

# ORGANIC GARDENS *TODAY*

SUMMER 2013

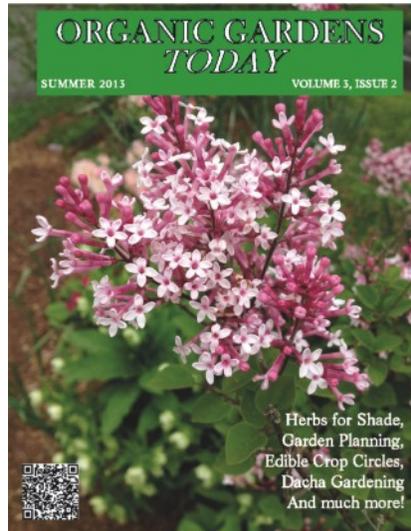
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 2



Herbs for Shade,  
Garden Planning,  
Edible Crop Circles,  
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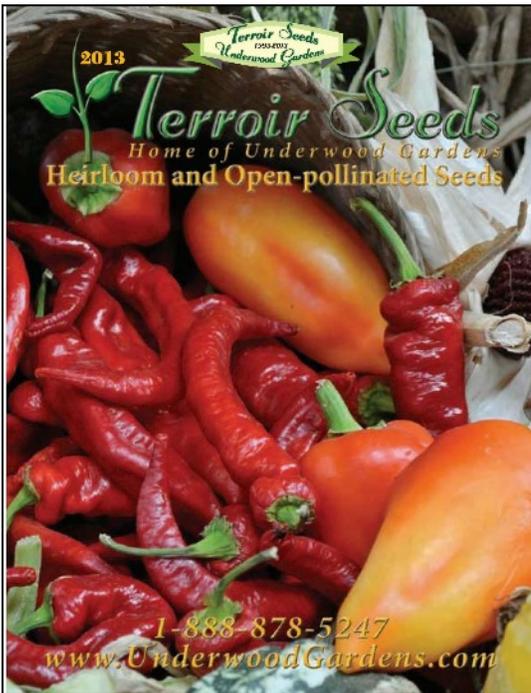
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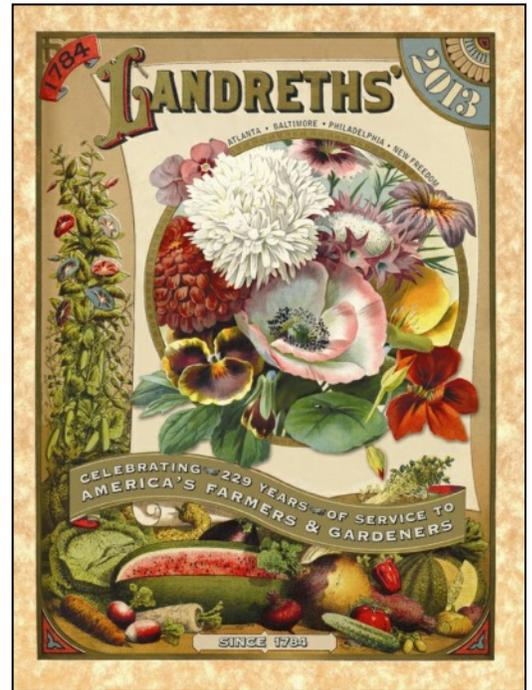
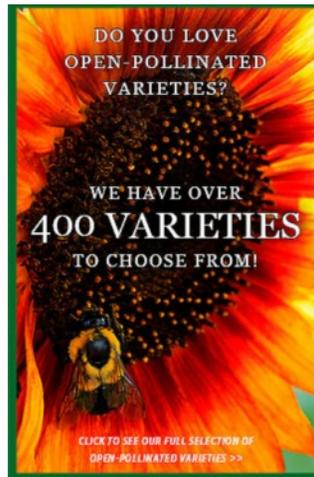
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## SUGGESTED GARDENING RESOURCES



### High Mowing Organic Seed



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*Ken Owen Wildlife Photography*

For the back page photo.

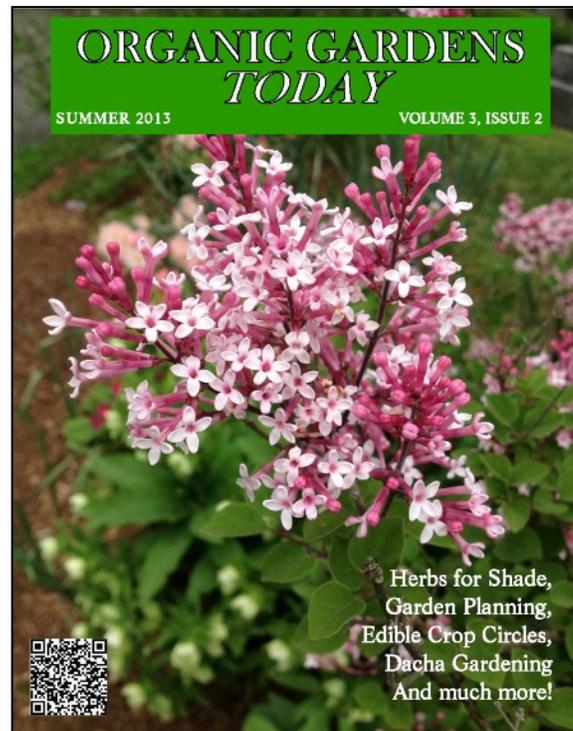
You can view his remarkable photos on his

Facebook page by typing

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[www.pbase.com/kowenj](http://www.pbase.com/kowenj)



Lilacs, including this cultivar "Tinkerbelle", can offer several weeks of color and fragrance to your garden.

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# From The Editor

## Welcome to the Summer edition of *Organic Gardens Today!*

I hope that your spring was all that you had hoped and planned for, especially after the winter we had endured. Spring in the Northeast started dry, then wet with snow and rain, to now in the upper 80's and humid, otherwise known as August weather. Sometimes I wonder if we will ever have a "normal" spring and fall that I remember from my childhood, but we are in the new normal: extreme weather swings, aka Climate Change. We will have to adapt to these new weather patterns and do our best as gardeners and organic believers to spread the truth and hopefully get a few more people on our side.



Spring also was a very news worthy period. To keep you abreast of the organic news happening, we have added a new section called "*Organic News and Noteworthy*". You can always keep updated by joining our Facebook Group, but now we will summarize the news of the previous season. Unfortunately in this issue there is a lot of disturbing news to report, but I hope that in future issues the news will be better.

What is annoying me to no end this season is the recent news that the USDA just announced they found a significant amount of genetically engineered wheat growing in farm fields in Oregon. Why is this a big deal? Because GE wheat has never been approved for commercialization or sale. These strains of GE wheat escaped from GMO field experiments conducted across 16 states by Monsanto from 1998 to 2005. As the USDA states, "Further testing by USDA laboratories indicates the presence of the same GE glyphosate-resistant wheat variety that Monsanto was authorized to field test in 16 states from 1998 to 2005." In plain words, GMO pollution has begun, all courtesy of Monsanto. The ones that will be hurt the most are the family farmers who grow the wheat. Countries around the world are refusing to accept shipments of wheat from the United States until DNA testing can prove conclusively that the GMO wheat is NOT in the shipment, especially since most countries have banned GMO's of any kind from entering their borders. All of the effort in growing the wheat will return zero profit to these farmers. But thanks to the recent Farm Bill, approved by our Senators and Representatives, the farmers will have no legal action thanks to the "Monsanto Protection Act", secretly added to the Farm Bill. What you can do is call your local Representative and voice your concern by asking them to repeal the "Monsanto Protection Act" and instead Protect out Family Farmers.

If you like what we have accomplished with *Organic Gardens Today*, please *share us* with your family, friends, coworkers and fellow gardeners. We rely on word of mouth to spread the word about the magazine, and I thank you in advance for sharing us. If you go to our website, [www.organicgardentoday.com](http://www.organicgardentoday.com) and you can click the "Share" button to share the website with your friends on any social media platform.

David Daehnke, Editor



*PS: Like us on Facebook page and join our group. Type "Organic Gardens Today" in the search box or use the link below*

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/184728751568234>

*You can start a discussion, add your comments or follow useful links to like-minded articles and websites.*

## MEET OUR WRITERS



DAVID DAEHNKE, THE GARDENING GURU, EDITOR

David is a seasoned gardener and lecturer, helping both the novice and experienced gardener. His fun and informative lectures are widely requested throughout the Northeast. Over the past 12 years, David has successfully managed three public gardens as Executive Director, but his true love is communicating proper gardening practices and creating gardens of beauty. He received his B.S. Degree in 1984 in Ornamental Horticulture at Delaware Valley College. David is widely known from his radio show "The Gardening Guru" on WGHT 1500 AM. He is a horticultural consultant on his Internet Web page, [www.thegardeningguru.com](http://www.thegardeningguru.com).



ELIZABETH KUCINICH

Elizabeth Kucinich is a government affairs professional and pure food advocate. Originally from England, Elizabeth lived and worked with rural poor in Tanzania and India. She came to the United States in 2005 to work on monetary policy reform and soon met her husband, Dennis Kucinich. Elizabeth served as a Congressional liaison to the 63rd President of the UN General Assembly and is now the Director of Policy at the Center for Food Safety, a leading organization in Washington, D.C. A board director of several notable charities, including Sean Penn's Haitian relief organization, J/P HRO and the Rodale Institute, the oldest organic agriculture research institute in the USA, Elizabeth has also produced two documentaries: "GMO OMG," on genetically engineered food, which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in February & "Hot Water," on the radioactive contamination of US water sources, which premiered at the D.C. Environmental Film Festival in March.



KATE COPSEY

Kate is a freelance garden writer from NW Ohio, who hosts America's Home Grown Veggie Show every Saturday at 10am on [www.americaswebradio.com](http://www.americaswebradio.com) from the studio of Radio Sandy Springs (Am 1620 Atlanta) and is streamed live. The show is a one hour magazine format with in depth interviews of experts, authors and gardeners. America's Home Grown Veggie Show is the only show on the air that airs 52 wks a year talking all about healthy vegetables.



AL BENNER

Married to Deena Seligsohn Benner. Twin boys - Owen and Coleman 6 years old. Too many interests, too little time... Grew up in New Hope Solebury, PA. Attended college at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA - BS in Ornamental Horticulture. Received an MBA at LaSalle University. Owner of three web businesses:

[www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com](http://www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com), [www.BackyardFarmers.com](http://www.BackyardFarmers.com), [www.MossAcres.com](http://www.MossAcres.com), [www.PurrfectFence.com](http://www.PurrfectFence.com). A founding partner for a self-sustaining residential real estate project in Costa Rica - [www.FincaLasBrisas.org](http://www.FincaLasBrisas.org). Founder of [www.BennersGardens.com](http://www.BennersGardens.com) - national supplier of deer fencing systems - company sold in Dec. 2006.

## MEET OUR WRITERS



CINDY MEREDITH

Cindy Meredith is the owner of [The Herb Cottage](#), a rural nursery in Lavaca County, Texas. In business since 1998, Cindy has a wide range of knowledge about gardening with herbs and adapted plants. The dynamic web site for herb and plant lovers is a handy source for growing information. Not just for Texans and other folks who live in hot, humid climates, the web site addresses all aspects of gardening.



GERI LAUFER

Horticulturist Geri Laufer is a dirt gardener and a widely published authority on gardening topics. Her award-winning book *Tussie-Mussies* (Workman Publishing) is the definitive work on the Language of Flowers. Geri's media appearances include Good Morning America, NPR and Home Matters. Former hats include Georgia Cooperative Extension Service County Agent, Gwinnett Tech Environmental Horticulture Adjunct Professor and Atlanta Botanical Garden Public Relations Manager/newsletter editor/web content manager. Currently [GardenGeri.com](#) provides PR and social media strategies for horticulture companies and a regular monthly gardening commentary on Atlanta NPR affiliate WABE-FM. Visit <http://www.gardengeri.com>



STEPHEN SCOTT

Stephen is the co-owner with his wife Cindy of Terroir Seeds, an heirloom seed company that not only provides quality garden seeds but helps customers improve their gardens and skills with a wealth of information not found anywhere else.

From his experiences in gardening, rangeland and habitat restoration Stephen has found that it's not just about the seeds; the highest quality seeds are great, but there is room and need for more, much more.

Stephen has discovered a cycle to gardening that is not being addressed much today- soil education and awareness of its role and importance; the important role of quality seed and how they interact with the soil; the critical importance of micro-organisms that feed us all that many are not aware of; how to prepare the food grown from the garden and how it can all tie in together to markedly increase our health- all from our home garden. Visit their website at [www.UnderwoodGardens.com](http://www.UnderwoodGardens.com).



MAUREEN FARMER

Maureen Farmer is master gardener and the founder of The Farmer's Garden website ([www.thefarmersgarden.com](http://www.thefarmersgarden.com)). The Farmer's Garden is an online place to make in-person connections between gardeners across the US. Gardeners and want-to-be gardeners can search and post free classified ads to share excess homegrown produce, tools, or gardening space with people in their area.

Food banks can post wanted classifieds for surplus food. She is an avid gardener and also a former Board member of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in Connecticut.

## MEET OUR WRITERS



### GARDENING JONES

Gardening Jones has been growing food for herself and her family for decades. She is a former restaurant owner and licensed food processor. She is now a Master Gardener and blogger in Northeast Pa., where her gardens grow bigger and better every year. You can visit her at [www.gardeningjones.com/blog](http://www.gardeningjones.com/blog) and find her on most social media sites.



### KIM CAMPBELL

Kim is an organic lifestyle activist, OSU-OKC degreed horticulturist, garden writer/blogger for Thrive Organic Green Witch Heals Farm & Organic Landscaping. Home based out of central Oklahoma, Kim is helping her community replace chemical fertilizers, pesticides and poisons one home, kitchen and yard at a time. Contact [HERBWILD@AOL.COM](mailto:HERBWILD@AOL.COM) or [THRIVE\\_LANDSCAPE@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:THRIVE_LANDSCAPE@HOTMAIL.COM) for consult or information.



### VANESSA GARDNER NAGEL, APLD, NCIDQ

Following a career as a commercial interior designer, Vanessa turned her global design experience inside-out into landscape design. Today, after more than 30 years as a designer, she continues to be an award-winning, eco-conscious garden designer, is the author of “Understanding Garden Design” and the soon-to-be-released, “The Designer’s Guide to Garden Furnishings”. Vanessa is the owner of Seasons Garden Design LLC in Vancouver, Washington and supports the design philosophies of integrating the exterior with the interior, as well as 'finding the common thread' when 'weaving' a garden design. She is APLD (Association of Professional Landscape Designers)-certified and NCIDQ (National Council for Interior Design Qualification)-certified. Vanessa is a professional member of the Oregon and Washington Chapters of APLD, a member of APLD’s international board, and was a member of the former Garden Design Magazine’ Advisory Board. She has won numerous awards for her designs, including an Award of Excellence from Sunset Magazine’s Landscape Design Competition. Vanessa taught as an adjunct faculty member at Marylhurst University and Portland Community College (Rock Creek Campus). Additionally, she has had the great pleasure of gardening for over 40 years.



### CLAUDIA DE YONG

Claudia came to gardening as a career late in life although she has always had a passion for plants and design. The year her father passed away in 2002, she was asked to design a show garden at Hampton Court Flower Show and won her first RHS medal. Since then she has designed 5 further show gardens winning Gold and Tudor Rose for Best in Show. Claudia has designed and built many private gardens all over England, many with water features from ponds and lakes to streams. Her style is more Romantic and loves sourcing craftsman made products. Claudia loves to travel and find small specialist nurseries. View her new informational blog at [www.thegardenspot.co.uk/](http://www.thegardenspot.co.uk/)

# *Home Grown Gardening Tips*

## GARDEN TIPS FOR JUNE

- \* There is still time to plant water lilies in pools or in tubs (which are easy to move). Make sure you add goldfish to the water features to help cut down on mosquitoes.
- \* Houseplants can be moved to summer quarters in a partially shaded section of the outdoor garden. Remember that they are in pots and need regular watering and feeding, especially if they are actively growing. Even better is to plunge to pots into the ground up to the lips of the pots.
- \* There is still time to plant dahlia roots, but make sure to set the stakes in the ground at the same time.
- \* When planting gladiolus corms, try to stagger the plantings by two weeks to create a succession of blooms.
- \* Early flowering garden plants which spread rapidly, including Phlox, should be divided soon after they have flowered.
- \* Portulacas a good old-fashioned, low growing flower for quick results in a hot, exposed situation. You can sow the seeds at this time or purchase flats at your local garden center.
- \* Softwood cutting of woody plants are readily made at this time of year.
- \* If grape hyacinths are permitted to go to seed, they will self-sow over a wide area, which is perfect for a naturalized setting.
- \* The foliage of all early blooming bulbs should be left until it is limp or yellow. These plants are storing the energy (food) needed for blooming next spring.
- \* The blooming stalks of irises should be removed once the flowers have faded. Do not permit them to go to seed.
- \* This is a good time to sow seeds of perennials, and can be directly sown into the bed you wish them to grow. Remember that not all perennials come true from seed.
- \* Break off the old flower heads from rhododendrons and laurels, taking care not to remove any of the branch.
- \* Bedding plants of all kinds can be planted out now. Be sure to water the plants as well as the soil in which they are being planted for better survival rates.
- \* Newly planted woody plants need an abundance of water to promote new top and root growth.
- \* Experiments have shown that flowers, in particular roses, keep best if they are harvested late in the afternoon or evening. They should be plunged into water ASAP.
- \* As you walk around your garden, take note of which plants need to be divided or moved in the fall and attach a small label to the plant to remind yourself.
- \* Sweet corn can be planted now, and it will make rapid growth. A second planting can be made in the middle of the month.
- \* When removing dandelions from your lawn by hand, remember that they are considered a fine eating green for your salad, and are actually grown for this purpose.
- \* Lettuce will bolt (go to seed) in the heat of summer, so continue to harvest as much as possible before the bolt. A second crop of lettuce can be started in late July for a fall crop.
- \* Peaches and plums can be thinned to one fruit to each six to eight inches of branch for peaches, less for plums, after their June drop.
- \* Prune duetzas, spireas, viburnums, and weigelas as soon as the blooming season is over. Japanese quince can also be pruned, but to a lighter extent.
- \* Lawns should be kept well watered (town drought warnings kept in mind) during the dry spells. Cutting heights should also be raised to help shade the bases of the plants from the strong summer sun.

# Home Grown Gardening Tips (continued)

## *GARDEN TIPS FOR JULY*

\* Bachelor buttons which have finished their first blooming period may often be made to flower again by shearing at least six inches from the tops of the plants.

\* Dahlias require little artificial watering in a normal season but should be given water enough to soak the ground deeply once a week starting in late July.

\* Keep the dead and dying foliage of hollyhocks cleared away from the base of the plants to help cut down on the transmission of diseases.

\* Columbines in many varieties can be grown from seed, which should be sown an eighth of an inch deep and firmly pressed into the soil. The seed take three to four weeks to germinate and can be collected when the seed pods dry out.

\* Most climbing roses are best pruned as soon as they have finished blooming. If they send up new shoots from the roots (not a grafted rose), you can prune most of the old canes out.

\* Cuttings should be made of coleus, geraniums, ever-blooming begonias and any other plants that may be needed for the house next Winter. Root them in moist sand. Geraniums will root easier if you let them dry in a shady, airy place for several hours before putting them in the sand.

\* Oriental poppies have become dormant by late July and can be divided with excellent success. Even if the roots are divided into 2 inch pieces and planted in a good soil, most of the will develop into new plants within a short period of time.

\* Bearded irises may be divided and new plants set out at any time during the next two months.

\* Peony seed pods should be removed. It will be beneficial to mix into the soil a high-phosphorous fertilizer which will help in making good strong eyes for next year.

\* Wisterias can be pruned now and will be benefited by a hard pruning instead of a lighter trimming.

\* It is not too late to start annuals for Fall blooming, including annual lupines, stock, godetias and Drummond's phlox.

\* Watch grafted plants to see that no suckers grow up from beneath the grafted area. Such sucker should be removed at once by hand picking.

\* Set your cutting height higher for your lawn during the hotter summer months. This will help shade the roots by keeping the ground cool, and give the plants more water storage area in the leaves.

\* July is usually a dry month and watering is most likely necessary. Do not merely sprinkle the surface of the ground, but soak it thoroughly for the most benefit. A light sprinkle will only draw the roots closer to the surface.

## *GARDEN TIPS FOR AUGUST*

\* To have forget-me-nots in bloom early next season, the seed should be sown this month. They make an attractive underplanting for spring bulbs such as tulips.

\* The Virginia bluebell, *Mertensia virginica*, can be divided at this time because the plant is in its dormant stage.

\* The foliage of bleeding heart, *Dicentra spectabilis*, which has died and become unsightly should be removed and disposed of in the garbage.

\* Peonies should be ordered now for September planting. Many Japanese varieties are choice and little known.

\* Cuttings taken from English ivy now will produce good houseplants this Winter.

\* When dividing irises, make a careful inspection for the iris borer and destroy any infested roots.

\* Begin to order your Fall bulbs now. It is better to order early than to be disappointed when they are out of stock.

\* Potatoes can be dug as soon as the tops have died. You can dig them as needed for they store better in the ground than in your house.

\* Eggplants and peppers are now bearing. Keep the matured fruit picked so the younger ones will develop.

\* Tie up cauliflower heads now by pulling the leaves over the top and fastening with a string. Then they will blanch properly.

## Home Grown Gardening Tips (continued)

\* Save tomato seeds from the most healthy, heavily fruited plants to start for next year.

\* You can sow lettuce seeds now for a late crop this Fall.

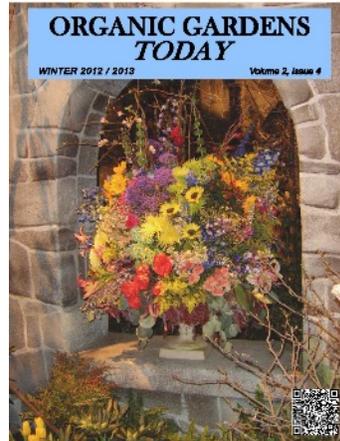
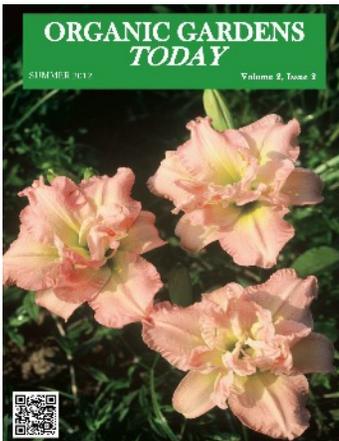
\* The old canes should be cut from raspberries now that the fruiting season is over.

\* Begin to prepare dead spots in your lawn for reseeded at the end of this month. If the grass is brown and standing upright, it is just dormant waiting for cooler and wetter weather in the Fall. Remove any dead areas

and one week before seeding apply a fertilizer higher in phosphorous than nitrogen fertilizer to help the new seedling's root development.

\* There is no reason why the coldframe cannot be used from now until Winter for growing crops such as lettuce and beets.

\* Many of the herbs can be cut and dried at this time of year to prepare them for Winter's culinary uses. Store them in a cool, airy and shady place for best results.



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***March Against Monsanto on March 25,  
2013- Over two million march world-wide  
and no media outlet covers it!***

Whether you are republican, democrat, green party, tea party or whatever party you associate with, you now know who controls what news stories get covered and which do not - corporations and their almighty dollar. When millions of citizens from around the world march in unison against a corporation trying to get controlling interests of every seed in the world, one wonders how a news story like that gets NO press. It all comes down to advertising revenue and the stations fear of losing it. Lets look at the companies who contributed to defeating Proposition 37 in California mandating the labeling of GMO's:

Monsanto Company \$8,112,867

E.I. Dupont De Nemours & Co. \$5,400,000

PepsiCo, Inc. \$2,585,400

Grocery Manufacturers Association \$2,002,000

Kraft Foods \$2,000,500

Bayer Cropscience \$2,000,000

Dow AgroSciences \$2,000,000

BASF Plant Science \$2,000,000

Syngenta Corporation \$2,000,000

Coca-Cola North America \$1,700,500

Nestle \$1,461,600

ConAgra \$1,176,700

These corporations threw millions at defeating Proposition 37 and I am sure they wouldn't have any problem pulling their advertising dollars from a news station that reported the March. If you think it can't happen, watch this YouTube video of what happened to two Fox News reporters trying to do a story on BGH (Bovine Growth Hormone) and its dangers to humans.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=JL1pKlnhvg0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=JL1pKlnhvg0)

All over the United States farmer's markets continue to thrive and grow. USDA statistics show that in 1994 there were 1,755 farmer's markets nationally. In 2012 the numbers have exploded to 7,864 and more are opening everyday. This is very good news on several fronts for organic people. The first and most important is you are buying fresh, full of nutrients organic fruits and vegetables without harmful insecticides, fungicides or herbicides. Plus the fruits and vegetables are harvested at their peak, not harvested two weeks before, sprayed with growth regulators or dyes to make them more appealing when they get to the store. Next you get to see the actual person growing your fruits and vegetables, who puts in long days caring for the plants, visually inspecting them for diseases and insects before they become a major problem, unlike corporate farms which spray chemicals on a regular basis and does not inspect plants. Did you know that heads of lettuce are sprayed with chemicals 25 times before they are harvested on a corporate farm? Finally you know where your dollars are going to - no middlemen, no trucking, direct to the grower, supporting their family and promoting the family farm.



To find a local farmer's market near you, go to;

[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

Type in your zip code and the search results will give you several options near you. Support your local farmer's market and let your dollars voice your support of not only fresh organic produce but also the independent family farmer!

*(OGT Magazine is now a proud sponsor of the  
Farmer's Market in Ramsey, NJ!)*

# Yes! Some Herbs Will Grow In Shade

By Geri Laufer

Sun or Shade? Most of the really “herby” herbs such as lavender, sage, rosemary and thyme need full sun to be at their best. But herb gardening isn't limited to gardens with full sun; many herbs and medicinal herbs thrive in the shade. Further, they don't need to be relegated to a herb garden, but are happy when planted next to ornamentals in the perennial garden.



## Mint Family

- \* Mint (spearmint, peppermint, curly mint, grapefruit mint, water mint) (*Mentha spp.*) – Grows 2-3 feet tall and vigorously spreads by horizontal rhizomes, easy to grow in containers, irresistible in flavoring beverages, fruits, cookies.
- \* Corsican Mint (*Mentha requienii*) – Grows ½ inch in height and creeps between brick or stones in shady paths; zones 6-9, does not like to dry out.
- \* Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*) – beautiful native perennial to 2 ½ or 3 feet, colorful flowers in red, pink, white lavender, also called Oswego Tea and used as tea.
- \* Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*) - beloved by bees, grows to 2 feet; zones 4-9; a soothing herb also useful as a tea or in beverages and fruit salads. .
- \* Dead Nettle (*Lamium maculatum*) - grows to 6-8 inches; zones 3-9; silvery-edged leaves bring light to shady areas, named cultivars for large colorful flowers or silver leaves.
- \* Shiso (*Perilla frutescens*) - Grows to 3 feet; as an annual in all zones but reseeds; use like basil

or cilantro in Asian cuisine, a red-leaf form is attractive.

- \* Anise Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) - Grows 2-4 feet; zones 4-9; beautiful terminal tassel flowers for the perennial border.
- \* Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*) Densely-growing ground cover to 1 foot, many dark green or maroon-leaved forms, beautiful spring flowers to 12 inches, butterfly nectar.
- \* Oregano (*Origanum vulgare*) – the “pizza herb” grows to 2 1/2 feet; zones 5-9 ; will tolerate partial shade.
- \* Lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*) fuzzy-leaved perennial plant with characteristic silver leaves; zones 3-8, needs good air circulation and browns out with excess humidity.
- \* Basil (particularly Lemon Basil) (*Ocimum basilicum*)- annual grows to 2-3 feet, prefers full sun but can produce leaves for culinary use with partial afternoon shade.

## Parsley Family

- \* Chervil (*Anthriscus cerefolium*) – lacy, cut-leaf annual, delicate flavor and one of the fines herbs in French cooking
- \* Sweet Cicely (*Myrrhis odoratus*) perennial grows to 3 feet in cool zones 4-6, lacy fern-like leaves and tiny, starry white flowers.
- \* Dill (*Anethum graveolens*) annual grows to 2-3 feet, best seeded in place from successive sowings to insure “dill weed” (leaves) or dill seed as needed for pickling.



- \* Cilantro (*Coriandrum sativum*) – biennial plant grows to 1 foot, zones 5-9; cool season only; bolts in hot weather
- \* Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) – Biennial plant grows to 1 foot; zones 5-9; thrives during the cool season and tolerates light shade.
- \* Chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*) - 12-inch clumps of tubular flowers and lavender blossoms in spring are good in salads
- \* Garlic Chives (*Allium sativum*)– clumps of narrow, flat-bladed leaves and starry white flowers are butterfly- and pollinator-magnets

#### Various Plant Families

- \* Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) – also called knit bone, grows 2-3 feet; zones 4-9; this large-leaved plant is vigorous and can substitute for Hosta in gardens plagued with pine voles
- \* Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia citrophylla* (formerly *A. triphylla*) a shrub in tropical areas, Lemon Verbena is a beloved herb used for teas, sachets and to amaze garden guests with its wonderful aroma; adds lemon flavor to many dishes
- \* Horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*) – spicy, bold-leaved member of the cabbage family with a large storage root used as a pungent seasoning, zones 2-9
- \* Sweet Violet (*Viola odorata*) - Grows 6-12 inches; zones 4-9; familiar nodding violet flowers and a sweet scent; flowers and leaves are both edible
- \* Spice Bush (*Lindera benzoin*) also known as Benjamin Bush or Wild Allspice, food source for swallowtail butterfly, shade and moist soils
- \* Wild Ginger (*Asarum canadense*) – spreading ground cover in shade and moist soils

Despite a shady garden, herb lovers can grow a full complement of herbs.

*Horticulturist Geri Laufer is a dirt gardener and a widely published authority on gardening topics. Her award-winning book Tussie-Mussies (Workman Publishing) is the definitive work on the Language of Flowers. Geri's media appearances include Good Morning America, NPR and Home Matters. Former hats include Georgia Cooperative Extension Service County Agent, Gwinnett Tech Environmental Horticulture Adjunct Professor and Atlanta Botanical Garden Public Relations Manager/newsletter editor/web content manager. Currently [GardenGeri.com](http://www.gardengeri.com) provides PR and social media strategies for horticulture companies and a regular monthly gardening commentary on Atlanta NPR affiliate WABE-FM. Visit <http://www.gardengeri.com>.*



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# How to Plant a Garden : Planting in odd numbers for a more natural look

By Claudia de Yong

## A naturalistic planting design

Recently a client asked me why we – landscapers and garden designers – plant a garden in odd numbers.

I replied that we don't tend to plant in even numbers because we want to avoid a bed with plants that are all in a row, "lined up like soldiers". It made me think about how many of us take our inspiration from the natural landscape itself. It has a natural chaos about it, a less ordered or managed look. When planting bulbs, 'natural chaos' really comes into its own and great drifts can be achieved by simply throwing large numbers of bulbs into an area before planting them where they land.

Arranging groups of plants in odd numbers can also help to create eye-catching compositions that are visually balanced and harmonious. For example, groups of threes, fives or sevens can be more aesthetically pleasing than a uniform arrangement. This is a little subjective, there is no hard or fast rule. However planting in odd numbers (also referred to as 'the rule of odds') has some sound logic behind it and can be very effective at helping to draw the eye through a garden. (Formal gardens, particularly those on a grand scale, traditionally rely on symmetry to do this.) An odd number of plants can be arranged in an irregular cluster for a 'naturalistic planting design' – looks much more natural than a straight line or uniform shape. This rule-of-thumb tends to apply only to smaller plant groupings – anything over 7-9 plants creates density and plants can start to morph together in our minds eye. If necessary, larger numbers can be broken down into smaller groups placed near each other, for example one bed made up of a group of five and three plants respectively.



*Echinacea and stipa tenuissima planted in small groups of odd numbers for a client.*

## A more formal look

Naturally chaotic however is not how we like our gardens to be all the time and a more formal look is achieved by planting evenly. Formal gardens are really more about us exerting control over nature, creating order out of the chaos. They immediately become calmer, more static and peaceful (a central theme of Japanese garden design). This style of planting can often be seen in our parks and stately homes where symmetry has historically been all important.



*Three large terracotta long pots planted with small buxus sempervirens.*

## The 'rule of odds' also applies to pots and containers

Placing pots in a garden to add colour and variety for seasonality has in the past been dictated by tradition. Two pots either side of an entrance for example is a classic look and always popular with clients. More recently though, placing three large pots along a wall is seen as 'trendy'. The move away from lots of small pots with different annuals in them has been replaced with large statement pots and containers. Tall shrubs and trees have taken over from the bedding in modern homes and we are seeing an increase in tender plants like cannas and others on front and back doorsteps.

## Plan before you buy

You might be tempted to buy a striking herbaceous plant that has caught your eye as you wander around your local garden centre or nursery – a plant which looks so lovely you think you 'just have' to have it. However, once you've arrived home you wonder where on earth you're going to put it because you haven't really considered the overall picture. Is there space? How will it fit in with the rest of the garden? (If you really

must have that one, single herbaceous plant, shrub or tree, turn it into a focal point by giving it a "hey, look-at-me" position. For example plant it next to an archway, entrance or gate; or in the very center of a border; or even right at the end of a path and plan where it is going to go from the outset.)



*A Mediterranean planting scheme with santolina, iris and rosemary in groups on dry stone walls. Photo courtesy Clive Nichols*

Many gardens that I have worked on have had very enthusiastic owners who have been taken with different plants they have picked up from either a garden centre or at a sale and have planted them without really knowing how big they will get or whether they will blend into their gardens at all. They have then asked me "do your magic", transform the garden yet keep odd plants they like. This can always be a bit tricky but in the end I usually convince them that if they like certain plants so much, why not buy a few more and make a statement rather than having one little specimen that will get lost in a large bed – it can be much easier to plant three rather than search for the ideal spot for just one. This way, I explain they will have more enjoyment from the plants they like and the overall effect will be more striking.

So plan before you buy. Consider buying at least three plants of the same variety or colour. Think where they will go – is there enough growing space. What kind of house or building do you have? Architecture often

dictates the style of garden too. A cottage garden which is more informal lends itself to planting in odd numbers, while a town house may be more suited to more formal planting, complimenting the ordered and managed environment in which it is set. Fashions come and go in gardening, just as they do in other areas. Budget dictates a lot of our decisions too. But, trends apart, if you remember the 'rule of odds' and plant in threes or more, and not in a straight line you will create a pleasing and dynamic garden and a more natural looking design.



*Three large buxus sempervirens planted for a client in the shingle in front of the porch is a happy compromise between the 'rule of odds' and a more structured look..*

*Claudia came to gardening as a career late in life although she has always had a passion for plants and design. The year her father passed away in 2002, she was asked to design a show garden at Hampton Court Flower Show and won her first RHS medal. Since then she has designed 5 further show gardens winning Gold and Tudor Rose for Best in Show. Claudia has designed and built many private gardens all over England, many with water features from ponds and lakes to streams. Her style is more Romantic and loves sourcing craftsman made products. Claudia loves to travel and find small specialist nurseries. Visit her web site at [www.claudiadeyong.com](http://www.claudiadeyong.com)*

## Putting Food By

*By Gardening Jones*

There's nothing quite like eating that first garden pea in spring, or slicing into a warm homegrown tomato. But enjoying your other veggies in a pot of steamy stew come winter, or atop a pizza early the next spring, is pretty wonderful too.

You work hard to grow your food organically, here are some ways you can preserve that goodness.

The most common way to store veggies over the winter is by freezing them. Most veggies need to be 'blanched' first, meaning simply dropped into a pot of boiling water for a few minutes. This helps to not only preserve their color, but to halt any further maturing of the veggie. Note that how long you blanch varies a little, and usually by the size of the pieces. All you need do then is strain, let dry, spread out on a sheet pan and place in freezer; when ready, remove from the pan, seal and freeze. By freezing them on a sheet pan or cookie sheet first, they will not be all frozen together. This makes getting just the amount you need out of the container easier.



Tomatoes, onions and peppers do not need to be blanched before freezing. Don't you love it? Just slice or chop, again spread them out to freeze, and you are done. When we start getting too many tomatoes and peppers from the garden to eat, but not enough to make salsa, we just rinse them off and toss in the freezer whole. The peppers thaw out wonderfully, and the hot peppers get even hotter. As the tomatoes thaw, not only do they lose that excess water, but the skins just come right off. This saves a lot of time later on.

Some veggies need to actually be cooked and prepped before freezing. Eggplant can be sliced and batter fried for Eggplant Parmesan later in the year. Likewise potatoes can be baked, boiled, mashed or fried, then frozen. Twice baked potatoes from homegrown? Heaven.

Cold holding is a wonderful way to store fresh veggies into the winter months. By using a root cellar, or other unheated area, veggies such as the cole crops, potatoes and sweet potatoes, even celery, leeks, onions and carrots can be enjoyed fresh. Celery, leeks and carrots need more moisture than the others, but this can be remedied by placing them in sand and spritzing them every once in a while.



Drying, roasting, and dehydrating are all variations on the idea of removing the water content from the veggies. These methods preserve food you can keep for the longest period of time, as well as takes up the least amount of shelf space. Note again that some items need to be blanched first. Drying is most commonly used for herbs. Simply place the stems and leaves upside down in a paper bag, and hang until dry. Store in any food grade container.

Dehydrating works well for most fruits and veggies. You can purchase an electric dehydrator, or DIY a solar one. I have even heard of people placing food on a cookie sheet and leaving them in the car on a hot day. Whatever works!

Roasting is a little different, it's a slow cooking method of dehydrating that adds a little extra flavor. I would recommend a cast iron skillet for this, slow roast on a low temperature until dehydrated completely, or finish off in a dehydrator. This works well for onions, garlic and tomatoes especially.

Canning is a great way to preserve food that is ready to eat, as well as for individual veggies. Foods that are high in acid such as whole tomatoes and marinara sauce, or prepared foods where acid is added, such as vinegar in pickles, can be water bath canned. High sugar foods, such as jams and some juices, can also be water bath canned. Acid and sugar are natural preservatives. For other veggies and combinations like soups, pressure canning is recommended to be a safer way to preserve them. Don't let a pressure canner scare you; they are very easy to use.



Probably the oldest way to preserve food is through lacto-fermentation. This process of layering veggies with salt, another natural preservative, dates back at least as

far as Captain Cook. He was known to carry sauerkraut on long voyages to help prevent his crew from getting scurvy. Homemade fermented sauerkraut is one of the healthiest things you can eat, and tastes nothing like commercial sauerkraut. The lactic acid bacterium that is naturally found in veggies ferments them, preserving much of the vitamins and giving you the good bacteria your body needs for digestion. You can purchase crocks designed specifically for this process, or use other food safe containers. You can find instructions online or in a number of wonderful books.

Most people that are serious about feeding their families from the garden even after the growing season ends use a variety of these methods to preserve what they grow. Which methods you choose depend on your eating lifestyle, your budget, and what you grow. Whatever you do, know you and your family are eating healthier because of it. Happy gardening!

*Gardening Jones has been growing food for herself and her family for decades. She is a former restaurant owner and licensed food processor. She is now a Master Gardener and blogger in Northeast Pa., where her gardens grow bigger and better every year. You can visit her at [www.gardeningjones.com/blog](http://www.gardeningjones.com/blog) and find her on most social media sites.*



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## Grafted Vegetables

By Kate Copsey

The art of grafting one tree or shrub to another goes back centuries and is still the most popular way to produce fruit trees that are small enough for modern gardens, or hardy enough for northern gardens. The art of grafting vegetables is the newest development in this field and although it has been used in the commercial trade for several years, it has sprung onto the retail market from almost nowhere to being stocked in big box stores and online retailers in just a few years. Currently the most common grafted vegetable is the heirloom tomato where many older varieties have regained popularity but are prone to disease. Currently the European market has added peppers, melons and eggplants to the line of grafted vegetables and these will probably be available in the USA in the next few years.



**The Tech Side of Grafting:** A grafted tomato or vegetable is composed of two parts – the root stock at the bottom of the graft and the scion above. The scion is the variety of tomato or pepper that you want to grow. The two parts start out as separate plants that are grown from seed until they reach the desired size. Then they are cut just above the first seedling leaves. The heirloom plant has the root discarded and the root stock discards the upper leaf area. The heirloom stem is then placed onto the stem of the root stock plant and almost immediately starts to take up nutrients from the alien roots. Over a few weeks the plants grow together and heal the division point (the graft) so the new plant can survive in the garden.

**Why bother?** When you graft a Bramley apple onto a dwarf root you get a long lived small apple tree, but with an annual vegetable the question of why is often heard. The main reason is that the root stock is picked to be from a variety that is both vigorous, and resistant

to many virus issues. In tomatoes these are commonly wilts caused by environmental conditions or soil borne viruses which make some of the heirloom varieties almost impossible to grow in some areas. Using a grafted variety allows the gardener to grow some favorite heirlooms that they were not able to do before. Another advantage is that grafted melons for instance are purchased at a more mature stage than seed grown melons and thus with a stronger root system it is more likely that borderline areas will get ripe fruit before the cold weather arrives.

**How to grow grafted vegetables:** It is important that when you buy a grafted vegetable that you recognize where the graft is in relation to the soil line. This is the position that the graft should be when it is planted in your garden. Planting the graft under the soil allows the heirloom to produce its own roots and fruit while getting none of the virus protection of the root stock; planting to high allows the vigorous root stock to put up shoots which overwhelm the heirloom and you do not get tomatoes with the cherished characteristic taste that you wanted. After planting, the grafted plant is fed and cared for in exactly the same way as any other heirloom plant.

**Is it a true heirloom:** In essence, the fruit that you produce from a grafted plant both looks and tastes the same as any other plant of the variety. So in that sense you are indeed growing an heirloom plant. There are virus protection qualities that are imparted from the scion which makes it stronger, and keeps disease away. The introduction of these alien properties does not generally count as making a difference, so unless you are purist you will be happy with the new trend.

Watch for more varieties to appear in the next year or two. There are also some double grafts which put two different varieties on a single root and make growing more than one variety possible in a container or area where space is limited.

*Kate is a freelance garden writer from NW Ohio, who hosts America's Home Grown Veggie Show every Saturday at 10am on [www.americaswebradio.com](http://www.americaswebradio.com) from the studio of Radio Sandy Springs (Am 1620 Atlanta) and is streamed live. The show is a one hour magazine format with in depth interviews of experts, authors and gardeners. America's Home Grown Veggie Show is the only show on the air that airs 52 wks a year talking all about healthy vegetables.*

## So What is a Cob Oven Anyway?

By Al Benner



For those of you who aren't familiar with what a cob oven is, or how to build your own, no it is not a bread oven constructed from discarded corn cobs :). It is, however, a labor intensive way to build your own oven - outdoors from free, or low cost local materials - sand, clay and straw.

For the past year we have counted down the days until our cob bread oven was ready for a test run, and with some farmer friends from the surrounding community up for cooking in our wood burning oven, we had our first bake your own farm pie event last friday. The handful of photos here say it all... Not only was the pizza probably some of the best most people have had, the oven also provided some amazing ambience (and sounds!) - experience a [close up video of a pie baking inside the cob oven.](#)



How to build a cob oven ? - It isn't for the faint of heart. Our over-sized earthen oven required hundreds of hours of hard labor...stomping sand and clay particles together (with straw for the outer layers) to form the monolithic cob material that gets applied in layers to the dome.

We fired the cob bread oven for about five hours prior to cooking, then moved the coals far to the back, leaving plenty of cooking surface on the fire bricks, onto which we slid the pies with an aluminum "peel". This was retrofitted with a long handle from a broken farm shovel (saving things on a farm is always a good idea). The personal-sized pizzas take only about three minutes to cook and are typically turned once to ensure even cooking.

It was soon noted that some people mastered the art of working the pizza peel better than others. The first pie didn't get enough cornmeal on the peel, and stuck, creating a pizza in the shape of an ice cream cone!

Cob oven cooking is very rewarding not only because of the outstanding flavor of the bread, pizza, or most any food, but also due to the complete experience of building the fire, sliding the baked goods in and out, and the bonding and community experience that takes place with friends and family outdoors around the earthen oven.

We have now scheduled our fall Farm Getaway that will include an intensive session on how to build your own bread oven for Sunday, September 29th, 2012. You can learn more about the event and how to [sign up here](#) Space is limited, and interest is high, so we suggest making your reservation as soon as you can to ensure a spot. We will be building pizzas from scratch and making cob, so come hungry and bring some old boots!

The farm of course did not stand still while the pizza oven fired and "part time" musicians jammed away on a variety of instruments.

The big project at the moment continues to be finishing the 96' x 28' high tunnel that was a grant from USDA.

June 1st marks the deadline for the completion date and we are down to the wire. Dave and Al have been teaming on this to get it completed, and with Dave now finishing up the end wall frames, it appears that with the arrival of our two farm apprentices - Katherine and Tyler next week, that we will have enough hands to get the

plastic up over the entire frame.



Unfortunately even though this covering is no longer really needed this time of year it was still required for reimbursement. The goal is to be able to start plants much earlier and grow them much later, and to also be able to have better success with warm weather crops such as tomatoes, cukes and melons (our peppers don't seem to need much help).



We have a lot of chicks in various stages right now to expand our flock. 18 "mutts" hatched from the incubator ten days ago and are growing like weeds, another 30 eggs are in the incubator, and a broody hen is still sitting on a clutch of eggs. Looks like in two weeks we

will have a total of 60 more young chickens.

Farm food alert: This time of year a favorite spring treat is rhubarb. We like to cook it down with strawberries and raspberries, adding some of our maple syrup and some honey for sweetness. This fruit sauce can then be used for pies or simply with yogurt and granola for a delicious dessert or breakfast item. Tart rhubarb has some very healthy compounds and is often used as a "spring tonic" for a variety of ailments. Get your rhubarb fix now before it gets too tough!



Until next time, keep your taste buds tantalized with local, organic food, and support your local farmer (or your local outdoor pizza oven)!

*Too many interests, too little time... Grew up in New Hope Solebury, PA. Attended college at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA - BS in Ornamental Horticulture. Received an MBA at LaSalle University. Owner of three web businesses: [www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com](http://www.OldSchoolFarmers.blogspot.com) [www.BackyardFarmers.com](http://www.BackyardFarmers.com) [www.MossAcres.com](http://www.MossAcres.com) [www.PurrfectFence.com](http://www.PurrfectFence.com) A founding partner for a self-sustaining residential real estate project in Costa Rica - [www.FincaLasBrisas.org](http://www.FincaLasBrisas.org) Founder of [www.BennersGardens.com](http://www.BennersGardens.com) - national supplier of deer fencing systems - company sold in Dec. 2006.*

# Russian Dacha Gardening

*By Stephen Scott*

There are a growing number of conversations and discussions taking place around the country, in person and online, about a highly important emerging question – how are we going to feed ourselves with a growing population, diminishing resources and a challenging climate?

We see news reports of crop devastation from droughts, floods and other weather related impacts around the world. There was a world-wide food shortage in 2008, causing a sharp spike in wheat prices that started a series of governmental overthrows in the Middle East. Clearly, food is important in a way that many have not thought about here in the United States. We didn't experience much in the way of price spikes in 2008, but if we look, there is clear evidence that we are experiencing our own price increases; they are just in a different manner.



The prices for food, when compared to a couple of years ago, have risen significantly, even here in America. Our food system is complex, with major food companies and distributors absorbing the brunt of price increases and passing them along in increments, instead of all at once, so that we are not as aware of the increases in food prices. With a severe drought across most of the country in 2012, and winter moisture levels significantly below normal for this year (2013), more crop failures are predicted along with higher prices.

It is natural that this conversation is beginning to happen. In venues ranging from upscale coffee shops to rural diners to governmental meetings, more and more people are asking, “How are we going to feed ourselves?” The conversation more often than not becomes some form of commercial vs. small scale agriculture, with both sides speaking passionately about the benefits

of their systems and judiciously pointing out the shortcomings and detriments of the other systems. It becomes an either/or argument and is a great example of false dichotomy.

We are not against large-scale farms, as there are a number of great examples of how size does not automatically mean a dependence on petro-chemical inputs, using fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides in an attempt to change a natural process into an industrialized, mechanical one to be controlled.

There is a need for a food production system of many sizes and for many reasons. We need diversity in size and scale, as it gives resiliency to our food system as a whole.

There is also an increasingly urgent need to re-examine our food distribution system, as there is an estimated 30 – 40% of food waste that happens before the food even reaches our homes. Utilizing this wasted food would go a long way toward easing hunger here in the United States.

During the course of these conversations a logical disconnect often occurs. The commercial scale folks talk in solid, proven, real world terms and numbers. They should, as this is what they know. They talk about how only industrial farming can feed the world, as it will require their technology, equipment and inputs to grow twice as much food. These are terms that they are familiar with. When the alternative of small scale, local and sustainable agriculture is put forth, they begin to talk in relative and theoretical terms, partly out of ignorance as they are not experienced or familiar with this different approach to agriculture. Sometimes it will be as a dismissal of the effectiveness of sustainable agriculture.

Here is where the disconnect happens: when advocates of local and sustainable agriculture talk, they also tend to talk in theoretical and abstract terms, not in the proven, real world results based terms that the industrial ag folks use. This skews the entire conversation!

Some of this is understandable, as the definition of “local and sustainable agriculture” is completely opposite on the spectrum of commercial and industrial. It is hard to speak about total food production or capacity from the local and sustainable model as it is from the commercial one, for the simple reason that there is more documenting and reporting of figures in large scale

agriculture, with almost none in the local one.

This doesn't mean that alternative agriculture has nothing to contribute. Far from it. Sustainable agriculture, on any scale, is a highly important contributor to the conversation, and our future. There is a school of thought that states, "We will ultimately wind up in a sustainable economic and agricultural model, either by choice or by force." I'm going to ignore the economic portion of the statement for this article, as it is beyond the scope of our focus.

The thought goes on to show how we don't have a choice on becoming sustainable in agriculture, as we simply cannot continue our current path of mining our soils of nutrients and using petroleum as a replacement. The petroleum is used for transportation, to power the mining equipment extracting the minerals used to replace those lost in the soil, and for herbicides, pesticides and petro-chemical based fertilizers. Both the nutrients and petroleum are finite, we all know this. What we don't know is precisely when these resources will run out. They are becoming more expensive each year, looking past short-term fluctuations.



We can make the choices to move our food production into a model where we aren't strip-mining the earth of its nutrients to grow our food, or we will wind up with no more petroleum to replace these critical nutrients, and our food production on any scale comes to a halt, with devastating consequences. We at Terroir Seeds are working on the choice solution – rather than force - helping to create a better, healthier, more productive, diversified, decentralized and independent food production system that everyone has access to and can participate in, no matter where they live.

During the conversation on feeding ourselves, several

examples of sustainable agriculture that are currently being practiced are usually brought up, such as Cuba. When Cuba suffered the oil embargoes and trade restrictions, many citizens died from the catastrophic decrease in daily calories as a result of very limited food production on the island in relation to the size of the population. Everyone lost around 30 pounds as they struggled to find ways to grow all of their own food with most people having little to no gardening experience and a loss of machines to work the land. Eventually they did succeed, and today Cuba is an example of small, local and sustainable agriculture feeding the population.

This example is pooh-pooed by the industrial ag proponents, "Of course Cuba can grow their own food, they are a tropical island, they can grow anything. It's not like that here or in the rest of the world." They ignore the difficult history and work that it took for Cubans to be able to grow their own food.

What if there was another example; one of an industrialized, well-populated country that is larger than the USA, grows about half of its total food production in home gardens in a difficult and short-season climate, with no machines or animals to help? Would that example suffice to show that local, small-scale, sustainable agriculture can be a proven, viable alternative to the industrial agriculture model?

That example is Russia, and the model is called dacha gardening. It has provided food for the people of Russia for over 1,000 years, starting as mainly subsistence or survival gardening and evolving into an independent, self-provisioning model between the Bolshevik Revolution and World War II and continues into today.

The term dacha, dating back to at least the eleventh century, has had many meanings; from "a landed estate" to the rural residences of Russian cultural and political elite. Since the 1940s, the term "dacha" has been used more widely in Russia to define a garden plot of an urban citizen. This is when the urban populations began to rapidly expand their garden plots to provide food for themselves, their families and neighbors.

Dacha gardening accounts for about 3% of the arable land used in agriculture, but grows an astounding 50% by value of the food eaten by Russians. According to official government statistics in 2000, over 35 million families (approximately 105 million people or 71% of the population) were engaged in dacha gardening.

These gardens provide 92% of Russia's potatoes, 77% of its vegetables, 87% of the berries and fruit, 59% of its meat and 49% of the milk produced nationally. There are several studies that indicate that these figures may be underestimated, as they don't take into account the self-provisioning efforts of wild harvesting or foraging of wild-growing plants, berries, nuts and mushrooms, as well as fishing and hunting that contributes to the local food economy.

Clearly, there is something to be acknowledged and studied here! Of note to us Americans, dacha gardening or self-provisioning gardening was the foundational reason that the Russian people did not experience a famine in the early 1990s after the USSR collapsed, and the state sponsored, heavily subsidized, industrial commercial agriculture collapsed along with it. This drew the attention of researchers seeking to find an explanation. Several attempts to explain it away as only a survival strategy have failed, especially when the extensive historical context is examined. Dacha gardening is much more than merely survival, and has always been.

This was not reported outside of Russia, as it wasn't considered newsworthy. What is truly newsworthy today is that we as a nation aren't in as favorable of a position if there were a similar catastrophic occurrence in our food distribution, power grid or dollar value. We are all too dependent on outside sources for our food, with most Americans tied to the grocery store and its 3 day supply of food being constantly trucked in.

Russian household agriculture – dacha gardening - is likely the most extensive system of successful food production of any industrialized nation. This shows that highly decentralized, small-scale food production is not only possible, but practical on a national scale and in a geographically large and diverse country with a challenging climate for growing. Most of the USA has far more than the 110 days average growing season that Russia has.

Today's dacha gardening closely resembles the peasant gardening production of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This shows a continuation of methods and techniques that have proven effective in a small scale garden that works as well today as 200 years ago. The Russians do not use machines – tillers or tractors – or animals on their garden plots, cultivating them in much the same way as the peasants did in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

Dacha gardening is not and never has been simply a survival strategy - a response to poverty, famine, adverse weather or social unrest. Recent studies have shown that Russian food gardening is a highly diverse, sustainable and culturally rich method of food production. This was initially recognized almost a century ago and has been confirmed more recently.



If examined through a strictly economic lens, dacha gardening makes no sense at all. There is much more labor as a dollar value invested than is harvested, but that isn't the point of this type of system at all. The function of dacha gardens goes well beyond their economic significance, because they serve as an important means of active leisure as well as a way to reconnect with the land. Traditional economic calculations fail to realize the true value and benefits of a dacha garden. Clearly, a wider viewpoint is needed to realize all of the benefits! Time spent in the garden is seen as relaxation, education, entertainment and exercise – all in one. Food production is a very valuable bonus.

Despite their significant contribution to the national food economy, the majority of dachas mostly function outside of the cash economy, as most dacha gardeners prefer to first share their surplus with relatives and friends after saving enough to feed them through the winter, and only then look at selling what remains. A few will sell the remainder at local markets, and move into a small market production model for extra cash.

The Russian mindset relating to the sharing of surplus food is important to examine, as it is one of the keys that ensure the success of the dacha gardening model. In dacha gardening, people will share their excess food

out of a sense of abundance or plenty. It is a very positive and powerful motivator which creates an upward, positive spiral of sharing among the community.



For example, a neighbor helps you to build a fence on your property. Instead of paying them money for their help, you give them 50 pounds of apples from your tree. These apples have little monetary value for you, as you have all of the apples you can use for the year stored up, canned, made into apple butter and jams. You are sharing your abundance. The neighbor is overwhelmed, as this is a considerable gift for a few hours of work, so he feels compelled to share some of his gardens abundance with you, for the same reason. He shares from his abundance. This process continues around the neighborhood until there is a solid network of people actively sharing food with one another. This system creates a resilient food network that is not only local and sustainable, but has many other positive benefits as well.

There are no feelings of “owing” from one person to another. When someone gives food to another, it is not “charity” or putting them under an obligation to repay. It is an exchange of excess freely given with no thought of repayment or obligation.

Economic profit is only one of the potential benefits of this type of food production. Other economic components are increased food security with a robust, decentralized and local food supply and distribution.

Agricultural sustainability, conservation of bio-diversity and the preservation of heirloom varieties are some of the environmental contributions of dacha gardening. Socially, dacha gardens help create community and a connection with the land and nature.

In addressing the question of “How are we going to feed ourselves?” we have a lot to consider in looking at the effective, proven and ongoing examples that Russian

dacha gardening has to offer us. A closer study of the methods and especially the mindsets will help all of us become more resilient and self-sustaining in our food systems right here at home.



*Stephen Scott is co-owner of Terroir Seeds LLC, home of Underwood Gardens, known for the finest hand selected heirloom and open pollinated seed.*  
[www.underwoodgardens.com](http://www.underwoodgardens.com)



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## Garden with Love, Create a Landscape Teeming with Life

*By Elizabeth Kucinich*

After searching the internet solidly for days, I found a property that called out "home". "It is so ugly I have to see it," I told my husband. And sure enough, this abandoned property was in need of a great deal of love. The back garden was a steep incline of poison ivy, the living room without a ceiling and the radiators had exploded in every room.

With a joyful combination of time, love and hard work, this lonely house it is now our happy home. I've named it the Howebalke, 'house on the hill'. The same name as my ancestors' organic farm in northern England, several generations past.

The most joyful part of living in our little patch of heaven is the life that we have brought back to the garden. Gardens should be alive! There's nothing better in my opinion than putting your hands in soil, turning compost or laying on the grass in the sunshine watching bees and butterflies move from flower to flower, while beetles creep across the rich soil floor and birds sing in the trees.

You won't find overly manicured beds in my modest little patch. I see my role as the garden keeper, to help provide a habitat. Safe, chemical-free, a little wild perhaps, and one that supports life in all her forms.

I grew up in England, my mother and grandmother keen gardeners. They know the Latin names for everything and have a deep understanding of the relationship between plants, pollinators, the broader ecology and the human heart.

Mother kept bees and I remember watching them with great satisfaction as they would fly back to the hive, their legs bulging with pajama pantaloons of bright yellow pollen.

Honey bees have been garnering quite a buzz in the media lately due to the tremendous rates of decline in bee populations around the world are due to what is being termed CCD, "Colony Collapse Disorder". So, once Dennis, my husband, our three rescue dogs and cat had moved in, we welcomed a top-bar hive of bees - our girls - to share our garden. They now reside in a little cottage garden I've created by our front door and,

along with the tomatoes, provide great excitement and intrigue for our young neighbors.



These community focused, docile creatures pollinate the flowers and provide hours of enjoyment as we watch them go about their day. I keep bees, not for honey, but because I value the tremendous contribution they make to our lives and our world. They support us, and now we need to support them.

The honey bee is the primary pollinator for many of the world's agricultural crops. Native bee species and other pollinators are vital to biological diversity and healthy ecosystems.

It is estimated that there are over 20,000 species of bees, and nearly 90% of the world's flowering plants, including most food crops, rely on pollinators. With one in three forks of food being attributed to their role. These species play a critical role in quality of life – not only for humans, but also for flowering plants, crops, and natural habitats. That is why we must be concerned that these important creatures are suffering alarming decline all around the globe. Honey bee colonies have declined by 50% since 1940.

Honey bees are not the only pollinating species suffering enormous losses. Many of the bumble bee species in North America are also experiencing declines, with several species on the brink of extinction. According to the Xerces Society, Franklin's bumble bee (*Bombus franklini*) and the rusty-patched bumble bee (*Bombus affinis*) face so many threats to their survival that the group has petitioned for both species to be listed as endangered species. (The status is currently pending.)

All pollinators, not just honey bees and bumble bees, are facing numerous risks jeopardizing their existence,

including: pesticides, parasites, pathogens, inadequate nutrition and habitat loss. While many of these factors will require action from our regulatory agencies to better protect pollinators, there are steps individuals (especially gardeners) can take to help our critical pollinator species. Perhaps one of the most fruitful and most beneficial steps is to provide pollinators with habitats and ample forage – plant more seeds, grow more flowers!

Our gardens play an important role in providing pollinators with a safe habitat. We can work together to create pollinator-friendly landscapes across the country. The best habitats will provide ample flowers for a variety of forage and adequate nutrition, in addition to water and nesting sites. And of course, it goes without saying that using any pesticides should be vehemently avoided. Some useful pointers to keep in mind while you are planning pollinator habitats are: use local native plants first and foremost; select plants with a variety of color; choose plants and flowers of varying shapes; plant both perennials and annuals; inhibit invasive plants; and consider providing nesting sites for bees.

As part of a national campaign aimed at encouraging individual efforts to protect pollinators and educate people about their importance, the Center for Food Safety and the BEE Protective Campaign have put together a variety of tools and resources to better help you care for these at-risk species.

The following is a list of a variety of plants to consider including in your gardens in order to provide nectar and pollen to pollinators throughout the season. Enjoy the life, colors and vibrancy that visit your garden - no matter how big or small!

***In spring and early summer plant:***

- |                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| American Plum           | American Vetch       |
| Blanket Flower          | Chokecherry          |
| Clasping Coneflower     | Daisy Fleabane       |
| Foxglove Bearded Tongue | Golden Currant       |
| Lyrate Rockcress        | Ohio Spiderwort      |
| Prairie Rose            | Prickly Wild Rose    |
| Red Flowering Currant   | Rosemary             |
| Sandcherry              | Scarlet Gaura        |
| Scarlet Globemallow     | Shell-Leaf Penstemon |
| Skunkbush Sumac         | Western Yarrow       |

***Mid-summer plant:***

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Black-Eyed Susan | Black Samson       |
| Blue Vervain     | Butterfly Milkweed |

- |                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Candle Anemone           | Canadian Milkvetch  |
| Canada Tick-Trefoil      | Evening-Primrose    |
| Common Milkweed          | False Sunflower     |
| Fireweed                 | Grayhead Coneflower |
| Great Blue Lobelia       | Hoary Vervain       |
| Illinois Bundleflower    | Lanceleaf Coreopsis |
| Lemon Mint               | Linden Tree         |
| Pale Purple Coneflower   | Plains Coreopsis    |
| Prairie Cinquefoil       | Prairie Gentian     |
| Purple Prairie Clover    | Rattlesnake Master  |
| Rocky Mountain Bee Plant | Showy Milkweed      |
| Sensitive Briar          | Showy Partridge-Pea |
| Stiff Goldenrod          | Prairie Coneflower  |
| Virginia Mountain Mint   | Western Ironweed    |
| Western Sunflower        | Wholeleaf Rosinweed |
| Wild Bergamot            |                     |

***Late summer and fall plant:***

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Aromatic Aster   | Compass Plant       |
| Cudweed Sagewort | Golden Alexander    |
| Heath Aster      | Jerusalem Artichoke |
| Late Goldenrod   | New England Aster   |
| Pine Deer Vetch  | Pitcher Sage        |
| Plains Sunflower | Roundhead Lespedeza |
| Stiff Goldenrod  | Sawtooth Sunflower  |

For more information about the importance of pollinators and how to get involved with national efforts to protect these critical species, visit the Center for Food Safety’s BEE Protective Campaign:

<http://www.centerforfoodsafety.org/issues/304/pollinators-and-pesticides/join-the-bee-protective-campaign>

For more information on pollinator habitats and providing nesting sites, visit Beyond Pesticides and the BEE Protective Habitat Guide:

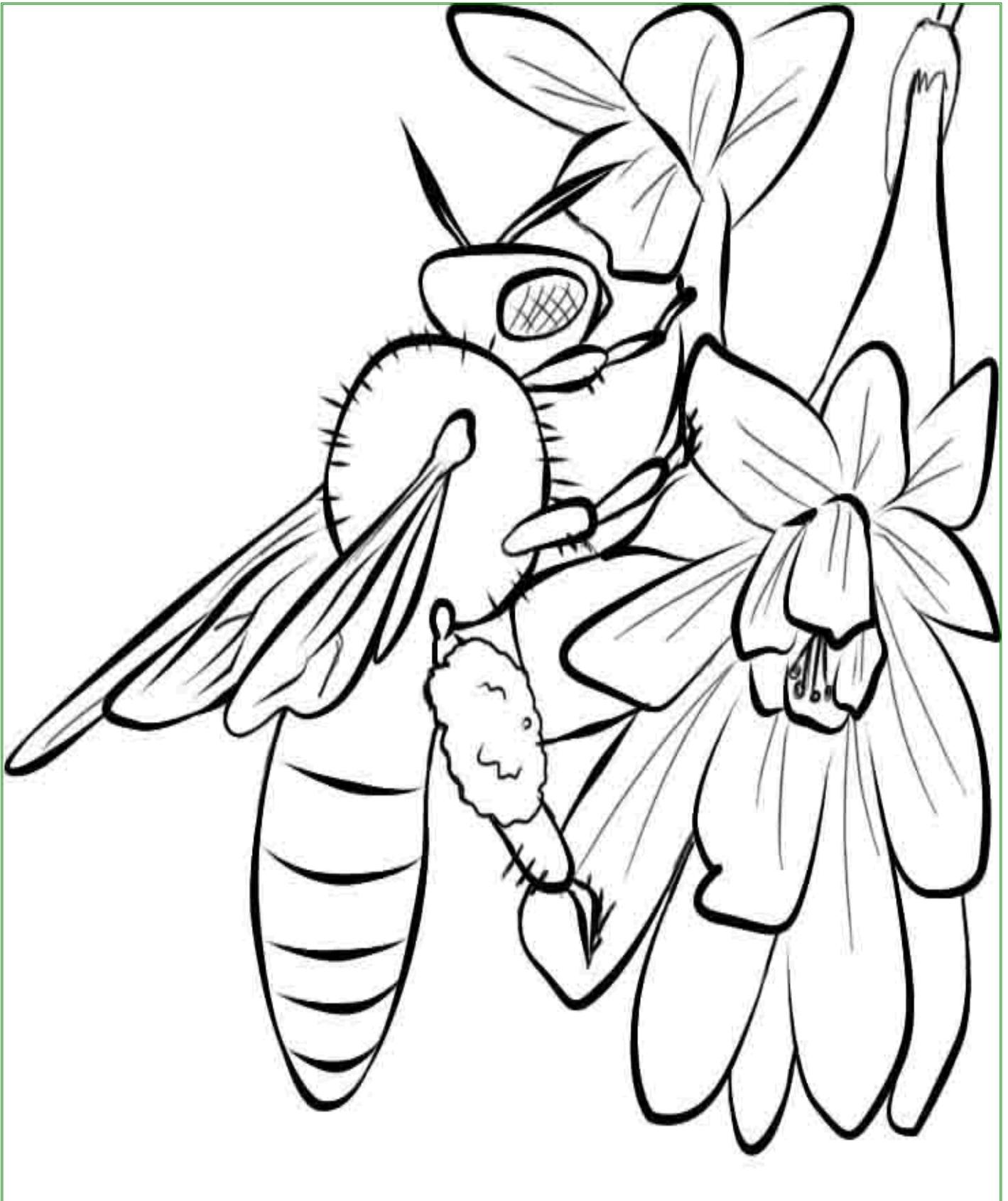
<http://www.beyondpesticides.org/pollinators/index.php>

And for more information on keeping bees in your backyard, please contact your local beekeeping organization.

*Elizabeth Kucinich is a government affairs professional and pure food advocate. Originally from England, Elizabeth lived and worked with rural poor in Tanzania and India. She came to the United States in 2005 to work on monetary policy reform and soon met her husband, Dennis Kucinich.*

*Elizabeth served as a Congressional liaison to the 63rd President of the UN General Assembly and is now the Director of Policy at the Center for Food Safety, a leading organization in Washington, D.C.*

*SUMMER CHILDREN'S COLORING CORNER*



## A Crop Circle of the Edible Kind

By Vanessa Gardner Nagel, APLD, NCIDQ

It's not unusual to believe that an organic vegetable garden is more a feast for the palate than for the eyes. So several years ago when I began to see the mood changing to grow edible gardens, I knew it would have to be where people had the most sun. I also knew that those sunny spaces wouldn't always be in the back yard. As a landscape designer, I wanted to walk the talk because I was convinced that anyone could have a beautiful edible garden right out front without a whit of lawn, even though sometimes it might involve fighting a homeowner's association or even worse, city hall. And it could be organic.

Just prior to this epiphany, I had trimmed our mowing schedule by reducing our amoebic-shaped lawn to three good-sized circles. When it became clear that the only really sunny area that we had left to grow a vegetable garden was one of those circles we knew we had to remove the lawn. Because it was for food, I managed to get this by my husband, who until then was unconvinced that lawn should be removed anywhere (but since then we have removed *all* of the lawn). Inspiration struck when it hit me that we would have a circle for crops otherwise known as a 'crop circle'.



*Having moved all of the boxwood from another garden location to create the outer circle, the lawn remains within while I determine just how many wine bottles I will need. Areas surrounding the circle are also undergoing a transformation.*

I've always admired the intriguing patterns of crop circles, often attributed to aliens from outer space. I researched quite a few crop circles that I found online. It was important to me to find a pattern with adequate



*The pattern is all in place and the first vegetables are in the ground. Tomatoes have red walls o'water to hasten their growth.*

divisions in order to rotate crops and have some permanent perennial vegetables like asparagus and artichokes (more about those later). Once I was happy with an adapted pattern I began to draw the pattern on the lawn with marking chalk to get a sense of how the pattern would look at actual scale. Then we removed the lawn. Next we amended the soil with a custom mix (at my request) of 90% compost and 10% quarter-ten gravel. The quarter-inch sized gravel has no fines in it and helps to break up our clay soil combined with the compost. Once the compost has deteriorated (by the next year) I am left with a light scattering of gravel, making it easier to walk around when the soil gets muddy. It also helps the artichoke stay well-drained at its crown so it does not rot over the winter in our cold, rainy climate (sometimes lasting well into spring), although I do cover it during the coldest part of winter. Each year we add more compost as mulch to continue to improve the soil (but now without the gravel), help retain moisture, and minimize weeds.



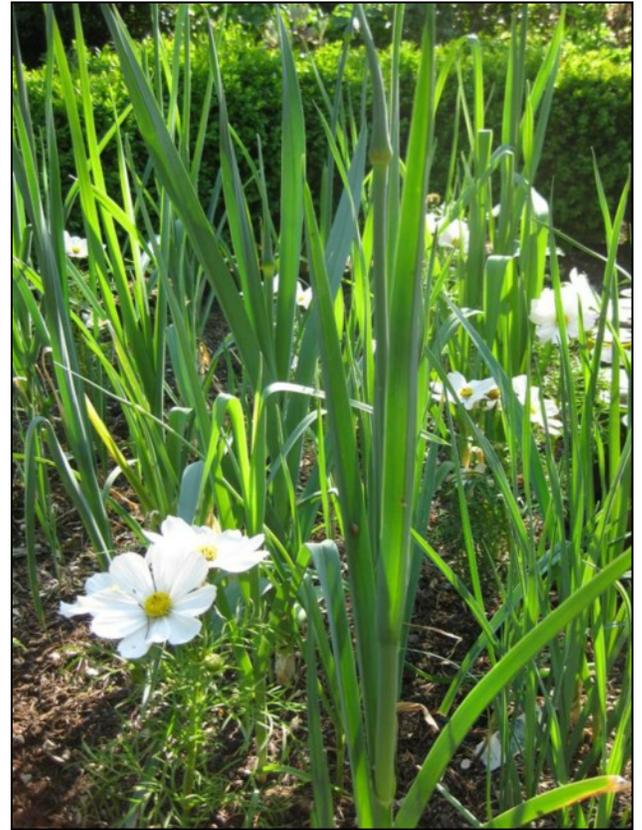
*Artichokes with Swiss chard in the background*

The landscape designer side of me also wants good plant combinations. I research plants that benefit from being near each other and those that hinder another's growth (like potatoes hinder artichokes, which I learned the hard way). I look for foliage contrast (planting Bull's Blood beets at the base of my fava beans, for example) and I like to plant flowers to invite a variety of beneficial insects. This year I've combined some white cosmos with my leeks. The bold, erect stems contrast beautifully with the lacy foliage of the cosmos and the cosmos flowers are good target plants for beneficials. I also have a few lavender plants strategically placed around the perimeter, although I've noticed that because I need to use smaller varieties of lavender to fit, that they get shaded on the north side of the boxwood hedge, so I will probably replace those with something more shade tolerant. Asparagus is planted on the north side of the crop circle because it gets fairly tall and can shade out other plants. Last year I intermingled the young asparagus (then 2 years old) with Tuscan Kale because I liked its bold leaves mingled with the fern-like foliage of the asparagus. This year I will grow it again, but elsewhere within the crop circle, or perhaps around the perimeter when the fava beans have been harvested. Because the narrow perimeter beds are easy to access, I've planted carrot seeds in amongst the lettuce plants and will continue to sow those through the summer. This coming winter I am growing to grow some cover crops in a couple of areas which will keep the crop circle interesting all year long.



*New steps from the bridge to the crop circle the second year.*

I feel confident that anyone can have a beautiful edible garden in their front yard with a little imagination. I recall a friend of mine once saying (about life) that "it needn't be dull". Expanding upon that statement, I would say that an organic, edible garden needn't be dull...or ugly.



*Newly transplanted white cosmos mingled with leeks.*

*Vanessa Gardner Nagel is an award-winning, eco-conscious landscape designer and the author of *Understanding Garden Design* and *The Professional Designer's Guide to Garden Furnishings* (the latter to be published August 2013 by Timber Press). She is also APLD (Association of Professional Landscape Designers)-certified, with over 30 years experience as a designer and a member of APLD's international board. You can learn more about her at <http://seasonsgardendesign.com>.*



*Asparagus foliage and Tuscan kale*

# Gardening in Heat and Drought

*By Cindy Meredith*

We can't control the weather, but we can help our plants deal with severe conditions of heat and drought. Just because you might be having a lot of rain now doesn't mean that later in the summer you won't be experiencing extreme heat with little or no rain.



*Yellow Lantana*

One way to assure your plants' health in high temperatures is to make sure you are growing your selections in the proper sun/shade area. Many plants that can grow perfectly happily in full sun in northern areas or the milder areas of the west coast need shade in the South-west, especially in the afternoon. There is a list of heat tolerant plants, both annuals and perennials, at the end of the article. Most of the plants listed can tolerate full sun, even here in Texas, but won't be compromised with some afternoon shade. And, remember, even drought tolerant plants need to be carefully monitored while they're getting established so they don't dry out. And, also, unless you are growing true cacti, all plants need some moisture.

At temperatures up to 90° F., plants grow more quickly, but rarely suffer much damage, if kept watered. Of course, plants not adapted to your area will suffer more, or plants growing in more sun than they can

handle could burn. When temperatures rise above 90° F. day after day, and the nights stay above 75° F., that is when your plants begin to suffer damage.

Symptoms of heat stress and hot soils start with foliage burn, then drying and browning at the tips of the leaves, dieback of tender, new growth and eventually even older leaves showing the whitish signs of burn. Even the stems can be burned in there isn't enough foliage cover.



*Purple Vitex Tree*

You can combat this type of damage by either erecting a shade area over your plants or actually digging them up and moving them. This is not generally advised in very hot weather because the activity stresses the plants even more. But, if you're going to lose a plant due to sun-burn, it's better to move it to a shady area, replant it and keep it well watered until it recovers. It would be advisable to prune the plant back at this time to help it recover.

It isn't only the sun's rays that can damage the plant. Too hot soil temperatures can burn roots, too. Shallow rooted plants and plants in containers can succumb to root damage when the soil is too hot. If the roots become compromised, they cannot deliver water to the upper part of the plant, where it's needed, and the plant suffers.

Mulch, mulch and more mulch!! One cannot over mulch in the summer. Mulch evens soil temperatures, protects the root system from damage and aids in water retention. You can even mulch container plants to keep them from drying out so fast. Another trick for containers is to place one container inside another to act as insulation. I realize this isn't possible with some containers, but if you have larger plants growing in nursery pots,

often you can find a larger pot to put it in. And, of course, if you're growing in containers, unless it's window box attached to the house or a fence, you can move the container to a more hospitable area.



*Herb Garden in South Central Texas early summer showing vigorous lemon grass and oregano in foreground.*

Moisture and nutrition are essential to keeping your plants looking good during the stress of summer heat. Regular deep watering is the best way to keep the plants hydrated. You might see some plants wilting in the afternoon, and some wilting is natural. The leaves are trying to make their surface area smaller so they don't lose so much moisture through them. Sometimes, a little afternoon water is necessary to take the stress off the plant. But, a good cover of mulch will often alleviate the problem. That, and having plants that are adapted to the area where they are growing.

Plants need to be fed during the summer, too. The best way to feed is to apply lighter applications of nutrients more often. Use only half or less than the amount suggested on the fertilizer container, but apply it perhaps every two weeks or so. This is especially helpful for container plantings. Organic fertilizers are really best at all times, but in the summer, there can be a chance of burning the plants with chemicals. And, always fertilize either in the cool of the morning... or relative cool, or in the evenings, when the sun isn't blasting your plants. Different areas may need different schedules.

Speaking of schedules, watering needs to be done on an as-needed basis, rather than on a schedule. If you see plants that look like they need water, and you've just watered, go ahead and give them some moisture.

If your plants are stressed, this is when pests like to attack. So keep vigil and try to notice any damage

early before the plant is completely taken over. As with fertilizers, organic pest control is the healthiest for you, your family, pets and plants. Apply any sprays in the early morning or evening.

I hope these tips will help you be able to enjoy your gardens this summer. Careful plant selection and placement will go a long way to making your job easier. And, never forget, if you lose plants this summer, you'll know what not to put in that spot next year. Because, with gardening, there's always next year.

Here's a list of annuals that do well in the heat:

Begonias	Caladium	Cockscomb
Coleus	Copper Plant	Cosmos
Gillardia	Impatiens	Lantana
Marigold	Portulaca	Salvia, Blue Salvia
Zinnia		

Here's a list of perennials and other landscape plants that tolerate heat well:

Katie Dwarf Ruellia	Hibiscus- likes water
Copper Canyon Daisy	Esperanza
Crape Myrtle	Vitex, Texas Lilac
Purple Fountain Grass	



*This is a newly mulched bed - notice the containers are also mulched.*

*Cindy Meredith is the owner of [The Herb Cottage](#), a rural nursery in Lavaca County, Texas. In business since 1998, Cindy has a wide range of knowledge about gardening with herbs and adapted plants. The dynamic web site for herb and plant lovers is a handy source for growing information. Not just for Texans and other folks who live in hot, humid climates, the web site addresses all aspects of gardening.*

## Organic Gardens Today Magazine is Looking for Writers



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Send your requests to [editor@organicgardentoday.com](mailto:editor@organicgardentoday.com)

We look forward to hearing from you!



## My Obsessively Organic Lifestyle

By Kim Campbell

Organic living is a way of life for me, my family, and for many people I come in contact with on a daily basis. This is probably because I try to tell every person I meet the important rewards of organic gardening. The trend happening right now, here in Small Town, America, is that folks are getting wise to what is going into their bodies. We now know that whatever we are putting on, into and around our bodies affects nutrition, health, and our bodies' natural disease prevention mechanisms.

Food grown naturally and organically has been cared for by farmers who respect the land growing the food. Organic soils have micro organisms that are alive and thriving, working to build healthy nutrient rich soil systems and therefore giving our food crops more available nutrient uptake. If the soils are healthy, the plants are going to be healthier as well. If the plants are fed biological nutrients instead of chemical fertilizers, the plants are better equipped to naturally fight off pest and disease attacks.



*Growing your own food insures that you know what is in it. Start your own seed from an organic, non gmo seed source such as <http://www.highmowingseeds.com/>*

The chemicals sprayed on plants that produce food harbor traces of these same herbicide and pesticides even when washed off thoroughly. The plant uptake the chemical poisons from the soil, absorbing it from plant leaves and produces food that contains everything that has ever been added. The friendly family corn farmers down the street are growing Round-Up Ready corn seed that can be sprayed with glyphosphates and is not affected or harmed. The herbicide is inside the seed (Round-Up - a type of non selective chemical herbicide that functions as a kill-all for most all plants). Can that really be safe for humans to ingest? Is this corn a food you want to feed your family? I myself, after a little awareness and self education decided to purchase and grow myself some corn seed that is organic, open pollinated, and non-genetically modified by greedy chemical companies producing GMO seed. High Mow seeds are good enough to be grown in the organic White House food gardens and this is the company I trust to sell me seed that is produced in the most ethical, safest, and nutritional ways possible. The Seed Savers Exchange system seed bank is reliably safe as well.



*Building and growing an organic fruit orchard / food garden has been the best decision I have ever made in my whole entire life!*

Insects and pests can be controlled with natural biological predators such as beneficial nematodes, lacewings, ladybugs, and praying mantis. These biological garden saviors can be purchased in organic garden supply shops. Planting certain plants that attract these awesome insects to the garden greatly help your eco-environment as well. Yarrow, sweet alyssum, marigolds, cosmos, lantana, dill, and fennel are all good choices for attracting the good guys to the garden.

Other natural, non chemical pest deterrents might include soapy water sprays, boric acid sprinkled (Mule

Team Borax washing soap) and or concoctions made from garlic juice, hot pepper wax and certain other essential plant oils such as peppermint, sweet orange, rosemary, lemongrass, cinnamon and cedar wood. Diatomaceous Earth is one of the best products you can purchase to kill soft bodied bugs that eat food crops. It consists of microscopic fossilized shells that are razor sharp, cutting and harming insects while not affecting people adversely. There is even a food grade diatomaceous earth product that is ingestible for human and pet consumption sold and packaged for the purpose of ridding the body of parasites and adding nutrients to the diet and that helps with painful joint inflammation.



*Kim Campbell shops at Earth to Urban local food hub in down town OKC. This establishment ensures that local farmers can provide the freshest, cleanest grown, ethically produced food available to community food shoppers.*

100 million pounds of chemicals are used by homeowners every year on their lawns. These dangerous lawn chemicals make their way into homes, contaminating indoor air and surfaces exposing children & pets to levels 10 times higher than pre-application levels. Huge amounts of chemicals are dangerously sinking into our water tables, rivers, streams, and ponds. This poisons all life forms including people. A great substitute for an herbicide “kill all” for undesired plants growing in sidewalk cracks or other unwanted areas is a mixture of apple cider vinegar, lemon juice, and table salt. Do not apply this to any area that has plants that you want to keep growing or soil you want to continue gardening in as it changes the ph value creating an inhospitable growing environment for most all plants.

I switched to an organic slow release lawn and garden fertilizer and have never looked back. I don't have to

because all my garden and lawn areas are growing like Eden utopia botanical bliss havens. This all natural product I found contains the entire power house nutrient NPK that the chemical company fertilizers boast plus some amazing goodies such as sea kelp, which acts as a heat stress plant healer, molasses, and corn gluten meal that serve as a biological pre-emergent for weed seed eradication and control.



*Heirloom Lettuce is some of the most beautifully colored plant I can think of. I plant the ruby red ones in the entryway flower garden beds for ornamental value.*

My gardens and lawn have never looked healthier or more vibrantly alive. I have to share this news for a better and safer way of living and gardening with other like minded families. This is for my own peace of mind and because I know of a better, safer and much healthier way to conduct my every day way of life.

Gardens and lawns are not the only area we need to banish toxic chemicals. Chemicals used to clean and disinfect our homes are loaded with harmful substances. Scented canned air fresheners are some of the worst indoor air pollutants. They may smell nice but the chemicals used to manufacture them are slowly making you unhealthy and sick. Switching to natural products that can be made at home is less expensive, less toxic, less wasteful, and easy to create with items already

stocked in the pantry of most homes. Some items you can use for clean and freshening the home are vinegar, baking soda, lemon juice, essential oils such as lavender, rosemary, sweet orange, pink grapefruit, lemon peel, and tea tree. All these essential oils are antibacterial by nature and impart a scent that is indescribably fresh and clean. Not only will they clean your home the aromatherapy aspect values are going to lift the mood and calm the mind.

**Cook up some scented goodness:** A great way to quickly infuse the air with delectable scents is to add some spices to a pot of water (8 cups or so), boil it for a time on the stove, and then turn the burner down to low and let simmer for awhile, replacing the liquid as needed. You can use things like cinnamon, orange & lemon peel, cloves as well as allspice and fresh mint leaves.

**Make your own mists:** If you need a quick burst of clean scent in your home, making your own natural air freshening spray. You can use a few drops (well, 30-40 drops for every 500 mL [16 oz] of water) of essential oil. Place the ingredients in a spray bottle and then spritz around the house as needed. Essential oils have natural antibacterial qualities, so any spray that you mix up should last for quite some time without going bad. Just give it a quick shake before using!

### *Porcelain and Tile*

Keep your bathrooms and kitchen tile spotless and hygienic with these natural cleansers:

**Baking Soda and Water:** Dust surfaces with baking soda, then scrub with a moist sponge or cloth. If you have tougher grime, sprinkle on some kosher salt, and work up some elbow grease.

**Lemon Juice or Vinegar:** Got stains, mildew or grease streaks? Spray or douse with lemon juice or vinegar. Let sit a few minutes, then scrub with a stiff brush.

**Disinfectant:** Instead of bleach, make your own disinfectant by mixing 2 cups of water, 3 tablespoons of liquid soap and 20 to 30 drops of tea tree oil. It's easy!

### *Kitchens Counters*

The room where food is prepared, stored and often enjoyed requires constant vigilance. Splatters, spills and errant crumbs can build up and collect out of sight, encouraging harmful bacteria.

**Baking Soda and Water:** Reclaim counters by sprinkling with baking soda, then scrubbing with a damp cloth or sponge. If you have stains, knead the baking soda and water into a paste and let set for a while before you remove. This method also works great for stainless steel sinks, cutting boards, containers, refrigerators, oven tops and more.

**Kosher Salt and Water:** If you need a tougher abrasive sprinkle on kosher salt, and scrub with a wet cloth or sponge.

**Natural Disinfectant:** To knock out germs without strong products, mix 2 cups of water, 3 tablespoons of liquid soap and 20 to 30 drops of tea tree oil. Spray or rub on countertops and other kitchen surfaces.

### *Windows and Mirrors*

Instead of those harsh-smelling sprays, try this highly effective, simple solution for windows and mirrors:

**White Vinegar, Water and Newspaper:** Mix 2 tablespoons of white vinegar with a gallon of water, and dispense into a used spray bottle. Squirt on, and then scrub with newspaper, not paper towels, which cause streaking.

If you're out of vinegar or don't like its smell, you can substitute undiluted lemon juice or club soda.

### *Carpet and Rugs*

Keeping carpets clean is less daunting than you might think, even after a season of tracked-in dirt and salt.

**Beat Those Rugs:** Take any removable rugs outside and beat the dust and hair out with a broom.

**Club Soda:** You've probably heard the old adage that club soda works well on carpet stains. But you have to attack the mess right away. Lift off any solids, and then liberally pour on club soda. Blot with an old rag. The soda's carbonation brings the spill to the surface, and the salts in the soda thwart staining.

**Cornmeal:** For big spills, dump cornmeal on the mess, wait 5 to 15 minutes, and vacuum up the gunk.

**Spot Cleaner:** Make your own by mixing: 1/4 cup liquid soap or detergent in a blender, with 1/3 cup water. Mix this until foamy. Spray on, and then rinse with vinegar.

**To Deodorize:** Sprinkle baking soda or cornstarch on the carpet or rug, using about 1 cup per medium-sized room. Vacuum the powder up after 30 minutes.

## Wood Floors

Hardwood floors are beautiful, hygienic, long lasting and add value to your home. They are easy to vacuum, but don't do well with wet mopping. So how do you restore their natural glow without roughing them up?

Vinegar: Whip up a solution of 1/4 cup white vinegar, sweet orange essential oil and 30 ounces of warm water. Put in a recycled spray bottle, and then spray on a cotton rag or towel until lightly damp. Then mop your floors, scrubbing away any grime.

## Safer Oven Cleaning

Conventional oven cleaning chemicals are loaded with toxic ingredients, including ethers, ethylene glycol, lye (sodium and potassium hydroxide), methylene chloride and petroleum distillates. The products are harmful to skin and eyes, and the fumes are unhealthy. Instead, go natural!

**Baking Soda and Water:** Coat the inside of your dirty appliance with a paste made from water and baking so-

da. Let stand overnight. Then, don gloves and scour off that grime. Make spotless with a moist cloth.

I have included a few non toxic home recipes to get you started banishing chemicals and toxic poisons from your life and lifestyle. I hope they inspire you to keep cleaning up your act by incorporating organic solutions to your own life.

*Kim Campbell is an organic lifestyle activist, OSU-OKC de-greed horticulturist, garden writer/blogger for Thrive Organic Green Witch Heals Farm & Organic Landscaping. Home based out of central Oklahoma, Kim is helping her community replace chemical fertilizers, pesticides and poisons one home, kitchen and yard at a time. Contact [HERBWILD@AOL.COM](mailto:HERBWILD@AOL.COM) or [THRIVE\\_LANDSCAPE@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:THRIVE_LANDSCAPE@HOTMAIL.COM) for consult or information.*



There is only ONE Gardening Guru, David Daehnke! David has over 25 years of experience in the horticulture field, from running his own landscaping business, Executive Director of three botanical gardens, and having his own radio show for 18 years.

He wants you to be the best gardener you can, teaching simple, smart, organic gardening practices which are safe to you, your family, your pets and OUR environment. David is a well-renowned speaker, lecturing to garden clubs, civic organizations and businesses with a fun and informative style. To schedule David for your next event or visit to learn more about safe organic gardening practices, visit his web site at:

[www.thegardeningguru.com](http://www.thegardeningguru.com)

## Fun and Easy Hypertufa

*By Maureen Farmer*

This weekend I took an advanced master gardener class on making hypertufa containers. Each attendee got a chance to help prepare the recipe below and make a hypertufa container to take home. We were asked to bring a 15 inch square board and rubber gloves with us to class. The board was needed to transport our containers home and the gloves were to prevent the alkaline concrete from damaging the skin on our hands.

1. We were each given four pieces of 6" by 12" foam board and four nails. We assembled the boards into a square and used the nails to secure the pieces together. Then we wrapped duct tape firmly around our container forms.

2. We placed a piece of 3 mi plastic on our boards and then placed our forms on top of the plastic.

3. Next we went outside to help create the following recipe for hypertufa. Many variations of this recipe can be found n the web, but the following recipe is what we used. This recipe was created by our instructor, David Silver of Bantam Bonsai.

### Dry Mix:

1 Part Portland Cement Type I/II

1 Part Perlite

¾ Part Sieved Peat Moss

### Wet Mix:

1 Part Liquid Acrylic Bonding Agent

3 Parts Water

Concrete Coloring Agent

Small Handful of PVA RSC15 Fiber

The dry and wet mixtures were prepared. Half of the wet mixture was poured into the dry ingredients and hand mixed together. Half of the remaining liquid was added until the mixture could be formed into a ball. Then the strengthening fiber was added. We were cautioned not to add the fiber in the beginning since it tends to clump together.

4. We placed a couple of dowels upright in our forms to create drainage holes in the bottom of the hypertufa container. We placed the hypertufa mixture around the dowels to hold them in place. Then we packed the mixture across the bottom and into the corners. We pressed the mixture into place, taking care not to press so hard that water was expressed from the mixture.

5. After the bottom was finished, we formed the sides, making them approximately 1.5" thick.

6. When we were satisfied with the height of our container, we lightly misted it with water and placed the board and the filled mold inside a plastic bag and closed the bag. After we got home we were told to keep the bag closed and out of the sun for approximately 24 hours.

7. The next morning, I unwrapped my creation and removed the duct tape and the nails. Then I gently pulled the foam boards away from my container. I used a hammer and a screwdriver to tap out the dowels used to created the drainage holes.

8. I used a stiff wire brush to remove any pieces of hypertufa that had leaked out of the mold, roughen up the sides and round off the sharp corners. You can leave the sides smooth, but I preferred to create a more rustic look for my container. I rinsed off the board and the form pieces so that I can re-use it for my next hypertufa project.

9. I misted the contained and placed it back into the plastic bag. It needs to remain in the bag out of direct sunlight and above freezing (70 degrees is optimal temperature) for a month to fully cure.

10. After a month, I will remove the container from the plastic bag. I will also burn off any protruding fibers from the sides. Then I'll finally be able to fill my hypertufa container with soil and some pretty plants. Hypertufa containers may be left outdoors year round.

Our instructor also told us that we can make free form containers, but be sure to make them at least 1.5 inches thick. He also said that containers must be treated if we want them to hold water. For example if they are to be used as a birdbath. But most of all, he said to experiment and have fun! I'm looking forward to creating more hypertufa in the future.

*Maureen Farmer is master gardener and the founder of The Farmer's Garden website ([www.thefarmersgarden.com](http://www.thefarmersgarden.com)). The Farmer's Garden is an online place to make in-person connections between gardeners across the US. Gardeners and want-to-be gardeners can search and post free classified ads to share excess homegrown produce, tools, or gardening space with people in their area. Food banks can post wanted classifieds for surplus food. She is an avid gardener and also a former Board member of Urban Oaks Organic Farm in Connecticut.*

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