cilantro, Swiss chard, spinach, lettuce, broccoli raab, mustard greens and radishes are also able to be directly sown into the soil and can last until the first hard frosts of November. Cooler weather crops that have a longer length to maturity, such as kale, broccoli, cabbage, collards, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts, will need to be transplanted using veggie starts purchased unless direct-sown in mid-July. Many of these plants in the Brassica family transplanted now will be ready late fall or hold throughout the winter and finish sizing up in early spring.

## *Tips Toward a Successful Harvest*

- Keep the soil with your newly planted seeds and transplants moist in the end of the summer heat. This will allow the seeds to germinate successfully and the starts to avoid as much shock as possible.
- Cover young cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts and other Brassicas with floating row cover, if possible, to keep out the cabbage maggot and cabbage worm.
- Thin your carrots, beets, turnips and other crops to allow for extra space for airflow to avoid rot.

*Mulch Crops for Added Warmth*

- Find more resources if need be. Some great books include: *The Maritime Northwest Garden Guide* by Tilth Alliance, *Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades* by Steve Solomon and *Your Farm in the City* by Lisa Taylor.



**A cloche can extend the gardening season.**

- Just try it, keep experimenting and having fun!

## Companion Planting

By Barbara King

Companion planting is the inter-planting of two or more plant species in close proximity to take advantage of naturally occurring symbiotic relationships. The other aspect of companion planting is keeping 'bad companions' apart. For hundreds of years, gardeners have believed this practice can benefit the plants involved to assist in healthy growth or by discouraging pests and disease. Some horticulturalists, however, believe that a better term to use is "plant associations" as many of the benefits long claimed cannot be scientifically proven. How did the idea arise that benefits can be derived by planting certain plants together? An example is the historical planting of the "Three Sisters" - corn, beans and squash - by Native Americans. The beans supplied nitrogen to the soil, the corn stalks provided a structure for the beans to climb and the broad leaves of the squash vines shaded the soil, keeping it moist and inhibiting the germination of weed seeds.

What is known today about beneficial plant associations in the garden? Diverse plantings can attract and retain beneficial insects, including predator and parasitoid species that are important for pest management and plant health. They can also help attract pollinators, improving pollination for certain crops that may be less desirable to pollinators. It seems that the presence of several species in a given area can disrupt the ability of many herbivorous insects to discover their appropriate host plants for feeding or egg laying.

Below ground, research has revealed that many plants share root system connections that transfer nutrients between plant species, facilitating their growth. An example is nitrogen-fixing legumes (like peas or beans), which add nutrients to the soil. Above ground, growing plants can provide shade and moderate the microclimate for newly germinated plants.

Here are some common companion plant ideas to try:

Plant flowers in the Aster family (sunflower, purple coneflower, black-eyed susan) to attract beneficial insects such as lady beetles, spined soldier bugs, assassin bugs and predatory wasps. Plant beans and potatoes together to repel Colorado potato beetles and Mexican bean beetles. Planting onions to repel insects and, maybe, even wildlife. Growing parsley and carrots next to each other can help to deter carrot flies due to the aroma of the parsley. Similarly, the smell of cilantro can repel aphids. Marigolds and chamomile are other examples of strong smelling herbs that can deter garden pests while attracting beneficial insects.

When planning your next garden, why not explore companion planting? Even if you don't give much credence to such plant associations, having flowers intermixed with vegetables is beautiful.



# VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

## Where Have You Bean?

By Shannon Allegra Fox

I'm truly living the life of la vida loca in my garden, sowing seeds I never imagined I'd ever grow in my life, like chickpeas, sun chokes, flax, goji berries and asparagus! Then there's my mystery 10 Bean Tunnel. It's a mystery because at the Bellingham Seed Swap, I gathered a bunch of beans, not knowing the origins of the green giant wonders. Some were labeled Bellingham Pole, Cranberry, Orcas and Garbanzo, to the tune of 10 varieties. I collected many sticks from the woods to build my tunnel structure: mostly straight 10 feet long/2 inch wide for the base and shorter curved pieces for the rounded roof. I sowed the seeds and bean plants started to creep up the structure. An entertaining race began. I love my new bean relationship! I hope my squash, corn and tomatillos don't get jealous.

### Planting

In general, beans are very sensitive to frost (the exception is favas, which require a long, cool growing season). Most beans grow best in air temperatures of 70°F to 80°F, and soil temperature should be at least 60°F. Soggy, cold soil will cause the seeds to rot. Beans need a sunny, well-drained area rich in organic matter. Lighten heavy soils with compost to help seedlings emerge. Beans are self-pollinating, so you can grow cultivars side by side with little danger of cross pollination, so corn would be a companion plant. Plant your first crop of beans a week or two after the date of the last expected frost. Sow bush beans 1 inch deep in heavy soil and 1½ inches deep in light soil. Firm the earth over them to ensure soil contact. Most bush bean cultivars should be planted 3-6 inches apart in rows 2-2½ feet apart. They produce the bulk of their crop over a 2-week period. For a continuous harvest, stagger plantings at 2-week intervals until late September. Bush beans usually don't need any support unless planted in a windy area. In that case, prop them up with brushy twigs or a strong cord around stakes set at the row ends or in each corner of the bed. Pole beans are even more sensitive to cold than bush beans. They also take longer to mature (10-11 weeks), but they produce about three times the yield of bush beans in the same garden space and keep on bearing until the first frost. Sow pole beans in single rows 3-4 feet apart or double rows spaced 1 foot apart. Sow seeds 2 inches deep and 10 inches apart. Provide a trellis or other vertical support at planting or as soon as the first two leaves of the seedlings open. Planting pole beans around a tepee support is a fun project, but it will be more difficult to harvest the beans than from a simple vertical trellis.

### Growing Tips

Bush beans germinate in about 7 days, pole beans in about 14. It's important to maintain even soil moisture during this period and when the plants are about to blossom. If the soil dries out at these times, your harvest may be drastically reduced. Water deeply at least once a week when there is no rain, being careful not to hose off any of the blossoms on bush beans when you water. Apply several inches of mulch (after the seedlings emerge) to conserve moisture, reduce weeds and keep the soil cool during hot spells (high heat can cause blossoms to drop off). Beans generally don't need extra nitrogen for good growth because the beneficial bacteria that live in nodules on bean roots help to provide nitrogen for the plants. To speed up growth, give beans—particularly long-bearing pole beans or heavy-feeding limas—a midseason side-dressing of compost or kelp extract solution.

*continued on next page*



# VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

## Harvesting

Pick green beans when they are pencil size, tender and before the seeds inside form bumps on the pod. Harvest almost daily to encourage production. If you allow pods to ripen fully, the plants will stop producing and die. Pulling directly on the pods may uproot the plants. Instead, pinch off beans using your thumbnail and fingers or use scissors. Also remove any overly mature beans you missed in previous pickings. Serve, freeze, can or pickle the beans the day you harvest them to preserve the fresh, delicious homegrown flavor.

Pick shell beans for fresh eating when the pods are plump but still tender. The more you pick, the more the vines will produce. Eat or preserve them as soon as possible. Unshelled, both they and green beans will keep for up to a week in the refrigerator.

To dry beans, leave the pods on the plants until they are brown and the seeds rattle inside them. Seeds should be so hard you can barely dent them. If the pods have yellowed and a rainy spell is forecast, cut the plants off near the ground and hang them upside down indoors to dry completely. Put the shelled beans in airtight, lidded containers. Add a packet of dried milk to absorb moisture, and store the beans in a cool, dry place. They will keep for 10 to 12 months.

## Pests & Disease

If disease strikes, destroy infested plants immediately, don't touch other plants with unwashed hands or clippers, and don't sow beans in that area again for 3 to 5 years.

The Master Gardeners are a free and local gardening resource to help you figure out what's wrong with your plants, solve horticultural puzzles, identify pests and so much more. They are available weekdays at the WSU Whatcom County Extension office and can be reached at (360) 778-5808. [Visit www.whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/clinic.html](http://www.whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/clinic.html) for more information.

*Scarlet Runner Pole Beans on Trellis*



*Green Romano Bean Harvest*



# VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

## *Beet Carpaccio with Marinated Bean Salad*

### Ingredients

- 4 medium beets
- 1/2 pound green or mixed beans, trimmed
- 1/4 cup toasted pine nuts or toasted sunflower seeds
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 2 shallots, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- sea salt
- freshly ground pepper

### Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Wash beets well and remove green tops if necessary.
3. Line a roasting pan with aluminum foil and place the beets in the pan. Coat them with a tablespoon of olive oil and sprinkle with salt.
4. Cover the beets with aluminum foil, place in the oven to roast for about an hour or until tender. Beets are done once they can be easily speared with a fork.
5. Remove from oven and let cool. Alternatively, if you have a steamer, you can steam the beets for about 40 minutes, or until soft.
6. While beets are cooking, mix the shallots in a large bowl with the parsley, mustard and vinegar. Slowly whisk in the rest of the olive oil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
7. Bring 6 cups of water to a boil. Add the beans and let them cook for about 3 minutes. You just want to blanche the beans, not cook them through, so that they stay firm and beautifully bright green.
8. Remove beans from the water and add them to the marinade.
9. Once the beets have cooled, slice them as thin as you like, season with salt and pepper and arrange in a single layer over 4 large plates.
10. Top with green beans, spooning any leftover marinade on top, and sprinkle with toasted pine nuts or sunflower seeds.



## *Basic Green Bean Recipe*

### Ingredients

- fresh green beans (whole or already trimmed)

### Preparation

1. Boil a medium to large pot of water (small if you're only preparing green beans for 1 or 2).
2. Wash the green beans and trim the ends (if not already trimmed).
3. Once water is boiling, toss green beans in pot and boil (blanch) for about 4 minutes.
4. Once they've turned bright green, drain the beans in a colander.
5. Drizzle olive oil or top the green beans with some of the following toppings:

- butter
- melted cheese
- soy sauce
- garlic salt
- sesame seeds
- parmesan cheese
- toasted almonds

# VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

## Broccoli By Alex Milne



Broccoli is believed to be a descendent of wild Mediterranean kale which was bred carefully over time to have certain traits, such as large flower buds. It's a member of the cabbage family (*Brassica oleracea*, if you want to be fancy). Siblings in this plant family include cabbage, kale, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts. This may seem hard to believe but once you begin to familiarize yourself with these plants, you'll see how similar they look and how their needs are much the same. Broccoli is a great choice for the home gardener. It's delicious, nutritious and can offer a continuous harvest from main head to side shoot.

### Planting

Broccoli is a cool season crop. In Western Washington, it can be grown year round with good timing. Here are some tips for success. For a summer harvest, plant your broccoli indoors from late February-March, then transplant outdoors after the danger of frost. Remember to harden off your plant starts by gradually exposing them to outdoor temperature before putting them in the ground. This will reduce shock. If you are sowing your seed directly into the ground, plant into your outdoor garden bed as early as mid-March (with the use of floating row cover to increase soil temperature). For a fall harvest, direct sow from late March to July or transplant outside from mid-July to mid-August. Due to the mild climate in the Maritime Pacific Northwest, broccoli can be overwintered. Direct sow mid-July to early August or transplant late August to harvest broccoli the following spring. *Familiarize yourself with varieties before planting and the temperatures in which they thrive.*

Find a location that gets full sun and has fertile, moist soil that is preferably between 6.0 and 7.0 ph. Work in some compost before planting to provide nutrients and organic matter, which will help your soil retain moisture. Your broccoli will thank you. Plant seeds ½ inch deep or plant your transplants deeper by burying them up to their first true leaves. Give broccoli enough room to grow by planting your seeds or transplants 1 ½ - 2 feet apart. You can expect your broccoli to grow 2-3 feet in height.

### Growing Tips

Your job is not quite over once the broccoli is in the ground. Your new babies will still need some attention. Make sure to keep the soil moist. Daily watering may be required during the summer months. Watering from the bottom is best because getting the heads of the broccoli too wet can lead to mildew problems. It's beneficial to add some organic liquid fertilizer after they have been in the ground for 3 weeks.

### Broccoli Varieties

Broccoli has quite a few different faces. A few varieties include:

**Green Goliath:** heat-tolerant with side shoots that mature for harvest after you cut the main head

**Green Duke:** heat tolerant, early-season variety that is especially good for hot summers

**Calabrese:** Italian heirloom with side shoots that mature for harvest after you cut the main head, great for fall planting

**Flash:** fast-growing heat-resistant hybrid with side shoots that mature once the main head is cut, great for fall planting

**Romanesco or 'broccoflower':** a mix between cauliflower and broccoli that looks like something from the bottom of the ocean or outer space, with conical, pointy clusters, a lighter green color and a nutty flavor



## *Pests & Disease*

With these growing tips, your broccoli should live a healthy, undisturbed life, but some pests/diseases to look out for include black leg, aphids, club root, downy mildew and western flower thrips. If you see anything abnormal with your plants keep these suspects in mind. *If you have a plant or pest problem, head down to the Washington State University Whatcom County Extension office to the Diagnostic Plant Clinic for FREE help. Call (360)778-5808 for hours or visit <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ch/clinic.html> for more information.*

## *Harvest*

Broccoli can take 50-100 days to mature, depending on the variety, how much sun they receive and the particular season's average temperature. Harvest when the buds on the head are tight and close together. Make sure to harvest before your broccoli head turns into a flower! If you see any yellow petals emerging, harvest immediately. It's best to harvest broccoli in the morning while it is cooler outside. Cut the stalk about 6 inches below the top broccoli head. Most varieties have side shoots that will continue to grow. Broccoli will keep for about 5 days in fridge.

You always hear that you should be eating your greens. Broccoli is no doubt one of the healthiest green plants and is full of vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and antioxidants. Broccoli is perhaps best known for helping to prevent some types of cancer, such as stomach, breast and intestinal. It's known to help prevent sun damage, promote bone/ joint health, lower cholesterol, aid digestion and improve our body's ability to detox. Broccoli is very high in fiber, vitamin A and vitamin C. Additionally, it's a good source of Vitamin E and K, folate, potassium and phosphorus. If you want to consume your broccoli without losing any nutrients in the cooking process, eat it raw or lightly steamed.

## *Broccoli and Apple Salad with Nuts*

### **Ingredients for Salad**

- 2 medium heads of broccoli, chopped
- 1 large carrot, grated
- 1 apple, cored and finely chopped
- 1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup walnuts or almonds, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup dried cranberries

### **Preparation**

1. In a bowl, mix all the ingredients for the dressing and season to taste.
2. In a separate bowl, mix the ingredients for the salad.
3. Thoroughly mix the dressing and into the salad.
4. Serve right away or chill it in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes.

### **Ingredients for Dressing**

- 1 cup mayonnaise or veganise
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

## Food Miles

By Tessa McKnight

Have you ever heard someone use the phrase "food miles" and wondered what on earth they meant? The first time I heard this term I was confused too. I had no idea what my friend was talking about! Lucky for you, I did some research, and now I get to share what I learned with you.

Food miles is a really simple idea. It's the amount of miles our food travels from the place it was grown to where we eat it. This seems pretty simple and straightforward, doesn't it? Unfortunately, sometimes it isn't.

Let's take fish for example. If a fisherman catches fish off of the coast of America, in the Pacific Ocean, those fish will sometimes be shipped as far as China to be processed. And then they are shipped all the way back to America to be sold! But that's not all. Before the fish reaches the stores, it first goes to a distribution center somewhere in America and then it is shipped to stores where we can buy it. In addition, we add some travel miles to our fish if we put it in a car and drive it home! Did you ever realize that our food travels so far? Each step of that journey uses fuel and other resources and also adds pollution to the air and water.

*Shopping locally is a great way to reduce your food miles.*

There are so many benefits to shopping locally. This means to buy food that has been locally grown, caught or harvested. When we do this, we support local farmers and help our community to be strong. Buying from our local community food co-op, straight from the farmers, trading with friends or a road-side vegetable stand are all great ways to keep food miles low. This also directs money to our neighbors and friends.

*If you really want to keep your food miles as low as possible, nothing beats growing your own food at home!*

### Find Out How Far Your Food Traveled!

**It's easy to discover how far your food has traveled. Follow the steps below to find out how local (or not!) the foods you commonly eat are.**

- 1. Find the country of origin. Look on the back of the container that your food came in or on the produce sticker. You should be able to see where the food was made. It may say something like "Manufactured in America" or "Product of Mexico."**
- 2. Look up this country on a map or use the Internet (ask for help if you need it). Where is it in relation to where you live?**
- 3. Calculate the miles between Bellingham and the country of origin. Google Maps makes this really easy!**

