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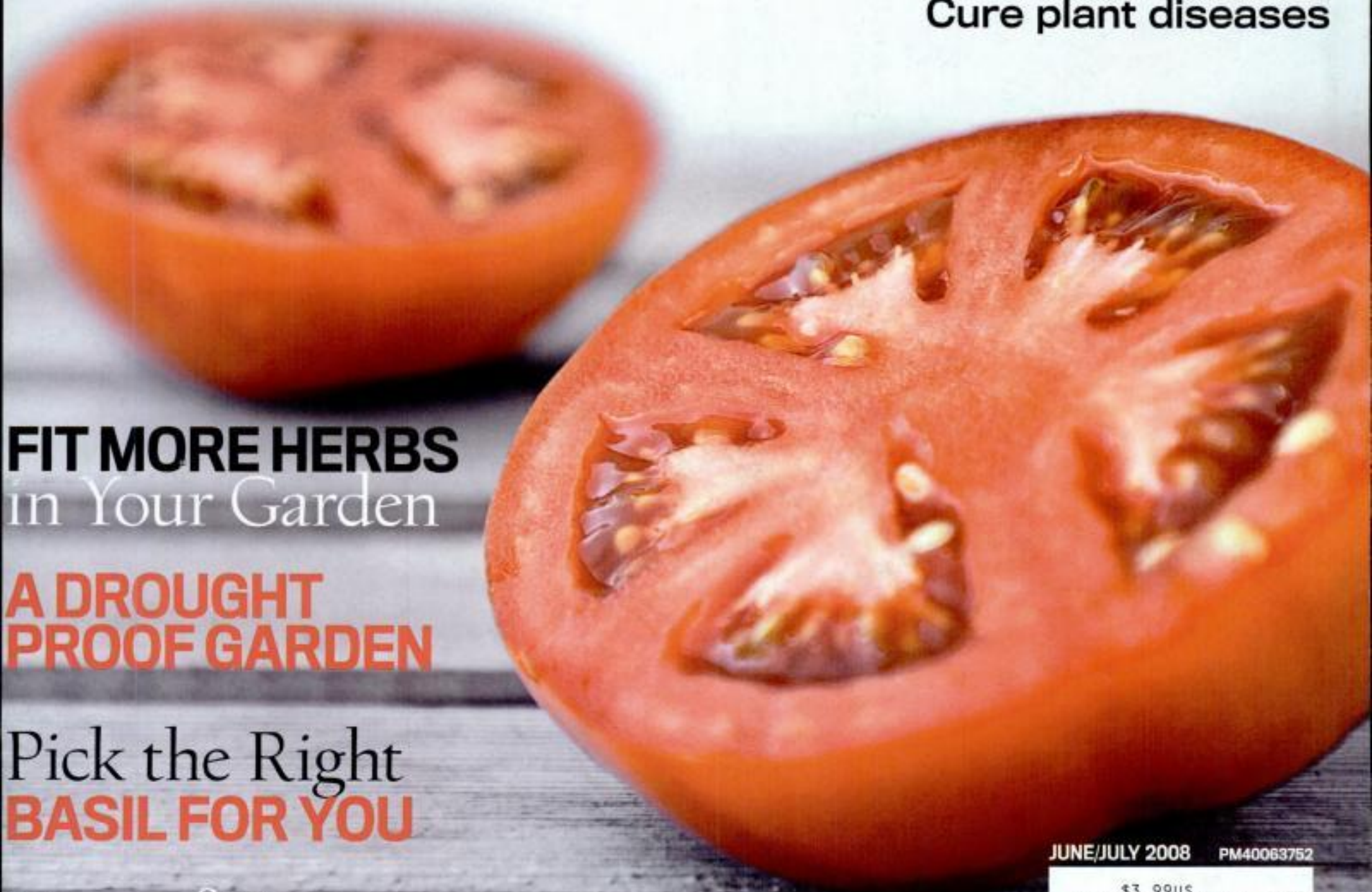


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From the kitchen of: Pascal Sauton, Executive Chef and Owner  
Carafe ~ Portland, Oregon

## Quinoa Salad

2 cups Bob's Red Mill® Organic Quinoa  
1/2 cup crushed Oregon Hazelnuts, toasted  
1/4 cup minced green onions  
1/4 cup dry black currants, soaked in warm water then drained  
1/4 cup sherry vinegar  
1/4 cup olive oil

To cook Quinoa: Boil 4 cups of water; add Quinoa and cook on medium heat for 10 minutes. Drain in a strainer, then spread Quinoa on a cookie sheet and let cool at room temperature. Do not rinse.

After Quinoa has cooled, place in a bowl, add the remaining ingredients and season with sea

salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste. As an option: Add 1/4 cup finely crumbled blue veined cheese. This adds another flavor complexity.

Serve as an appetizer with prosciutto, smoked duck breast or poached leeks.

Serve as an entree with freshly grilled fish or cold poached salmon.

For more great whole grain summer salad recipes, please visit [www.bobsredmill.com/og](http://www.bobsredmill.com/og)

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
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**\* = COVER STORIES**

#### EXTRAS AT ORGANICGARDENING.COM

- New Gardeners' forum** Click on "Discussions" to ask your questions and get fast answers from experienced growers.
- Pest Solutions** Identify what's eating your plants and find the most-effective remedies.

 **ON THE COVER** Sean McCormick shot the image of a fresh-picked tomato from our Pennsylvania test garden.

SEAN MCCORMICK

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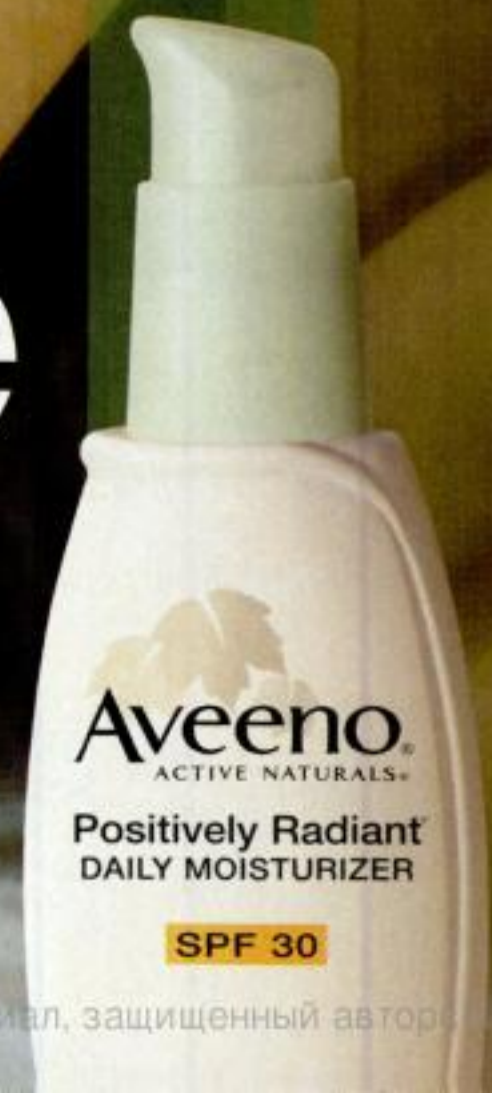
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## IN SEASON

By Scott Meyer

## The Hardest Choices

ou've made a big choice. When you started reading this magazine—whether this is your first issue (welcome!) or you've been a subscriber since way back when “organic” was still a new (old) idea—you decided to learn how to garden without toxic chemicals. Maybe you wanted to learn more about how to bring the organic approach to other areas of your life, too.

Since you made that choice, you've probably discovered that every day you have countless more to make. They start coming at you as soon as you roll out of bed in the morning. How long will you run the shower? What's for breakfast? Where will you shop? How will you keep pests from spoiling your garden? See what I mean? You make decisions all day long that impact the health and well-being of you, your family, and the environment.

In some cases, the choices are clear-cut. I imagine, for instance, few organic gardeners will knowingly plant genetically modified seeds. The challenge, though, is that most choices are not so simple. Even basic ones. Consider, for example, shampoo. As you'll see in our report on page 44, a recent study revealed that many shampoos sold as “organic” or “natural” contain small amounts of 1,4-dioxane, a probable human carcinogen. The shampoo makers say they are working to minimize the amount of the compound. But, they insist, products that contain it are more effective and the risks to human health are very small. A couple of my colleagues, both dedicated to organic principles in everything they do, told me they tried the brands without 1,4-dioxane but the results were unsatisfactory. So they choose to keep using the brands with 1,4-dioxane until they find a shampoo that works well without it.

Here at America's original organic magazine, one of our most critical choices is about the paper we print on. We have always used as much recycled content as possible. But as we learn more about where and how recycled paper is produced (overseas, using lots of bleach), we've shifted our focus instead to getting paper from sources who harvest it from sustainably managed forests and process it with the least damage to the environment.

We now have another choice to offer you. You can save the paper and get your copy of *Organic Gardening* delivered electronically. This edition is identical in every way to the paper edition. Each issue is archived so you can refer to past articles, and you can print articles to save in your own personal archive. For a free preview, go to [zinio.com](http://zinio.com) and click on Home & Garden.

Whichever version you select, we appreciate the choice you've made to be an organic gardener and to read *Organic Gardening*. I wish all of your other choices will be as easy to make.

Meet you here again next time.

Scott



## 3 Things I Learned from This Issue

## Better Basil

Whenever I've seen flowers forming on my basil, I've snipped them off to keep the plant producing tasty and tender new leaves. I now know a better way to encourage fresh leaf growth. Discover the secret on page 50.

## Bugs Battle Disease

Certain ladybugs work to prevent powdery mildew on cucumbers, melons, and grapes. See the helpful bug and learn how it works on page 19.

## Bat Case

Scientists report that brown bat colonies are being wiped out by a mysterious disease. Find out why bats are so valuable to gardeners and more about the disease on page 31.





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EDITOR Scott Meyer

PUBLISHER Christopher Lambiase, 212-808-0298

## EDITORIAL AND DESIGN

ART DIRECTOR Gavin Robinson

SENIOR EDITORS Therese Ciesinski, Zazel Lovén

PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR Christa Neu

WEST COAST CONTRIBUTING EDITOR Will Evans Galloway

EDITORIAL PRODUCTION MANAGER Nancy Rutman

RESEARCH EDITOR/TEST GARDEN MANAGER Pamela Ruch

DESIGNER Tara Long

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR Beth Huxta

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER, [ORGANICGARDENING.COM](http://ORGANICGARDENING.COM)

Abigail Poulette

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT Ginger Horsford

BRAND COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR Ellie Prezant

EDITORIAL INTERN Courtney Connelly

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LANDSCAPE COORDINATORS

Josh Brunner, Lisa Gabory, April Johnson

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NATIONAL ADVERTISING DIRECTOR Jeff Tkach, 610-967-8583

MARKETING MANAGER Tammy Hobar, 610-967-7943

MIDWEST REPRESENTATIVE Cheryl Kogut, 312-494-1919, ext. 306

WEST COAST REPRESENTATIVES Nicholas Freedman, 707-775-3376 David McRobie, 707-775-2496

ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE Ashley McEwan, Media People Inc., 212-779-7172, ext. 232

DETROIT REPRESENTATIVE Susan Hunyor, 248-637-1357

## PRODUCTION

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ADVERTISING PRODUCTION SPECIALIST Lynn Laudenslager

## CIRCULATION

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John Phelan

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## LETTERS

## Keep It Raw

The milk article ["Milk Shake-Up," May] seemed to discourage raw milk in favor of USDA-certified pasteurized and homogenized milk. Must we sterilize everything in the name of public safety, negating what has managed to nourish many generations healthfully and safely?

I want to refer your readers to the Weston A. Price Foundation ([westonaprice.org](http://westonaprice.org)), which is a pioneer in the effort to educate the public about raw milk.

Steve Eyerdam  
Chehalis, Washington

## Funny About Worms

I just got my first issue and I love it. I read the article about compost tea [Soil, May], and I want to urge folks to try vermicomposting. You can't get easier than worms eating junk mail and veggie scraps and leaving behind compost. I have a five-tray worm bin, and the results have been wonderful—even if I do have to put up with my family's worm jokes.

Tanya Gearheart  
Via e-mail

*So, Tanya, have you heard the one about the two worms who walked into a bar? —Editor*

## Serious About Swapping

I am ecstatic that you have revived your magazine to nearly its original format! I

had dropped my 10-year subscription, so it's great to have you back in my life.

I would love it if you also revived the seed savers/plant swap section. I still have the best peonies growing in my garden that I swapped for Thai dragon peppers and purple old-fashioned iris.

B. Miller-Daniels  
Maynard, Massachusetts

*Our seed and plant swap is alive and well in the Discussions area of [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com), so you can trade directly with other gardeners.*

## Deep Concerns

"Double Delight" [Ask OG, April] describes the benefits of double-digging garden soil. However, gardeners need to

understand the history of their garden property. Many gardens, especially community gardens, are on lots where the soil is contaminated with lead, arsenic, pesticides, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These soils are often covered with clean soil or compost. We work with urban gardeners in Boston and have found polluted soils at some of the sites. In these situations, we recommend against double-digging to prevent replacing the cleaner, surface soils with contaminated soils found at depth.

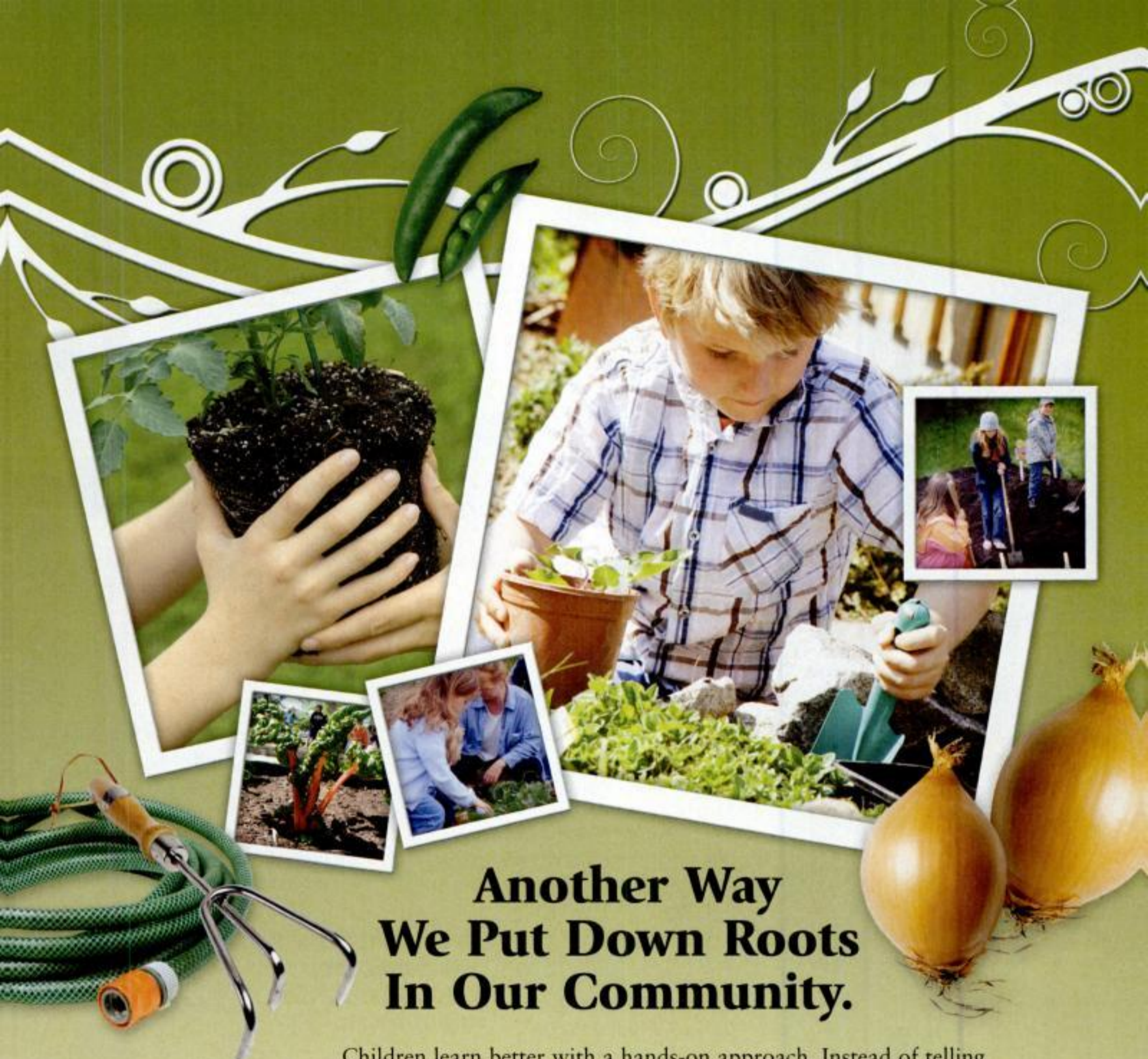
Wendy J. Heiger-Bernays  
H. Patricia Hynes  
Department of Environmental Health  
Boston University  
Boston, Massachusetts

## READER PHOTO CONTEST

Carol McKenzie of Gloucester, Massachusetts, took this stunning shot of a flowering cherry tree with her Samsung NV10 camera. "The pride of my garden are my collection of approximately 130 different daylilies," she tells us. "I also love to do pottery and have set one of my favorite hymns into eight garden plaques, so you can walk the length of the garden and sing or read the entire hymn. My garden is truly my sanctuary." For hints on taking great photos of your garden, check out the "Tip of the Day" every Friday at [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com). To enter the contest, send your digital pictures to [ogphoto@rodale.com](mailto:ogphoto@rodale.com). To vote on your favorite entry each month, visit [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com).

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## LETTERS

### Classic De-composer

I was working in my compost pile with my headphones on and then... silence. Where did my iPod go? How was I going to listen to Paul Weller? I searched high and low but couldn't find it. Two weeks later, after a snowstorm, I was working in the compost again. At the base of a small tree nearby was my iPod. I took it in, plugged the sucker into the computer, and there was Mr. Weller again. Unharmed.

Alan Pierson

*Lucky Us Ranch, Springfield, Missouri*

*You just have to believe the music got the compost's microbes dancin' and digestin'.*

### Doo Gooder

In Ask OG [May], you answered a question about disposing of dog waste. When I lived in the city, I had a better system than you suggested. I kept red worms in a garbage can (drilled for drainage) with a lid, and each time I returned from walking the dog, I deposited the load in the can. I occasionally added leaves, dried grass clippings, and shredded newspaper as bedding for the worms. In the spring, I transferred the worms to another can and used the compost left in the first can around my ornamentals. This works well in the city, especially for renters.

Brian Carter

*Bradford, New Hampshire*

### Bee Aware

I have launched The Great Sunflower Project, a community science project with the goal of increasing understanding of where bees are doing poorly and how the pollination of our garden and wild plants are affected. We'll send gardeners free native sunflower (*Helianthus annuus*) seed, and twice a month, we'd like them to report on how long it takes for five bees to visit one sunflower plant. This information will give us an index of pollination that we can compare



across the United States. You can see the details about the project and register at [greatsunflower.org](http://greatsunflower.org).

Gretchen LeBuhn

*San Francisco, California*

### Neighborly Way

I was shocked by "What Do Neighbors Know" [April]. I see that Gloria Bitterman (who should be called Bitterwoman) is a first-time writer. Please do not let her write again. Who does she think she is? Just because a person asks for advice does not mean they must take and apply it.

Because her neighbor did not plant green leaf lettuce, she has decided never to offer any of her wisdom? Is that the way gardeners are? Rude? Selfish? These neighbors she described

appear to be doing their best to reduce, reuse, and recycle. She poked fun at them. I would love to be their neighbor.

Does Ms. Bitterwoman know that there are cultured people in the world, who appreciate different tastes and textures? She has shown her ignorance.

Cheryl MacKay

*Billerica, Massachusetts*

Gloria Bitterman! Very good column. I hope her neighbors invite her over for dinner and serve salad.

Susan J.

*Pasadena, California*

“ The neighbors are doing their best. She poked fun at them. ”



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## ASK OG



By Willi Evans Galloway

## Cleanest Windows

My windows are so dirty I can barely see my garden. How do I clean them without toxic chemicals?

Laura Hayden  
Belleville, Illinois

**In a nutshell:** Household products, including dish soap, vinegar, water, and rubbing alcohol, get windows nice and clean.

**The whole story:** Starting on the outside, first remove the layer of soil-based grime that builds up on windows. Dip a soft, absorbent rag into soapy water and then scrub the windows, using a squeegee to remove excess water and prevent drips. "Commercial window cleaners leave a waxy base that can build up on windows," says Linda Hunter, author of *Green Clean*. "The only way you can get that off is with rubbing alcohol." Spray undiluted rubbing alcohol onto the window and wipe it dry.

Next, clean the glass with vinegar and water. "I recommend mixing 2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar to a quart of water," says Hunter. Spray the glass with the diluted vinegar and dry with a soft cloth (don't worry, the vinegar smell goes away fast).

Inside, remove any waxy buildup with rubbing alcohol and then shine the windows up by cleaning them with vinegar and water. To get your glass extra sparkly, Hunter recommends spraying windows with club soda and buffing them dry. Use the vinegar mixture for maintenance cleaning.

## Battling Flea Beetles

Every year, something makes little holes in the leaves of my eggplant. What's the problem, and how can I take care of it?

Gary Tennis  
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania

**In a nutshell:** You've got flea beetles, and the easiest way to control them is with a row cover.

**The whole story:** First, place your eggplants in a different spot in the garden than the previous year, and delay planting in spring to avoid overwintering beetles. Allow eggplants to get to a healthy size by growing them in pots until the soil gets warm (about 70°F). Immediately after planting them in the garden, install a row cover frame and row cover over your eggplants to create a physical barrier between your plants and the beetles.

To catch any beetles that might emerge from the soil underneath the row cover, try this trick developed at Boulder Belt Organics, a farm in New Paris, Ohio: Cover a full bottle of water with Tanglefoot (a sticky coating that traps insects that land on it) and place it underneath the rowcover. The water inside the bottle warms up during the day, and at night, the heat radiating from the bottle attracts the beetles, which then get stuck in the Tanglefoot and die. When the eggplants begin to flower, remove the water bottle and open up the row cover to give pollinators access to the plants.

## Weed Control Strategies

How do I get rid of pigweed?

Kris Laity  
Howell, Michigan

**In a nutshell:** Pigweed is easy to control if you deal with the plants while they are small.

**The whole story:** "An average redroot pigweed (*Amaranthus retroflexus*) plant produces 100,000 seeds, and these seeds can last 100 years in the soil," says Tom Lanini, a weed ecologist at the University of California–Davis.

Obviously, you should never, ever let pigweed go to seed. The easiest way to control pigweed is to hand-cultivate when the plants are still small. Lanini recommends using a stirrup hoe to make weeding easier. Flame weeding (using propane and a tool designed to desiccate, not torch, the plants) also kills broadleaf weeds like pigweed when the plants are young.

Organic herbicides, including Matran, GreenMatch EX, and Weed Zap, control pigweed, says Lanini. After hand-cultivating, flaming, or applying an organic herbicide, cover the entire problem area with a 3-inch layer of mulch to keep remaining weed seeds from sprouting.

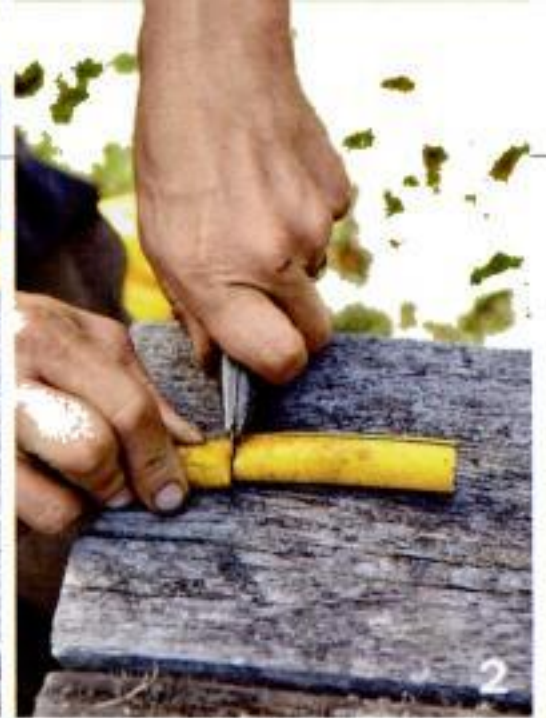


TECHNIQUE

# Hose Repair

My hose has a crack in it and leaks. Can I salvage it?

Derrek Woodbury  
Boise, Idaho



**1** Turn on your hose and mark the leaky area with an indelible marker.

**2** Using a box cutter or sharp blade, cut out the damaged section of hose. Purchase a hose repair kit that contains a repair fitting and clamps (see photos). Make sure the repair fitting fits the diameter of your hose.

**3** Slip a clamp onto each section of hose. Then insert the hose repair fitting into one section of the hose. Slide the second hose section onto the other side of the fitting and snuggle the two sections back together as tightly as possible.

**4** Screw the clamp down firmly on each side of the repair fitting.

THIS PAGE: ROBIN LEHR, OPPOSITE: A. RICHARD ALLEN

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# NEWS



18



26



1



12

26-29



Edited by Beth Huxia

**EVENTS**

**JUNE**

**1 Recycling Month** Look to the Freecycle Network ([freecycle.org](http://freecycle.org)) for used-but-free gardening equipment.

**5 World Environment Day** This year's slogan is "Kick the Habit! Towards a Low Carbon Economy." Go to the EPA's Web site ([epa.gov](http://epa.gov)) to use the Personal Emissions Calculator that totals your greenhouse-gas emissions and offers advice on how to cut back.

**18 International Picnic Day** Pack up homegrown and locally sourced foods and enjoy eating in the fresh air and sunshine.

**21 Lavender Thyme, Wytheville, VA** Cut your own lavender and learn how to grow and cook with it at the Beagle Ridge Herb Farm.

**26 Bicycle Patented by W.K. Clarkson Jr., 1819** Cars produce about 20 pounds of carbon dioxide for every gallon of gas. Use pedal power whenever you can.

**27-29 North American Organic Brewers Festival, Portland, OR** At the world's largest gathering of organic brewers, tasters receive a compostable cornstarch glass. We'll drink to that.

**JULY**

**1 National Peach Month** Thin peaches when fruits are about 1 inch in diameter. Remove damaged fruits first, and allow 6 to 8 inches between each remaining fruit.

**12 Betterbee Field Day, Greenwich, NY** A full day of bee appreciation, with speakers and demonstrations on apiculture, including organic approaches. To attract bees to your garden, plant goldenrod, Russian sage, and catmint.

**15 Cow Appreciation Day** Cow manure is an excellent soil amendment, but be sure

to let it compost for at least four months before applying it around your edible crops.

**21 Coldest Day in History, 1983** At the Vostok Station in Antarctica, researchers documented the most frigid temperature of -128.6°F. The dog days of summer don't seem so bad, do they?

**26-29 Watermelon Thump, Luling, TX** This town full of "melonheads" celebrates vitamin- and antioxidant-rich watermelon with the Seed Spitting Championship. Lee Wheelis set the record in 1989 with his 68-foot shot.

**June/July tip** Summer is potting time: Compact varieties of marigold, zinnia, dahlia, begonia, verbena, and cosmos adapt readily to pot culture and add vivid, season-long color.



**FUN FACT**

**Huge melon:** The largest watermelon recorded was a 268.8-pounder grown by Lloyd Bright of Hope, Arkansas, in 2005.



**Breeding frenzy:**  
Aphids give birth every day 'til death.

SCIENCE OF LIVING

## Aphids: Born to Breed

THE SOFT-BODIED INSECT slowly sinks her stylet (needle-like mouth part) into the tender green tissue. She sucks up sugary plant juices, injecting saliva into the wound to keep the juices flowing, and drips sticky goo onto the leaves below. The honeydew is lapped up by a gang of protective ants. Her female offspring are born live, in multiples of three or more, every day for two or three weeks until she dies, and inside of each young aphid are already-formed babies. A single aphid can theoretically generate 1 heptillion descendants (that's 24 zeroes).

Fear not! A large percentage of the population doesn't survive; aphids move so slowly that they're easy prey for ladybugs and lacewings. You can knock them off leaves with a garden hose, and it's unlikely they'll get back to feeding before they starve. An aphid population explosion causes babies to be born with wings that will carry them away to less crowded, greener pastures, and a late-season chill causes yet another breeding phenomenon: the appearance of winged males. After all, the lady must mate with a real male if she is to lay winter-hardy eggs and generate another heptillion or so sap-sucking, leaf-withering aphids next year.

**A single aphid can generate 1 heptillion descendants.**

TOP 5

### Wedding Crashers

You may have heard that tossing grains of rice at newlyweds is harmful to birds. There is no scientific evidence to support this claim, but many churches and reception halls now prohibit the practice anyway, because the rice is hard to clean up and may be a hazard to people walking on it. Besides, throwing away food is wasteful. Try one of these ecofriendly alternatives instead:

- 1 Colored Ecofetti.** Biodegradable and water-soluble, at [ecoparty.com](http://ecoparty.com).
- 2 Bells.** Ringing bells are a signal of good luck.
- 3 Bubbles.** Soap bubbles are fun for everyone.
- 4 Sunflower seeds.** Your feathered friends will handle the cleanup.
- 5 Petals or buds.** Rose or daisy petals work well, or use fragrant, tiny lavender buds.



RESEARCH REPORT.01

## For the Birds

### Sunflowers attract birds and beneficial bugs.

**Findings:** Researchers from the University of Florida conducted a bird census on five farms that incorporated sunflower rows with vegetable crops, and observed the birds' habits. Numbers of birds and the time they spent foraging were higher in areas that included sunflowers than in those that didn't. The researchers found remnants of caterpillars, grasshoppers, stinkbugs, beetles, and many other garden troublemakers in the birds' guts. Sunflowers served as perches from which the birds could survey the garden and then swoop down on their prey. Moreover, sunflower rows harbored big-eyed bugs, assassin bugs, and predatory wasps and spiders, all beneficials that migrated to nearby crops to hunt for pests.

**Our advice:** Plant a central row of sunflowers amid your vegetables early in the season, so that beneficial predators can become established before pests become a problem.



**Flower power:**  
Birds perch on sunflowers to find food.



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ORGANIC DAIRY SOY JUICE EGGS PRODUCE

## NEWS

THEN & NOW

### Wonder Plants



**THEN** Jerome Olds, *Organic Gardening* editor in November 1960, celebrated “new plant materials for soil improvement.” Among the 1960 “new wonders” were Amur honeysuckle, autumn olive, and crown vetch, all introduced from other continents. As an aside, Olds noted, “Each one has different characteristics that makes it desirable in one locale, a nuisance in another.”

**NOW** Wonders they are today, but not in the way Olds predicted. Amur honeysuckle is so aggressive in forming thickets that native saplings have trouble competing. Autumn olive, planted to support wildlife, is a favorite of birds, all right—they disperse the seeds liberally, planting the shrubs where they disturb the nitrogen cycle of native communities. Crown vetch does indeed “return humus to the soil,” but it also climbs over small trees and invades prairies and dunes. Will wonders never cease?



**Comprehensive list of invasive plants: [invasive.org](http://invasive.org)**

RESEARCH REPORT.02

### Yes, You Can Plant a Lawn in Summer

**Warm-season grasses thrive in June.**

**Findings:** If you didn't get a chance to plant cool-season grasses in early spring, you don't have to wait until fall. OG's own lawn trial has a solution: Warm-season bahiagrass came to the rescue when a tent site left an expanse of mud in early June. In just three to four weeks after planting, with zero supplemental watering, the grass was tall enough to mow. When the weather turned cool, we sprinkled the entire area with mixed turfgrass seed. The following spring, the dead (nonhardy) bahiagrass created a natural barrier that kept weed seeds from germinating, and the fall-planted lawn grasses came alive.

**Our advice:** The best way to start a lawn is to seed in fall, with spring seeding a close second. Laying sod, which is often treated with chemical herbicides and fertilizers, is the least sustainable choice.

**Bahiagrass created a natural barrier that kept weed seeds from germinating.**

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: THOMAS MACDONALD/RODALE; ELENA ELISSEVA/LAMY; OPPOSITE: DUGALD STERMER

RESEARCH REPORT.03

# Ladybugs Beat Disease

## A native species eliminates powdery mildew.

**Findings:** The 20-spotted lady beetle is small, mottled brown, cream, and tan in color, and easily overlooked. But its ability to scout out nascent patches of powdery mildew on grapes, melons, cucumbers, and other crops attracted the attention of University of California-Davis entomologist Andrew Sutherland. He observed that the adult beetle lays clusters of eggs on mildew-infected leaves; fungus-hungry larvae emerge, capable of reducing mildew spores by as much as 92 percent. When Sutherland doused the beetles and their larvae with several organic mildew treatments, including sulfur spray and the microbial fungicide *Bacillus subtilis* (sold as Serenade), he found that sulfur killed the insects, while the microbial fungicide had no effect on them. Research also showed that the mildew-feeding ladybugs act as warning signals, alerting farmers to areas of their greenhouses or fields that require prompt attention to prevent damage from powdery mildew.

**Our advice:** Learn to recognize the helpful beetles, and use sulfur only as a last resort to treat powdery mildew. It is organic, but better to trust in a balanced ecosystem to solve problems.



**Native girl:** 20-spotted lady beetles converge on powdery mildew.

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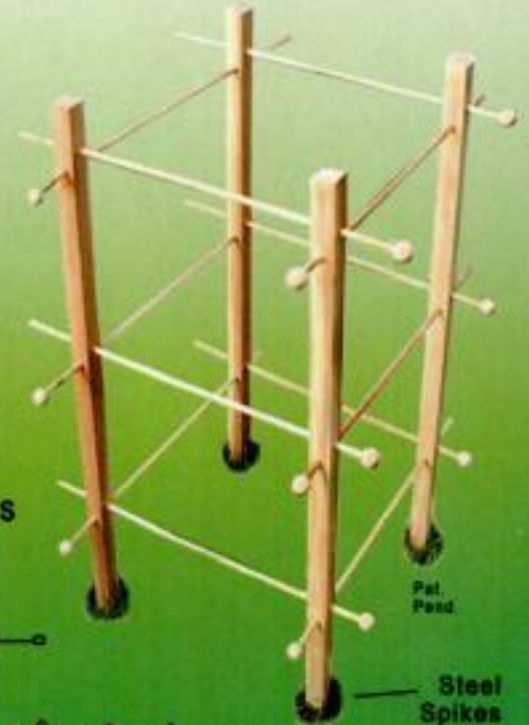
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## NEWS



TECHNIQUE



## Bug Off

THE BEST WAY TO CONTROL PESTS IN YOUR GARDEN is to encourage birds, toads, and beneficial insects to prey on them. But when an infestation gets out of control, skip the poison and try these environmentally safe, homemade solutions to help your garden survive.

### All-Purpose Spray

Works on a multitude of pests, including slugs and Japanese beetles.

- 1 garlic bulb
- 1 small onion
- 1 teaspoon powdered cayenne pepper
- 1 quart water
- 1 tablespoon liquid dish soap

Chop the garlic and onion in a blender. Add the cayenne pepper and water. Steep for one hour. Strain through cheesecloth. Add liquid dish soap so the spray sticks to plant leaves. Mix well. Spray the mixture on both sides of the leaves. Store remaining spray in a labeled jar in the fridge. Note: Certain plants are very sensitive to soaps and can develop leaf burn. Always test on a leaf or two the day before spraying the whole plant.

### Hot Pepper Spray

Easy-to-make hot pepper spray repels insects and curious cats and dogs when they eat treated plants. Wear rubber gloves when preparing and using the mixture; the peppers can cause irritation.

- ½ cup hot peppers
- 2 cups water

Puree peppers and water in a blender. Strain the liquid through a cheesecloth. Apply every 5 to 7 days until the pests are gone.

Adapted from *The Frugal Gardener: How to Have More Garden for Less Money*, by Catriona Tudor Erier

**Hot pepper spray repels insects and curious cats and dogs.**

### Tomato-Leaf Spray

The alkaloids found in tomato leaves are toxic to soft-bodied pests such as aphids. Bonus: This spray also will attract the beneficial *Trichogramma* wasp, which preys on corn-earworm eggs.

- 1 to 2 cups tomato leaves
- 4 cups water

Gather tomato leaves from the bottom of the plant so you won't interfere with tomato production. Mash or chop the leaves and add 2 cups of water. Let steep overnight. The following day, strain out the leaves and discard. Dilute the liquid with 2 more cups of water. Spray on affected leaves, especially the undersides of lower leaves where aphids congregate. To lure *Trichogramma* wasps, spray the entire corn plant.

# one drop at a time

Each day, you have the power to help solve a global environmental issue. Find out why water conservation is so important and how you can make a difference.

By Sharon Tregaskis

**T**he *Organic Gardening WaterWorks* project was launched just in time. We started our campaign in Spring 2007 to raise awareness about water conservation and to give rainwater-harvesting systems to community gardens. Then came the drought. Last summer, Atlanta tapped the dregs of Lake Lanier because of an unprecedented, months-long dry spell. Georgia, Alabama, and Florida are battling in the courts over rights to the Chattahoochee River. Cities in Massachusetts designed desalination plants to tap ocean water, and in California and Colorado so-called "toilet-to-tap" systems closed the loop from sewage treatment to potable water.

It seems we have a national drinking problem. Only 1 percent of the world's water is fresh and drinkable. And yet as the population keeps growing, our thirst for fresh water shows no signs of slaking. What to do? These five solutions will help you get smart about water conservation.

Savings

**3**  
gallons

#### Close the tap.

When tooth brushing or whisker shaving, stop the sink or use a glass to hold what you need instead of letting the faucet run freely. The savings add up to three gallons a day.

**150**  
gallons

#### Compost.

Garbage disposals suck up 50 to 150 gallons of water every month. Rather than dumping your biodegradable food waste down the drain, turn it into plant food by composting it.

**300**  
gallons

#### Shower shorter.

The average shower pours out 5 to 10 gallons a minute. Shaving even 60 seconds off your daily ablutions can add up to a savings of 300 gallons a month.

**1,500**  
gallons

#### Xeriscape.

The average landscape can drink as much as 1,500 gallons of water a month. Grow native plants and trees, which are adapted to the typical amount of rainfall in your region and skip the irrigation.

**5.8**  
billion gallons

#### Make a splash.

Nationwide, we flush 5.8 billion gallons of drinking water into sewers every day. For a really big change, switch to a composting toilet. New models are safe, keep unpleasant odors contained, and are simple to maintain.

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*Sharon Tregaskis is an environmental writer who takes short showers at her home in Ithaca, New York.*



By Beth Huxta

## SOIL HEALTH

## Crop Out Weeds

Controlling weeds without toxic chemicals and improving your garden's soil require a lot of hard labor with a hoe or tiller, right? Not if you borrow a simple trick from organic farmers. The secret is to grow a cover crop as mulch. Cover crops, sometimes called green manure, are nutrient-rich plants you grow during the off-season and then allow to die back so that they block weeds from sprouting and feed the soil as they decompose. With these hints from the experts, you can put cover crops to work for you in any size plot.

### Mulch Works

"Through competition and blocking sunlight, the mulch stops weeds from germinating and growing," explains Dave Wilson, research agronomist at the nonprofit Rodale Institute.

Cover crop mulches reduce plant diseases and even certain pest populations, report USDA researchers. The pest control may result from the increase in beneficial insects that are sheltered by the crops. Using cover crops as mulch also adds organic matter to your soil, prevents moisture loss and erosion, and moderates soil temperatures, says Ron Morse, Ph.D., a horticulture professor at Virginia Tech. Bonus: USDA researchers

MITCH MAMMEL/RODALE



## THE DIRT

Each year, an estimated 24 billion tons of topsoil is lost worldwide, due in part to continuous soil disturbance through tilling as well as through wind and water erosion.

the maximum benefits: organic biomass, a healthy balance of nutrients, plus a diverse population of soil microbes.

**Hardy winter annuals**, particularly hairy vetch and cereal rye, are often used in gardens. Hairy vetch is a nitrogen-fixing legume with a taproot that reaches 1 to 3 feet deep. It is very cold- and drought-tolerant and continues to put on root growth in the winter. Cereal rye, also cold-hardy, is a grass that produces a thick stand of green stems and a dense, fibrous root system.

"Generally, you plant these crops in early fall," explains Keith Baldwin, an extension horticulturist in Greensboro, North Carolina. The following spring, a few weeks before planting time, the winter annuals have maximized their biomass production and are ready to be killed.

Sow hairy vetch seed directly in your garden at least 30 to 50 days before the first frost. Broadcast about  $\frac{3}{4}$  pounds of seed per 1,000 square feet and rake soil over it. The earlier you seed, the more biomass you will end up with when cutting time comes. If you haven't planted hairy vetch before, treat the seed with pea/vetch inoculant (*Rhizobium leguminosarum*) to maximize its nitrogen fixation, Wilson advises.

Cut the vetch when purple flowers appear, with an eye for stem length—the greater the stem length, the easier to kill. *Caution:* Hairy vetch is a viney plant, making it more difficult to cut than upright plants. To make a weed-blocking mat, try pushing plants down by walking through the plot with a board or piece of plywood. Then spread a tarp over the beds for a few days to block out sunlight and help kill the crop.

"Cereal rye can be seeded later into the fall months than hairy vetch and still germinate," Wilson says.

Sow about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  pounds of rye per 1,000 square feet.

Cut rye when it flowers; any earlier and it's

likely to regrow. Give it about three weeks to break down before planting the next crop.

**Crimson clover** is a cool-season annual legume recommended by experts for gardeners in mild winter climates, such as North Carolina. The bright red blooms attract pollinators and other beneficials.

Sow  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  pound of clover seed per 1,000 square feet in late summer or early fall for a living mulch in spring.

Cut with a scythe or hand clippers when the blooms turn red. "I choose crimson clover over hairy vetch because it's easier to cut and kill, with its upright, straight growth," Baldwin says.

**Tender cover crops**, including sorghum-sudangrass, millet, cowpeas, and

soybeans, are sown in summer. Come spring, you can plant right into the thick mulch that remains after they winterkill; that is, die with the first frost. In the OG Test Garden, summer-planted sudangrass transformed a thistle-filled, compacted border into a beautiful, weed-free, no-work bed for tomatoes, reports garden manager Pam Ruch. "We just made holes in the knocked-down grass, put a shovel-ful of compost in each, and planted."

Visit [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com) for more information on weed-smothering cover crops.

## SOURCES

**Johnny's Selected Seeds**, [johnnyseeds.com](http://johnnyseeds.com)

**Peaceful Valley Farm Supply**, [groworganic.com](http://groworganic.com)

**Southern Exposure Seed Exchange**, [southernexposure.com](http://southernexposure.com)

**Stellar Seeds**, [stellarseeds.com](http://stellarseeds.com)

**Territorial Seed**, [territorialseed.com](http://territorialseed.com)



**Grass stand:** In the OG Test Garden, we renew beds with sudangrass, which becomes mulch when winter kills it.

have found that tomato plants grown in mulch from a hairy vetch cover crop bear fruit two to three weeks longer than those grown without it.

## Smart Choices

To use cover crops as mulch, choose those that produce a lot of biomass (roots, stems, and leaves). Cover crops typically fall into two distinct categories: legumes and grasses. Legumes increase phosphorus availability and add nitrogen to the soil by extracting it from the air and fixing it in their root nodules. Grasses produce a high volume of biomass while enhancing access to potassium. Plant them together, and you reap

## Cover crop mulch also reduces plant disease and even helps control pests.



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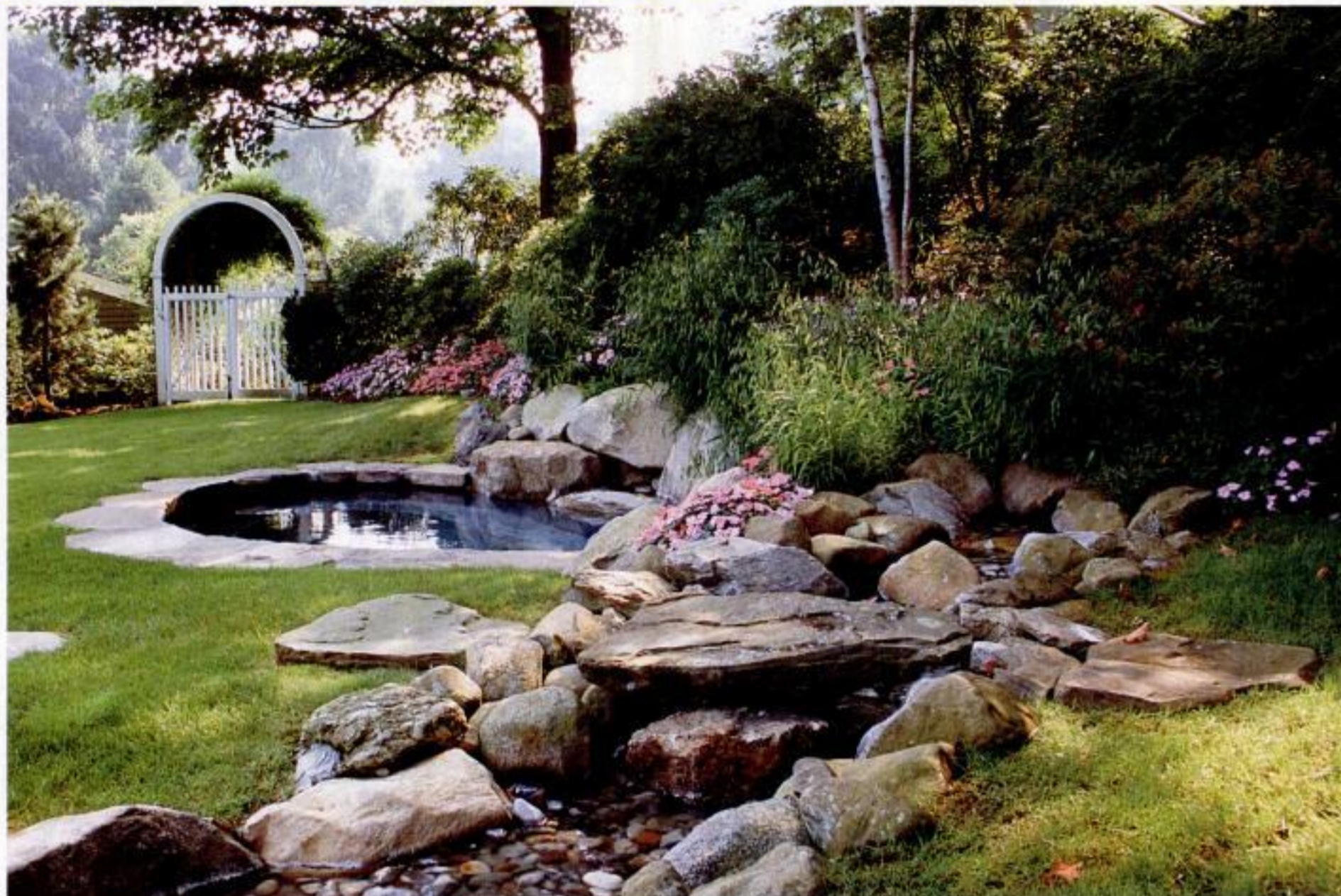
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# LANDSCAPE

Edited by Therese Ciesinski



**EXPERT:** Daniel Pellegrino, J&D Landscape, Newton, Massachusetts

**IDEA:** A year-round water view

As welcome as a pool or spa can be in a backyard, their unmistakable artificiality detracts from the nature around them. If you dream of a watery respite after a hard day of weeding but a white-tiled rectangle isn't your idea of natural habitat, then borrow an idea from these Massachusetts homeowners, who asked for a pool that was view-worthy, even in winter.

Pellegrino designed a spa and a swimming pool (not in photo) that look more like woodland ponds. The stream that joins them appears to emerge from the hillside. Careful construction that includes special frost protection for the plumbing means that, come October, the pool and spa don't need to be covered. Energy-saving geothermal heating recirculates the water in the stream through the ground, so that in winter the surface water stays at about 38°F.

How successfully do these "ponds" imitate nature? "This is a chlorine-free pool, and the deer and the [owners'] dogs seem to love it. And you may have to share your morning swim with a few ducks," Pellegrino says.

#### MORE IDEAS FROM PELLEGRINO:

##### 1 Local Rocks

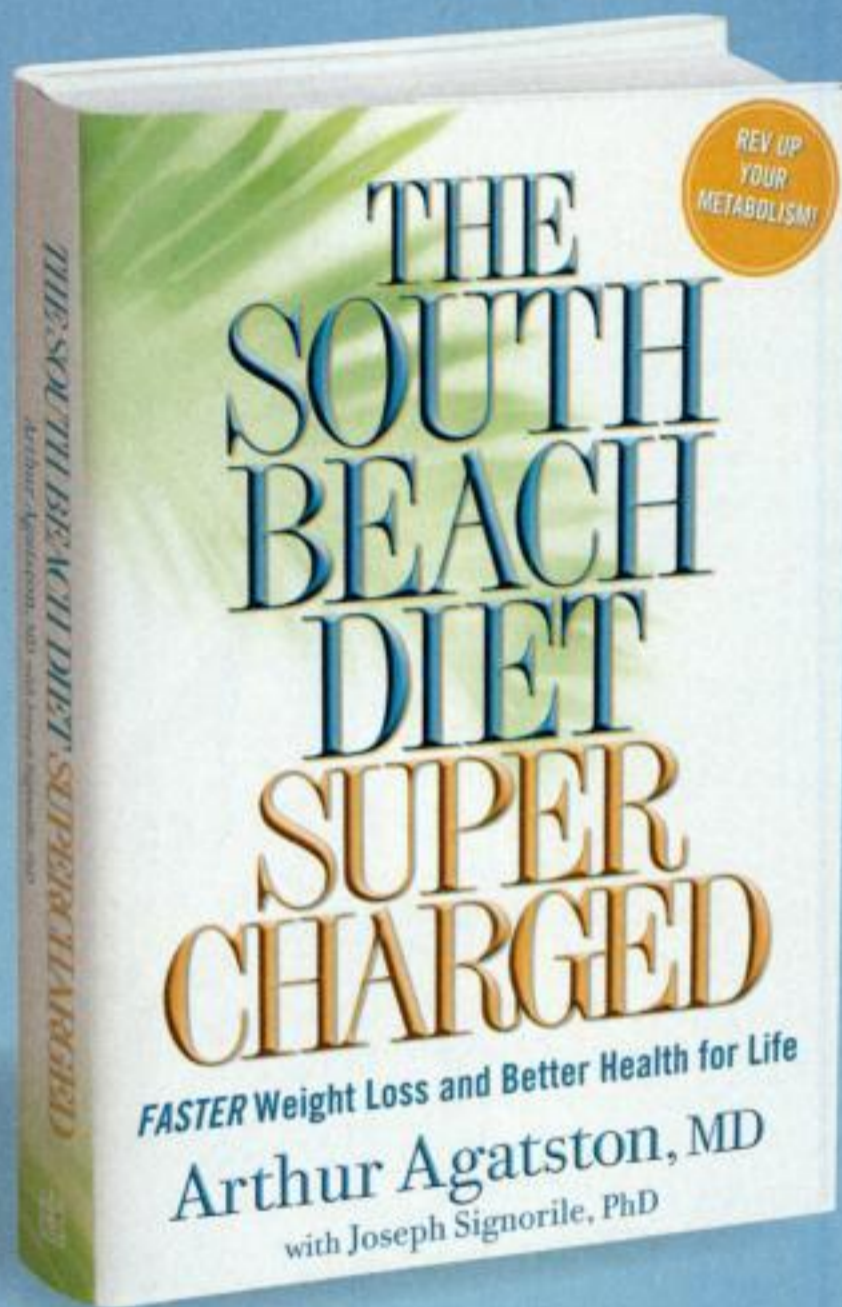
Work Pellegrino did at another site provided plenty of local stone to create the streambed and the coping around the pools. This stone is mostly blasted granite ledgerstone, which fractures, so the plumbing runs through man-made "stone."

##### 2 Use Basic Black

Instead of the traditional turquoise color, the inside of the hot tub is finished in black. Unlike blue, black warms the water when the sun hits it, but more important, the color turns the hot tub into a reflecting pool, mirroring the landscape around it.

For more great natural pond ideas, pick up *The Water Gardener's Bible* from your favorite bookseller or at [rodalestore.com](http://rodalestore.com).

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## INDOORS ONLY

African violet  
Weeping fig  
Peace lily  
Moth orchid  
Zebra plant

### ORGANIC SOLUTIONS

## Spring Break: Houseplants Go Wild

While you're thinking about all you have to do outside in your garden at this time of year, remember that your houseplants are putting out new growth now, too, and benefit greatly from a summer spent outside.

### Bring Them Out

You can't simply show all your houseplants to the door on the first warm, sunny day, though. Most can go out only when all chances of frost are over, or night temperatures are at a steady 60 to 65°F.

"The key to moving plants outdoors is to slowly move them into the elements so that they don't go into shock or burn," says Julie Bawden-Davis of HealthyHouseplants.com, author of *Indoor Gardening the Organic Way*.

"When moving plants outdoors, put them in a shady area for the day and then bring them in. Do this for two or three days, until you finally leave the plants out day and night in the shady spot," Bawden-Davis says. "If a plant grows best in the shade, then it can stay there for the duration of the summer. If it needs sun, then *slowly* move it out into the sunlight."

### While They're Out

Be on the lookout for plants that are getting too much direct sun. Symptoms are wilting foliage, white or brown patches on leaves, and burned leaf edges. And now that these plants are outside, don't continue their

indoor watering schedule. If they're sitting where they'll be rained on, great. You won't need to water as much, and chances are the rainwater in your area is better for them than your tap water. But if they're protected under eaves or a porch, they'll need more frequent watering than they did indoors.

Watch for pest infestations, particularly aphids and spider mites, and encourage the good guys—spiders, lacewings, lady beetles, and other beneficials, which eat the pests. Fertilize monthly with diluted liquid fish fertilizer or seaweed emulsion.

### Bring Them In

Start moving your houseplants back inside when nighttime temperatures drop to about 50°F. But, again, do this gradually. Place the pots near an open window, Bawden-Davis advises, so the change in temperature and humidity isn't too extreme.

Rinse each plant off before bringing it indoors to help remove bugs, pollen, or dust that may have settled on the leaves. If you see any insect infestations, isolate the plant from others and treat with an organic pest-control formula.



Nature calls: Time spent outdoors makes your houseplants healthier and more vigorous.

## Movin' Out

When you bring your houseplants outside, take the time to repot them if they need it. Five signs that your plant needs a bigger home:

- Roots are coming out of the drainage hole.
- Water runs out through the hole instead of soaking in when watering.
- The soil dries out more quickly than it used to.
- There's a white crust on the soil surface and at the drainage hole (this is a buildup of salts).
- When you pull the plant out of the pot and look at the roots, it's almost all roots and no soil.



Clockwise starting top left: Prince Edward Island, Cabot Trail: Cape Breton, Louisburg Lighthouse, Whale Watching, Halifax Waterfront

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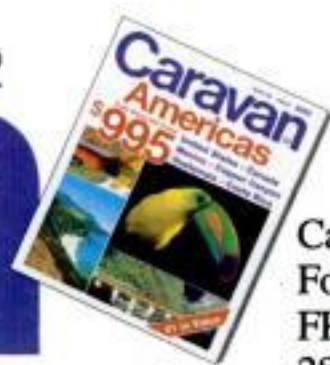
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## LANDSCAPE



**Snap, crackle, pop:** Light up pots or flowerbeds with this brilliant begonia.

### PLANTS WORTH HAVING

## 'Bonfire' Begonia

*Begonia boliviensis* 'Bonfire'

**Why grow it:** 'Bonfire' has small but abundant red-orange flowers that look like they're ready to ignite; they all but explode from between red-edged leaves. The flowers look downright incendiary when paired with silver plants such as lamb's ears, and glow against orange plants such as cannas and apricot-colored roses. True to its name, 'Bonfire' is drawn to the light; it's one of the few begonias that can take full sun.

**Vital statistics:** 'Bonfire' grows in a mound or it can spread out, depending on whether you pinch it back or not. In a mound, a plant can grow to be about 20 inches wide and 20 inches high. Its trailing habit makes it ideal for pots or hanging baskets. Our test plants were slow starters—they didn't do much until July—but then bloomed nonstop until October. In USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 9 to 11,

'Bonfire' is perennial, but you can overwinter it indoors in colder zones.

**What it needs:**

Begonias don't tolerate overwatering, and 'Bonfire' is no exception. Good drainage is essential, or the roots rot and the plant dies. It flowers most profusely in full sun but does fine in partial shade and even full shade, though the plant will be lankier and produce fewer and smaller flowers.

**SOURCES**

'Bonfire' is available nationwide at garden centers and at: **Avant Gardens**, 508-998-8819, [avantgardensne.com](http://avantgardensne.com)

**Rush Creek Growers**, 800-669-2971, [rushcreekgrowers.com](http://rushcreekgrowers.com) (wholesale only; check Web site for retail locator)

**The fiery 'Bonfire' is the rare begonia that not only handles full sun but thrives in it.**



## ANIMAL TRACKS

# Little Brown Bat

**NICE CATCH.** In one evening expedition, the only true flying mammal can eat half its own body weight, nabbing up to 1,200 mosquitoes in 60 minutes. Not bad for a critter whose weight class tops out at half an ounce. That's less than a tablespoon of butter. —Sharon Tregaskis

## Just the Facts

- **Myotis lucifugus**—literally “mouse-eared shunner of light”—uses echolocation, the same call-and-response technique used by whales and dolphins. The brown bat emits high-frequency calls that are far outside the range of human hearing.
- A **9-inch wingspan** allows these lightweights to reach flight speeds of 20 miles per hour; they venture up to 6 miles a night.
- **With a range** spanning from southern Canada and Alaska to northern Mexico, the little brown bat is common throughout most of the United States.
- **Winter hibernation** slows a little brown bat's resting heart rate from 200 beats per minute to just 20, and its body temperature

hovers only a degree above that of the surrounding air.

- **To banish bats from your belfry**, wait until they head out (at dusk in summer, rarely in winter), then block entry points—often gaps smaller than a dime.
- **In January 2007**, thousands of little brown bats began dying of an illness so baffling, scientists compare it to the Colony Collapse



**Number of little brown bats found hibernating in one New Jersey cave:**

# 20,000

Disorder afflicting honeybees. The syndrome is currently confined to three states. Its telltale symptom is a ring of white fungus around the nose; victims die of starvation, burning through their winter fat well before hibernation ends. Learn more from Bat Conservation International, [batcon.org](http://batcon.org).



**Lightweight:** A little brown bat weighs less than a pack of gum.



Chef Created ....  
Nature Inspired!

## Go Green Drew's Salad!

Serves 6-8

- 8 Cups mixed green lettuces
- 1 Avocado, cut into chunks
- 1 Orange, segmented
- 1/2 C. Red Onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 C. Endame
- 1/4 C. fresh Parsley
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground Pepper
- 4-6 Oz Drew's Thai Sesame Lime

Toss and Serve!

## Beet, Arugala, Walnut & Goat Cheese Salad With Drew's Orange Vinaigrette

Serves 2-4

- 6 Roasted Beets, Peeled, Diced
- 1 Shallot, minced
- 1 C. Toasted Walnuts, chopped
- 1 bunch Arrugala, chopped
- 4 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
- 3-4 Oz Drew's Sesame Orange

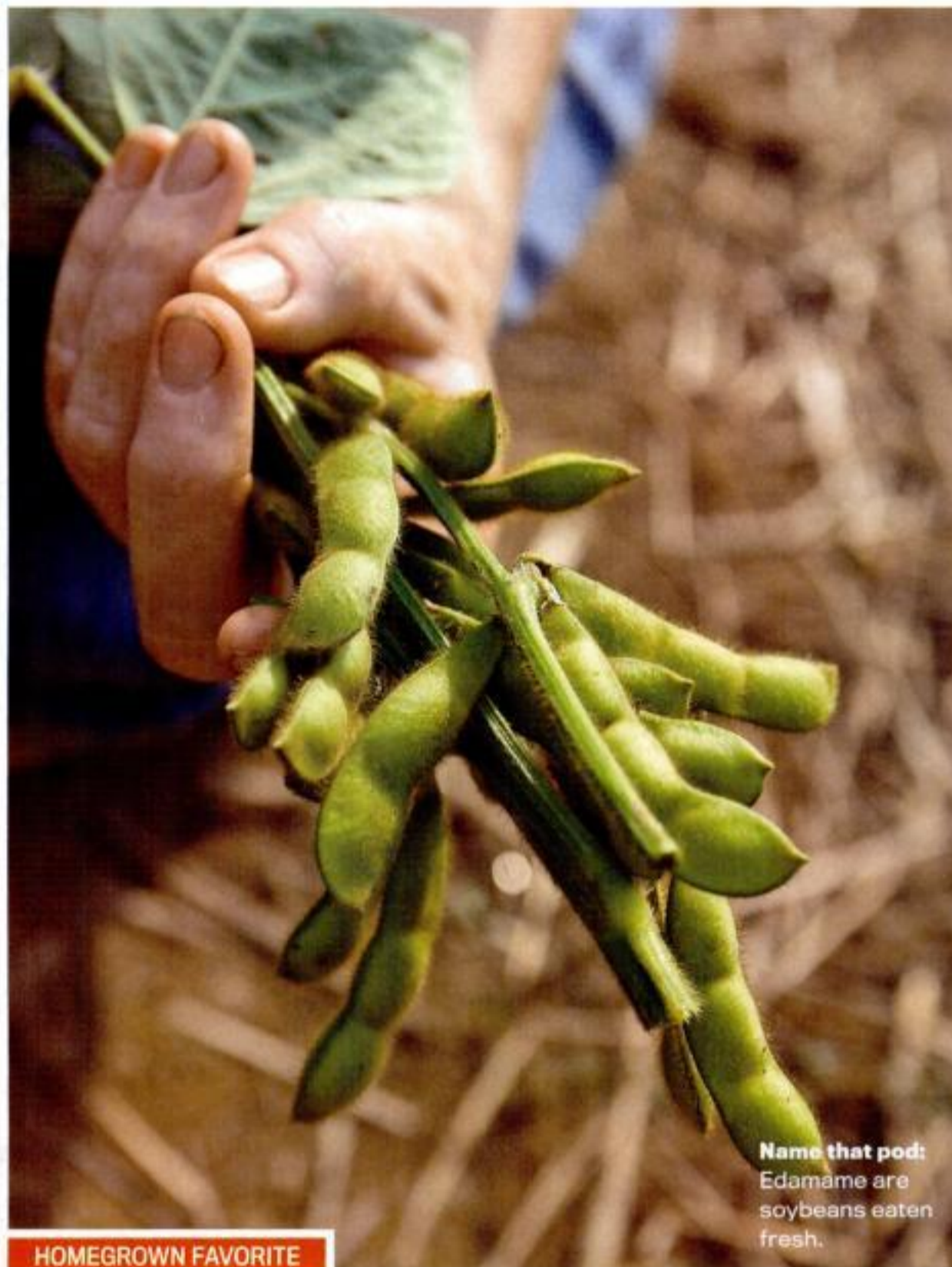
Toss and Serve!



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## FOOD

Edited by Willi Evans Galloway



**Name that pod:**  
Edamame are  
soybeans eaten  
fresh.

HOMEGROWN FAVORITE

## Edamame

Fans of Japanese restaurants will be pleased to know how easy these edible soybeans are to grow and to serve. The word *edamame* means “beans on branches” in Japanese, and the bushy plants bear loads of short pods with bright green, sweet, nutty-flavored beans.

—Barbara Wilde

### Growing Guide

**Preparing a site.** Edamame tolerate a wide variety of soils, but they do require decent drainage. Choose a spot in full sun. Incorporate an inch of compost into the soil before planting.

**Planting.** Beans have a symbiotic relationship with rhizobium bacteria that helps them capture and “fix” atmospheric nitrogen in a form plants can use. Increase the nitrogen available to your soybeans and improve your soybean yields by coating the seeds with a soybean-specific type of rhizobial bacteria inoculant (available from [johnnyseeds.com](http://johnnyseeds.com)) before planting. Simply run the seeds under water and place them in a jar with the inoculant. Cover and shake to coat the seeds with the powdered inoculant.

Edamame need warm soil to germinate, so wait to plant until soil temperatures reach 55 to 60°F. Do not presoak edamame seeds before planting. Space the seeds 3 to 4 inches apart and plant  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch deep in rows 20 to 36 inches apart. If the soil is dry, water *before* sowing rather than right afterward. This practice prevents a crust from forming on the top layer of soil that can inhibit seedling emergence. Keep the soil only lightly moist until germination, because too much water causes the seeds to rot.

**Growing.** When the plants reach about 3 inches high, cultivate the soil around them lightly; then mulch to suppress weeds and retain moisture. Keep the mulch about an inch away from the base of the plants to prevent them from rotting during extremely wet weather.

Edamame tolerate hot, dry conditions, and the plants usually do not need supplemental water except during extreme drought. If the leaves start folding down along their central vein, they're too dry and it's time to irrigate. Edamame typically do not need to be fertilized;



**Master's tip** Edamame is photoperiod-sensitive, meaning that each variety flowers at a certain day length, no matter when the seeds were planted. Even staggered plantings of a single variety mature all at once. Plant several varieties with different days-to-maturity to ensure a long season of beans.

however, if your plants seem stunted or fail to thrive, you won't harm them with a dose of compost tea or diluted liquid fish and seaweed. Most varieties grow only 18 to 24 inches tall at maturity.

**Problem solving.**

Edamame usually suffer no disease or insect problems in a diverse organic garden.

As the beans form, install a floating row cover over the plants to protect them from the biggest edamame pests: rabbits, groundhogs, and deer. Rotate your edamame patch to a different spot in the garden from year to year to avoid disease.

**Edamame means "beans on branches" in Japanese.**

**Harvesting.** Pick edamame when the pods are plump and still bright green. I like to use a pair of scissors to snip off the pods from the plants. Like sweet corn and asparagus, edamame taste their best when harvested just before cooking. If you must store them, harvest the whole plant (see Newbie Hint) and then refrigerate in a plastic bag.

**Best Varieties**

Thanks to the surge in popularity of edamame, breeders have developed a huge number of varieties. Edamame are "short day" plants, meaning that they

flower when the number of hours of daylight falls below a certain level. Gardeners in the north, where summer day lengths are longer, should plant varieties adapted to their conditions.

**'Beer Friend'.** 85 days. Traditional variety from Japan, where edamame are enjoyed as a snack with beer. Plump pods of three or four beans.

**'Early Hakucho'.** 65 to 75 days. Extra-early; close to day-length-neutral. Short, stocky, and prolific.

**'Sayamusume'.** 85 days. Extra-large, 3- to 4-inch pods; adapted to northern areas.

Barbara Wilde writes about gardening and cooking in France on her Web site, [frenchgardening.com](http://frenchgardening.com).

**HOMEMADE FLAVOR**

# Soy for Snacking

THOUGH WONDERFULLY NUTRITIOUS, soybeans of any kind—fresh, dry, or sprouted—contain trypsin inhibitors that indirectly impair protein digestion. Luckily, parboiling the beans for a few short minutes takes care of this issue. To prepare fresh edamame, just bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add edamame in their pods and cook for 5 minutes after the water returns to a boil. Don't overcook; the beans should retain some bite. To use in salads and stir-fries, just pop the steamed beans out of their pods and into your salad bowl or wok.

**Simple salad.** Combine edamame with a bit of olive oil, fresh lemon juice, snippets of fresh herbs, sliced cherry tomatoes, slivered red onion, and cooked quinoa (a high-protein, mild-flavored grain). Season with salt and pepper and...mmm!




**Japanese-style edamame.** Cook the pods as described above. Then drain in a colander, place in an attractive bowl, and toss with flaked sea salt. Serve immediately. To eat, insert the pods into your mouth and drag them through your teeth to pop out the beans.

**Freeze for later.** To freeze edamame, follow the parboiling directions. Then cool the pods in ice water and drain thoroughly. Spread the pods on a cookie sheet in a single layer and freeze until solid. Pack the frozen beans in plastic bags, being sure to squeeze out extra air, and put the bags back into the freezer, where the edamame will keep for several months.



THIS PAGE: CHRISTA NEU; OPPOSITE: THOMAS MACDONALD

 **Newbie hint** Cut the plants off at the soil line and leave the roots with their nitrogen-rich nodules to decay in the soil. Strip off most of the leaves and transport the whole plant into the kitchen. Bundle six leaf-stripped plants at their bases with a rubber band and share the delicious, edible bouquet with a friend.



## HERBS FOR COOKING

## Summer Savory

The Romans used summer savory (*Satureja hortensis*) as a mind-altering aphrodisiac. An interesting fact, no doubt, but don't let it distract you from the real reason to grow this easy-care herb: pretty spikes of lilac flowers and pungent gray-green leaves that add a...well, *savory* flavor to everything from meat to vegetable dishes.

—Aimee Theriault

### Grow It

**Height:** 12 to 16 inches.

**Hardiness:** Annual.

**Site:** Full sun; flourishes in moderately rich, well-drained soil.

**When to plant:** Sow seeds in midspring.

**Care:** Water plants occasionally, but be sure the soil is well drained.

**Harvest:** Snip leaves before bloom for the best flavor. To store, strip the leaves from the stem and air-dry thoroughly. Then pack them loosely in a plastic bag and store in the refrigerator.

**Comments:** Rub crushed leaves on a bee sting to numb the pain.

### Use It

Master chef, organic farmer, and culinary entrepreneur Al Rosas cultivates summer savory at his certified-organic farm in Citra, Florida. "Every kitchen should be using summer savory—it's a zesty ingredient that can really make a dish 'pop,'" says Rosas, who uses the herb to flavor his savory young fennel salad:

- Remove the tops from 2 young fennel bulbs and slice them crosswise into very thin slices. Clean and thinly slice a pound of fresh mushrooms. Place both in a salad bowl.
- Make a dressing of 5 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, and 2 tablespoons chopped fresh summer savory. Gently toss with the fennel and mushrooms.
- Place 3 or 4 lettuce or radicchio leaves on each plate and top with the salad. Shave a few slices of well-aged Parmigiano-Reggiano on top of each. The salad can be eaten as a roll-up or with a knife and fork.

TECHNIQUE

# Hand-Pollinate Squash

EVER BEEN DISAPPOINTED TO SEE SEEMINGLY HEALTHY SQUASH VINES with an abundance of flowers bear little or no fruit? The cause: poor pollination. For squash fruit to develop, the female flower must be pollinated with pollen from a male flower. Typically, insects perform this job, but if your yields are low or nonexistent, you can step in and help.

**1** Male squash flowers have straight stems and no baby fruit behind the flower. Inside the male flower are anthers, which are Q-tip-shaped reproductive organs covered in powdery pollen. Take a small paintbrush and rub it on the anthers until the brush is coated in pollen.

**2** Now make like a bumblebee and start pollinating female flowers, which have a small immature fruit right behind the flower. Inside the female flower you'll notice a stigma—the smooth, slightly sticky, bulbous female organ (see right). Rub the pollen-coated paintbrush onto the stigma of a female flower, leaving the pollen behind. The pollen from one male flower can pollinate up to three female flowers. Pollinate the female flowers in the morning for the best results. You'll know your pollination efforts have been successful when the immature fruit begins to grow and the female flower falls off.



THIS PAGE: MITCH MANDEL; OPPOSITE: PHOTO AND STYLING BY ANGEL TUCKER

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## PEOPLE

Edited by Beth Huxia



## GREEN HEROES

## The Rescuers

Every year, countless native plants are wiped out by bulldozers and other tools of development. But in the Seattle area, the Native Plant Salvage Program has come to the rescue of 100,000 plants.

Since 1992, participants in the project have dug up and replanted threatened natives to help restore wetlands and stream banks, and to provide wildlife habitat. The project is now led by comanagers Cindy Young and Greg Rabourn (pictured at top right). Rabourn says the most satisfying part of the project for him is working with volunteers. "They come out in all weather—windstorms, snow, and driving rain—to rescue plants," he explains.

One such volunteer, Janka Hobbs, says the project is "a great excuse to get muddy in the woods." Hobbs has been with the group since its inception, and her kids have grown up salvaging. Her son, Tim, knew the scientific names of the plants before the

**Salvage squad:** Volunteers brave all conditions to save native plants such as trillium (right).

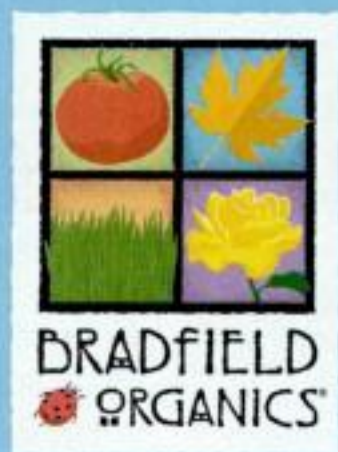
common ones. "As a kindergartener, Tim tried to help new volunteers by pointing out *Acer circinatum* and other plants," Hobbs says. "They'd occasionally ask me why he couldn't talk yet!"

The effort has even more personal benefits, say volunteers Mike O'Brien and Leah Mickelson. They tell us that salvaging keeps their relationship healthy and strong. "It's something we can do together," O'Brien says, "and we can bring home natives, which ramps up species diversity and saves us money. Some people get excited for ski season; we get excited to salvage plants."

Listen to Greg Rabourn each Tuesday at 10 a.m. PST on the KUOW public radio program *Weekday* at [kuow.org](http://kuow.org).



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## PEOPLE

MEET AN OG READER

# Still Growing Strong

WHEN ERVIN WALTER and his wife, Aida, planted their first garden in the early 1930s, they had a very urgent motivation. "During the Great Depression, if we wanted to eat, we had to grow our own food," Walter says. "As our family grew, so did our garden."

Nearly 75 years later, at age 94, Walter doesn't have to garden to feed his family. But he still gardens almost every day in every season. On his family's farm in Cresco, Iowa, Walter grows everything from strawberries, beets, and potatoes to spices and herbs for the kitchen. His 8-foot-tall tomato plants (started from seed) yield fruits 23 inches in circumference, and he harvests huge 70-pound cabbages that need to be cut with a handsaw.

What is Walter's secret? "It's all in the compost," he says. Tons of compost—literally. "We mounted a vacuum unit to a trailer, which we take into town to collect leaves. One load is about one ton of leaves, and we usually collect about 12 loads," Walter explains. He adds ground corncobs



**Hefty harvest:** Thanks to rich leaf-mold compost, Walter harvests more than 100 pounds of tomatoes from each plant.

and cow manure to the pile and lets it compost for two years, then puts the leaf-mold compost down 1 foot thick on the garden.

"All of this compost conserves moisture and stops weeds, which are plentiful here," Walter says. But through his many years of working the soil and feeding his family, he has learned to live with a few weeds: "I always say, if you can't grow weeds, you can't grow anything."



**Time-tested tip** For micronutrients, Walter works 25 pounds of bone-meal and 10 pounds of greensand into his 60-by-60-foot plot in spring.

### COMMUNITY GARDEN

### DENVER, COLORADO



**Planting partners:** Gove brings together a diverse community of people.

IN A CLIMATE AS HOT AND DRY AS DENVER'S IN SUMMER, you'd think that gardeners would be encouraged to save rainwater to irrigate their plots. But Colorado law prohibits the state's citizens from capturing rainfall. So Denver's Gove Community Garden, one of the participants in the *Organic Gardening WaterWorks* 2007 project, got a new, efficient drip-irrigation system instead of the 1,000-gallon cistern we donated to the other 19 WaterWorks community gardens. Judy Elliott, Gove's education director, is thrilled with the water savings. "Applying water directly to the roots is conservation at its best," she notes.

Learn about Denver Urban Gardens at [dug.org](http://dug.org) and about our WaterWorks 2008 project at [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com). Get info on community gardens from the American Community Gardening Association at [communitygarden.org](http://communitygarden.org).

ABOVE: LEE WALTER; LEFT: BRENDAN HARRINGTON



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# GREENHOUSE

## ECOTRENDS

### Growing New Farmers

Edited by Zazel Lovén

When late nights and constant stress were dampening Chef Chris Cubberly's enthusiasm for restaurant work, he was inspired by the idea of growing farm-fresh food for his livelihood. But without any experience, he knew he needed an in-depth course in professional agriculture. Cubberly, like countless others intrigued by the dream of earning their living off the land, took part in an internship that taught him the art and business of organic farming. After launching Red Tail Farm, he and his wife, Tania, started selling their produce and cut flowers at farmers' markets in and around nearby Chicago.

With consumer demand for locally produced, organic food soaring, farming has become increasingly appealing to people with no background in agriculture. Apprenticeships are helping to train new farmers and providing

**Certified-organic farms in 2000: 6,592**  
**Certified-organic farms in 2005: 8,493**

a labor pool for organic farms. The minimum commitment is typically a month, but full-season apprenticeships begin in February and last into December. Besides the experience and knowledge you gain, most farms exchange your labor for a roof over your head and all the produce you can eat.

At Serenbe Farms in Georgia, Paige Witherington grows and sells 250 varieties of vegetables. She teaches apprentices everything from budgeting and planning to growing techniques, so each worker can learn the whole farm system. At the 5-acre CSA garden at Seven Springs Farm in Virginia, Ron Justes emphasizes small-scale organic farmsteading and living lightly on the land.

Jordie Robinson worked on 11 farms to discover if he wanted to make agriculture his life's work. He learned new skills, from putting in fence posts to milking goats, weeding to building raised beds. "Every situation was positive," he reports, "and as much as you put in, you will take away."

#### RESOURCES

**Organic Volunteers**, [organicvolunteers.com](http://organicvolunteers.com)  
**World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)**, [wwoof.org](http://wwoof.org)



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## 36 Hours around the Lake

Urban renewal is coming to this old industrial center on Lake Erie, and with it a rejuvenated green scene, inspired in part by GardenWalk Buffalo, the largest event of its kind in the nation. In just 36 hours, you can appreciate much of what's happening. —Amy Stewart

**Weekend Activity.** For **Garden Walk Buffalo**, more than 260 gardeners open their gates on the last weekend in July for a celebration of neighborhood gardens. Pick up free maps, take the Garden Walk shuttle, or put on your walking shoes to explore historic communities with other plant lovers. [gardenwalkbuffalo.com](http://gardenwalkbuffalo.com)

**Friday p.m. Rue Franklin.** Start your visit by indulging your love of seasonal food prepared with a French flair. Locals love the lush courtyard garden for al fresco dining, where Paris seems right outside the door. Though it's known as the best restaurant in town, prices are reasonable. [ruefranklin.com](http://ruefranklin.com)

**Saturday a.m. Elmwood-Bidwell Farmers Market.** Stop from mid-May through November for baked goods and local produce. Miss Garden Walk? Stroll the side streets off Elmwood to ogle the beautiful front-yard gardens. [elmwoodmarket.org](http://elmwoodmarket.org)

**Saturday lunch. Erie Basin Marina.** Grab a picnic and enjoy the display of All-America Selections annuals being trialed here. [visitbuffaloniagara.com](http://visitbuffaloniagara.com)

**Saturday 3 p.m. Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Garden** is home to a glass Crystal Palace-style conservatory built in 1897. [buffalogardens.com](http://buffalogardens.com)

**Saturday 4 p.m. Lockwood's Greenhouses** is known for its vast selection of perennial and native plants and not-to-miss shop. [lockwoodsgreenhouses.com](http://lockwoodsgreenhouses.com). The Lexington Co-op offers all kinds of regional products. Great grab-and-go food with seating outside. [lexington.coop](http://lexington.coop). Urban Roots is a hip co-op selling plants and organic-gardening supplies. [urbanroots.org](http://urbanroots.org)

**Sunday a.m. Betty's** serves up vegetarian-friendly breakfast, brunch, and dinner in a lovely old restored house. [bettysbuffalo.com](http://bettysbuffalo.com)

**Sunday midday.** After brunch, drop by **Delaware Park**, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, for a jazz concert on the steps of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Olmsted was a passionate advocate for green, walkable cities. [buffaloolmstedparks.org](http://buffaloolmstedparks.org)

**Sunday 2 p.m. Darwin D. Martin House**, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, features a conservatory filled with period plants, a gardener's cottage with glass walls, and a unique Wright-designed built-in watering system for the urns. [darwinmartinhouse.org](http://darwinmartinhouse.org)

Amy Stewart is the author of *Flower Confidential: The Good, the Bad, and the Beautiful in the Business of Flowers*. Visit [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com) for tips from local experts on gardening in the Buffalo area.

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## OG WATCHDOG

### Natural or Not?

Ecoconscious shoppers who pay a premium for products that proclaim themselves “organic” or “natural” may be dismayed to learn that some of them contain toxic by-products.

David Steinman, author of *Safe Trip to Eden: Ten Steps to Save Planet Earth from the Global Warming Meltdown*, and the Organic Consumers Association recently released results of tests on more than 100 “natural” or “organic” branded body-care and household cleaning products. The tests showed that some of these brands may contain 1,4-dioxane, considered a probable human carcinogen by the EPA.

Manufacturers don’t intentionally add 1,4-dioxane to their products; it’s a by-product formed when ethylene oxide,

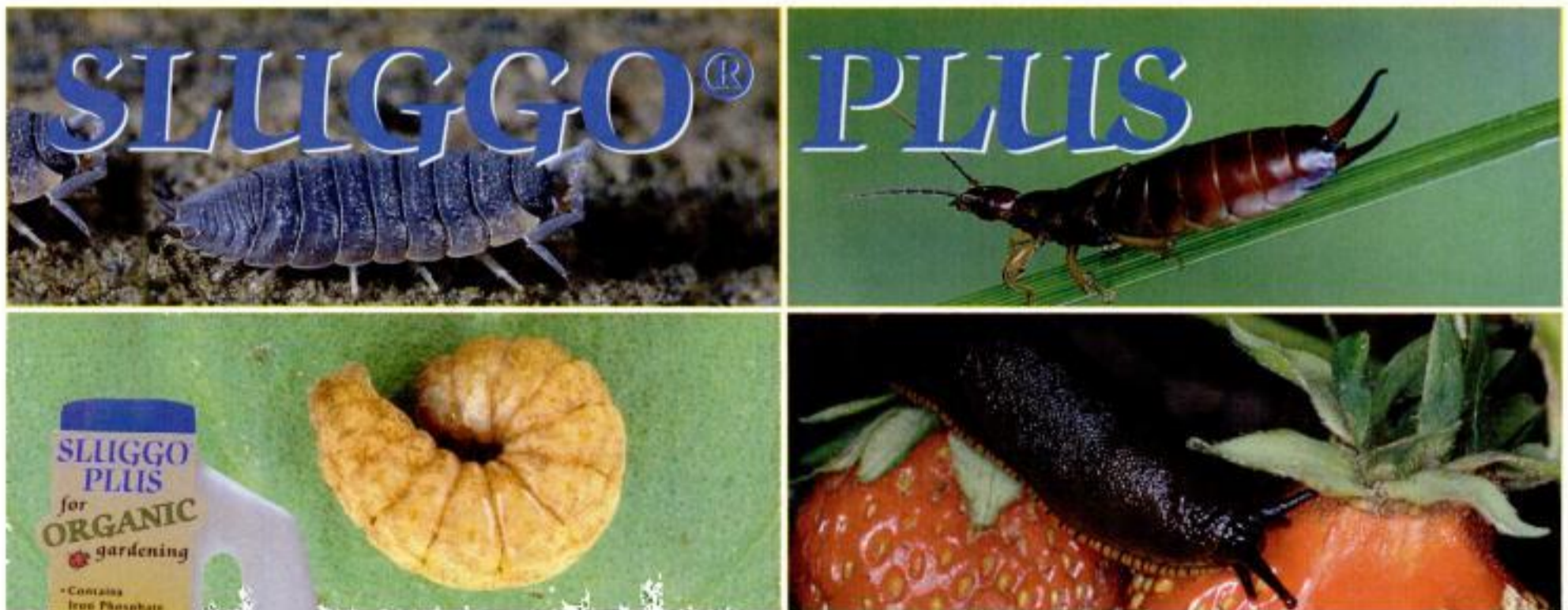
a petrochemical, is added to naturally derived foaming agents to render them less harsh. While searching for a safe bubble bath for his children, Steinman found that many of the products labeled “natural” contained trace amounts well below the standards set by the FDA for certain product uses, which allows for concentrations of 10 parts per million (ppm). A few, however, contained levels that surpassed the standard.

Before you empty your cabinets, be aware that 1,4-dioxane doesn’t accumulate in the body; it’s quickly metabolized and released in urine and breath. “The level of contamination in most of these products is not alarming; however, the accumulated effect of using several products over a period of time is a valid concern,” says Stephen Ashkin, a consultant to the green cleaning industry. Ashkin urges people



**Bubble burst:** Natural cleaners and body-care products may contain toxins.

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**TIP** To avoid 1,4-dioxane, found in many leading brands called "natural," choose products that do not contain PEG (polyethylene glycol) compounds and ingredients whose names end in "eth."

to consider the potential length of exposure (for example, contact with detergent while washing dishes is fairly brief, while a skin cream could last for many hours), then consider their overall health to assess their level of risk.

Federal regulations don't require personal-care or household cleaning products to disclose all ingredients on labels. Several of the companies pledged to investigate the problem and actively seek alternatives. When purchasing certified-organic products isn't an option (there aren't any organic dish soaps), Steinman recommends that consumers support companies that are working toward eliminating petrochemicals entirely. Visit [organicconsumers.org/bodycare](http://organicconsumers.org/bodycare) for the full list of test results. —Diana Erney



**Flee the coop:**  
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Nearly 25 percent of conventional egg-producing chicken farms in the United Kingdom have tested positive for salmonella, according to a new study published in *The Veterinary Record*. By comparison, less than 5 percent of organic farms tested positive. The researchers found that the highest incidence of salmonella occurred in the largest holding size category—30,000 birds or more. In the United States, conventional flocks of 100,000 are common, and some flocks have as many as 5 million egg-layers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that salmonella afflicts 1.4 million Americans each year.

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By **Denise Foley** Photographs by **Sean McCormick**

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# SECRETS OF CHAMPION TOMATO GROWERS

THESE AWARD-WINNING GARDENERS GROW THE EARLIEST, BIGGEST, TASTIEST, PRETTIEST TOMATOES—AND LOTS OF THEM. USE THEIR TIPS TO GET YOUR BEST EVER CROP THIS YEAR.

**E**ver consider tomato growing a competitive sport? Neither did I. Then I met Doug Oster. “There’s only one goal in growing tomatoes,” the Pittsburgh gardening columnist told me, “and that’s getting the first one.” His earliest BLT happens in June.

I almost phoned Amnesty International after talking to Jim Ward of Ward’s Berry Farm in Sharon, Massachusetts. Ward takes a little unnatural glee in spells of hot, dry weather “because heat-stressed plants produce better-tasting tomatoes.” His poor tortured fruits (“I don’t mean you should create conditions that make the plant sorry to be alive,” he protested) have racked up first places in the annual Massachusetts Tomato Contest.

Frankly, I’m mystified. To me, a homegrown tomato is just God’s gift to the *insalata caprese*. But I discovered something talking to people who treat gardening like a hoe-and-spade version of the X Games: Their techniques for raising the biggest, tastiest, best-looking tomatoes can help the average gardener like me get a bumper crop, even if my tomatoes win only the coveted “empty salad bowl” trophy.

**The joys of summer:** Tomatoes this luscious make the work worthwhile.

## Me First, Me First!

If you want the first tomato in the neighborhood, you must grow your own from scratch. Champion tomato growers John and Diane Franklin in Michigan start in February. Following their early-bird tricks stretches your tomato season, which is especially important if you live in a short-season climate. Start with quick-to-mature varieties; then use these hints. The Franklins found several inexpensive investments that paid off in more plants and earlier fruit, including:

- **New tubes.** Use fresh fluorescent lights, one warm and one cool. “We use an inexpensive fluorescent fixture, but we use new bulbs each season. Your eyes don’t know that the rays the old ones put out aren’t as strong, but the plants do,” Diane says. “We use one cool and one warm, which gives the full spectrum of light.” A timer is helpful, too, as the plants need six hours of sleep a night, adds John.
- **Party cups.** Yes, the colorful 16-ounce plastic cups you use at barbecues. “Once they grow out of their little cell packs, we put the plants in the party cups, after poking three holes in the bottom,” John

explains. "Because they're tall, we plant deep, and the plants develop really nice root systems."

**WINNER'S CIRCLE TIP** Wall O' Water. Aha! The real reason the Franklins harvest tomatoes in May. This product—a plastic "tepee" filled with water—is heated by the sun during the day and protects new plants down to 16°F. You'll get a six- to eight-week jump on those who foolishly wait until the last frost date to plant.

### You Say Tomato, I Say Patooiel

Getting growers to agree on the best-tasting tomato is as difficult as getting Donald Trump and Rosie O'Donnell to hug each other. But one thing they all agree on: Good soil makes for great-tasting tomatoes. Follow these tips, and you'll turn your own soil into a breeding ground for best-tasting tomato winners.

- **Test your soil.** Tomatoes need a slightly acidic pH of 6.0 to 6.8, plus a well-balanced supply of calcium, potassium, phosphorus, and nitrogen, to produce big, healthy, tasty fruit.
- **Compost, compost, compost.** "A 1- to 2-inch-deep layer of compost contains almost every nutrient tomatoes need," says Stephen Reiners, Ph.D., associate professor of horticultural sciences at Cornell University. "Put a shovelful around plants two or three times a season."

**WINNER'S CIRCLE TIP** Use bio-activated compost tea, which helps fight foliar diseases. The Franklins swear by this tea, which they make using compost, bagged worm castings, and an aerating system. Refer to the April 2008 issue of *Organic Gardening* for information on how to make and use compost tea.

### Mine Last Longer Than Yours

To stretch out tomato season as long as you can to get as much as you can, follow these simple strategies.

- **Give 'em room.** Plant tomatoes at least 2 feet apart—plants that are too close produce few fruit.
- **Bury the plant halfway up the stem.** This encourages more roots. And don't remove the branches, either, because roots grow from them, too.
- **Pass on pruning.** Removing branches from the plant gives you bigger but fewer fruit. The more branches you leave on the plant, the more fruit at different stages of development you get, so you're less likely to lose everything if a cold, wet spell happens, Jim Ward says.
- **Build tomato tunnels.** Plastic tunnels help avoid nighttime dew, which can be as fungus-promoting as



**Wonder wall:** Wall O' Waters keep plants warm down to 16°F.

heavy rains because the water stays on the plants all night (and it's the amount of time the leaves are wet that seems to be most critical).

**WINNER'S CIRCLE TIP** You could lose your entire crop if you have only one kind of tomato and it takes a dive. The Franklins plant a variety of determinates and indeterminates so they not only have the first tomato in the neighborhood, but potentially the last.

### That's Some Cute Tomato

Some tomatoes are born pretty, but you can help keep any variety looking its best. Bonus: These techniques also increase your harvest by extending your season.

- **Grow your own mulch.** Sowing a fall crop of hairy vetch in your tomato plot helps next summer's crop resist fungal diseases and live longer, report USDA researchers. Hairy vetch kicks several tomato genes into high gear—specifically, two that deter fungi and two that "delay senescence, or how soon they start going downhill," says USDA researcher John Teasdale, Ph.D., who studied the technique.



**Juicy fruit:** The secret to tasty, blemish-free tomatoes? Compost.

## SPECIAL HEIRLOOM OFFER

'Limbaugh Legacy Potato Top' is an heirloom tomato that Doug Oster, gardening columnist for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and coauthor of *Grow Organic* (2007), is happy to share with *Organic Gardening* readers. A few years ago, Oster started sending out seeds free to Pittsburgh gardeners, asking only that they return seeds to him—and they have. One reader told Oster that his father's last expressed wish as he lay on his deathbed was "Get the seeds back to Doug." The fruits grow to 1 to 2 pounds but can reach 5 pounds. Oster will mail you seeds: Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Doug Oster, The Backyard Gardener, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 34 Blvd. of the Allies, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.



**Behind bars:** Caging your tomato plants keeps the fruit clean and disease-free.

Here's how: Sow your vetch crop in fall. If you have a large plot, mow or roll the vetch before it blooms (late May or early June) to kill it before planting your tomatoes and other vegetables. In smaller plots, pull up the vetch by hand and allow it to lay on the soil. "Keep it wet so it decomposes," Teasdale advises.

If you live in the south or other warm areas, substitute the more cold-sensitive crimson clover.

- **Cage them.** Most growers I talked to use homemade cages of concrete-reinforcing wire bent into 3-foot rounds. Your goal: Keep the tomato vines off the ground, where they pick up bugs, diseases, and ugly spots, and away from each other so you get good air circulation, which also cuts down on diseases.

- **Check for calcium.** Tomatoes that don't get enough calcium develop blossom-end rot, a dry, sunken rotted end where the flower was. Make sure soil is slightly acidic, has enough calcium, and is watered regularly to allow plants to take up the mineral. Crushed eggshells or dolomitic lime sprinkled around the plants increases calcium content.

**WINNER'S CIRCLE TIP** Tomatoes need at least six hours of sunlight, not just for optimum photosynthesis but for protection from disease. Site your patch where dew and rain will evaporate from the plants quickly. You need sun for that—and wind.

"Look for an area of your yard with good air flow," Cornell's Reiners says.

### Mine's Bigger Than Yours

Rich, fertile soil is important to growing big, healthy tomatoes, but there are two other key elements: Plant naturally big tomato varieties and/or prune like the dickens.

Prune off all but two branches of your plant so it puts its energy into growing big fruit instead of lots of fruit, Reiners says. You can also pick off the flowers by hand. "But even with heavy pruning, you may add only 2 to 3 ounces to a fruit; maybe 4 ounces, and that's only on varieties with the largest fruit," he says. "You're not going to turn an 8-ounce fruit into a 1-pounder." 🍅

The best tomatoes Denise Foley ever grew in her Philadelphia-area garden came from a bag of town compost. She wishes she knew what they were—and didn't know how they got there.

**W** Everything you need to know about growing tomatoes, including soil preparation, growing techniques, and disease prevention, is at [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com).

# A BOUNTY OF BASILS

IT'S A TOMATO'S BEST FRIEND. CHOOSE THE RIGHT VARIETY FOR YOUR CONDITIONS AND ENJOY ARMFULS OF THIS IRRESISTIBLE HERB.

By **Ann McCormick**

Photographs by **Christa Neu**

**A**mong all the lovely aromatic plants in my garden, the basilis draw my fingers, again and again, as I weed and water. Brushing the foliage releases the fragrance, and I nibble on the sun-warmed leaves as I work. Like tomatoes, fresh-picked basil is a true summer pleasure, a treat only gardeners get to enjoy.

Basil, like most herbs, can be easy to grow if you choose the right variety and give it hospitable conditions. To help you choose basilis that will thrive in your garden, I asked herb gardeners in many regions about their most common growing challenges, which basilis they grow, and how they grow them.

**Hot and humid.** In North Texas where I live, gardeners experience a lot of highs—high temperatures, high humidity, and often high winds. High temperatures mandate regular, deep watering of basil during the summer months to maintain healthy growth. High humidity fosters fungal diseases. And high winds tear the easily bruised leaves.

The very large leaved basilis do not do well here, probably due to the drying winds. But lemon basil and sweet green basil are reliable in my garden. Thai basil and colorful 'African Blue' thrive here, too. These also grow well in other hot, humid climates, such as the southeastern and mid-Atlantic states.

**High altitude.** Thin air plus persistent winds make it necessary to provide protection for tender plants such as basil. John Cretti, host of a garden radio show in

the Denver area, names 'Sweet Genovese' as the most popular basil among Rocky Mountain gardeners. He warns that if basil becomes chilled early in the season, it is "generally stunted and never amounts to much." If you live at a high altitude, you can extend the basil season in fall by growing it in containers and bringing it under shelter when frost threatens.

**Temperature extremes.** Winter seldom brings frozen ground to the garden of Jim Long of Long Creek Herbs, but like many in the Ozarks and in other parts of the country, Long regularly experiences a few days early in the year that "reach the upper 60s, followed by a drop to 15°F."

The long growing season in Long's area (on the Missouri-Arkansas line) is favorable for basil, and he grows many, including Thai, sweet green basil, 'Lime,' 'Mrs. Burns Lemon', and 'Siam Queen'. 'Greek Columnar' (also called 'Sweet Aussie') is another favorite.

**Unexpected frosts.** On the Michigan Peninsula, surrounded by the Great Lakes, Donna Frawley's garden, Frawley's Fine Herbarry, is subjected to Arctic blasts.

Many northern gardeners share her challenge: When unexpected frost—in spring and fall—hits, she scurries to cover her basil with thick but lightweight GardenQuilt row covers. Sweet green basil is her biggest seller.

**Pretty tasty:** With so many colors and leaf shapes to choose from (that's 'Perpetua', above, and 'Red Rubin', right), you can grow basil in your vegetable garden and flowerbed.



## Which Basil for Your Garden?

You'll find basil in a wide array of leaf shape, color, flavor, and size. Here is a selection of basil to consider for your garden.

### For best flavor:

'Aroma 1'  
'Aroma 2'  
Genovese  
'Green Ruffles'  
Lemon  
'Nufar'  
Sweet green

### For appearance and flavor:

'African Blue'  
'Ararat'  
'Dark Opal'  
'Purple Ruffles'  
'Red Rubin'  
'Thai Magic'

### Slow to flower:

'Aussie Sweet'  
'Pesto Perpetuo'  
'Summerlong'

### Compact habit suitable for edging:

'Spicy Globe'  
'Summerlong'



**Beat the beetles:** Handpick Japanese beetles before they devour your harvest.

**Frigid springs.** "The cold off-ocean wind keeps our nighttime temps low and the soil cold," says C. L. Fornari, who lives in coastal New England, where she hosts a weekly garden radio show. Wise gardeners in her region wait until night temperatures remain above 50°F before planting outdoors.

Sweet green and lemon basil grow best in Fornari's area. Thai basil tolerates the New England weather but fares better in warmer temperatures than the other two varieties. Purple-leaved basil is usually disappointing, she reports, both in growth habit and taste.

**Rainy days.** Summer comes late to the Pacific Northwest, says Josh Kirschenbaum of Territorial Seed Company. Gardeners in this area must wait until after Mother's Day to plant frost-sensitive basil, or it just sits in the cold ground and becomes stunted. At the end of the season, fungal diseases brought on by frequent fall rains plague basil in the Northwest, Kirschenbaum says.

Sweet green and 'Mammoth Sweet' basil are the region's staples. But recently, northwestern gardeners have begun growing sweet green basil varieties developed for resistance to F1 fusarium wilt, a deadly fungal disease. 'Aroma 1' is Kirschenbaum's favorite F1-resistant basil, because of its superior flavor and vigor, but 'Nufar' and 'Aroma 2' are also good performers.

**Dry summers.** Renee Shepherd, founder of Renee's Garden Seeds, grows basil in the coastal hills of central California. Summer days are warm and dry and nights can be quite cool. Thorough, consistent watering, careful mulching, and several successive plantings keep her in fresh basil all summer. She is particularly fond of Genovese-type basil; 'Mrs. Burns Lemon' is also a favorite.

### Growing Great Basil

**First steps.** You can buy basil seedlings and transplant them to your garden when the soil has warmed to 65°F. But basil seeds are very easy (and fun) to start indoors under ordinary fluorescent lights. In late spring, about six weeks before overnight temperatures stay consistently warmer than 50°F, sow seeds on top of a flat of soilless mix and lightly cover. Keep evenly moist until the seeds germinate in about seven days.

Once they sprout, use a small fan to circulate air and prevent damping-off, a common fungal disease that kills seedlings. Keep the soil consistently moist as the seedlings grow. When they are six weeks old, acclimate them to life in your garden by leaving them outside for an increasing amount of time each day.

**Planting.** When transplanting basil to your garden, treat the seedlings as you would tomatoes: Wait until the soil temperature reaches at least 65°F and nights are consistently above 50°F. Find a spot with at least four hours of direct sunlight. Mix organic matter such as compost into the soil to hold moisture and give the plants a boost. Pinch off the lowest set of leaves and side stems and plant the roots deep enough that the spot where you removed leaves and stems is covered. You'll get new roots there, just as you do with tomatoes.

**Watering and mulching.** Regular watering is key to a good basil harvest. Whether your plants are in pots or the ground, water them in the morning to reduce risk of fungus—and water deeply; don't just

## DOES BASIL REPEL FLYING INSECTS?

One persistent bit of basil lore is its ability to repel flies and mosquitoes. Putting pots of basil on windowsills is often suggested as a natural way to keep flies out of the house. Rubbing the skin with basil leaves and burning leaves on a fire or barbecue are other recommended pest-repelling strategies. Basil has even been discussed as part of a program to combat malaria-carrying mosquitoes in Third World countries. Is there any factual basis for all this?

There is. Arthur Tucker, Ph.D., research professor at Delaware State University and internationally recognized expert on the chemical constituents of herbs, confirms that basil can be used as a mosquito repellent "by either crushing the leaves or applying the oil." The three most effective species are sweet green basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), sacred basil (*O. tenuiflorum*), and tree basil (*O. gratissimum*).

wet the top inch or two. Poor or erratic watering can shock the plant and slow or halt growth, or bring on premature flowering. This can reduce the essential oils that provide flavor and fragrance.

Mulch and weed to prevent competition for water. When choosing mulch, you might want to try colored plastic at the base of your basil. When USDA scientists in South Carolina tested the effects of using colors other than black for plastic mulch, basil grown over red plastic had larger and more succulent leaves. Plants grown over yellow or green plastic had higher concentrations of aromatic compounds.

**Get more leaves.** To maximize the number of leaves, watch for emerging flowers, which drain energy away from leaf production. When daytime temps rise above 80°F, stem tips form a square cluster of four leaves layered one on top of another. Your basil is maturing and forming a flower spike.

The first impulse most gardeners have is to pinch off the tip. Deadheading or pinching off the flower spike doesn't halt the flowering; it simply makes way for the next flower stalk. Instead cut at least six leaf nodes down the stem. Your basil will resume leaf production again—exactly what you want.

**Wipe out wilt.** Fusarium wilt is the one disease that bothers basil. The fungus spreads through contaminated seeds or soil and clogs the plant's vascular tissue, preventing nutrients from flowing upward—a horticultural version of hardening of the arteries. The plant wilts and dies as if cut off at the roots.

Chemical fungicides do not cure the problem. The answer lies with taking preventive measures, such as choosing fusarium-wilt-resistant varieties. Where wilt has been a problem, avoid planting basil or other plants in the mint family (which can be symptom-free but still perpetuate the disease) for several years, advises Robert Wick, Ph.D., plant pathology professor at the University of Massachusetts.

Wherever you plant basil, amend the soil with

compost, says Wade Elmer, Ph.D., plant pathologist at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. He has found that using compost reduces the incidence of fusarium wilt. He suspects that the compost raises the soil pH and thus retards fungal growth. If your plants wilt despite being well watered, "immediately remove symptomatic plants, digging out the roots and surrounding soil, and bag and discard them," Wick recommends.

**Harvest for top flavor.** Wait until the plant is at least 10 inches high before making the first cut. Cut stems just above the second set of leaves (count from the bottom). New stems will form at this juncture.

Trim your basil often, every 10 days or less, Jim Long advises. The more you harvest basil, the better the flavor. "New gardeners often 'save' the basil until they really need it. When they do harvest, it is past its prime and has bitter overtones," says Long.

**End-of-season strategies.** In fall, watch for freezes. Frost blackens and shrivels basil leaves. Protect against brief cold spells by using row-cover cloth, lightweight fabric, or even newspaper. This works as long as the soil stays warm. Once the ground cools, basil stops growing. At that point, dig up your basil, pot it up, and bring it in to a sheltered area. Or take cuttings and start new plants indoors.

If overnight lows are expected to stay below 35°F, harvest basil immediately. Even if you keep the plant alive, the leaves lose flavor. Then it's time to start enjoying the basil you dried or froze in summer. You did save some for winter, didn't you? 🍷

Ann McCormick, the Herb 'n Cowgirl, writes and lectures on herb gardens. She has a Saturday radio program on KWRD 100.7 FM in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Visit her Web site at [ann-mccormick.com](http://ann-mccormick.com).

**WW** Find out more on the basil in this article, learn how to preserve basil, and discover the best-looking basil for flower beds, at [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com).

**Tip: Don't just snip off basil flowers; that encourages more of them. Instead clip down six leaf nodes to get more leaves.**

**For better yields:** Remove the lowest leaves and plant basil right up to the next set of leaves (below, left). This develops a strong root system. Cut back the plants when they start to flower.



# COULD



By **Willi Evans Galloway** Photographs by **Sergio Ballivian**

Материал, защищенный авторским правом





**Strip ease:** Flowers planted in the parking strip are reflected on the Guerins' shiny vintage Airstream trailer (above). Hollyhocks (below, left) are a statuesque presence with striking color in late summer. Drought-tolerant flowers, including goldenrod and penstemons, brighten the parking strip between the street and the sidewalk (below, center). Common purple phlox (below, right) attracts beneficial insects. Guerin (opposite page) waters her garden, with the help of the family's beagle, just once a week.



some good soil under there," says Guerin, an avid composter who knows that the difference between gardens that survive and those that thrive is soil quality.

Rather than struggling to amend the hydrophobic, nutrient-depleted silt, Guerin rented a small construction vehicle and skimmed it off, revealing the site's original, slightly sandy topsoil. She then traded the pile of silt to a friend looking for fill dirt in exchange for a low-tech drought defense system: a big load of sheep manure. "Before we planted, we spread the sheep manure a couple inches thick over the entire yard and then tilled it in," Guerin explains. The manure stimulated earthworms and other soil inhabitants to loosen up compacted areas of the garden, making it easier for new plants to get established. The addition of organic matter also helped the sandy soil to retain moisture, which keeps the Guerins' garden healthy and hydrated, even in the face of drought and drying winds.

### Privacy Protection

With the yard's maintenance issues under control, Guerin turned her attention to the property's other major challenge: its layout. The house and detached garage sit like bookends on opposite edges of the long, wide, rectangular lot. "I just didn't have any idea what I would do with the yard, because it is all side yard," Guerin recalls. But she knew she needed to figure it out, and

fast. "I wanted to have a yard that we could hang out in pretty quickly, because we knew remodeling the house was going to be a major, long-term project," she explains. "It was important for us to have a living space outside to enjoy while the inside was intolerable."

Since the house is located on a corner, has no backyard, and is just a block away from the University of Wyoming campus, creating privacy was paramount, but

Guerin wanted to balance that need with her desire to create a garden that passersby could enjoy. "I didn't want to just put up a big, tall fence, because that would seem unfriendly," she says. Instead, she took a more inviting approach by installing a short, undulating picket fence to define the yard's boundaries while still allowing a peek at the gardens inside. A hedge of extremely hardy, drought-tolerant pink, white, and purple lilacs planted alongside the fence provides color and fragrance in spring and adds an additional layer of privacy during the summer months when the family spends much of their time outside.

### Border Patrol

Inside the picket fence, huge curving borders filled with flowering perennials define the space. On a tour through the garden, Guerin points out her favorite plants, including some time-tested ones that she transplanted from her previous garden. "I brought peonies, yellow flax (*Linum flavum*), Indian

pinks (*Spigelia marilandica*), which is a great hot orangey plant, tulip bulbs, irises, and columbine,"

Guerin says. "I also planted grape hyacinths from my grandmother's garden all along the fence."

Tough-as-nails perennials, including more than 70 penstemons, perky native coneflowers (*Echinacea*), blue delphiniums, Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), fluffy Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*, a.k.a. *Stipa tenuissima*), and fuzzy gray lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*) headline the gardens, but a carefully edited supporting cast of bulbs, annuals, and a few borderline perennials and shrubs keep things interesting.

"I'm always trying stuff that is borderline, like butterfly bush (*Buddleia davidii*), because sometimes you get lucky, and if it dies you get to replace it with something else," says Guerin, who views zone information less as a guideline than as a challenge. "I really try to pay attention to microclimates in my yard, because you can overcome a lot of things by planting plants in the right spot in the garden."

Guerin's garden survival strategy shows in her choice of hardy, unfussy plants and in her garden's thoughtful design. *(continued)*



## A Truly Green Lawn

Follow Jodi Guerin's sustainable lawn strategy to create a cushy, green lawn that needs little water.

**Plant regionally appropriate grass.** Guerin planted Enviro turf, a blend of grasses that thrives in her Rocky Mountain West climate and needs 40 percent less irrigation than Kentucky bluegrass.

**Grasscycle.** Mow often and let the clippings fall on the lawn and decompose. This practice returns valuable organic matter and nitrogen to the soil.

**Water weekly.** Guerin irrigates only once a week, even in the height of summer. This practice encourages the grass roots to search for moisture deep in the soil and conserves water.

**Leave the leaves.** Rather than raking and bagging leaves in fall, Guerin shreds them with her mower and leaves them on the lawn to add more organic matter to the soil and feed the worms.

Symmetrical beds curve around both sides of the house, both to offset the squareness of the structure and to take advantage of the radiating heat and shelter it provides. Within the beds, plants rub shoulders with one another. This planting strategy creates a seamless wave of color in summer, and the densely packed plants shade the soil, reducing competition from weeds and the need to water.

### Water-Wise Plantings

"I'm a bit of a plant collector," Guerin confesses. So it's no surprise that her gardens do not stop at the front gate. Wrapping around the house between the sidewalk and the street are parking strips planted with sun-worshipping perennials. "I wanted some gardens that were public, because our neighborhood needed it,"

says Guerin, who looked at the parking strips as an opportunity to educate her neighbors on how beautiful drought-tolerant gardens can be. So she applied for, and won, a \$1,000 grant from the city to replace the grassy strips with a mix of drought-tolerant plants that also handle exposure, desiccating winter winds, and the summer heat that radiates up from the pavement that surrounds the gardens on both sides.

"I've lost a lot of things in the winter to sheer exposure, because they get dried out and frostbitten," Guerin says. "But I'm a tough-love gardener. If it's not going to live, then it won't stay." After five years of trial and

error, the parking-strip plantings now feature clumps of bearded iris, fluffy plumes of yellow goldenrod (*Solidago*), lilies intertwined with ornamental grasses, and a smattering of bird and butterfly favorites, including short annual sunflowers, salvias, and penstemons. Touchable mats of lamb's ears, sedums, and other low-growing groundcovers weave through the taller plants and act as

a weed-reducing, water-conserving mulch.

### Garden Living

The most remarkable thing about the Guerins' garden is not how it looks or what weather it survives, but that it feels comfortable and lived-in. That first summer, while the yard was still a blank slate, Guerin sat down and

## Dry Standbys

Gardening in an arid climate has taught Guerin to respect plants that need just a bit of water to produce big blooms. "I like plants with a purpose, especially ones that attract butterflies or bees," she says. Here are her five favorites for drought-tolerant gardens.

**Beardtongue** (*Penstemon*). Thrives in hot, dry, marginal soil and produces masses of orange, red, pink, purple, white, or yellow tubular flowers that attract hummingbirds and bees. Plant several species to extend their bloom time and pollinator appeal.

**Creeping hummingbird trumpet** (*Zauschneria garrattii*). A drought-tolerant groundcover that bursts into bloom in late summer. The hummingbirds can't resist its bright orange, trumpet-shaped flowers.

**Hardy plumbago** (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*). A hardy, adaptable groundcover with deep blue flowers and foliage that slowly turns bright red in fall. Use it to fill in space under taller perennials.

**Pasque flower** (*Pulsatilla vulgaris*). Very early spring wildflower with delicate purple or burgundy bell-shaped flowers. The seedpods look like little poofs of cotton. Interplant them with spring bulbs, especially tulips.

**Texas hummingbird mint** (*Agastache cana*). Hummingbirds love this tender perennial's spiky tubular pink flowers. Pair it with Russian sage for a pretty late-summer show. Reseeds readily.

considered not only what kinds of gardens she wanted but how her family would use the yard. "We spend practically all our time outdoors during the summer," she says. So she drew up a list of criteria that included room for the kids and dog to play, a place to eat, spots to relax in, and a kitchen garden to cook from.

Today, French doors open up off the kitchen and onto a large wooden deck that hosts summer meals and backyard get-togethers. A small four-square vegetable garden, flanked by the garage and a small flagstone patio, sits within sight of the kitchen. The rambling, deep green lawn runs right up to the patio, and it seems to invite visitors to slip off their shoes and wander over barefoot to the flower gardens that beckon from across the yard.

For Guerin, the garden that she built from scratch is ultimately more than just a place to relax with her family; it's an excuse to take a breather from her hectic life as a mom, wife, community activist, and small-business owner. "I don't find gardening a chore. I like to grab a glass of wine in one hand and a weeder in the other and spend half an hour fussing around in the garden," she says with a smile. "It's cheaper than therapy." 🍷

**W** Check out a photo slide show of drought-tolerant plants and find growing guides for some of Jodi Guerin's favorite flowers, including iris and phlox, online at [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com).





**Durable, drought-tolerant flowers:** Tough yellow lilies and Mexican feather grass look deceptively delicate when planted together (above, left). Lavender delphiniums add height at the back of a deep border and lend the garden a casual, cottage garden feel (above, center). Pioneers prized hollyhocks (above, right) for their hardiness. Bearded irises make an architectural statement at the front of the house, even after they have finished blooming (below). Pollinators are attracted to the flowers of lamb's ears (opposite page).

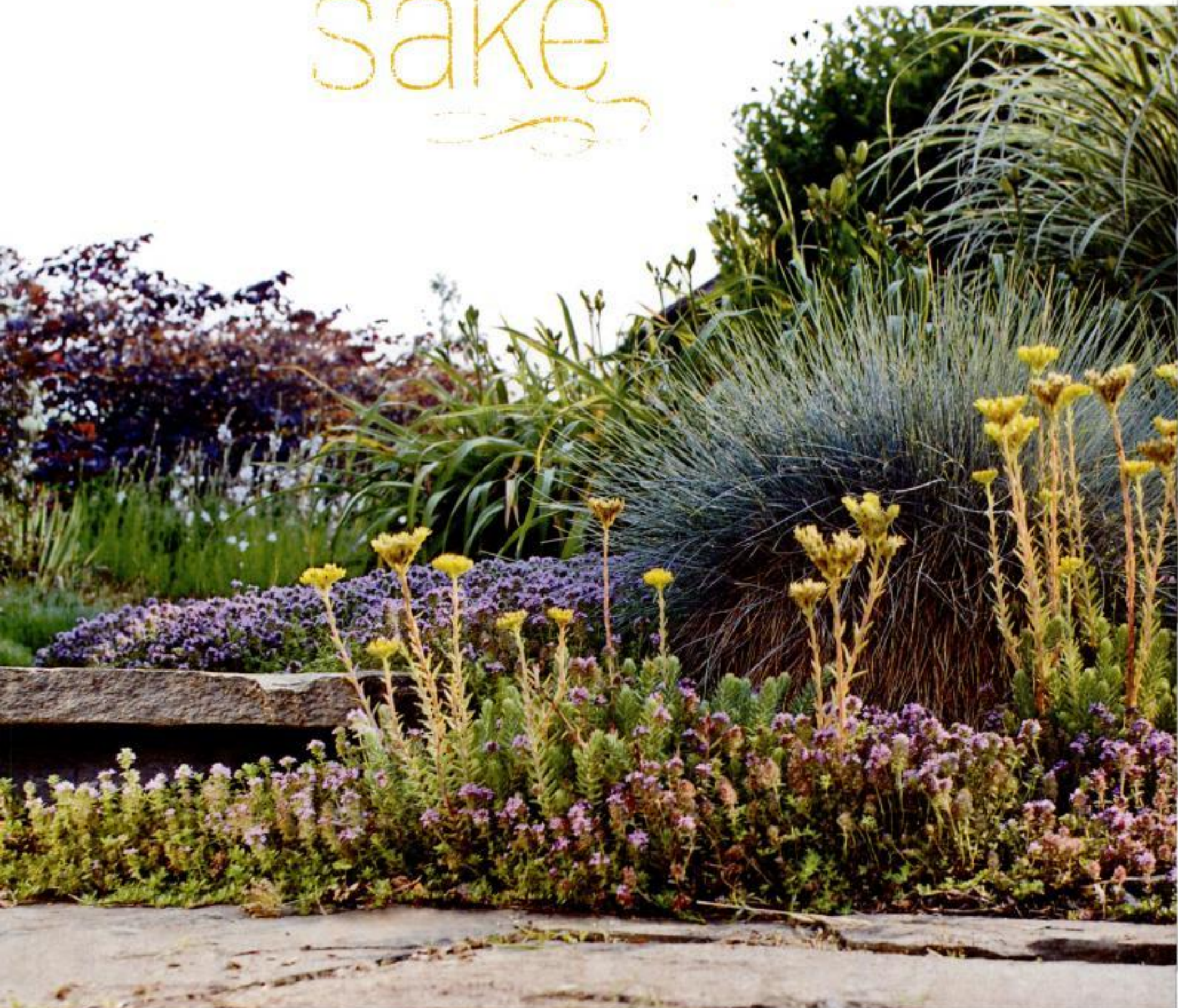


Pretty flowers, fragrant foliage, and easy care are three great reasons to move herbs out of your kitchen garden and into the rest of your landscape.

# herbs

By **Nan Stermann**

## *For* beauty's sake



# Whoever decided that edible plants

must be segregated from ornamentals and sequestered in the backyard must not have truly appreciated the broad appeal of herbs. These amazingly functional plants attract beneficial insects, pollinators, and butterflies. And they have knockout foliage, stunning flowers, fabulous fragrance, and great texture. Oh, and did we mention that you can eat them, too? This season, get more out of your garden space by edging a flower border with a row of ruffled parsley, padding a shady footpath with Corsican mint, and tucking basil or chamomile into your containers. Once you start mixing herbs into the landscape, you'll discover they are just as appealing and useful there as they are in the kitchen, if not more so!

## Annual Elegance

When planting herbs, you can choose from annuals and perennials, shrubs, groundcovers, and even a few trees and grasses. Start with annual herbs, which add variety to the mix of familiar flowers.

**Basil** (*Ocimum basilicum*) bears broad, fragrant leaves and white or purple flower spikes that quickly fill gaps in perennial and annual borders and complement the textures and colors of common container foliage plants, especially coleus, dusty miller, and ornamental sweet potato. 'Napoleitano', with its huge, crinkly green leaves, is a classic culinary basil, but you can choose from an assortment of basil varieties with different leaf sizes, textures, and colors.

'Red Rubin' has smooth, bronzy purple leaves, while 'Ararat' features unusual mottled purple and green leaves. 'Cardinal' has dark green foliage offset by striking red stems and a large topknot of reddish purple flowers. Line borders with rows of basil or cluster a few plants together to create a dramatic splash of colorful foliage in sunny flowerbeds (see page 63 for a great annual border plan). Mounding basil varieties—especially 'Piccolo Verde Fino' and 'Summer-long', dwarf varieties with tiny leaves that mature into adorable 10- to 12-inch-tall mounds—can be tucked in among rocks in the garden.

**Perilla** (*Perilla frutescens*), also known as shiso, is a basil cousin with deeply grooved, toothed purple or green leaves, and it is a great, edible alternative to coleus. Used in Japan to flavor rice and sushi, this fast-growing herb tolerates hot summers and grows in both sun and part shade. New varieties, including 'Magilla' and 'Gage's Shadow', don't have culinary value, but their dramatically variegated leaves more than make up for it. Korean shiso (*P. frutescens* var. *crispa*) grows to 2 feet tall or more. Its large, roundish leaves are green on top and blushed with purple on the undersides, and they pair up nicely with hostas and heucheras in partly shaded borders or under deciduous trees.

**Dill** (*Anethum graveolens*) has feathery foliage and abundant umbrella-shaped flower heads that mix well with perennial standbys, including *Verbena bonariensis*, coreopsis, sweet William, cranesbill, and catmint. The pretty, pale green plant is also an important food source for black swallowtail butterfly larvae. "I drop dill flowerheads among perennial and annual flowers when they mature in summer to give flowerbeds a naturalized look," says OG Test Garden manager Pam Ruch, who notes that the seedlings tend to pop out of the ground on their own schedule the following season. "Usually they sprout in late spring and again in late summer. The chartreuse flowers are a welcome sight whenever they appear."

## Perennial Favorites

Blend a few choice perennial herbs, especially ones that feature vibrant flowers, into your ornamental borders, and they will attract birds, bees, and passersby who won't be able to resist the delightful fragrance and touchable foliage.

**Pineapple sage** (*Salvia elegans*) is a Mexican native with fuzzy, gray-green pineapple-scented leaves that prefers full or part sun and regular water. "We eat the leaves in salad all summer," says Kirk Brown, an Allentown, Pennsylvania, gardener. "Then, just as the garden is fading in October, pineapple sage comes into bloom with red, red flowers. It is the garden's last hurrah." Hummingbirds find the blooms irresistible.

The tender perennial's tops die back when temperatures sink to the mid-20s, but the plants can resprout easily from the roots; just don't expect them to return after a hard freeze. In USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 7 and higher, however, pineapple sage overwinters easily.

**Anise hyssop** (*Agastache foeniculum*) sends up spikes of purple flowers that lure droves of bees and butterflies. Plant this 2- to 3-foot-tall plant at the edge of beds so you have the opportunity to brush past





low-traffic areas of your lawn or tuck plants between pavers on patios and paths.

**Mounding marjoram**, sometimes sold as 'Betty Rollins' oregano, makes a mat of green leaves that release a minty fragrance when crushed. For a very low-growing plant, Billings recommends creeping oregano (*Origanum vulgare* 'Humile').

**Creeping thymes** quickly fill in the space between pavers. Caraway thyme (*Thymus herba-barona*) is one of the few culinary creeping thymes. Billings prefers creeping thyme (*Thymus praecox arcticus*), especially 'Pink Chintz', or tiny elfin thyme (*Thymus serpyllum* 'Elfin'). They tend to stay more dense and lower than other thymes, typically reaching only 2 or 3 inches tall.

**Corsican mint** (*Mentha requienii*) is soft and delightfully fragrant. Unlike other mints, this creeper spreads slowly where it is perennial (Zones 7 to 9). In cooler climates—where it grows as an annual—one plant can cover more than a square foot during summer.

These are only a few ideas for landscaping with herbs. Once you get started, you can, with just a little imagination, transform your entire yard into an herb garden. 🌿

Nan Sterman, a member of the *Organic Gardening* test team and author of *California Gardener's Guide Volume II*, grows herbs in Encinitas, California.

Visit [OrganicGardening.com](http://OrganicGardening.com) to get detailed herb-growing guides, a list of the prettiest flowering herbs, and more.

## Herban Feast

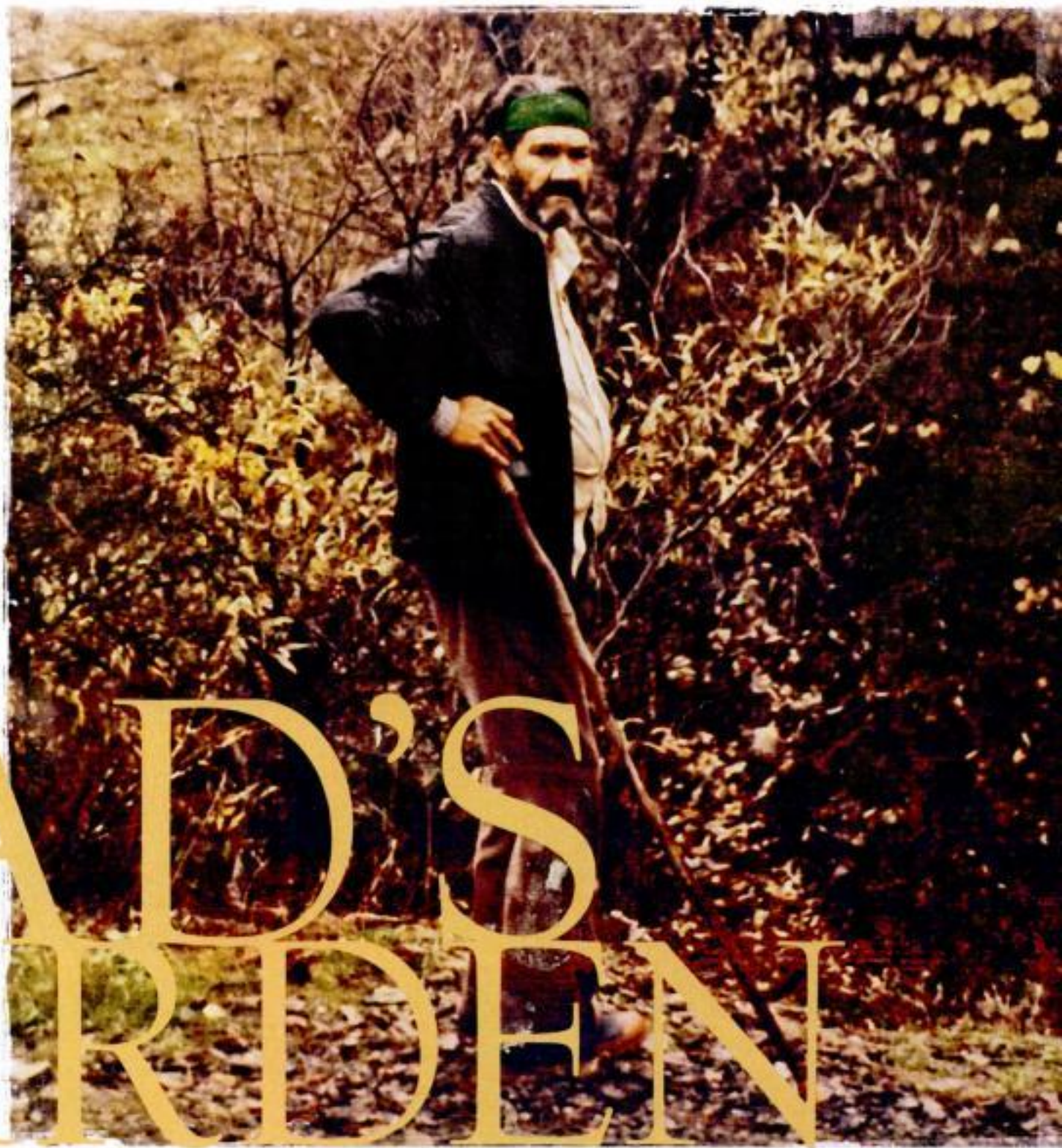
Planting herbs in pots makes it easy to harvest their fragrant leaves for use in the kitchen. Plus, they make unexpected partners with traditional container plants. Here are a trio of container ideas that highlight the texture, taste, and color of four easy-to-grow herbs.

**Foliage feature.** The cream and green variegated leaves of 'Pesto Perpetuo' basil deserve to be observed up close. I like to plant it in a large ceramic pot with rose-pink alstroemeria hybrid 'Princess Zsa Zsa' and eye-catching foliage plants, including a burgundy-leaved rex begonia, red-blush 'Efanthia' euphorbia, and a young Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*).

**Tea pot.** In a large glazed container, plant a big, shrubby lemon verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*) and prune it into three main upright branches. Tuck round-leaved variegated ginger mint (*Mentha X gracilis* 'Variegata') around the base of the verbena and encourage it to cascade over the sides of the pot. I steep the verbena and mint leaves in hot water and serve the tea hot or cold.

**Lemon fresh.** The tropical herb lemongrass (*Cymbopogon*) makes a graceful, fountainlike mound of light green leaves and looks especially pretty planted as a single specimen in a low, round terra-cotta bowl. In my Southern California garden, lemongrass overwinters easily, but in cooler climates, simply take divisions indoors in the fall and put them out again come spring. —Nan Sterman

**MASTER'S TIP** Plant plugs of creeping herbs between pavers. Plugs—roots with tiny shoots—give you more bang for your buck than the typical plants grown in 2-inch pots, and the plugs' small rootballs are easier to squeeze into tight growing spaces.



# DAD'S GARDEN

**A NATIVE AMERICAN STORYTELLER GLEANS LONG-LASTING LESSONS ABOUT SOWING AND GROWING FROM HER FATHER.** By **Dovie Thomason**

I was working in my garden when my Dad decided it was a good time for a visit. My Dad had died 15 years before, so I guess this is a ghost story. I was raking rock, tearing out old lawn, pulling out roots, preparing the earth for a new garden at my new home. I heard his voice clearly: "Do the hard work now, or there'll just be more later," and, "There's use for those rocks—some things grow better in a hard place."

He had these little aphorisms—some clearly original, some quotes he kept repeating that he'd first memorized while working the fields at the Indian school. "Takes courage to emerge from darkness," he'd say, pressing seeds in the earth. "Everything begins in darkness."

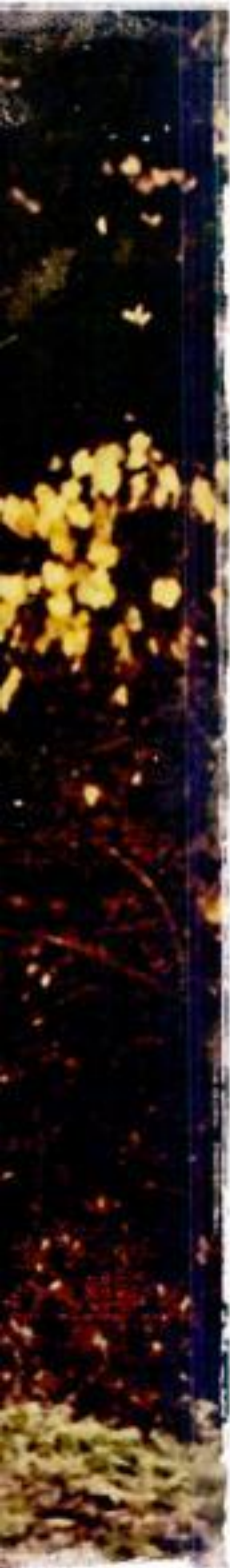
Taped to the wall of his toolshed was an old newspaper photo. It showed Geronimo as an old man, finally freed from prison, standing in a field next to his wife and children, holding a huge pump-

kin. "If they could make him a farmer, it's good enough for me." My dad would have been a happier man if he'd been able to farm instead of trying to be a salesman.

So his garden was his solace, his meditation. And I was his helper. We'd work up and down the furrows he'd made, not saying much, in a comfortable silence. He started my apprenticeship with planting radishes—a fast grower. They sprout in four or five days. Nothing like a little instant gratification to get you hooked on the gardening magic. Patience comes later.

"That's faith," he said. "Putting a seed in the ground and believing something good will come of it." He planted by the moon cycles. "If it grows tall, plant when the moon's full," he said. "If it's a root or a creeper, plant when the moon's dark. Full





moon, it'll grow; dark moon, it'll be slow."

Dad was no Farmer McGregor, like in the bunny books I loved. The animals were welcome in his garden—to a point. "Always plant extra for the critters, but mark your borders with pee so they don't eat yours, too."

He understood the nature of plants. He'd reroute his rows to accommodate "volunteers," believing that those plants that are "wild-sown, wind-blown, bird-dropped" were stronger and deserved their place. "They know better than you where it's best to grow."

He saved some of the food for seed each year. "Can't eat it all," he'd say, then tell the story of the Coyote who didn't want to learn the patience for growing things, so he

boiled his seeds for soup and ate till his belly was hard. Then he took the leftover soup and poured it in the garden, covering it with earth. Nothing grew from his garden, so he had an excuse to beg and steal.

Dad was always glad to see the bees and the worms. "Without them, life's over on this earth," he'd say with a laugh. "Top of the food chain... ha! If we all disappeared, it'd all just go on without us."

And when the food began to come, he'd tell me, "Don't pick the first you see of anything. That way there'll always be more. Leave a gift." And he'd press a penny or a pinch of a Lucky Strike cigarette into the earth. "Share with the folks who've got no garden." He'd share fresh-picked, dried, or canned. He made a thick, sweet preserve from watermelon rind and strung ropes of chilies for frying up with deer meat.

I'm so like my Dad. There's a comfort I seek in the garden. Sometimes it eludes

**"THAT'S FAITH,"**  
HE SAID, "PUTTING A SEED IN THE GROUND AND BELIEVING SOMETHING GOOD WILL COME OF IT."

me, especially if I'm rushing, just trying to fit it in and get done. Then, I can hear him say, "You enter the garden at the speed of a man; you leave it at the speed of a plant." I've learned to slow down so that I can see the new sprout, light shining through leaves, the place where the baby bunnies have burrowed in among the beans.

I now know that by encouraging me to follow and watch him in his garden, my dad had been teaching me more than plant wisdom and earth stewardship. He taught me more than maybe he even knew. He taught me how to comfort myself, as if he knew there would be times when he wouldn't be there or just could not.

My daughter came cartwheeling and giggling across the yard to land in a heap. She's 16, planted radishes when she was 4, and has always been my garden helper. Day's light was leaving the sky as she lay there, breathless. Dusk is the silence of day, a breath at long last exhaled, echoed now by geese headed home.

I noticed my Dad wasn't around any more. He once told me we come from the stars. I wonder if that's where we return. I looked for the evening star, the wishing star, and made my wish. I wished my child would always remember the sweet peace of these times together in the garden.

And I made a second wish, feeling a little greedy, since I was already so content. I wished my Dad would decide to visit again at harvest time. I wished for him to see what became of the seeds he planted. 🍂

Dovie Thomason, a Lakota/Kiowa Apache storyteller and educator, lives and gardens in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Learn more about her work at [doviethomason.com](http://doviethomason.com).

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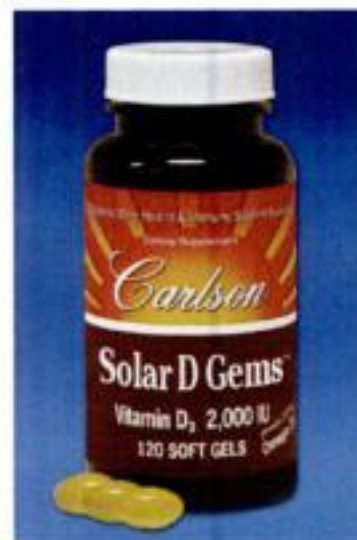


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# CLOSER LOOK

## Honeysuckle

Walk down a country road when summer is at its peak, and you'll be enveloped by the sweet fragrance of honeysuckle in bloom. When we were kids, a friend and I discovered how to gently break apart the flowers and drink the sugary nectar. We felt as if we'd found our own candy store. Now I know that common honeysuckle is an invasive import to our continent that's too destructive to plant in my own garden. But I have found alternatives that I expect will inspire a new generation of sweet memories.



By Abigail Pouletre

### Immigrant Story

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) is native to East Asia. In 1806, it was introduced to the United States as a desirable ornamental. The vine escaped cultivation and now grows rampant from New York to Florida and west to central Illinois.

### Good for Something

Although Japanese honeysuckle is notorious for strangling out native plants, it has a couple of redeeming qualities. It provides food and shelter for wildlife—white-tailed deer especially appreciate the semi-evergreen foliage in winter. And the quick-growing vines work as a groundcover for controlling soil erosion.

**"These ivory bugles blow scent instead of sound."**

—English writer Samuel Pepys

### Safe Substitutes

Native honeysuckles and other desirable species share Japanese honeysuckle's most attractive traits.

If you love...	Plant...
Fragrance	'Gold Flame' honeysuckle ( <i>L. x heckrottii</i> )
Fall color	Bush-honeysuckle ( <i>Diervilla</i> spp.)
Hummingbirds	Trumpet honeysuckle ( <i>L. sempervirens</i> )
All-summer blooms	'Dropmore Scarlet' honeysuckle ( <i>L. x brownii</i> )

**SOURCES** Brushwood Nursery, [brushwoodnursery.com](http://brushwoodnursery.com)  
Digging Dog Nursery, [diggingdog.com](http://diggingdog.com)  
Nature Hills Nursery, [naturehills.com](http://naturehills.com)





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