KPOV – *The Point*

Gardening: Get Good at It

“Planning Your Vegetable Garden”

March 5, 2019

It's a sunny morning in early August. Birds are singing, bees are buzzing. You're in your vegetable garden, pulling handfuls of slim green beans, and picking Sun Gold cherry tomatoes, those little golden orbs of sweet earthy goodness. All is right with the world!

Yes, that can be you. It's easier than you think. Right now is the perfect time to plan your vegetable garden.

If you've never had a garden on your property, congratulations! You have no prior mistakes to undo. If you have an established vegetable garden plot, good for you. That means less prep work this spring.

No space to garden? Not a problem! Plots are available in most communities in Central Oregon. Visit gocomga.com for a list of community garden locations.

If you're making a new vegetable garden, choose your site wisely. Find a spot with at least 8 hours of sun (south-facing is ideal), that's not in a valley or depression, and not sloping. If slopes are unavoidable, terrace an area so you have a level surface. Choose a spot near a water source so you can easily irrigate. Find a location protected from strong winds that rob plants of warmth and moisture.

Then decide how you will organize it. Will you have rows, or raised beds? While there's nothing wrong with traditional rows, raised beds offer some advantages: Raised beds are easy to amend and soil in raised beds warms earlier, so you can plant earlier, extending the precious days of growing season. While you can use boards, rocks or concrete blocks to make raised beds, it's not necessary to have any of those. You can simply mound up the soil.

Next, plot your space. Your tools can be as simple as a sheet of graph paper and a pencil, or you can use web sites or apps. Either way, it's important to draw your garden to scale so you can plan what you will plant where and know what will fit. Tall plants such as corn should go at the back so they don't cast shade on shorter plants. Allow for the sprawl of vining plants like squash and cucumbers, or plan trellises for them to climb.

Determine what vegetables you want to plant. A good starting point is, what do you and your family like to eat? Then you can whittle down based on what is going to thrive in Central Oregon. If you want watermelons or cantaloupe, choose miniature varieties for our short season. Likewise, little cherry tomatoes work well here where our growing season is only 90 days at best. But there are larger varieties that will grow well here too. February and March are good times to purchase seeds from catalogues, web sites or local retailers. Remember to check the number of days to maturity on the seed packet and look for the lowest numbers you can find.

Decide how you'll protect your plants from frost. You can cover with row cover, plastic, overturned pots or tubs, even bedsheets. But keep whatever you use close at hand.

When the ground is no longer frozen, you can start preparing your plot, but wait until soil warms to plant seeds and seedlings. Remove rocks larger than pebbles. If you're carving your garden site from your lawn, remove the turfgrass. Amend your soil with organic matter such as compost or manure (do not use manure from pigs or dogs and keep cats out of your veggie garden). You want your amended garden soil to be about 1/3 organic matter and 2/3 native soil. Or, go the easy (albeit expensive) way and create raised beds made from purchased garden soil mixes that are already amended.

Finally, get the free 24-page booklet, "Growing Vegetables in Central Oregon" at any Extension Service office or download it (<https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9128>). And watch for announcements about the free vegetable gardening classes Master Gardeners will teach this spring.

Thanks for listening to Gardening: Get Good at It on KPOV’s The Point.

Resources:

Community Gardens in Central Oregon

*Managed by Central Oregon Master Gardeners*:

Hollinshead Community Garden

Hollinshead Park

1237 NE Jones Rd., Bend

To register for the lottery to assign plots, send your contact info to gocomga14@gmail.com BEFORE APRIL 5, 2019.

Northwest Crossing Community Garden

Discovery Park

NW Discovery Park Dr., Bend

To register for the lottery to assign plots, send your contact info to gocomga@gmail.com BEFORE APRIL 15, 2019.

*Managed by others:*

Franklin's Corner Community Garden

Franklin & 9th St., Bend

<https://www.franklinscorner.org/get-involved.html>

Miller's Landing Community Garden

Miller's Landing Park

55 NW Riverside Blvd., Bend

millerlandingcommunitygarden@gmail.com

Redmond Organic Community Garden

House of Hope Ministries

Glacier & SW 14th St., Redmond

Visit the onsite thrift store for more information

Prineville Community Garden

Gary Ward Park

1143 NW 9th Street, Prineville

<http://ccprd.org/community-garden/>

Sisters Community Garden

Adjacent to Sisters Eagle Airport

[www.sisterscommunitygarden.org](http://www.sisterscommunitygarden.org)