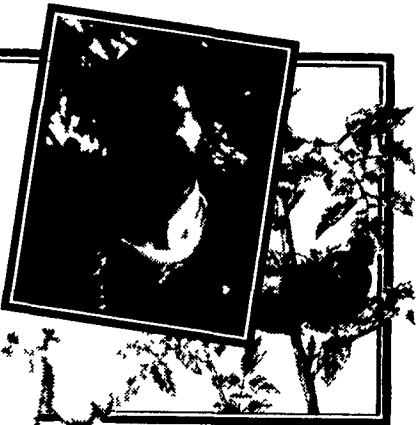


**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



This is the second in a series of articles on WWII Victory Gardens. We'll discuss vegetable gardening in the early 1940s and see what lessons we can apply to 1995.

Your garden soil is the dinner table where your plants find their daily bread.

Victory gardens in the early 1940s assured ample amounts of fresh vegetables and fruits for home use during war-related food shortages. Even after the war ended in 1945, a media campaign for "gardening after victory" was conducted.

The language or "patriot

thoughts" of the victory garden became part of the written language of gardening. Gardeners were told to "destroy" insect "invaders" and weed "saboteurs." We must be "vigilant of the fifth column" in protecting our gardens and "re-employ" control measures against our "enemy." A subtitle for a book read, "Vegetables, victuals, vitamins, and victory, with violets, verbenas and veronicas for variety."

Many different victory garden plans were available at this time. "Remember your victory garden will seem twice as large in July and August as it does now, so consider

the time available and choose the size accordingly." Plans were designed to be expandable if more gardening area was desired or it needed to be designed for the locality and terrain.

- Victory garden plans existed for gardens as large as 50 x 100 feet, 50 x 60 feet, 30 x 50 feet, 25 x 40 feet and as small as 20 x 30 feet, 15 x 20 feet and 10 x 15 feet.

- A 30 x 50 foot plot produced 4-5 bu. snap beans; 12-15 qts. lima beans; 100 bunches of beets; 50 heads of cabbage; 45 pounds of carrots; 15 pounds of swiss chard; 20 heads of lettuce; 30 bunches of onions; 50 bunches of radishes; 40 pounds of spinach; 3 bu. tomatoes; and 5 bu. turnips or rutabagas.

- For a family of two, a 25 x 50 foot garden was adequate to supply all essential vegetables except sweet corn and potatoes.

- For a family of five, a 50 x 100 feet was recommended with intensive cultivation between 18' rows.

- A rule of thumb was to produce enough vegetables to put up 85 to 115 quarts for each family member per season.

- A half hour a day should be sufficient labor for the average-

size garden, after the garden has been planted.

- In Pennsylvania, industrial firms were asked to provide at least 1000 square feet of land for each member of the employee's family.

In the early 1940s, gardeners were provided all the information needed to succeed with a victory garden. Previous gardening experience was not necessary.

The average dates of the last killing frost (May 1) compiled by USDA weather reports were used to plan sowing and planting times.

To get the most from the soil a victory gardener must understand and respect it.

A soil not too heavy or too light is preferred. The soil should contain plenty of air, moisture, organic materials and fertilizer. Topsoil should be a minimum 8-10 inches deep.

Methods of digging practices in the early 40s include single dig-

ging and double digging. Techniques of seed sowing required the victory gardeners to smooth soil in the seed bed with a wooden rake. Narrow rows can be made with a pointed stick. Use the side of a hoe as a larger drill. Sow your seeds directly from a seed packet. Bush limas should be well spaced. Onion sets are sown in medium drills. Broadcast peas in a wide drill. Thin out seedlings. Cucumbers and melons should be sown in hills.

Vegetable seeds were easier to select than today. There were far fewer varieties to choose from. Hybrid seed only existed for sweet corn. A favorite hybrid sweet corn was "Golden Sweet Bantram" which produced (sometimes 2) 8 inch ears with 14 rows of light grains with sweet pulp. Hybrid sweet corn is highly resistant to disease and drought, as well as being more productive.

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