



Have You Heard?

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Home Economist

THE ART OF HOME CANNING LIVES ON

The tradition of food preservation has not waned with the onset of convenience foods that cater to today's fast-paced way of life. According to a 1989 survey, over 25 percent of all American homes still engage in some type of annual home canning activity, and one-half of American homes had done some kind of home canning during the previous two years.

Why, in light of the microwaveable, flash-frozen foods so widely available, has home canning remained popular? Many people connect home canning with a treasured part of their past. Home canning is the natural end to a chain of events that begins with planting, watering, and harvesting. It con-

duces the images of those who found a way to enjoy the bounty of the earth without the benefit of supermarkets, refrigeration and artificial preservatives.

Of course, feeling good is not exclusively what home canning is about. It is also about good nutrition, value, and health.

For many home canners, there is a strong connection between growing food and preserving food. Over 18 million of all home canners grow some amount of food for preservation. Though inundated by food products labeled "all-natural," "no preservatives," and "light," people still value fresh, home-grown food as more natural, more nutritious and more delicious. Home-grown foods are also far less expensive than processed

foods.

These benefits appeal to the home canners of the '90s. Not only do they prefer the value, good nutrition, and freshness of home-preserved food, they also prefer to know how it is preserved. They want to control the amount of salt and sugar and make sure only the finest ingredients go into home canning jars, and onto their tables.

A 1990 survey conducted by Organic Gardening Magazine

gives some indication of the strength of canning among those who grow their own food. More than 73 percent said they had preserved food in the last 12 months. Over one-half said they had preserved anywhere between one and 59 quarts of food, and an incredible 13 percent said they had preserved 96 quarts or more. An amazing 93 percent said they grow food for preservation.

What does this sustained popu-

larity for home canning mean? It means that, no matter how "on-the-go" many Americans are, they still find time for important things like health, nutrition and saving money. It also means that — whether a dozen half-pint jars of strawberry preserves are kept for gift-giving or pantry shelves are filled with dozens of quarts of garden-fresh fruits and vegetables — the art of home canning lives on.

Wildflowers Add Color, Variety To Landscapes

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Want to add interesting textures and colors to the expanse of green lawn in front of your house? For ideas on how to do this, pay attention to the roadside this summer.

A variety of wildflowers can be seen in displays along Pennsylvania's highways, part of a state transportation department program in cooperation with Penn State's College of Agriculture.

Art Gover, project associate in Penn State's agronomy department, is continuing an evaluation

of six annuals and 10 perennials for the roadway displays.

Annuals in the mix are bachelor's button, clarkia, tall plains coreopsis, cosmos, Indian blanket and corn poppy. Perennials are white yarrow, Siberian wallflower, ox-eye daisy, lance-leaved coreopsis, purple coneflower, dames' rocket, blue flax, evening primrose, black-eyed Susan, and prairie coneflower.

"The mix is designed to be hardy, competitive with weeds, and showy enough to be seen from a distance," said Gover. "Most of

these species occur naturally in Pennsylvania. The mix should make an impressive display throughout the season.

"The flowers have done well along the highway and should do well in your yard — probably better since most yards provide a less competitive growing environment than the roadside."

Seeds of the 16 species can be ordered from seed house catalogs or bought at local nurseries.

The wildflowers will grow in well-drained areas that get full sun or partial shade. For best results, they should not be planted where there are persistent, invasive weeds such as Canada thistle or crown vetch.

If you are planning to cover a large area with wildflowers, remove weeds and sod by applying a herbicide containing glyphosate several weeks before planting. For small areas, strip off the sod with a shovel or spading fork or cover the area for several weeks with black plastic. Avoid tilling, since this will stimulate dormant weed seeds.

The wildflowers can be planted any time after fall's killing frosts to early June and will produce blooms the first season. Seed should be planted no more than a quarter of an inch deep or simply left on the soil surface.

After frost kills the blooms at the end of each growing season, mow the wildflowers to a height of six inches. Leave the dead stalks on the soil to disperse the seeds.

"During the first season, the annuals and a few perennials will bloom. The second season will provide blooms from the reseeding annuals and all the perennials," said Gover.

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