

EL DORADO FARMERS MARKET - FOCUS ON QUALITY!

I finally made it down to the new El Dorado Farmers Market this year. I've been remiss due to a deer stand project that really needs to get finished before that season sneaks up on me. But I digress, this is about the market and not my feeble attempts to put venison in the freezer.

Bright and early last Saturday morning I made my way through the new farmers market. In case you missed it, the City of El Dorado has done some re-modeling to the old Home Lumber store at 121 W. Ash, just one block west of Main between Ash and Olive. Lots of parking, wet ground wasn't a worry and the inside of the building has been cleaned up and bathrooms are going in. Once inside I had to remember that many local growers have had a tough time of it this year due to excessive rain and one doozy of a hail storm.

Four vendors have taken up residence there on Saturday mornings now. The products on display were as nice as any I've seen at any market in Oklahoma, Missouri or Kansas. Very high quality fresh tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, onions and peppers were in abundance. One vendor has locally produced honey and the new local brewing company has a display of products also.

The great thing about this new location is that there are plans to make this a year-round market that will be largely unaffected by the vagaries of the weather. It takes time to build a market and a customer base, and I certainly hope that the community can get behind the good folks that work so hard to bring fresh, locally grown produce to our area. So come on down and check it out, the market is operating on Saturdays from 7 AM to noon and Tuesday evenings from 5 PM to 7 PM.

Master Gardener Applications Now Available!

It's that time of year again, time to start thinking about dusting off the Master Gardener applications and spreading the word about the next class.

WHAT is a Master Gardener? Do I have to be a gardening expert to take the Master Gardener course? Why would I want to be a Master Gardener? What does a Master Gardener do? These and many other questions come to mind when Master Gardener training is mentioned. Let me try to clarify a few of these points.

A Master Gardener is a person who has a thirst for knowledge about home horticulture, you know, all that stuff growing around your house - the lawn, the shade trees, the shrubs, the garden, the fruit trees, and even your houseplants. It is a person who wants to know things like; which tomato does best in Kansas, what are the best shade trees to plant in a small yard, what kind of fertilizer is best for my fescue, when should I prune my lilac, and how do I get rid of moles that are tunneling throughout my yard. And things like; how many apple trees do I need for good fruit production, how about peaches and pears, will raspberries do any good here, what can I do to improve the soil in my garden/flower beds/yard, do I need to add lime to my soil, what can I do to control ticks, fleas, and chiggers in my yard. Let's not forget about bagworms. What about herbs, and did I mention crabgrass, or dandelions. How many hours of sunshine should you have on your water garden? How much sun does your vegetable garden need?

This is just a small sample of some of the questions that commonly come up in the everyday world of home horticulture. A Master Gardener is not a person who knows all the answers to these questions, but someone who wants to know these answers and wants to learn where to go to find out the answers to other questions just like these.

WHY would anyone want to become a Master Gardener? Well, first to gain the aforementioned knowledge, and second, to share this information with friends, neighbors, and other people in the community. Past classes of Master Gardeners have participated in such projects as the landscaping and planting of the courthouse grounds, conducting a tomato taste test at the Butler County Fair, volunteering to assist at the compost site, routing traffic and taking surveys during the Household Hazardous Waste Collection day, and provided assistance during the county fair with the horticulture judging contests and judging of the horticulture exhibits, downtown planting of the planter boxes and establishment and planting of the Extension Demonstration Garden. Most recently the Butler County Master Gardeners have installed a water garden at the demonstration garden, and are currently working on the landscaping of that new feature. There's also the Numana community garden that Butler County Master Gardeners are involved with.

HOW do I become a Master Gardener? By simply filling out an application form at the Extension office (we will even mail it to you) and being available to attend twelve training sessions between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM on Thursdays from September 10th to December 10th. Thanksgiving is excluded of course, along with the week of October 22nd.

IN EXCHANGE for over 40 hours of comprehensive training in home horticulture you will be asked to give back 40 hours of volunteer service to the horticulture programming efforts of the Butler County Extension office. There is a fee of \$110.00 to cover the cost of the program and educational materials, but what a small price to pay for what you receive. Sessions on landscaping, gardening, fruit and nut production, lawn care, insect and disease control, organic methods, soil management, annuals and perennials, nuisance animals, plant propagation, houseplants and more are all part of the program.

ANYONE that thinks they might be interested in taking the Master Gardener training should call 321-9660 or come down to the Extension office at the 206 N. Griffith(the fairgrounds) and pick-up an application.