

### Flora & Fauna

#### *Planting a Fall Vegetable Garden*

There are plenty of good reasons for having a fall vegetable garden: temperatures tend to be more tolerable, which makes time spent in the garden more enjoyable, there are usually fewer pests preying on plants and fall veggies usually taste better. A fall garden will grow nearly everything planted in a spring garden, as well as a few summer crops.

Getting a fall vegetable garden up and growing can be a bit challenging, however, because seeds must be sown and transplants set out in mid- to late summer when temperatures can still be brutal. Some seeds do have trouble germinating when it's hot, but sprout they must if you're going to have a fall vegetable garden. Here are some tricks to help get them started:

To determine when to plant, subtract the number of days to maturity (listed on the back of the seed packet) from the average first frost date in your area. If you want to cut the time a little more, start with transplants.

The heat of mid-summer tends to sap all the moisture from the ground and air. So start by wetting the soil a day or two before planting the seeds. You might have to water two or three times a day to keep the seeds hydrated until they germinate. But be careful. Too much water, i.e., keeping roots soaking wet instead of moist, will cause root rotting and subsequent transplant stunting or death.

You should also plant seeds slightly deeper than you would in the spring. So if the seed packet recommends a planting depth of 1/4 inch, plant them 1/2-inch deep. That way the soil will insulate the seeds somewhat, and the germination rate will be closer to normal. Provide temporary shade and, to further insulate the soil from hot temperatures and maintain even soil moisture, apply a light layer of mulch, ideally in the form of grass clippings.

Within a week or so of planting, greens should germinate, at which time they should be thinned to avoid overcrowding, which can lead to stunted growth, pest and disease problems and a disappointing harvest.

Topping the list of things to plant are greens of all kinds, from the familiar, such as lettuce and spinach, to the not-so-familiar, such as arugula and radicchio. Some semi-hardy vegetables such as spinach, lettuces, Swiss chard, radishes and beets can tolerate a light frost and temperatures down to about 30°F. And some hardy plants such as broccoli, kale and cabbage can handle several frosts and temperatures down to about 22°F.

If the frost warning is mild, you can try covering tender plants such as tomatoes that hold an abundance of immature fruit. Baskets, burlap or canvas sacks, boxes, blankets or buckets can be used as covers. Warm days after the frost will mature some fruit as long as the plants have nightly frost protection.

Root crops such as turnips, radishes, carrots and beets grow especially well during fall, and the same rules regarding planting apply to them as well. These vegetables can survive temperatures several degrees below freezing. In fact, carrots can be left in the ground during winter if adequately protected. Once they've reached harvest size and just before the first hard freeze, cover carrots with shredded leaves. Then simply reach into the leaves and harvest.

If you're lucky, you could be eating vegetables fresh from the garden along with your Thanksgiving Day turkey!

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### *Cleaning Corner* *Keep Your Shower Clean*

Shower enclosures are a chore to keep clean -- but they can be less of a problem if you follow these guidelines:

- Keep mildew from taking hold by wiping shower walls with a towel after each shower.
- If the shower area is subject to mildew, periodically spray it with a mildew inhibitor and disinfectant.
- Remove hard-water deposits on shower enclosures with a solution of white vinegar and water.
- Glass shower doors will sparkle when you clean them with a sponge dipped in white vinegar.
- Add 1 cup liquid fabric softener to 1 quart warm water, and use to loosen and clean soap scum from shower doors. Do not use on the tub; it will become slippery.
- Remove water spots on the metal frames around shower doors and enclosures with lemon oil.
- **Note:** Never use harsh abrasive powders or steel-wool pads.

## July

- 1568 The Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London perfected the art of beer bottling
- 1863 Free mail delivery begins in 49 US cities with postage tested at 3 cents an envelope
- 1872 The donut cutter is invented and patented by John Blondel of Maine
- 1899 The Gideon Society is established to place bibles in hotel rooms
- 1910 Chicago's Comiskey Park opens for baseball season
- 1919 After public protests, the 3-cent per envelope postage charge is dropped to 2 cents
- 1931 The first ice vending machine is tested in Los Angeles, California
- 1943 The U.S. Government began withholding tax from the paychecks of all Americans
- 1991 TV Guide prints and sells its 2,000<sup>th</sup> issue

# Health Tips: Stay Safe this Fourth of July

Americans love to celebrate with fireworks. Fireworks used to be enjoyed only on Independence Day. Now in many parts of the country, fireworks are a mainstay of weddings, birthday parties, picnics and any other occasion of celebration.

The injury rate on legal fireworks has declined over 84% since the Consumer Products Safety Commission began to closely monitor the fireworks industry. While usage continues to expand on an annual basis, the injury rate drops every year.

The National Council on Fireworks Safety, a charitable organization. Based in Washington, D.C., wants every American to have a safe Fourth of July. Its mission is to educate the public on the safe and responsible use of fireworks so as to eliminate injuries.

Here's what they advise:

- Only buy consumer fireworks from a licensed store or stand. Never buy fireworks from an individual's house, or from someone on the street. Such fireworks are likely to be illegal explosives that can seriously injure you.

Consumer fireworks regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission are packaged in bright colors and have safety warnings on the packaging. The packaging sets forth the country of origin, which is normally China. Typical consumer fireworks include fountains, cones, sparklers, fire crackers, bottle rockets and multiple tube products.

Illegal explosives are often unpackaged and are wrapped with plain brown paper. They are very unlikely to have any safety warnings, or place of manufacture. Many of them are hand made in basements or illicit factories. They go by names such as M80, Quarter Stick or Cherry Bomb. If someone approaches you to sell one of these illegal explosives, politely decline and then call your local police department.

- Always have a bucket of water, or water hose, nearby.
- Treat fireworks with respect. Read all of the cautions and warnings and use common sense.
- Use fireworks and sparklers only outdoors. Lighting fireworks indoors, throwing them from automobiles and lighting multiple devices at the same time can lead to accidents and are not how fireworks are to be used. Always obey all local laws pertaining to the use of fireworks.
- If you see someone misusing fireworks, stop them. Show them the correct way to use consumer fireworks and do not ever use professional fireworks or illegal explosives. Do your part and everyone will be safer.
- Only persons over 12 years of age should handle sparklers of any type. Too many young people get burned by sparklers every year.
- Obey local laws. If fireworks are not legal where you are, don't use them. If drought conditions mean a ban on fireworks, follow the law.
- Only use fireworks as intended. Don't try to alter them or combine them.
- Fireworks and alcohol do not mix. Have a designated "shooter."
- When all else fails, use common sense. Respect fireworks and sparklers as the great American tradition they are, but also respect the fact that they must be used with caution.

This summer, the National Council on Fireworks Safety reminds you to celebrate, and celebrate safely.

## Kid Corner: Kids and Pets

We surround our children with images of animals from the day they are born. We decorate nurseries with stuffed puppies and penguins and hang mobiles with dangling bears and bunnies over cribs. Later on, we want the kids to experience the joys of having a real animal in the house to grow up with.

Children need animals in their lives. They provide comfort, companionship, life lessons, and, in many cases, a healing touch. A recent study reveals that children raised with animals are less likely to develop allergic reactions to animals, so that is an added bonus to having animals already in the house when the kids start arriving. Other health benefits that come from having a pet include: lowering high blood pressure, preventing heart disease and combating depression.

However, bringing an animal into a family should be a privilege and done in a way that is safe for both child and animal. If you want to bring home a puppy or a kitten to raise alongside the kids, you're quite likely to find yourself being given the third degree by an adoption counselor at the local shelter – and for good reason.

Young children, and especially toddlers, don't know how to properly treat an animal and may accidentally cause it injury or get injured themselves. Animals don't like to have their hair, tails and ears pulled and some may bite if a child is constantly putting his or her hands in its mouth. It's okay for a young child to carry a teddy bear around by the leg, but not the new kitten!

### A Rough Guide to Kids and Pets

- **Birth to 6 months:** A quiet time for the animal/child interaction. No small child should be left unsupervised with an animal.
- **6 months to a year:** Keep pet food and feeding areas away from crawling and toddling children. A child of this age will grab at whatever is in his or her path, so ears and tails are a target, and children have to be carefully supervised around animals to avert any unexpected reactions.
- **1-3 years:** A time of exploration and for putting things in the mouth. A dog or cat who is possessive about his or her toys and food can be potentially dangerous to a child. The child is eye level with a medium to large dog, and dogs can see that as a threat. This age group is especially vulnerable to a biting dog.
- **4-6 years:** By now, a child has mastered quite a lot of language and can understand more about how to interact with another living being, but a firm eye on the situation is still needed.
- **6-10 years:** Your child can now help look after a pet - feeding, cleaning up, walking and playing with a cat or dog or any other animal in the house.
- **Teens:** Just a warning about this group. At some point in the teen years, your child may develop other priorities in his or her life such as: sports, band, boys, girls, existential philosophy or shopping. Pet care chores can suddenly and dramatically go onto the back burner. Parental supervision is a must.
- **18-20 years:** Many kids will be going away to college or joining the military. You need to be ready for the likelihood that taking care of the animals will revert back to the adults or other children in the family.

## **Ingredients:**

12 eight-ounce plastic cups  
12 craft sticks (popsicle sticks)  
4 cups cran-raspberry juice  
2 cups frozen whipped topping  
2 cups vanilla yogurt  
4 cups grape juice  
water  
blue food coloring  
red food coloring

## **Preparation:**

1. Mix the grape juice and water until a suitable blue color results. Try adding blue food coloring to achieve the desired shade. Pour into the plastic cups filling them 1/3 full. Place into the freezer until they start to freeze. Once they do, stick a craft stick in the center of each cup.
2. Freeze until solid. Mix the yogurt and whipped topping together. Place a layer on top of the frozen blue layer, and freeze for one hour. Repeat the process given for the blue layer but do it with the cran-raspberry juice and red food coloring. Add a red layer to each cup and freeze until frozen.
3. Run the outer side of the cups under cold water to release them. Enjoy!

## **Fireworks Trivia**

Fireworks originated in China around 200 B.C. Until the 1830s, the only colors that could be produced were orange and white. Scientific advancements in the field of chemistry eventually yielded reds, greens, blues and yellows. Further advancements deepened the colors, made the fireworks burn brighter, fly higher and burst into different patterns. It is estimated that the US uses over 200,000 tons of fireworks for holiday celebrations each year.

## **How to Care for Household Linens**

Caring for household linens can be tricky. Today, textiles come in a multitude of fibers, colors and sizes, each with specific care requirements. Trying to decide between hot and cold, permanent press and extra rinse can be tricky and frustrating.

One of the best ways to know how to care for an item is to **save the care directions** that are packaged with it. Write the product name on it. For example, "tan floral twin sheets," "master bedroom pillows," etc. Tape this card up in your laundry room or stick it into a card file kept on the laundry room shelf.

### **General tips for cleaning and caring for household linens:**

**Bed sheets.** Wash sheets in cool or lukewarm water. Set wash cycle on "gentle" and use the extra rinse cycle if available. You should also use less detergent, about half the recommended amount, and avoid using bleach as it breaks down fabric fibers.

Avoid over drying sheets. Remove sheets from the dryer and fold immediately. If sheets have cooled and wrinkles have set, tumble another 5-10 minutes with a damp washcloth.

**Pillowcases.** Iron pillowcases for fresh, crisp good looks on your bed. Change pillowcases at least twice a week. Changing pillowcases frequently can help keep your face and hair cleaner.

**Pillows.** When you purchase a pillow, always purchase at least two pillow protectors in the correct size to match it. The pillow protector (a plain white pillowcase with a zippered closure) offers an additional barrier against dirt and oil and will lessen the need for pillow cleaning.

Many pillows can be washed at home in a washing machine with a few additional precautions. First, set your washer on a gentle wash cycle. Put the pillow through the final rinse cycle another time or two to fully rinse out any soap. These additional rinses are necessary due to the thickness of pillows.

Next, use the spin dry feature of your washer at least twice to get as much moisture out of your pillow as possible. Then place in the dryer. Drying your pillow will probably take several drying cycles, and several hours, since the filling in the center may still be damp even when the outer layers are dry. If in doubt, hang the pillow in a dry location for a day or two.

**Towels.** Better quality towels are made from combed, long staple, 100% cotton which generally exhibit less lint shedding than less expensive towels. Washing towels will cause them to fade eventually and they may lose or change color. If you've found the "perfect towels" to match your wallpaper, be sure to buy extras and replace worn pieces as needed.

Always **launder towels before using** them for the first time. During this first wash, add one half to 1 cup of white vinegar to the wash water. This will help set the dyes and result in increased colorfastness. You should also use less detergent, about half the recommended amount, and avoid using bleach. Never use fabric softeners, as they will decrease the towel's ability to absorb water.

## **... Carpet Talk...**

The best way to keep your carpets cleaner longer is simply to vacuum on a regular basis. Particles of dry soil get tracked in to your home on shoes, clothing and even gentle summer breezes through open windows. If not removed, they'll settle deep into the pile of the carpet, actually damaging the fibers and making it look dull and dingy... as well as dirty!

To do all you can to keep your carpet fresh and looking new, keep these tips in mind:

- 1) Go the extra mile when shopping for a vacuum. Cheap vacuums don't reach down deep into the carpet fibers, so a great deal of soil is left to accumulate deep down.
- 2) Use the correct vacuum tools to care for your floor covering. Thick, loop pile, if brushed the wrong way, can shorten a carpet's life. Combination beater/brush bars agitate pile and loosen it down deep for removal. Describe your carpet type to your vacuum salesperson for the right fit.
- 3) Many vacuums today offer bagless technology, which is downright convenient when it comes to disposing the dirt you've trapped. However, paper bags tend to do a more efficient job trapping particles. If you find bags that trap particles smaller than two microns in size, you've got a winner. Don't forget to replace bags when they're between one-half to two-thirds full for maximum efficiency.
- 4) If your vacuum has an adjustable height mechanism, start at the highest setting then lower it until it just touches the pile. Your vacuum should slightly vibrate carpet. If the brush is set too low, you'll wind up overworking the motor and possibly needing to purchase a replacement vacuum sooner than expected.

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**Inside this issue you'll find:**

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