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In this Issue:

- Tulipmania
- Container Gardening
- Mushrooms in Houseplants
- Smashed Rainbow Potatoes

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The Grapevine

Tulipmania

We think of Tulips as commonplace spring flowers, but the vibrant plants were once one of the most sought-after commodities in the Netherlands. Tulips were seen as exotic, given their Middle Eastern origins; they were attractive and stylish, with highly saturated colors, and they looked like no other flower in Western and Northern Europe. Between 1634 and 1637, tulip prices skyrocketed in the Netherlands and other parts of Europe, and the flower became a status symbol, indicating both wealth and a certain aura of worldly cosmopolitanism. The demand for tulips in a variety of both colors and patterns (striped tulips became a particular point of obsession for their rare “broken” appearance) became so frenzied that a single bulb could be used as the dowry for a marriage. The phenomenon was dubbed “Tulipmania,” and at the height of the market, tulips were even more valuable than gold, with the most expensive bulb ever sold valued at roughly a quarter-million dollars in current currency. Alas, the flower’s moment in the sun eventually came to an end. Like many economic bubbles, the tulip market burst in part because many people bought bulbs on credit they could not repay. In the winter of 1637, the bottom fell out of the tulip market, and the price halved in a matter of days. Contrary to many myths, the tulip market crash didn’t bring down the Dutch economy, as only the very wealthy were involved. It’s estimated that 350 people took part in Tulipmania, and contrary to many myths, no one went bankrupt from tulip purchases. Happy Growing!!



Growing Vegetables in Containers

There is nothing like freshly picked vegetables from your own garden to add to meals during the summer. Growing up, we had a big garden and grew a wide variety of our own vegetables and fruits in a small orchard that we froze, canned, and ate fresh. My current garden space is slightly limited, so I've started adding plants in containers. Over the last decade, growing vegetables in containers has been a rapidly expanding trend here in the US, with people in apartments wanting to grow their own veggies or facing soil conditions or too much shade in their yards. The horticultural world has noticed that new varieties that will grow well in containers have rapidly developed. There are currently varieties of every type of vegetable available for container growing, making it easier than ever to try.

The first, and in some ways the most essential part, of container gardening is the container itself. Containers can be made from various materials, including clay, plastic, cloth, wood, concrete blocks, or even wire baskets with sphagnum moss, as long as the container has never contained any toxic chemicals. Some of the cheapest container options can be storage totes, five-gallon buckets, protein tubs from livestock, or even old swimming pools your kids have outgrown. The key is that they need to be at least 6 inches deep and have drainage holes, which you can easily add yourself. Avoid dark-colored pots because they tend to heat up faster, which can damage your plants' roots. Large vegetables such as tomatoes, squash, watermelon, and corn will need containers at least the size of a five-gallon bucket. The bigger the container, the more room for roots; the cooler the roots stay, the more soil to buffer the temperature. If you are worried about your plants drying out during the hot summer days, self-watering containers can be purchased, similar to the one shown on the right, or they are easy to make.



Once you have a container, the next step is figuring out where to put it. Fruiting vegetables need 8 or more hours of sunlight a day, while root and leaf crops need approximately 6 hours of sunlight. Figure out where you want to put your container so it receives the maximum possible light. You should decide where to put your containers before filling them, because they get very heavy. A word of caution: water from the containers can stain decks. To prevent staining, you can use saucers to catch excess water (which can help avoid angering your neighbors if you live in an apartment), but they do need to be emptied after a rain or watering, so the plants don't stand in water. You can also place the containers on bricks or stands to prevent staining.



Once you have a container and know where you will put it, the next step is to fill it with media. Whatever media or mix you use should provide nutrients for the plant, retain moisture, promote maximum root growth, and support the plant so it doesn't fall over. I will never recommend using just straight garden dirt or topsoil in containers. It turns into a rock as it dries out and becomes compacted, so the roots can't grow through it. You can use pasteurized topsoil as part of a mix, but it should never be more than 10% of the mix, and only use it in large pots or raised beds. A peat- or coco coir-based potting mix is your best option for containers, combined with compost. This combination is lighter but will hold enough water for your vegetables to grow. You can reuse your soil for several years, as long as you didn't have any major

disease issues. I would refresh the soil every couple of years by adding new compost or potting soil to replenish the nutrients plants use each year.

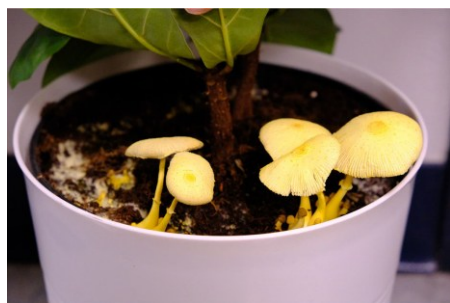
The final step is determining what vegetables to plant in a container. You can grow any vegetable in a container that you would grow in the ground; you have to pick the right variety. When looking at varieties, find ones labeled “dwarf” or “bush” varieties. A wide array of varieties have been developed strictly for containers, and they are usually labeled as such. Tomatoes, peas, and vining crops will need some support to grow. A tomato cage or trellis can help keep them contained and prevent them from sprawling everywhere on your deck. I’ve included a list of recommended varieties at the end of this Grapevine to give you an idea of the options.



As with all container plants, your vegetables will need to be watered regularly, especially later in the summer when it gets really hot. One way to reduce water use is to put a mulch layer on top of your soil to reduce evaporation and help keep the soil cooler. Fertilizer will also be necessary to keep the plants producing throughout the summer. I typically mix a slow-release vegetable fertilizer into the soil when I put it in the containers. This way, my vegetables get some fertilizer every time I water. I’ll fertilize every couple of weeks with a water-soluble general fertilizer (10-10-10 or 14-14-14) once the plants start to set blooms and produce fruit. I tend to wait to fertilize my tomatoes until they set blooms because I want them to produce tomatoes, not just grow impressive tops, which has happened to me. I do try to “flush” the soil periodically by watering it thoroughly until the excess water runs out, to prevent fertilizer salts from building up. Monitor your plants for disease, insect, and nutrient issues. These can usually be corrected, but it’s easier to fix if you catch them early.

Container gardening is an excellent option for people who cannot otherwise garden in the ground or have no interest in gardening in the ground. Even if you have soil issues, no room in your backyard, live in an apartment, or physically can’t get into the garden anymore, you can still have fresh vegetables all summer.

Question of the Week- Mushrooms in Houseplants



Mushrooms growing in potting soil are a common problem reported in nursery production and in potted plants in the indoor and outdoor home landscape. Many of these fungi are saprotrophic and feed on organic matter in potting soil and/or mulch. Mushrooms are the reproductive structures of many species in the kingdom Fungi. They are sometimes called “fruiting bodies” or “sporocarps.” These fungi are not necessarily harmful to plants; in fact, in some conditions, they can be helpful, though they can be unsightly to homeowners.

Fungi produce airborne spores and are found everywhere. Potted plants can provide ideal conditions for fruiting by fungi, as some potting soil blends contain a high proportion of woody materials (e.g., wood chips, pine bark), which are optimal substrates for many mushroom-forming fungi. Additionally, fungal spores can also originate from soil components, such as peat moss or sphagnum. Potted plants located outdoors or in screenhouses, which are exposed to a regular flow of outside air, have the potential to be colonized by spores of many different fungi, including mushroom-forming fungi. Indoor potted plants may contain fungal spores in potting soils that, under certain conditions, can promote mushroom formation. Generally, when mushroom-forming fungi are growing in potting soil, it is due to high humidity, low light, and warm temperatures. When pots are kept indoors, moving them to a drier, cooler area may help prevent further mushroom growth. Mushrooms can be removed from the soil or mulch by picking off the fruiting bodies by hand and throwing them away.

Upcoming Events

Garden Hour Webinars:

April 1st- April Showers,
Rain Garden Flowers

May 6th- Natives vs.
Cultivars--Making
Informed Choices for
Your Landscape

June 3rd- Maximizing
Success with Extension
Resources

Upcoming Events:

March 11th at 12:15 pm-
Seed Starting Lunch and
Learn at Andover Public
Library

March 11th at 5:30 pm-
Companion Vegetable
Planting at Benton
Community Building

March 26th-Simple Morea
Classes on Kokedama and
Planted Wall Hanging

March 28th at 9:30 am-
Rain Barrel Clinic at the
Whitewater Library

Recipe of the Month

Smashed Rainbow Potatoes



Last week, we covered how to grow microgreens; this week, we have a recipe for using what you have grown. The best-ever side dish with crispy potatoes is smothered in a fresh herb vinaigrette. Make it for lunch, dinner, or brunch. It perfectly complements any main protein or can be enjoyed completely on its own!

Ingredients

- 2 oz broccoli microgreens
- 2 lbs small rainbow potatoes
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup fresh parsley (chopped)
- 2 tbsp fresh thyme (chopped)
- 2 tbsp mint (chopped)
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp maple syrup (or sweetener of your choice)
- ½ tsp red pepper flakes
- 1 lemon (zested and juiced)
- Salt

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 450°F.
2. Bring a pot of generously salted water to a boil. Cook the potatoes for 10-15 minutes, or until fork-tender.
3. Transfer potatoes to a parchment-lined sheet pan. Using the bottom of a heavy cup, lightly press on each potato until smashed.
4. Drizzle olive oil and salt and roast until golden brown and crisp. About 25-30 minutes.
5. While potatoes are roasting, make the vinaigrette. Combine olive oil, fresh herbs, Dijon mustard, red pepper flakes, and sweetener. Add salt to taste.
6. When potatoes are done, toss with plenty of AeroFarms Micro Broccoli and the herb vinaigrette.

Recipe Source: [Microgreens by Aerofarms](#)

ANNUAL BUTLER COUNTY *Lawn & Garden Show*

FREE
Admission

GROW & BLOOM IN BUTLER



Master Gardeners of Butler Co., KS

- Children's activities
- Concessions
- Exhibits & vendors
- Plants for sale!
- Professional presentations
- Seed swap
- Soil test service available!
- & More!

**DOOR
PRIZES!**

Event Details



Saturday, April 11th, 9 AM - 5 PM
Sunday, April 12th, 11 AM - 4 PM

Butler County Community/4-H Building
200 N. Griffith, El Dorado

This institution is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Program information may be available in languages other than English. Language access requests and reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities, including alternative means of communication (e.g., Braille, large print, and American Sign Language), may be requested by contacting the event contact, Butler County Ext. Office four weeks prior to the start of the event, March 13th, at 316-321-9660. Requests received after this date will be honored when it is feasible to do so. Language access services, such as interpretation or translation of vital information, will be provided free of charge to limited English proficient individuals upon request.

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