New Computer Program Makes Quick Work Of Garden Planning

BY SUSAN USHER

It's that time of year—gardeners are turning ground, starting seeds and setting out cold-weather crops.

In Brunswick County's temperate climate an extended growing season allows more freedom than in many locales, with almost unlimited possibilities for the eager gardener. But any garden—regardless of its size—performs better when carefully planned.

A new home garden planning program available through the Brunswick County Agricultural Extension Service could make this year's gardening even easier—especially for first-timers or newcomers to the area.

The program takes only a few minutes to use and requires no computer skills, only the ability to read simple instructions. It is available at no charge at the extension office in Bolivia and also at all three county library branches in Southport, Shallotte and Leland.

Developed by the University of Kentucky, a land-grant institution as a program for 4-Hers, it was expanded and adapted by a Polk County extension agent and volunteers. It has undergone further adaptation to local conditions with the help of Assistant Extension Agent William Barrow Jr. and volunteers Bill and Glenda Kotchish of Shallotte.

The program is simple. It allows the user to type in the number of people for which the garden is expected to provide and to choose as many as 36 popular vegetables, ranging from asparagus to watermelon.

Then, in just a few seconds, rather than the calculating time required by hand, it displays the amount of seed or number of hills or sets required, the necessary spacing and feet of row required, and whether seeds or transplants should be used. The same display shows the recommended time to plant and recommended soil temperature, as well as when to expect the crop to mature.

Tt also gives a rough estimate of the square footage needed for your garden, what you can expect to pay for seeds and plants, an estimate—in dollar value—of how much food the garden should produce, and the relative productivity of your garden space.

Amounts to be planted are average and subject to adjustment, Barrow noted, "but they should put you in the ballpark." The figures include plenty for summer eating, plus an allowance for some canning and freezing.

Once the numbers and vegetables have been adjusted to suit your personal needs, the data can be copied from a computer screen display or printed out on paper to take home. There may be a small charge at the library for print-outs.

For instance, in a garden for two persons, the plan recommends planting a half pound of bush beans, a pound of edible-pod peas, four hills of cucumbers and six of summer squash, four eggplants, and eight each of tomato and pepper plants.

Along with the figures, the garden plan also offers basic advice especially helpful to the new gardener.

For instance, it recommends:

•Planting crops such as beets, carrots, greens, radishes and turnips in four equal plantings 10 to 14 days apart;

•Rotating the garden site from year to year or at least the location of vegetables within it;

•Planting perennial crops in an area to one side so as not to interfere with tilling;

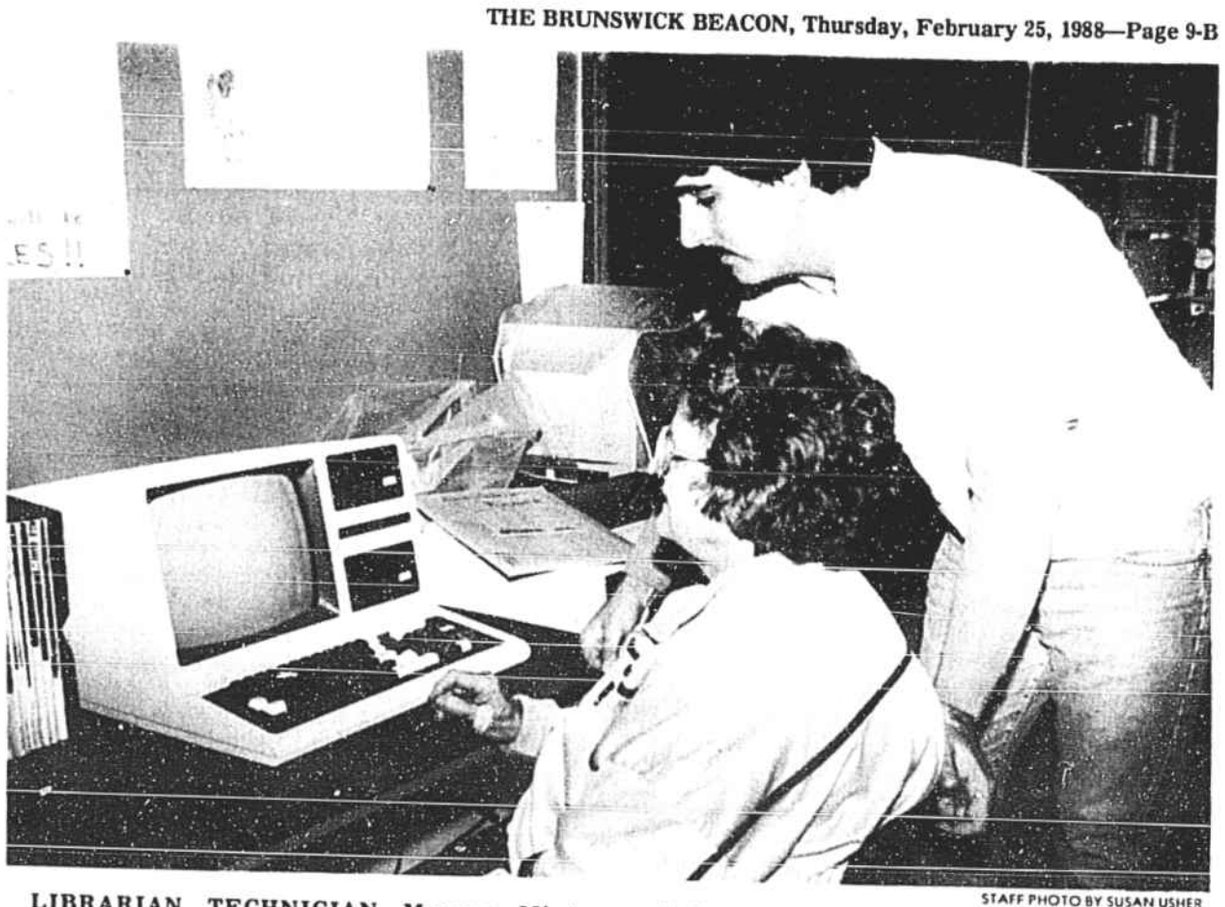
•Running rows north and south to prevent plants from shading each other; and

•Planting tall growing crops on the north side and low-growing crops on the south side.

Lastly, it refers the gardener to other useful publications, including specific extension bulletins relating to vegetable gardening. And, for each vegetable you've listed, it provides a list of varieties recommended as suitable for this area. Recommended tomato varieties, for example, include for main crop, Park's Whopper (VFNT), Celebrity (VFNT), Supersteak (VFN), Better Boy (VFN), Mt. Pride; and for cherry or salad tomatoes, Small Fry, Sweet 100, Castlex 1067 and Cherry Grande.

The extension service has other useful computer programs available at its Bolivia office, on topics such as family budget analysis, refinancing a mortgage, calculating the economic costs and benefits of various home financing scenarios, calculating life insurance needs, retirement investment provisions vs. anticipated needs, evaluating the self-esteem of a teen-ager and farm programs such as livestock, field and horticultural crop management.

All programs can be used at the extension office at no charge; appointments are recommended so a staff person will be available to assist.



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

LIBRARIAN TECHNICIAN Marcus Mintz demonstrates a computerized garden planning program to Frances Leggett of Shallotte at the West Brunswick Branch Library. Copies of the program are available for use at no charge at all county libraries and the Brunswick County Agricultural Extension Service Office in Bolivia.

Winnabow VFD Sells Barbecue

Winnabow Volunteer Fire Department will serve barbecue Saturday, March 5, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Plates will consist of pork barbecue, potato salad, cole slaw and hushpuppies, and will cost $3 each, said spokesman Ralph Frazier.

The department is located on Governor's Road off U.S. 17 in Winnabow.

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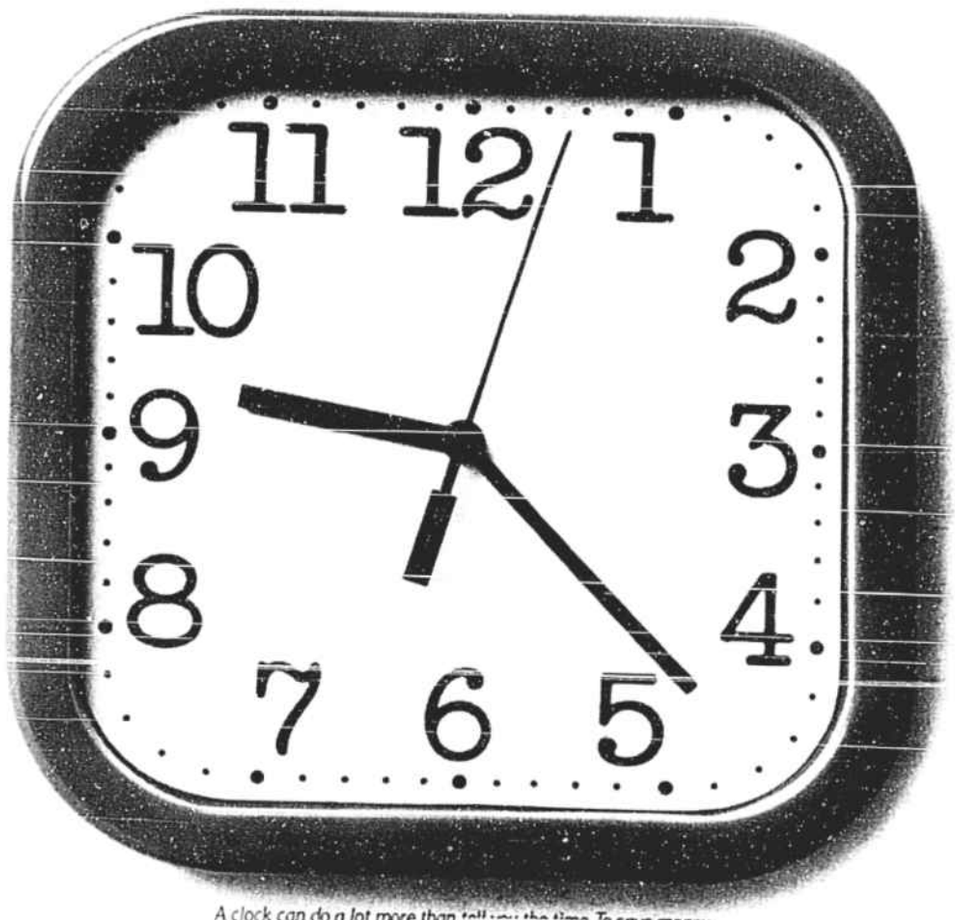
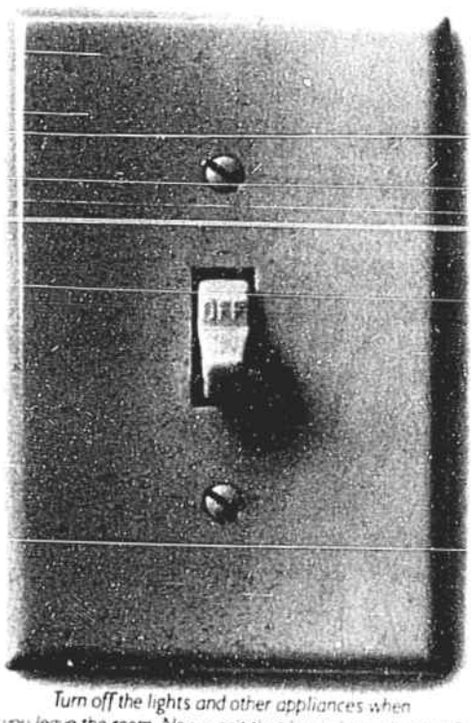
A DO-IT-YOURSELF GUIDE TO SAVING ELECTRICITY.



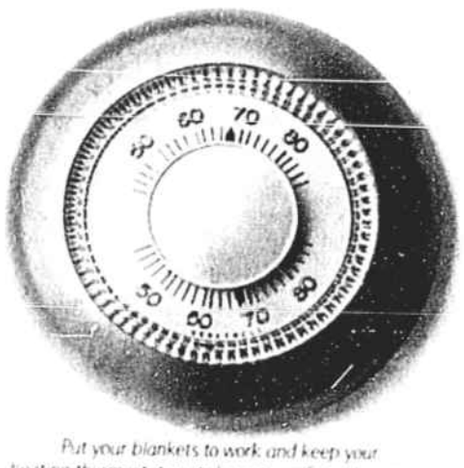
A clock can do a lot more than tell you the time. To save money when you use larger appliances, check out our Time-Of-Use program

Saving money is just a matter of degrees. Make sure your water heater isn't set too high.

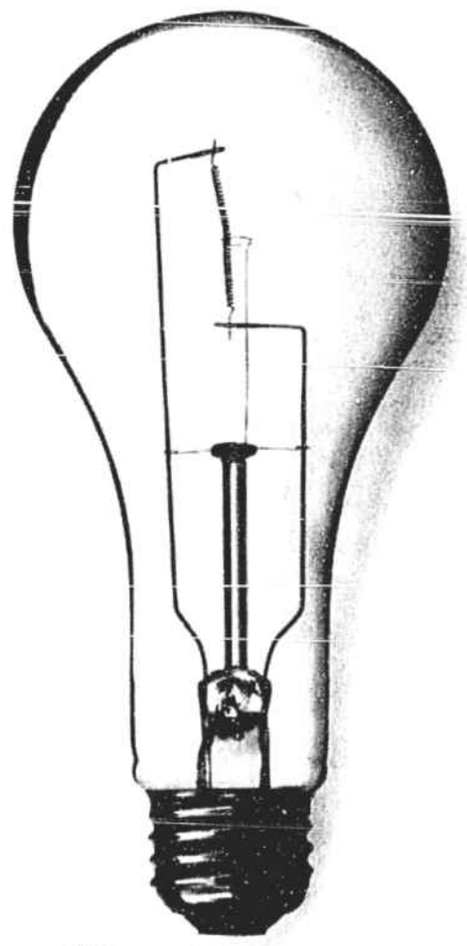


Turn off the lights and other appliances when you leave the room. Now won't that be a pleasant switch?

Make sure you always have your appliances on the appropriate setting. It's the little things that add up.



Put your blankets to work and keep your heating thermostat on its lowest comfortable setting.



Watt's going on? Using a lower wattage light bulb is another easy way to save money.

You really don't need any special tools to become an energy-saving do-it-yourselfer. Just turn off the lights as you leave the room. Let the sun in your house on winter days and close your curtains at night.

We bet you can come up with lots of other ways to save money on electricity.

And if you're a real do-it-yourselfer, just ask for your copy of "The Home Energy Check List" at the CP&L office that's nearest to you.

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