KPOV — *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon”

January 28, 2020

Growing vegetables in your own backyard is popular these days. We’re all trying to be healthy and fit. There’s nothing better for you and nothing I know that tastes better than freshly harvested fruits and vegetables. It’s so handy to be able to walk outside and pull fresh carrots, radishes or beets out of the ground! And yet, we live in Central Oregon. Our average growing season can be as short as 70 days in LaPine and up to 100 days in Madras. In a one hundred year period for Bend, there have only been 9 calendar dates when the temperature did not drop below 33 degrees. Even in the middle of summer from mid-July to mid-August, we have a 20% chance of experiencing a freeze!

Do not be discouraged by all of these challenges! OSU Certified Master Gardeners are here to help you grow those delicious vegetables that you’re craving. Beginning March 5th “Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon” will be taught in Redmond, Madras, Bend, Prineville and Sisters. Each class will be tailored to our climate, soil, annual precipitation, air and soil temperature variations and elevations. All of these factors will influence the decisions you’ll make when planning your garden.

When selecting your garden site, look for a space that receives full sun for 8 to 12 hours per day during the growing season. You’ll want to have access to water, keep it close to your house, avoid low spots and consider how to protect your vegetables from hungry critters in your area.

Think about who will be doing the work to make your garden successful. What does your family like to eat? What will you do with your surplus? Will you be canning, storing, freezing or donating? Write your plans down on paper or make use of online resources for designing your personal garden plot.

When you know what you’d like to plant, you can select seeds at local nurseries or through online catalogs. Look for short season varieties then add 14 days to the maturity date on the seed package. You can give plants a head start by starting seeds indoors where you can control conditions necessary for successful germination. Using a greenhouse to safeguard transplanted seedlings is another way to extend our short growing season. Other methods include the use of cold frames, row cover, mulch or black plastic and walls of water for tomatoes and peppers.

While you’re waiting for your seeds to sprout, you can begin amending your garden soil with compost or aged manure. Because vegetables take more nutrients out of the soil than ornamentals you’ll want to continue to feed the soil throughout the season. You’ll also want to consider the gardening tools and equipment needed — gardening gloves, air and soil thermometers, trowels, gardening rakes and pruners to name a few.

Did you know that the average rainfall in Central Oregon between April and September is only 4 to 6 inches? Drip irrigation can help get necessary moisture to the roots and not just the plant foliage. It also means less water will evaporate into our dry air. Water conservation is essential in our area. Amending the soil, using mulch, grouping plants together with similar needs and controlling weeds all help to conserve water.

All of these topics and more will be covered in the OSU Certified Master Gardener led class, “Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon”.

To learn details about this and other gardening classes, check out our website [www.gocomga.com](http://www.gocomga.com). Look under the orange tab for Gardening Get Good At It where you will find the February 18th script with a list of additional resources.

This has been Gardening: Get Good At It on KPOV — The Point.

Resources:
From the OSU/Deschutes Extension Website: [www.extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/](http://www.extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/)

Bauer, Michael. 1994. The Central Oregon Climate

Detweiler, Amy Jo. 2014. “Central Oregon Climate and How It Relates to Gardening” OSU Extension Service, Deschutes County.

Detweiler, Amy Jo; Douville, Liz; Kemp, Vicky; Stephan, Toni. Published 2015 and reviewed 2019. “Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon (Crook, Deschutes, and Jefferson Counties)”

Sunset Western Garden Book. 2001. Sunset Publishing Corporation