

From The Ground Up



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Eat Your Greens—They're Good for You

By: Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

Did your mother ever tell you to eat your greens? Greens are delicious and loaded with nutrients important to good health. They include collards, mustard greens, kale, spinach, Swiss chard, turnip greens and beet tops.

Greens are a dietary staple in many countries though consumption in our country has declined in favor of other, more popular vegetables. Few of us probably eat the amount of dark green vegetables recommended by the USDA's MyPlate, which is about 1.5-2 cups per week for adults. If you'd like to add more greens to your diet, you're in luck because greens are very easy to grow and perfect to plant in the cool months of spring. You can direct seed them in the garden as soon as the soil can be worked.

Most greens prefer cool weather. Kale and collards tolerate warmer temperatures but mustard greens and spinach will bolt quickly in the summer heat. Chard, on the other hand, will yield leaves throughout the summer. To enjoy a fall crop of greens sow some collard, mustard and kale seeds in midsummer. Spinach can be planted in early August for a second crop.

If you are cramped for space, greens can also be grown in containers. The size of the container will vary by crop. For example, with beets and turnips use at least a two gallon container. A one

gallon pot is fine for other greens. Thin seedlings to one plant every three inches. For chard, mustard, and collards sow two to three seeds and thin to a single plant.

You can harvest greens as soon as the leaves reach a usable size. Young leaves are

milder tasting and except for collards can be eaten raw in salads. Collards are tough chewing and can taste bitter if eaten raw. Pick the outer leaves and let the plant keep growing. Store greens unwashed in an open plastic bag in the refrigerator. Storage life will vary by the type of green. For long term storage, freezing is the best option.

When preparing greens for cooking wash the leaves under cool running water or swish the greens around in a sink of cold water to remove any dirt. For large, mature leaves remove the stem and midrib by cutting them away with a sharp knife. Then stack the leaves on a cutting board, roll them into a jelly roll shape and slice into 1/2 to 1-inch wide strips.

An easy way to cook greens is to bring lightly salted water to boiling. Add the sliced greens, cover and cook until tender. I use a large cast iron skillet with just enough water to cover the greens. Chard and beet tops generally take 8 to 10 minutes to cook while kale, mustard, turnip, and collard greens take about 20 to 30 minutes. Keep in mind that young, tender leaves will cook faster than older leaves. Drain the greens,

toss in some butter or olive oil and season to taste with salt and pepper. Or you can sprinkle them with ginger, curry, lemon juice or balsamic or cider vinegar. There are many ways to season cooked greens.

Though greens are most often boiled, sautéing them is another way to go. A traditional dish for collards is to sauté them with bacon and garlic.

Recipes will call for large amounts of greens but keep in mind that greens cook down considerably in the pan. You can find many recipes online and if looking through a cookbook, check the index under greens.

Hopefully you are now inspired to grow some greens this spring or try something different if you've grown them in the past.



Swiss chard Oregonstate.edu



Tend Your Soil

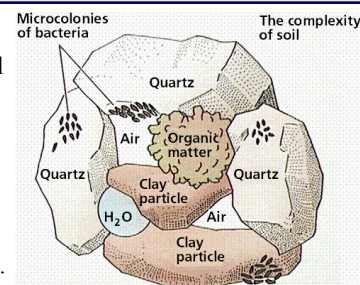
Before planting, give some thought to the garden's foundation – soil. Soil provides nutrients, water and physical support for plants. It is made from broken-down, weathered rocks and the remains of animals and plants. What you might not realize, however, is that soil is also teeming with life and needs to be nourished and cared for just like the plants themselves.

A quarter teaspoon of top soil can contain up to a billion microorganisms. Microorganisms include bacteria and fungi. Most are single-celled and too small to see with the unaided

eye. These microorganisms are responsible for breaking down the organic matter in the soil, which is necessary to release energy, nutrients and carbon dioxide back into the soil.

What we can do to help keep these bio-recyclers happy? Make sure they get enough to eat. Feed them some organic matter. Almost all soils benefit from the addition of organic matter. Sources of organic matter include compost, grass-clippings (untreated with herbicides), shredded leaves, bark chips, peat moss, and well-aged animal manure.

Besides feeding those microorganisms that work so hard in your garden, organic matter will improve soil texture and help build and stabilize soil structure. In turn, this can improve root growth and both the water and nutrient-holding capability of the soil. Look to have about 3-5% of organic matter in your soil.



www.emc.maricopa.edu



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APRIL 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Sow tomato seeds indoors for May planting	4	5 Don't till garden when soil is wet	6
7	8	9 Begin spring clean-up of yard	10	11 Plants pansies & other cool season flowers	12	13 Plant cool season vegetables
14	15	16 Divide fall blooming perennials as new growth begins	17	18 Start fertilizing houseplants, repot if needed	19	20
21	22 Start a Compost for Earth Day	23	24 Remove mulch on strawberries when see new growth	25	26 Plant a Tree for Arbor Day	27
28	29 Aerate your lawn if necessary	30				

The South Dakota Herb Garden

By Priscilla Jurkovich, Master Gardener

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) is a hardy annual and has been called pot marigold to differentiate it from the common marigold (*Tagetes*). Calendula is from the Asteraceae family and bears bright, ornamental daisy-like flowers, 1 to 3 inches across on 8 to 30 inch plants. The plant loves full sun or partial shade. Flowers bloom June through frost. It tolerates a pH in the range of 4.5 to 8.3 and will be happy in the SD alkaline soil. Start the seeds indoors 4-6 weeks before you want to plant outside. Transplant once the danger of frost is over. Calendula deters asparagus beetles and tomato hornworms making them a good companion plant for tomatoes or to brighten your asparagus patch.

The flowers and the leaves are edible and rich in vitamins and minerals. The leaves can be used in salads or in stir fry recipes and have a similar taste to dandelion leaves with similar detoxifying qualities as the dandelion.

The flower can be used for medicinal purposes. The antibacterial, anti-inflammatory qualities have been used in tinctures (soak petals in alcohol) or infusions (tea made with 1-2 tsp. of petals in one cup boiling water, steeped for 10 minutes) to treat headaches, toothaches and even tuberculosis. The tea is gentle enough to be used to treat thrush in children's mouths. The infusion or tincture helps inflammatory problems of the digestive system such as gastritis, peptic ulcers, regional ileitis and colitis. Some anti-tumor activities have been observed in scientific studies.

Calendula is also a popular salve and cream ingredient because it decreases the inflammation of sprains, stings, varicose veins and other swellings. It soothes burns, sunburn, rashes and skin irritations as well as acne and eczema. Some studies show it kills bacteria and fungus such as ringworm and athlete's foot.



Photo by Priscilla Jurkovich

The Delectable Garden Beet

By Margaret Murphy, Master Gardener

Beets – it seems people either love them or hate them. For many years, I was in the latter group. As far back as I can remember my mom has planted beets in her garden. She likes them pickled and that's how I knew beets growing up. Not being partial to pickled beets, I avoided them for years. Then one summer, a friend of mine served steamed beetroots taken fresh from the garden. I ate a few and, as it turns out, they are very delicious.

The beet has been around a long time. Its history dates back to ancient Mediterranean civilizations. In earlier times, people used only the beet greens both as a culinary herb and medicinally. The Romans are thought to be the first to cultivate the root for food starting in the 3rd century AD. Beets grown in ancient days had long, tubular roots but today they come in many different shapes and colors.

Most people are familiar with the red, globe-shaped beet. Popular varieties include the Ruby Queen, Red Ace, Detroit Dark Red and Bull's Blood. Bull's Blood is an heirloom variety that also sports a burgundy colored top. Another well-liked beet is the Cylindra. This is a Danish heirloom variety that has a dark red, cylindrical root. For a beet of a different color try the Burpee's Golden with its fair color and sweet mild taste, or the Albino, also sweet and tender plus won't stain your fingers or cutting board. For a festive colored beet try the Chioggia. This is an Italian heirloom that has red and white concentric rings on the inside – nicknamed the candy cane beet.

Beets are easy to grow and perform best in rich, loose, well-drained soils. If your soil is poorly drained, add compost or other organic matter. You can also plant beets in a raised bed. Beets are cold hardy. Sow the seeds directly into the ground as soon as the soil can be worked. Some folks will soak the seeds in water for a few hours before planting to aid with germination. You can plant beets any time from spring to midsummer or make successive plantings every 2-3 weeks for a continued harvest. The last planting date for a fall crop is usually around early August.

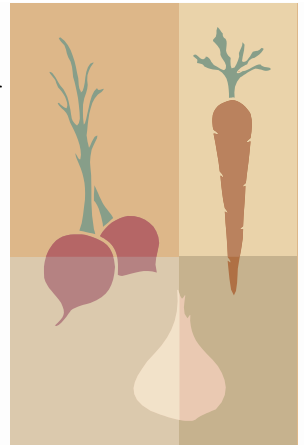
Besides good soil and sunshine, beets need space to grow. So, when seedlings reach 3-4 inches high, thin the crop. After thinning, the spacing of plants should be about 2-4 inches apart. If you are like me, it hurts a little to pull healthy seedlings from the ground but remember you can enjoy the fresh, young greens in a salad. Overcrowding is one of the most common problems resulting in a poor crop.

Interestingly, with most beet cultivars, each 'seed' is really a fruit containing a cluster of several seeds. Even if you are very meticulous about spacing your seeds when planting, you may still end up with seedlings that are too close together and need to be thinned.

Poor growth can also occur due to soil that is too dry and crusted over. Keep your planted rows adequately watered especially during hot, dry periods. Mulching with dry grass clippings or peat moss may help as well.

Stored beets unwashed in a plastic bag with an inch of stem and the tap root on. They will last about a week in the refrigerator. For long-term storage, keep them in a cold, humid location such as a root cellar.

There are so many different ways to eat beets. So, if you've been suffering from "beet-avoidance" all these years, maybe it's time to give them another try. You can steam, boil, roast or grill them. Cook them with the skins intact, which helps preserve the nutrients then peel before eating. Beets can also be frozen, canned or pickled. In Australia, pickled beet slices are a favorite on hamburgers. And don't forget to take advantage of the wholesome beet greens. Put them in a salad or sauté them in a touch of olive oil.



Pest of the Month Crabgrass

Spring is the time to thwart crabgrass from taking hold in your lawn. Crabgrass is an annual grass that germinates

from spring to mid-summer. The seeds begin to germinate when soil temperatures reach 55 to 60 degrees F. A pre-emergent herbicide can be used to prevent the growing of crabgrass.

For successful crabgrass control, timing is everything. Pre-emergent herbicides should be applied when soil temps (at a 2 inch depth) are about 55 degrees F. Typically, when you see the bright yellow flowers of forsythia or start to smell the lilacs in bloom.

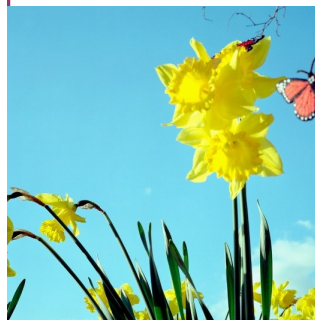
Gardeners can also control crabgrass by applying corn gluten meal. A corn milling byproduct, corn gluten meal inhibits the root growth of crabgrass seedlings. You can check with a garden center or nursery for commonly used herbicides and always read and follow the instructions carefully.

Avoid applying pre-emergent herbicides in areas you are trying to reseed. These chemicals will inhibit the growth of the grass seed. Apply the pre-emergent well after the grass seed has sprouted.



Crabgrass turf.msu.edu

Garden Fun Fact



What's the difference between the terms Daffodil, Narcissus, or Jonquil?

Much confusion has existed over the proper name for these plants. Actually, both daffodil and *narcissus* are correct. *Narcissus* is the generic botanical name given these plants in 1753. In England, however, the plants commonly were

known as daffodils. This term was carried to other countries by English-speaking people.

Jonquil refers to a specific kind of *narcissus*, and is not correct for the group in general. True jonquils have a reedlike leaf and sweet-smelling flowers.

Narcissus, then, is the correct botanical name for the genus; daffodil is the correct common name for all members of the genus; and jonquil correctly refers to one particular division of the genus.

From the University of Missouri Extension
(<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6610#or>)

Save the Date

- Next MG meeting is April 13 at 10 am . May's meeting is on Monday the 13 at 7 pm
- Master Gardener Plant Sale at Fairgrounds- May 11, 2013
Plants that sell are houseplants, hostas, shrubs, vegetables, unusual perennials – make sure that you label them. Set up is Friday afternoon and the sale starts at 9 am on Saturday.

Master Gardener Notes

- Keep track of your hours! Send completed [forms](#) to Mary Roduner by mail or FAX.
- Volunteers needed for organizing the Garden Tour and tending the Extension office gardens.
- Also, put your creative powers to work by volunteering to write an article for the *From the Ground Up* newsletter.

For more information call the Master Gardener office at 605-782-3290 or send an [email](#).

Plus, check out our [website](#)!

Plant of the Month

Rhubarb

We treat rhubarb like a fruit but actually it is a hardy, perennial vegetable. It was originally cultivated for its medicinal qualities. Rhubarb was considered useful for cleansing the body and used as a laxative and to reduce fevers. Today, it's been found beneficial in the treatment of cold sores. Cultivars commonly grown here include Canada Red, Crimson Red, MacDonald, Valentine, and Victoria, which is a green stalked cultivar.

Garden grown rhubarb is usually started by root divisions. You can buy rhubarb plants from local garden centers or through some seed catalogs. However, many gardeners start their rhubarb from a division shared by a rhubarb-growing neighbor. Established plants can be divided as soon as the soil is easily worked and before new growth emerges. Early spring is a great time to transplant rhubarb but you can also transplant it in the early fall.

With good care, a rhubarb plant can live 15 years or more. Plant it in a sunny place, free of weeds with well-drained, fertile soil. Give the plants plenty of room to grow spacing them about three feet apart from each other. To keep rhubarb hearty fertilize it annually in early spring before growth starts. Remember to incorporate some organic matter such as manure or compost to further enrich the soil.

It's recommended that you don't harvest any rhubarb during the first two growing seasons. This is to allow sufficient time for the roots to become well established. Some folks might do a light harvest the second year. In the third year, rhubarb can be harvested for four to six weeks. After the third year, you can harvest for a longer period but stop harvesting by mid-June. Discontinuing the harvest helps keep the plant vigorous by allowing it ample time to produce food for next year's crop. Also it's a good practice to never harvest more than two-thirds of the plant at any one time. When picking stalks discard the leaf. Leaves of rhubarb contain a moderate amount of oxalic acid and are harmful if eaten. You can, however, compost the leaves.

If you find your rhubarb flowering, pull the stalks. Plants that flower and seed are less productive. Older plants are more prone to flowering than younger ones. Very hot and dry conditions as well as infertile soils can also cause flowering. Good cultural practices such as watering regularly during dry spells and fertilizing in early spring can reduce the likelihood of flowering.



When planting trees, proper watering is the key to success

Last fall, we saw a number of trees go into the winter water-stressed due to the extended dryness of the season. As a result, folks may be wondering about the health of their trees this spring. In general, well-established, hearty trees are pretty resilient. However, if you're left wondering whether or not a tree has survived, be patient and wait until bud break. Branches that are still living will eventually show new growth emerging from the buds.

If you find that you need to replant, one crucial element to a newly planted tree's survival is proper watering. Freshly planted trees lack the established root system needed for adequate water storage. As such, the tree relies on rain or supplemental watering and generally needs supplemental water even when we are not experiencing drought conditions.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to recommend a set schedule for watering a new tree. How often and how much to water depends on several factors including the amount of rainfall we receive and how well the site holds moisture. For the first few months, the need for watering could be as often as two to three times a week or even daily if the weather conditions are particularly hot, dry and windy. As the tree grows, watering frequency can be reduced but the watering area will expand.



As a rule of thumb, apply one to two gallons of water, per inch of trunk diameter, directly over the tree's root ball. Inspect the tree and the soil moisture frequently, especially in hot, dry weather, and before you water. It's important not to overwater as excessive irrigation can lead to root rot.

You can monitor soil moisture by digging a small hole with a trowel or soil probe (keep the tool you use small to minimize root injury). Check the soil moisture in the root zone to a depth of about one foot.

To help conserve soil moisture, place two to three inches of mulch over the developing root system (usually out to the tips of the branches). Keep the mulch at least four inches away from the trunk to avoid conditions that invite decay or unwanted pests like insects and rodents. Suggested mulches include: wood chips, shredded bark or pine needles.

Lastly, fertilizing a newly planted tree is not recommended. Fertilizer may harm developing roots plus research shows that fertilization is not that effective until the tree has re-established part of its root system.

A newly planted tree needs to be regularly tended while it gets established. Typically, for plant hardiness zones 4 and 5, establishment takes one season per inch of trunk caliper.

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