

Let Your Vegetables Grow Up

Do you have more vegetables on your "need to grow" list than you have space to put them? The most popular vegetables take up the largest growing space, so why don't you grow them up? That's right: grow up.

Instead of letting your space-consuming vegetables sprawl outward on the ground, train them to grow upward on trellises, fences, stakes or cages. This type of vertical gardening tremendously increases the space saving possibility and increases the yield as well.

Just about any vegetable that produces a vine or rambling stem can be grown vertically. The vegetables you might try would be: tomatoes, cucumbers, pole beans, peas, all melons, New Zealand spinach, most summer squash and all winter squash. Many of these plants will climb by grasping the support with their twisting tendrils. The young transplants may need help at first; gently twist the plant around the support in a counterclockwise manner. That's the direction plants normally grow when they are climbing. Others need to be attached to the support system with twine because they are not natural climbers.

When watermelons and cantaloupes are grown vertically, a support will be needed to keep the fruit from harvesting itself as it ripens. A sling to hold the fruit can be made from a nylon stocking or similar material.

In addition to letting you grow more vegetables, trellises, fences, stakes or cages

have several other advantages. Most experts agree that you'll get a better quality product when the plant is up off the ground and exposed to sunlight and good air circulation. Pollination is improved, and because of better air circulation, disease is less likely to occur. Pest damage virtually is eliminated because of immediate visibility. These vegetables will have fewer blemishes and scars because they won't be on the ground. Plus, harvesting will be a lot easier on the poor, tired gardener who doesn't like to bend over.

Vegetables grown on trellises and fences should be placed at the north end of the garden so they will not shade adjacent vegetables. When fully grown, vertical crops form a green "living wall." Almost any type of material can be used as a support. Chain-link fences work especially well. Trellises can be made entirely of wood or a combination of wood, netting or wire. Make the support tall enough for a full season's growth and sturdy enough to support the weight of the mature plant.

Grow your vegetables up this year and see how much more fits into your garden space. I know the spring tends to slip away from folks and we don't always get all those gardening chores done, but it's not too late to plant vegetables. In fact, several vegetables such as okra, southern peas, peppers, eggplant, tomatoes and even lima beans do much better planted once the weather warms.

SKIN CANCER ON THE RISE

With the continued rise of skin cancer over the past two months, the National Cancer Institute warns that nearly half of all Americans who live to age of 65 will develop at least one skin cancer.

Skin cancers come in two varieties: non-melanoma and malignant melanoma. The non-melanoma variety are slow growing, easily treatable and rarely lead to death. This said, there are at least 1 million new cases reported annually in the US, resulting in an estimated 2,200 deaths. These figures represent twice the number of cases from 20 years ago.

According to the Skin Cancer Foundations, malignant melanoma is a much more serious form of skin cancer. While only about 54,000 new cases are reported annually, the mortality rate nearly triples with about 7,600 lives lost. Though the incidences have risen dramatically over the past several years, survival rates have improved dramatically due to early detection.

Like most cancers, the risk of melanoma increases with age. People of all ages, however, have some risk of melanoma. The disease is now the most frequently diagnosed cancer in

American women between ages 25 and 29 and the second most frequently diagnosed, after breast cancer, among women between 30 and 34.

According to Harvard University, although skin cancer can occur in people of all races, those with darker skin typically have a lower risk because their skin contains more of the pigment melanin, which protects against skin cancer. Melanoma occurs 10 times more often among whites than African Americans, and two to four times more frequently among whites than Hispanics. The incidence of skin cancer has increased dramatically among whites during the past decade, but has remained stable among African Americans.

Carteret General Hospital's Raab Oncology Clinic along with the Carteret County Health Department will host a free skin cancer screening Saturday May 7. The screenings will be conducted at the Raab Oncology Clinic located at 302 Medical Park in Morehead City from 8:15am - 11:30am. Call 808-6200 to schedule your appointment.

Perennials That Can Take the Heat

Gardeners new to our area soon find that summer's steamy days and nights can take their toll on the landscape. Though technically we are in climate zone 8, many otherwise tried and true zone 8 perennials seem to just melt away after their first year here. Careful selection is the key to long-lived perennials in our climate.

For an excellent opportunity to learn more about this topic, come out for a free workshop at 10 a.m. on Saturday, May 21, at the Craven County Agricultural Building, 300 Industrial Drive, New Bern.

Master Gardener Ethel Hess will present a workshop titled "Ten Perennials Best Known for Heat Tolerance," based on her own research and years of experience growing perennials in our area. Sponsored by the Craven County Extension Service, Saturday garden workshops are free and open to the public. For more information call 633-1477.

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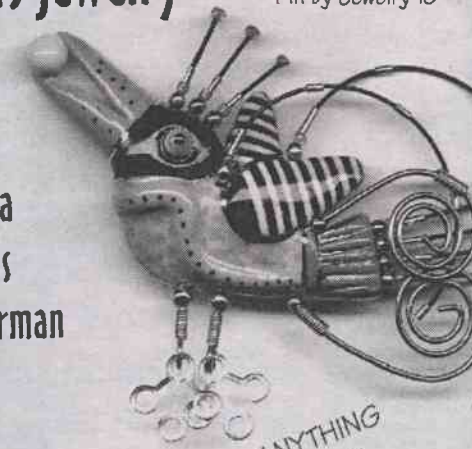
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