

**Seeding,
Weeding
and mulch
more**

For the avid gardener

Ratatouille is a colorful, delicious, easy-to-make fresh vegetable dish that comes to us from the Provence section of France. What is so appealing about ratatouille in addition to the already mentioned attributes is that you have to go no further than the summer vegetable garden to find the ingredients. Ratatouille is a marvelous mix of peppers, eggplant, zucchini and cucumbers topped off with a tomato sauce. Here's how to grow ratatouille:

Sweet peppers, generally harvested when they are green (although they can be allowed to become red), are an ornamental addition to the vegetable garden with their glossy green leaves and compact, bushy habit of growth. Besides their use of ratatouille, they can be stuffed, stewed or used raw in salads and with dips. After purchasing plants from your

garden center or greenhouse, do not set them into the ground until all danger of frost has passed and the night temperatures will not fall below 55°F; doing so will cause plants to stop growing and suffer great damage. Set plants about 24-inches apart in a rich soil kept moist, especially at flowering time when lack of moisture can result in no fruit set. If it becomes extremely hot during the summer, mulch peppers to keep the soil cool as they will not set fruit if temperatures climb over 85°F.

Hot peppers, a close relative, can be used to spice up your ratatouille but are becoming most popular with the increasing rise in the love of Mexican food. You need only a plant or two of hot peppers for an average family; to tone down their spiciness, use them fresh and/or remove the seeds. Ornamental peppers are petite,

compact pepper plants that produce hot fruit while adding a decorative touch to the garden.

Eggplants, like peppers, are set out after it has become warm as they are very tender. Set 24- to 30-inches apart in a deep, well fertilized soil and harvest the attractive black or purple fruit any time from one-third to fully mature.

Cucumbers, like the other warm season vegetables, should not be planted until the danger of frost is past. However, if earlier planting is desired, it can be done if a protective covering or cloche is applied at night if temperatures are going to dip. Cucumbers require a steady supply of fer-

tilizer applied to a well drained soil. Although cucumbers can be left to trail along the ground, they will require less garden space and will be less subject to damage if they are trained to grow up some sort of a trellis or fence. Tie the vines carefully to prevent damage and take the same precaution when harvesting fruit.

Zucchini is one type of summer squash, which is a vegetable whose fruits are eaten when immature in contrast to the winter squash which are harvested in fall and have a thick skin. Zucchini grow on bush type rather than on vines, and grow to about 3-feet around. Like the other ingredients of

ratatouille, they like warm soil and days to produce at their best. Provide zucchini with loose, well drained soil rich in organic matter and kept cool with an organic or black plastic mulch. If early flowers do not set fruit, do not be disturbed; all squashes bear separate male and female flowers, and only the female flowers produce fruit. Zucchini, like most other vegetables, require full sun.

Making ratatouille is easy. Cut the various vegetables into bite-sized pieces and saute in a small amount of butter or oil. Season to taste with onions, garlic, oregano or other spices and top with a tomato sauce.

Berks County 4-H to hold show

BERKS COUNTY — Berks County 4-H Beef Club will hold their annual spring show on Saturday, May 19 at the Reading Fairground Cattle Barn.

Contestants will learn how to and practice fitting and showing animals. Animals should be

washed and clipped before arrival. All fitting, with the exception of washing and clipping, will be done at the fairgrounds before the show since fitting is part of the contest.

Contestants should bring their own equipment and chairs. Contestants should bring County Farm Show steers, and those with heifers only may show the heifers.

Fitting and showing will be divided into six classes according to birthdate.

Freezebranding of Farm Show steers will be after lunch. Implanting and worming will also be available.

Anyone with questions should call Karen Freeman at the 4-H office.

Lebanon County 4-H

The Lebanon County 4-H Livestock Club held their annual reorganizational meeting on March 12 in the auditorium of the Municipal Building.

Several new programs are available to the members, including: livestock judging, teen leadership and veterinarian science.

The club will participate in the county 4-H spaghetti dinner to be held on April 28 at the Annville Cleona High School cafeteria. The next meeting will be on April 26 at the extension office.

Elizabethtown 4-H

The Elizabethtown 4-H Pig and Rabbit Club will hold its reorganizational meeting on Friday, April 6 at the home of the project leader, Warren Heisey.

All persons ages 8 through 19 are eligible and encouraged to join in a pig or rabbit project. For more information call 367-3287.

Lehigh County 4-H

The Lehigh County Sheep and Lamb Club met on March 21 at 7:30 at the Lehigh Farm Credit Building in Foglesville.

A veterinary from East Penn Clinic gave a lecture on sheep and

their parasites.

The next meeting will be held at Ruth and Joshua Grim's home. The program will be on fitting and showmanship.

Kutztown FFA

(Continued from Page B23)

production, Patrick Fenstermaker, Mertzown; fruit & vegetable production, Jenny Seidel, Maxatawny; floriculture (Greenhouse), Michael Smith,

Topton; home & farmstead improvement, Dan Rice, R2, Kemp-ton; public speaking, Jenny Seidel, Joanne Kunkel, Naomi Herbert, R3, Kutztown.



Terry Wisser, left, is Star Chapter Farmer at Kutztown FFA, while Scott Mertz is Star Chapter Agribusinessman.

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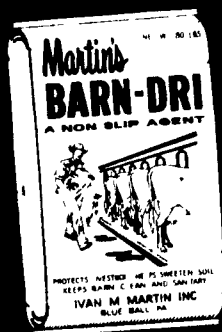
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