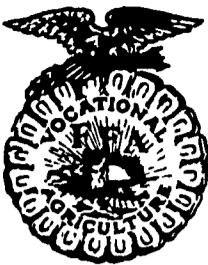


From Local Ag Teachers:



Thoughts in Passing



Plan Now For Home Gardening

The article this week was prepared by Carl Graybill, Ephrata High School agricultural teacher.

With the cost of living on the rise, why not cut some corners on the family food budget and have your own garden this spring. You can stretch the food dollar, enjoy the freshest vegetables, and experience a rewarding hobby all at the same time.

Gardening is not difficult, in fact, with a little land, some fairly easy work, and the proper knowledge and materials, anyone can have a green thumb. The following information will be

of general nature, designed to help the novice gardener.

The Garden Site

There are a few items to consider when selecting a site for your garden. Good soil is important and the plot should be located near the house to facilitate irrigation. Avoid the vicinity of trees and large shrubs, and choose a place which has enough slope for surface water drainage.

When To Plant

The time to plant depends on the crop to be planted. In Lancaster County, crops such as asparagus, califlower, carrots, cabbage,

peas, lettuce, beets, radishes, spinach, winter onions, salsify, parsnip, and horseradish can be planted in the spring as soon as the soil can be prepared.

Frost sensitive crops such as snap beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, tomatoes, and squash are best planted after May 15 to eliminate the danger of frost. Warm season crops such as lima beans, egg plant, musk melon, and peppers should not be planted until the soil has become warm.

What To Plant

Plant crops according to family tastes. Root crops, fruit crops, and leafy crops should be included in a balanced garden. Avoid melons, cucumbers and pumpkins in a small garden

since they take up considerable space.

How To Plant

Use your land space to its greatest potential when planting a garden. Don't plant the crops too close, and allow space between rows for cultivation. Planting beans after early peas on the same plot can get more use out of the land. Companion cropping such as planting onion sets for green onions between rows of cabbage plants will save garden space. The green onions will be harvested before the cabbages need the room. Several small plantings of certain crops such as corn can be made to minimize waste, and to offer garden fresh vegetables over a longer period of time.

Plan Your Garden

Plan your garden well in advance of planting time to insure maximum production from the land available. Draw up a garden plan on paper and decide what kinds and varieties of crops to plant, where they will be located, amount of each to be grown, spacing of rows, and planting dates for each crop.

Seeds and Plants

Order seeds well in advance of planting time, and select varieties adapted to your locality. Seeds left over from the previous season should be germination tested before using to avoid wasting your time planting poor quality seed. A germination test can be easily accomplished by placing at least ten seeds of each variety to be tested between moist paper towels and storing in a warm place.

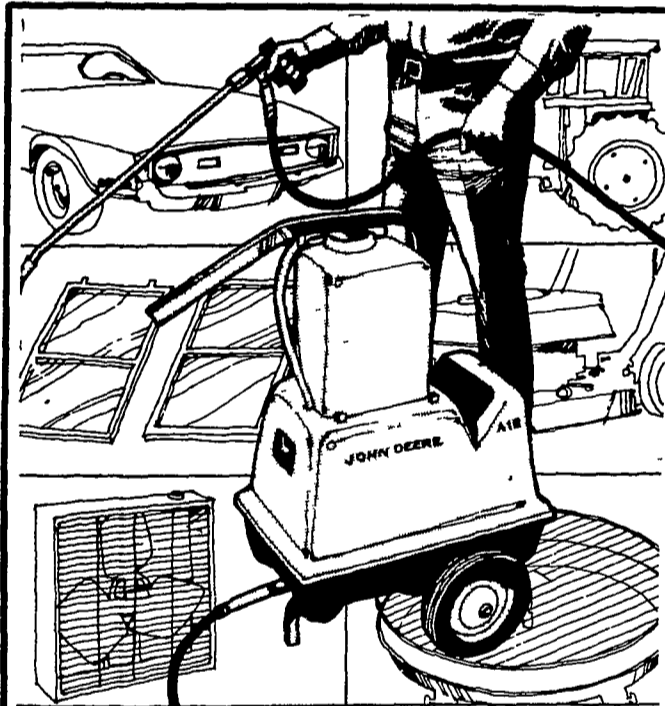


Carl Graybill

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Note: Keep the paper towels moist after the seeds have sprouted to determine the germination percentages. High germination percentages indicate the seeds are still of good quality. Quality vegetable plants can be purchased from greenhouses and garden supply stores in your area.

Tools and Equipment
Good quality garden tools greatly lessen the time spent working in the garden. Standard garden tools would include a hoe, steel rake, spade, bucket or watering can, hand duster or sprayer, trowel and a dibble for setting out plants and a weeder for weeding and thinning. Large gardens make the purchase of a rotary tiller a worthwhile idea.

The Garden Soil
The ideal garden soil is fertile, deep, well-drained, and high in organic matter. Thorough soil preparation before planting is needed for growing garden crops. The deeper the soil is stirred, the greater is its capacity for holding air and moisture. Compost or manure should be worked into the soil to add organic matter. A soil test should be taken to determine if lime is needed, and how much fertilizer should be applied. Ten to 35 pounds of 5-10-5 or 5-10-10 fertilizer per 1,000 square feet meets most crop needs. The fertilizer can be broadcast and worked into the soil, or placed in a band two to three inches deep and two to three inches to the side of the row of seeds.

Planting the Seeds and Plants
Plant in a freshly prepared seedbed of loose, fine soil. Plant the seeds at the proper depth and properly spaced in the row to avoid overcrowding. Firm the soil around the seeds with light tamping to hasten germination. Plants should be placed in a hole large enough to avoid cramping the roots. Put some water or starter solution in the hole around each plant before the soil is replaced. Press the soil firmly around the roots to avoid air spaces which would cause the roots to dry out.

Cultivation
Start cultivating the garden as soon as the plants are up. Take care not to cultivate too deeply and thus injure the roots. Keep the soil loose to allow water to soak in, and keep the weeds under control at all times.

Watering and Mulching
During a normal season, watering is not usually necessary. However, if a long dry period occurs and watering is needed, be sure to water thoroughly. One thorough watering that wets the soil to a depth of four to six inches per week is usually sufficient. Don't water lightly and frequently since this reduces root development.

Mulching conserves and holds water and reduces erosion and weed growth. Straw, leaves, sawdust, plastic and numerous other materials serve as a good mulch.

Toddler Topics
A series of educational packets called "Toddler Topics" will be published by the Lancaster County Extension Service beginning in February. The topics give information to the Young Homemaker about children and food, language and reading development, health, developing creativity in children, one parent families, and helping children when there is a family crisis. A special feature of each packet will be a page full of creative activities that involve mother and child. "Toddler Topic" packets will be sent free to any interested people. To be placed on the mailing list, contact the Lancaster County Extension Service, Room 1, 1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster, PA 17601.

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