

Planning a Garden

Since the downturn in the economy, many are interested in preparing for future disaster. One way to do so is home gardening. Over the last few years, many have planted their first garden and local garden centers have seen increased demand for food producing plants.

Historically though, raising a garden and livestock to meet a family's food needs was not such a novelty. My own grandparents did so. My grandma's vegetable garden was nearly a half-acre in size and she also raised many fruit trees, raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, currants and other crops. For much of the year she spent nearly all of her time caring for the garden or preserving food for future use. For odds and ends my grandparents could not produce, my grandfather earned money by working as a part-time electrician and sold milk to the local creamery for extra spending money to buy these.

One thing my grandparents had to have to be able to do this, that most of us do not have today, is plenty of land. However, especially with some creativity, much can still be produced in today's smaller yard. For those that want to raise fruit trees, look for semi-dwarf or dwarf varieties. In many instances, varieties can be found that are self-pollinating so that a second tree of the same species is not needed. Peaches, apricots and European plums are often self-fruitful. Japanese plums and cherries are often not so, but some research varieties can be found that are. Apples are not self-fruitful with the exception of Golden Delicious. Fortunately, there are so many apple trees around that one can often get away with planting just one in their yard because it will be pollinated by a neighbor's tree.

As far as vegetables are concerned, cool season crops such as lettuce, radishes, peas, cabbage and other cole crops can be planted outdoors in Cache Valley starting the first few weeks of April. These can then be replaced, after they have been harvested, by warm season crops like tomatoes, peppers and squash. In late summer, cool season crops can be planted again for a fall harvest. Additionally, most county Extension offices offer free or low cost food preservation classes on how to use preserved food so that one can be efficient with what they have worked hard to grow.

Even though it is the middle of winter, it is a good time to start planning for the upcoming growing season. If you start your own vegetable seedlings indoors, local garden centers are already stocking seeds. I have also been receiving many gardening catalogs that are useful. For those who are serious about taking vegetable gardening beyond a hobby or are just curious, I have posted a WWI Victory Gardening Guide at: <http://extension.usu.edu/cache/htm/horticulture>. Even though the information is nearly a century old, most of it is still valid. Note though, the guide includes food preservation information that should be ignored beyond reading it for general interest. Good luck and happy gardening.