



# The Real Dirt!

April, 2012

## Veg Out this Summer!

As you pour over the seed catalogues during these long winter nights, more people are contemplating a veggie garden, but is it too much trouble? Think again. You can take a lot of personal pride in growing your own fresh lettuce and peas, luscious tomatoes or fresh beans by the kitchen door. You will be able to rest assured that your produce has been grown naturally and does not contain pesticides or other chemicals.



Square foot gardens can be an excellent design for a vegetable garden. This might mean a wooden form 4' by 8' raised a foot off the ground. The soil warms up faster if the garden is raised extending the growing season and many people find weeding easier if they can sit on a side log or board and pick away at their weeds as they enjoy their morning coffee. Watering is more efficient and therefore less expensive.

So, you don't think you have enough room for a vegetable garden? Consider a vertical pallet garden under your deck, on a balcony or beside the barbeque.

Pallets can be found behind supermarkets free of charge and most do not use pressure treated wood or preservatives. You may even be lucky enough to find a pallet at a stone mason's. Their pallets are made of oak and are sturdier than most. Landscape fabric is used to contain the soil and a drip water system or water bulbs recommended for irrigation. For an excellent tutorial on how to build a pallet garden Google "How to Turn a Pallet into a Garden" by Fern.

The first rule of planning a veggie garden is to grow plants that you enjoy eating and are easiest to grow. Peas and carrots are first to be planted as soon as the snow is gone. Of course you can easily have two or three crops staggered if you have the room. There isn't anything as sweet as a pea from the pod in the early spring. Extras can be frozen for next winter.

Lettuces have come a long way from the early varieties; they are now available in all textures, shades and mixtures of green and burgundy. One of the most successful to grow in our area is the Oak leaf lettuce as is does better in hot summers. Spinach is one of my personal favourites as it is so high in nutritional value and so expensive in the stores. However, it should be planted early in the season as it does not like our hot summers.

Beans are the real deal when planning a vegetable garden. Not only can you have two or three crops the blooms are fabulous. Purple blooms from the purple pod

varieties, Dragon's tongue (or Tongue of Fire) in a startling yellow or the beautiful red blooms of the Scarlett Runner (if you have a trellis or wall to cover).



Tomato seeds are available for an amazing variety of colours especially the cherry tomatoes which can be found in yellow, dark purple, ping zebra-striped green, orange and of course red. You may also want to experiment with the heirloom varieties or trade varieties with friends.

Seed from unconventional vegetables can be obtained from suppliers or seed exchange associations such as Canada's Heritage Seed Program or the Canadian Organic Growers.

There are new advancements in the veggie world and it is well worth your while to check out several catalogues to choose your seeds. Burpee has come out with a "Boost" line of veggies that are packed with antioxidants and vitamins for higher nutrition food. As we all push towards a sustainable earth we are learning more environmentally responsible methods of providing ourselves with convenient, inexpensive and tasty vegetables in 2012.

*Cherin Harris-Tuck,  
Master Gardener*

## April TO DO List

- Bring tools out of storage and examine them for rust or other damage. Clean and sharpen them if you didn't do it in the fall!
- Prune all late summer-flowering shrubs and old perennial growth.
- Divide perennials that bloom in mid-summer.
- Avoid walking on your lawn and garden as the ground starts to thaw. The soil is saturated with moisture and will compact very easily.
- Have a gardening question or need to identify a plant or pest, ask a Master Gardener (contact information to the right).
- Rake lawn, repair damage and seed bare spots.
- Prepare garden beds for planting –dig in compost and other organic matter

## Tip of the Month:

Here is a tip for those people encouraging birds to their backyard for natural predators but would like to deter squirrels in their feeders. Use a Slinky toy! Attach a slinky toy to a 2" metal post and the squirrels will not climb up the post. Louise just put one on hers last week and works good.

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Editor Cherin Harris-Tuck

To Subscribe/Unsubscribe please contact [therealdirt@rogers.ca](mailto:therealdirt@rogers.ca)



## Master Gardeners of Simcoe County

### Where to find us for free gardening advice!

**Tues. April 17, 2012** Master Gardener Meeting, The White Pine Boardroom  
2284 Nursery Rd. Midhurst 7:00pm – 9:00pm

**April 21- 22, 2012** Creemore Horticultural Society – St. Luke's Anglican Hall, 22  
Caroline St. West, Creemore 7:30 - 9:00

**Wed April 24, 2012** Brentwood ; Dahlias –Darlings of the Garden; Ada Malstrom

**May 8, 2012** Right Plant, Right Place; Joan Nieman-Agapas, New Barrie Library,  
48 Dean Avenue.

**May 10, 2012,** Container Gardening; Cherin Harris-Tuck, New Barrie Library, 48  
Dean Avenue.

**May 14, 2012** Veggies and Annuals; Clarinda Hamilton, Timely Landscaping  
Tips and Tricks; Rhona Desroches, TBA Kevin Van Andel  
Penetang, Brian Orser Hall Arena, Thompson Rd.

**May 15, 2012** Master Gardener Meeting, The White Pine Boardroom 2284  
Nursery Rd. Midhurst Guest Speaker Cindy Mitchell; Hosta  
Fever(7:00pm – 9:00pm)

**May 22, 2012** Alliston, St. John's Church, 56 Victoria St. Alliston Greg Kalcic,  
John Crow, Tracy XXX.

**May 22, 2012** Cookstown Library, Carol Dunk

**Ask a Master Gardener** books containing answers to your most common only gardening questions are available at any of these speaking engagements for \$10 or Gardening Guides for only \$1. Valuable references for you or as gifts for a gardening friend!



For information on arranging a lecture for your group please contact Joan Nieman-Agapas 705-721-9088 or email her at [jnabarrie@yahoo.ca](mailto:jnabarrie@yahoo.ca). For more information on Master Gardeners, visit our website: [www.mgoi.ca](http://www.mgoi.ca)