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CCHD GARDEN NEWS

Gardening Education 101



TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

THE CABBAGE; SEPTEMBER PLANT SPOTLIGHT

By: Jo Polk

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September's plant of the month is the humble cabbage. Once thought of as peasant food, the cabbage has proven itself to be a nutrition powerhouse and versatile in the culinary world. Check out the article on our plant of the month to learn more about this cruciferous plant.
(Continued on page 1)

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Investing in raised beds and the soil to fill these beds is not always economical for some gardeners but what other way can you garden if you don't have land to plant directly in? Have you ever heard of Straw Bale Gardening? This type of gardening can help offset the cost of starting a raised bed garden. Marti's article gives us an introduction to straw bale gardening and why you may want to give it a try! Please continuing reading on page 2.



STRAW BALE GARDENING

By: Marti Keith

THE GEN Z GARDENER; MY MENTAL HEALTH JOURNEY

By: Hannah Dickens



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Hannah talks about the upcoming fall and winter season and the importance of rest for the garden and for the mind, body and spirit. Continued on page 3.

THE CABBAGE;

SEPTEMBER PLANT SPOTLIGHT

By: Jo Polk

Cabbage is from the family Cruciferae. The family name comes from the Latin word meaning cross because the flowers are cross-shaped. Other plants in the Cruciferae family include broccoli, cauliflower, kale, and Brussel sprouts. These plants are also called "Cole crops".

Cabbage is a versatile vegetable because it can be eaten raw, pickled, steamed, sauteed, roasted, added to stir-fries and soups plus it grows and stores well. Cabbage is also very affordable and often one of the least expensive vegetables at the market.

At the turn of the century, cabbage was considered to be food for poor people. It's now regarded as one of the most nutritional vegetables and thought to have strong anti-aging and anti-cancer properties. Cabbage is high in vitamin C, vitamin K, folate, potassium, manganese, vitamin A, thiamin, vitamin B6, calcium and iron. It also contains high levels of fiber, which may help keep the digestive tract and colon healthy. Cabbage is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and only contains around 15 calories per cup.

There are hundreds of varieties of cabbage in the world but very few are available in grocery stores. Most cabbages can be categorized into four main groups: green, red, Savoy and Chinese (Napa) cabbage. Green cabbage looks similar to a head of iceberg lettuce and is the most common variety. The outer leaves range from dark to pale green while the inside is pale green or white. When it is eaten raw, it has a somewhat peppery flavor but takes on a sweeter taste if cooked.

Red or purple cabbage takes longer to mature so these types are not as tender as the green varieties. Red cabbage can be used interchangeably in most standard cabbage recipes. Red cabbage has a compound called anthocyanin that gives the cabbage a beautiful color and causes it to turn blue when cooked with any alkaline substance. This color can leach into other foods if cooked together.

Savoy cabbage originated in Italy has deep green crinkly leaves is considered the most tender and sweet. The head is less compact, due to the wrinkled leaves but looks similar to green cabbage. Savoy cabbage is a good choice for stuffed cabbage since the leaves are more pliable and stand up to longer cooking times. Napa cabbage, also known as Chinese cabbage, is yellow-green in color, has an oblong head and has frilly leaves. The leaves are crisp and have thick stems. Napa is one of the milder flavored cabbages and can be eaten raw or cooked.

To grow cabbage, it is best to do so as a cool crop. Because cabbage is hardy, it can withstand heavy frost and temperatures as low as 15 to 20°F. That means it can be grown in both spring and fall. For the best results, choose a planting site that receives full sun (at least 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight per day). Cabbage is a heavy feeder; it quickly depletes the soil of nutrients and needs a steady supply of water and nutrients throughout its growth. Prepare the soil in advance by mixing in aged manure and/or compost. Soil should also be well-draining, as roots that stand in water cause heads to split or rot.



THE RECIPE; FRIED CABBAGE AND SAUSAGE

Ingredients:

1 small head or ½ large head of green cabbage, Smoked Sausage (I used Meijer brand gluten free chicken smoked sausage for this recipe because my daughter's dietary needs), ½ yellow onion-sliced, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, ½ teaspoon onion powder, 1 teaspoon black pepper, 1 teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper, chicken or vegetable broth

Process:

Cut the cabbage into 1 inch pieces and rinse the cabbage, in a large skillet, add a tablespoon of olive or vegetable oil and allow it to heat over medium heat. Cut the sausage into ½ inch circles and add them to the skillet, allow the sausage to brown on each side. Once sausage is browned, add the onions and cabbage to cook down. Add the seasonings and saute until the cabbage and onions start to soften. As the cabbage and onions cook down, add a splash of chicken or vegetable broth and cover with a lid and allow the dish to simmer over medium heat for 20 minutes. Once the cabbage and onions are cooked to you desired consistency, the dish is done. We served this over top of mashed potatoes but a side of fried potatoes would be delicious as well to complete this meal. This meal serves 4 people and cost around \$2.00 (including the cost of potatoes) a serving making this not only a nutritional dish but a very economical one!



STRAW BALE GARDENING

By: Marti Keith

One my favorite way to garden is to use straw bales. I have used straw for at least the last ten years. I always plant my tomatoes plants in straw and have also had success with cucumbers, squash and peppers. Next growing season I am going to try new potatoes.

Straw bale gardening is a method of gardening using straw bales as instant, temporary raised beds that decompose to create nutrient-rich compost for the next growing season.

My favorite things about using straw is never having to battle weeds and straw bales can be used for just about any size container. You can have just a patio garden or a large garden when using the straw bale gardening method.

The process of prepping or conditioning the straw bales for planting requires fertilizing and plenty of watering. Straw bales should be placed out in a sunny spot and then you can begin conditioning them which can take 10 to 12 days. Conditioning involves regularly adding high-nitrogen fertilizer (about ½ cup of fertilizer per bale) and water which kickstarts the composting process within the bale. This prepping allows the straw to start breaking down and making good bacteria. One of the signs that your straw is breaking down is when you start to see tiny mushrooms and some growth of green grass which will disappear eventually.

Once you have completed the prepping process you are ready to plant your seeds or starter plants. You can plant seedlings directly into holes in the bales by digging a hole, add some potting soil and plant your seedling in there. To plant by sowing seeds, put a thin layer of potting soil over the straw bales and then sprinkle your seeds.

Here are some additional tips for a successful straw bale garden:

- You should always make sure you are using straw bales and not hay bales.
- Purchase your straw bales in mid to late April from a local hardware store to allow time to condition the straw.
- Choose appropriate plants: Avoid root vegetables like carrots and plants that get too top heavy.
- Fertilize as needed especially for fruiting plants like tomatoes.
- Water regularly, keeping the bales moist through the growing season.
- Once the plants are done, you can break up the decomposed bales and use them as compost or mulch for the other garden areas and nutrient dense soil for summer flower pots.

If you are interested in straw gardening I would recommend the book, *Straw Bale Gardens Complete*: by Joel Karsten.



THE GEN Z GARDENER

By: Hannah Dickens

As the weather begins to change, we may start seeing the difference between people in how they look at the fall weather. Some people thrive in the fall, with the cooler weather, the color of the trees and the lovely fall activities that take place. While other people can be deeply affected by the changing of the season due to reduced daylight and the impending winter and cold that will be coming soon. I'm here to talk about how I am both of these people and how I like to look at the garden and come up with ideas to cope with the upcoming winter coming.

Seasonal affective disorder, otherwise known as SAD, is a type of depression linked to changes in the seasons, typically in the fall and winter months. It is characterized by changes in mood, sleep, appetite, and energy levels that coincide with reduced daylight hours.

Fall offers a beautiful canvas for nature -based activities and mindfulness practices. Activities such as watching the changing leaves can help you become more grounded. Fall reminds us that it is time to start to prepare the garden for rest. Some fall garden tasks include cleaning out old plants and weeds, amending the soil with compost and prepping tools for winter storage. We remove old plants and amend the soil to help remove disease and pests so they don't affect the plants for next growing season. You can add mulch to the soil after adding compost to help conserve water and moderate soil temperature for new seedlings.

Preparing our garden to rest for the season is a good reminder that we also need time to rest and rejuvenate our minds and bodies by reflecting on what serves us and what does not. Take time to reflect on the things that you joy and the things that don't. If they don't bring you joy, then pull them out of your life and throw it out with the rest of the weeds. If it brings you joy, feed it and amend the soil so that it can grow. You should also take time to reflect and rest during this upcoming season. We don't realize how important it is to rest and relax. We live such busy lives and use so much energy day to day.

Plants are the same way, through spring and summer growing and producing for harvest. Going through weeks of growth to become something great. Same with us as humans, we go through so many changes and never give ourselves time to relax. Fall is a great time to just give ourselves a break from our busy lives and I encourage you to utilize this time to.



QUESTIONS?

SEND US YOUR GARDENING QUESTIONS

Do you have questions you would like us to answer? Each newsletter will have a section for readers to submit questions and let us try to answer those for you. Please submit our questions via email to:

jpolk@clarkcounty.in.gov

with Gardening 101 question in the subject line.