

# Onions, beans, tomatoes tops for garden

NEWARK - Onions, green beans, and tomatoes are three of the most productive crops you can grow in the small home garden. With proper care at planting time and minimal attention during the growing season, they'll produce abundantly right up to the first hard frost in the Fall.

One of the first crops that can be set out in the Spring is onions, but there's still plenty of time to plant some if you haven't done so yet, says Delaware Extension vegetable specialist Dr. Michael Orzolek. He recommends starting with sets or plants, rather than seeds. Sets, which are easy

to come by, are actually small onions that were started the previous year. Look for "Ebenezer" and "Yellow Globe" - two of the most popular varieties for the home garden.

Onions need fertile soil to produce well, says Orzolek. Use 5-10-10 or 10-10-10 fertilizer at planting and sidedress plants with nitrogen about six weeks later. This fertilizer is needed to produce a good green color and rapid growth.

If you intend to harvest your onions as dry bulbs, plant sets three to four inches apart and 1-1/2 to two inches deep. For scallions, plants or sets should be 1-1/2 to two inches apart and three to four inches deep. Pull green onions whenever they reach edible size, starting with largest ones first. Harvest your dry-bulb crop after the majority of the tops have dried and are bent over.

For a satisfying yield, green or wax beans are one of the easiest and quickest crops to grow, says the specialist. Most beans require little space to grow and are adaptable to a wide range of soil conditions. It takes only 50 to 60 days from seed to produce a good crop of snap beans.

You have a choice between pole or bush type plants, when it comes to beans. There are differences in taste, as well as differences in length of harvest period for each type.

One planting of pole beans will give you a two to three month harvest, as opposed to only three weeks for bush beans. Pole beans are also somewhat easier to pick, because you don't have to do so much bending over. But bush beans have the advantage of taking up less space, and with several plantings about 10 days

apart, you can get almost a continuous harvest over a three to four month period.

One of Orzolek's favorite bush bean varieties is "Tenderette" - a velvety green-podded bean. But for people interested in trying something a little different, the specialist suggests trying some purple-podded beans. These grow on a bush type plant that produces a tender, stringless purple pod that turns deep green when it's cooked. He considers them very delicious.

If you're wondering how many beans to plant, by the way, figure on about a pound of beans from every two feet of row.

To get the most mileage out of your tomatoes this Summer, the vegetable specialist recommends planting several varieties with different maturity dates. There are a number of good ones to choose from, all resistant to fusarium and verticillium wilts.

For canning as well as fresh eating, a good all-purpose variety is Rutgers. The plant yields late, but once it starts producing you'll get an abundant harvest of nice firm six to eight ounce fruit right up to a hard frost.

Two mid-season, all-purpose varieties are Campbell 28 and Heinz 1350. Both were originally developed for commercial canning use, so they're

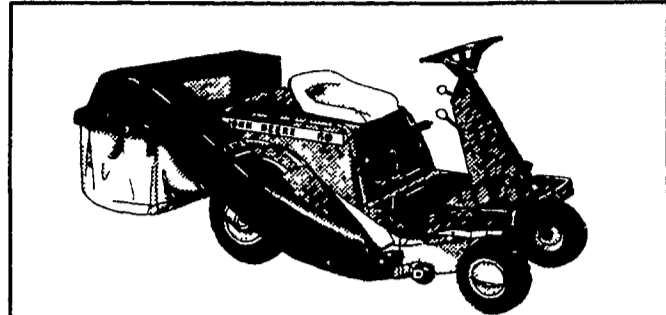
perfect for the gardener who wants to put up some tomato juice, or spaghetti sauce. For early yields, grow either Supersonic, Jet Star or Better Boy.

If you're looking for tomatoes weighing a pound or more, go to the Beefsteak or Ponderosa varieties. These will give you extra large fruit that's good for fresh eating. Just be prepared for a little less flavor and texture than you're used to with smaller fruited varieties. Also, yields will be smaller and you may find the plants less resistant to the diseases that plague tomatoes.

Speaking of diseases, one

problem that the home gardener can avoid by careful cultural practices is blossom end rot. Mulch plants well and maintain an even soil moisture over the growing season, and you shouldn't lose any fruit to this physiological condition.

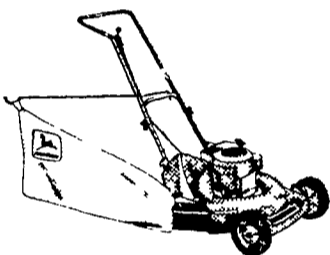
A final word of advice from the vegetable specialist: we've had an unusually cold Spring and some people have lost plants they set out or started early. Orzolek says not to get discouraged if you have to replant. There's still ample time to enjoy a bountiful harvest. The growing season has just begun.



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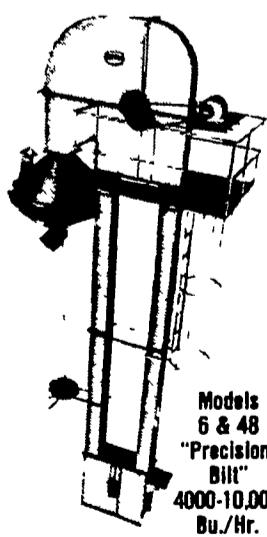
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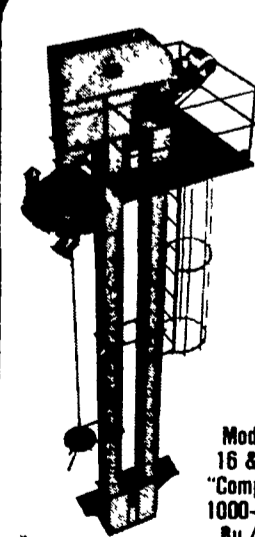
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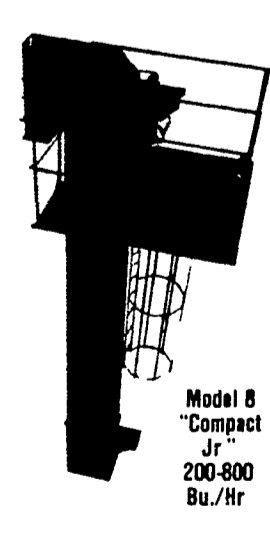
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