



GARDEN PROJECT

GARDEN BEET

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JUNE 2018

VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

Salad Greens

By Terri Ruddy



A new succession of salad mix

garden in as little as 6-8 weeks. I try to eat greens with every meal, and I plant in succession to have a steady supply throughout the growing season.

Succession planting uses space and time so you can have a continual supply of a crop. Set aside a designated area to plant a second set of your greens two or three weeks after your first planting. Repeat this throughout the growing season to have a continuously bountiful harvest.

Most salad greens are cool loving crops so when the heat of summer comes it's a bit tricky. It can be as simple as finding a shady area in the garden or try planting a succession on the north side of taller crops for shade.

Spinach

Pay close attention to seed varieties, as some do better in warmer temps.



Salad greens are one of my favorite veggies to grow. Most salad greens are fast growing and easy to plant from seed. Because they are cold tolerant, you can direct sow many varieties in early spring. Start them indoors and transplant them outside after the last frost. You can have fresh salad straight from your

Enjoy playing with the arrayed pallet of greens to include lettuce, spinach, arugula, mustards, kale, mizuna, and even add in herbs and edible flowers. What fun!

Leafy greens grow best in a rich well-drained soil with plenty of organic matter. They like to stay consistently moist, otherwise, they may experience stress. For best results, water near the roots and not directly on the leaves.

There are many ways to harvest salad greens depending if you want baby greens or head lettuce. For loose leaf lettuce or baby greens of any sort, make a clean cut with a scissors or knife taking the outer leaves and allowing the baby leaves to remain. They will continue to grow and you can harvest again in a week or so. Head lettuce can be harvested in 60-80 days depending on the variety. Once flower stalks begin to grow the lettuce will be bitter to the taste. Harvest in the early morning when it is not too hot.

Slugs and snails can be a pest to salad greens. Keep weeds and grass low around your garden to reduce their habitat. I find the best way to combat these critters is to monitor your greens frequently and pick them off whenever you see them. If you go outside at night with a flashlight, this is when they are most active.

You can also make a trap by putting beer or yeast and water in a shallow container not much higher than the soil level. The slugs are attracted to the smell, climb in and then drown. If you find these techniques are not working and that their population has become more than you can handle there are organic pesticide products on the market that can help. This should be your last resort and be sure to read the labels and use the product exactly as specified.

Salad Mix with Lettuce, Cilantro & Arugula



VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

In my garden, I like to have several different types of greens growing at all times so that I can add many greens to my salad. In our house, no two salads ever taste the same. Planting your favorite greens is key. Have fun and experiment with head lettuce, loose leaf lettuce, and tightly planted mixes that you can harvest for baby greens. Edible flowers are a delight to the eyes and can bring spice (like nasturtium) or chive for that mild oniony flavor. Herbs like mint leaves, cilantro, and dill are easy additions to your garden and very yummy in a salad.

There are so many delicious ways to create a salad with crunch and color. I'll leave that part up to you to create. With your own garden, each day can bring a new salad. The sky is the limit by adding sprouts, other veggies, nuts, fruits, cheese, or meat. But what about dressing?

For many, a salad is just not a salad without the dressing. On salad greens, it's important to have a dressing because the fat from the oil makes it easier to digest. Unfortunately, a lot of the premade, store bought dressings available out on the market have a lot of sugars, preservatives and other ingredients that have a lot of harmful health effects. This can defeat the whole purpose of eating the salad in the first place. The good news is salad dressing is very easy to make at home and is very cost effective.

The basics of a good dressing are:
Oil + Vinegar + Sweet + Spice + Herbs + Seasonings

Oil: extra virgin olive, sunflower, avocado, sesame, walnut

Vinegar: balsamic, rice wine, apple cider vinegar, red wine, sherry

Sweet: maple syrup, honey, brown sugar

Spice: mustard (yellow, dijon or grainy) optional

Herbs: cilantro, basil, oregano, dill, thyme, rosemary

Seasoning: salt, pepper, paprika, garlic, ginger, parsley

Mesculin Mix with Mizuna, Tat Soi & Kale



Lettuce Sown Close for Salad

Honey Mustard Detox Dressing

Ingredients

- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup raw apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1-2 tablespoons honey or maple syrup to taste
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- salt & pepper to taste

Directions

1. Place all the ingredients into a container with lid, such as a mason jar.
2. Then shake, shake, shake until the honey has dissolved and all is mixed.
3. The dressing tastes best if you let it sit for half an hour before serving. Any extra dressing can be stored in the fridge for about a week or so.

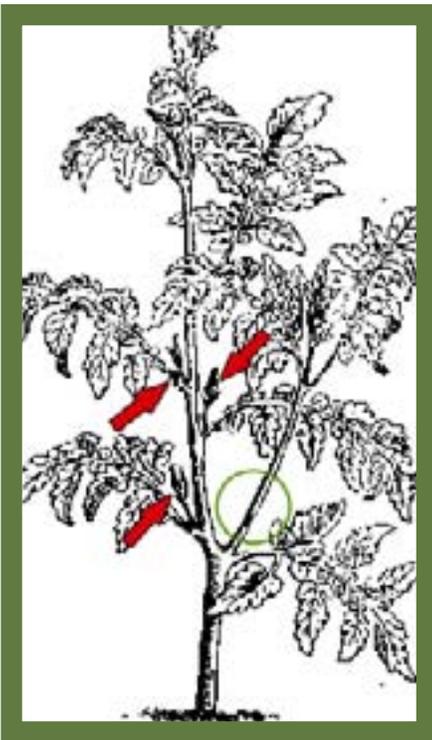
Tomato Growing Tips By Sunseed Farm

Growing great tomatoes west of the Cascades comes down to a handful of important details:

1. Variety: Don't expect to have success with the seeds Uncle Marv sent you from New Jersey—unlike some parts of the country, we need to choose our varieties pretty carefully in order to make sure the harvest rolls in before the late blight does. While all the varieties Sunseed sells as plants are growable here, we always recommend the nonheirlooms for the main crop, and the heirloom varieties for a yummy, but supplemental addition.

2. Timing and Protection: We strongly discourage planting before May 1st unless you're planting into a greenhouse. Depending on the year and the microclimate of the garden, tomatoes may even want some protection throughout May. June, July, and August are generally very safe months for unprotected tomato plants, but by September, they will likely benefit from being kept relatively dry. The late blight strikes wet leaves, so keeping the leaves dry in the late summer and fall is a big benefit.

3. Pruning: *This is without a doubt, the most overlooked, and underestimated aspect of tomato growing.*



There is no one "right way" to prune, but we'll provide some basic ideas, and the example of how we do our own. **The first big question is, determinate or indeterminate.** Take another look at the tag that came with your plant start to see what you've got. We'll start with determinate, because they're easy: leave them alone—no pruning necessary. For this reason we often recommend the determinates to busy or first time gardeners. Indeterminates on the other hand do need pruning to realize their harvest potential in this climate. Take a look at the drawing. It is important to get acquainted with the basic growth habit of the plant: central stem (or leader), leaves and fruit trusses coming off the stem, and axil shoots or "suckers" emerging from each leaf axil. The basic idea is to remove many of these suckers from the main stem, leaving perhaps 1-4 of them to grow out into additional vines. *We leave just one sucker to grow in addition to the central leader.* In the drawing, the red arrows point to suckers that we remove by pinching or cutting, and the green circle marks the one sucker that we have let grow into a second vine.

4. Know when to hold 'em, and know when to fold 'em: The end of summer can come sneaking right up some years. An important way to increase your yield is anticipating the change. Invariably, there are lots of green fruit on the vines as fall nears that won't ripen up in time. Some of these can be harvested to ripen later or used green, but we find the most benefit from thinning the fruit load when the nights start to cool. Every year and neighborhood is different, but a good place to start might be the end of August, and then see what you learn. By clipping off all the blossoms and little fruit, and snipping the growing tips off of the vines, you can divert that energy where it matters more—fruit that actually have a chance of getting red.

Visit www.sunseedfarm.com for more tips on tomatoes and so much more.

VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

Winter Squash- The Often Overlooked Vegetable By Ayesha Brookshier

In my experience winter squash is often overlooked as a common household vegetable. Let me assure you, this is quite a unique and fantastic veggie for many reasons. There are a wide variety of winter squash that differ in shape, color, and taste. Some of the better known varieties are Acorn, Delicata, Butternut, Spaghetti, Carnival, Kabocha, Hubbard, and...yes, pumpkin!



Gourds & Pumpkins



Young squash plant with plenty of room to grow.

First, let's go over the basics. Winter squash are vining plants that like to trail along the ground and are actually planted in late May/early June here in the maritime Pacific Northwest. They are harvested in early Fall before the first frost, which usually occurs in October. Like other members of the plant family Curcubitaceae (which is a broad family of plants that include summer squash like zucchini, cucumbers, and melons) winter squash thrive on plenty of summer heat.

Secondly, winter squash are not only delicious, but also packed full of a vast amount of nutritious goodness and are an excellent source of vitamin A, iron, fiber, beta-carotene, niacin, and potassium. I especially like winter squash because of their complex carbohydrates, which help regulate blood sugar, compared to other more simple types of carbohydrates (white pasta, fruit, potatoes) that can spike blood sugar.

And lastly, winter squash are a testament to delayed gratification in the garden. They generally take 3+ months to mature. Because winter squash develop "shell" type hard skin, they lend themselves to winter storage very easily. Some other vegetables can also be stored, without canning or freezing, for winter if done properly, such as potatoes and onions. Winter storage of extra squash offers a great opportunity for prolonging your harvest.



Beautiful Squash Blossoms

VEGGIES OF THE MONTH

Winter Squash Planting Tips

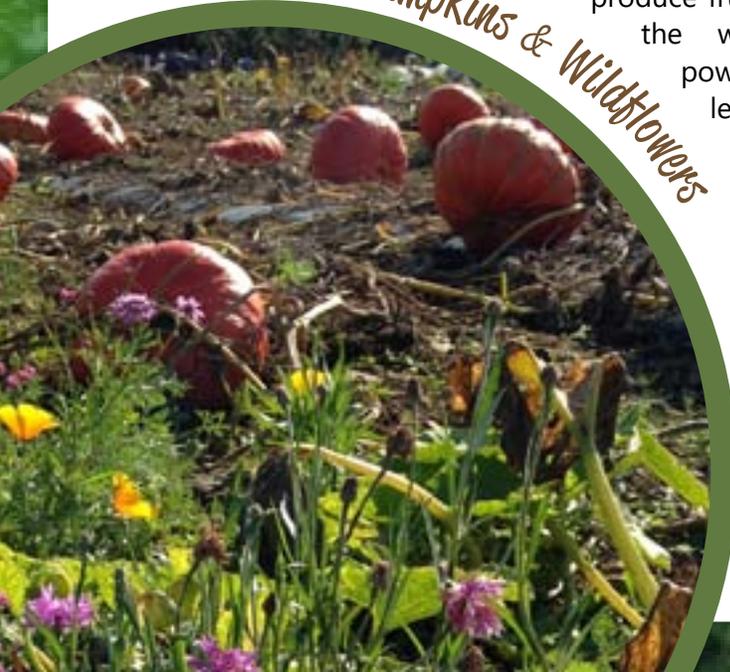
Winter squash thrive in warm weather, rich soil nutrients such as aged manure, compost or worm bin castings/tea, and plenty of room for the trailing vine (sometimes you can find a "bush" variety that takes less growing space). In the maritime Pacific Northwest, transplanting is recommended because they have such a long growing season. Some of the smaller fruiting varieties (sugar pie pumpkins) can be grown on a trellis, which is handy for saving space in a raised bed. For most other varieties, if you plant in the corner of your raised bed or in-ground garden, you can let the plant sprawl out into lawn, walkway, or some other empty area. Only the roots of the plant need to be in soil. A mature winter squash can have a trailing vine 8 feet long or longer. After planting, regular watering and mulching around the base of the plant will help retain soil moisture and keep weeds down.

If you have a compost pile and winter squash seeds get tossed in, don't be surprised to find "volunteer" winter squash growing out of your compost. For the past two summers I have gotten some of the best crops of Acorn squash from my compost pile plants, where the soil is so rich and so warm!

In this part of the world the most common problems you could encounter growing winter squash are aphids (when aren't they a problem?), cucumber beetle, and powdery mildew. In my experience powdery mildew is the most common problem, of which other plants in the same family, such as cucumbers and zucchini, also get in mid-to-late summer. To decrease your chances of getting powdery mildew, try to keep the leaves from getting wet when watering, and pick off any infected leaves as soon as they appear. Plants are quite

resilient and will still usually produce fruit, even with the white fungal powder on the leaves.

Cinderella Pumpkins & Wildflowers



Harvesting & Storing

I find it difficult to wait long enough for fruit maturity, but it's important to be patient. Generally, you harvest winter squash in early fall (late September), however, with the record hot summer of 2015, my first Acorn and Delicata squash were ready for harvest in late August. The plants continued to produce through early October! The skin should be tough enough that you can't puncture it with a fingernail. The signs of maturity can vary depending on type, but generally the darker color of the fruit indicates ripeness.

Once you've harvested the fruit, it can be tempting to want to eat it immediately, but if you set the squash to cure in a warm dry place for 1-2 weeks, this will help the skins seal and the stems dry for long-term storage. Then move the squash to a cool dry place for storage. Waiting 2-3 weeks after harvesting will allow the sugars of the squash to develop and the flavor and texture to improve greatly.

When it comes to eating winter squash, I find that the easiest way to try it for the first time is to cut squash in half (leaving skin on), core out the seeds with a spoon, place on cookie sheet or in casserole dish, drizzle with olive oil/butter and sprinkle with sea salt and pepper. Drizzling with maple syrup also is an extra treat! Other great options are chopping into cubes and adding to veggie medley or soup. I especially like making winter squash/butternut pureed soup and a recipe for this will be in the September issue of the *Garden Beet*.

Although winter squash can take a bit of room, they are such a wonderfully delicious treat. Perhaps you'll want to give them a try in your garden this year. Now is the perfect time to transplant them.

Why Compost With Worms?

By Elsie Konselman

We have all heard it said that earthworms are a sign of healthy soil. We accept this and seldom question what these amazing creatures do. Children are intrigued by worms. Some consider them creepy crawly creatures and won't touch them. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, called earthworms "the intestines of the earth." Charles Darwin, who studied earthworms for over 30 years said, "It may be doubted whether there are any other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world as have these lowly organized creatures."

In his book, *Harnessing the Earthworm*, Dr. Thomas Barrett says it best: "Earthworms are soil builders, everything else – plant, animal, man and bacteria, are food for earthworms whose function is to mix living matter with mineral particles and send them forth on their round once again." It is a cycle established by nature that has been at work since the beginning of time. A continuous flow of substances passing from one form of life to another, round and round without end. In modern times we have called it the soil food web.

Worms are nature's ultimate recyclers. They tunnel through the ground eating as they go. Taking organic materials and microbes in, making tunnels for air and water to reach the roots of plants and turning out "black gold." Microbial activity in **vermicompost** is 10-20 times higher than in the organic matter that the worm ingests. Studies have shown that vermicompost is 5 times higher in nutrients than traditional compost. Rich with phosphorus, nitrogen, and many other nutrients and trace minerals, vermicompost is an excellent organic fertilizer.

How can we as gardeners put earthworms to work for us? The answer is simple—compost with worms!

You might say, "I already have a composting system going." Many homeowners do. But unless you are doing cold compost, which can take a year or more to finish, worms cannot survive in a traditional compost pile due to the temperature required to breakdown the material. So you are not getting the added benefits that worms can bring to your compost. A worm composter can complement what you are already doing. Worm composting allows you to produce rich compost year round. It eliminates the need to bury kitchen waste in the garden or compost pile, or not use it at all, for fear animals will dig it up.

Worm composting is the perfect answer for people living in condominiums, apartments and small homes where space is limited. It can be done indoors or out. There is no heavy lifting or turning piles, so the elderly and children can do it. And added to all this, studies have shown that the average household can reduce the amount of waste going into landfills by up to 30% by recycling their kitchen waste, paper and cardboard through a worm composter.

Space will not permit listing all the amazing benefits of vermicompost. If you would like to learn how you can get started with a worm composter and read more about these marvelous creatures, below are some sources of information.

Worm Compost - Ready to Use

Resources

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost/easywormbin.htm>

<http://whatcom.wsu.edu/ag/compost/redwormsedit.htm>

- *Teaming With Microbes*, Jeff Lowenfels & Wayne Lewis
- *The Earth Moved*, Amy Stewart
- *Worms Eat My Garbage*, Mary Appelhof
- *Harnessing the Earthworm*, Thomas Barrett

Mulch Your Heart Out By Cassie Castrejon



Mulching has numerous benefits.

Mulching has many benefits for both the garden and the gardener. The act of adding mulch creates a surface for the garden that retains moisture, limits fluctuations in soil temperature, protects soil structure from heavy rains and suppresses weed growth. Not to mention, it often makes the garden more attractive. Mulch made of organic matter adds biomass to the soil that will break down in time, thus adding nutrients. Also, mulch keeps beneficial insects (microbes and worms) in the garden happy by giving them shelter and food. What I love most about mulch is its ability to suppress the mutant-like growing capabilities of weeds and invasive plants.

Weeds can be a lot of work for a gardener. They grow quickly in most places and have really good methods of producing and releasing lots of seeds. Their opportunistic roots can make their way deep into the soil stealing water and nutrients from surrounding plants. What's the solution? Yep, that's right, mulch!

When to Mulch?

It is best to begin mulching in the spring or early summer months after your transplants have been placed into the soil and direct sown crops are making their way towards maturity. You don't want to apply over direct sown areas right away because it blocks out the necessary sun that young plants need to grow. You can also mulch at the end of the growing season to protect your garden from heavy rains that can cause compaction and leach nutrients from the soil.

Wood chips are fabulous for pathways but not good for veggie gardens.

How to Mulch?

The first step, no matter what mulch material you choose, is to remove as much of the weeds and invasive plants you can from the garden. If you are mulching a large area, I suggest going through with a hoe and chopping up the roots. Mulching pathways will also suppress weeds and make paths more pleasant to walk on and free of mud in wet times of the year. Once you have cleared the weed roots, by any means necessary, you can now mulch your heart out. Keep mulch 1-2 in. away from the stems of plants. Plants that are in direct contact with mulch can be more susceptible to pests and disease.



TOOLS & TECHNIQUES

Organic Mulch Materials

There are a variety of materials that you can use alone or in combination. Apply a 2-3 inch layer:

- **Straw** but not hay which has seed heads.
- **Grass Clippings** free of weed seed.
*If fresh, apply 1 inch layers at a time and allow to dry to avoid matting.
- **Shredded Leaves** but only use deciduous leaves on your vegetable bed.
- **Shredded Newspaper** but don't use the glossy pages.

I pick materials based on their availability and cost. I prefer a combination of dried leaves that I shred with a lawn mower and dried grass clippings. Dried leaves are especially useful because they bring beneficial fungi into the garden. I'm not shy waiving down landscapers with fresh grass from a lawn without many weeds. Searching for mulching materials can be like a fun scavenger hunt, with the added bonus of meeting folks in the community and helping local businesses reduce their waste. The saying "one man's trash is another's treasure" is true, especially when it comes to mulch!

Love Your Garden and Maintain Your Mulch

No matter what kind of mulch you decide to use, regularly check your garden. Look for signs of small leaves protruding from the mulch. If you see weed leaves, then clear a small area around the base of the weed stem and dig out the roots the best you can. Afterwards, reapply mulch to the area. Mulching is an act of love in the garden with numerous benefits. It's also an act of love for yourself, since you will be spending more time admiring your garden than watering or bent over weeding.

Keep plant stems free of mulch.



*Learn from Mother Nature.
She never leaves her soil bare.*

Shred dried leaves for a great free mulch.



KID'S CORNER

Edible Flowers By Allie Bishop Pasquier

Have you ever eaten flowers? You probably have! Two popular flowers that we eat are broccoli and cauliflower: when you eat those, you're eating flower stalks and unopened flower buds. If you leave your broccoli in the garden after it ripens, you'll notice that it begins to open up into yellow flowers. Guess what? You can eat those flowers!



Calendula

Try some of the following beautiful flowers that are EASY to grow in your garden. You might already have some of these plants growing, so leave your plants in the ground to wait for their delicious flowers.

Calendula is easy to grow and often re-seeds itself. To eat, simply remove the petals. Add the bright yellow or orange petals to a salad for a splash of color. You can add to some fritters or a yummy tea. The taste is mild but slightly sweet. It's also full of vitamin C.

Kale Flowers are small and yellow with a similar taste to broccoli. The buds are delicious too! The plant produces flowers when it bolts or goes to seed towards the end of its life cycle.



Chive Blossoms

Arugula flowers are a product of bolting as well. White flowers open on the top of the arugula plant. Arugula buds have a delicious nutty flavor and the flowers are sweet and spicy. A combination of buds and flowers topping a salad is great.

Nasturtium is another easy to grow and colorful plant that blooms in yellow, orange and red. You can eat every part the plant: the petals, leaves and stems. Nasturtium has a peppery flavor. Save nasturtium seeds to plant the next year – or just let the seeds drop from the flowers you have not eaten this year and they'll come back for you in the next growing season.



Violas

There are many, many more edible flowers in the world: violas, rose petals, lavender and chive flowers to name a few. Growing flowers to eat in your garden adds beautiful color and attracts bees and butterflies. Enjoy your flowering plants in the garden and on your dinner plate.

Make Your Own Flower Play Dough!

- In a large bowl, combine 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 2 tablespoons vegetable oil and 2 tablespoons cream of tartar.
- Add 1 ½ cups of hot water into the mixture and mix to form a dough.
- Add in your flower petals. If they are large, rip or cut them into small pieces. You can divide the play dough into smaller balls before you add the petals so you can have a few different kinds of play dough to keep. Think about some other things you might add from your garden. What could make it change color? What could make it smell good?
- Enjoy your play dough! Keep it in an airtight container to keep it soft.

Kale Flowers

