



2022 YOUTH VEGGIE GARDEN PROJECT

Parent's Corner - June 2022 - Letter No. 2

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WATERING YOUR VEGGIE GARDEN PLANTS

Pay attention to your Veggie Garden. Soon summertime temperatures will be soaring high, so when things heat up, don't forget your veggie garden plants and give them the water that they need.

Garden vegetables benefit from deep, infrequent watering. About one inch of water per week is needed unless rain provides enough moisture for the week. Use soaker hoses on the ground to irrigate your plants. Soaker hoses are better than an overhead sprinklers because less water is wasted. Also keeping the foliage dry on the vegetables reduces the chance of fungal disease.

KEEPING WEEDS AWAY

Often during the summer growing season, we find that weeds can grow as well as the vegetables. Too many weeds will cause competition for moisture & nutrients, thus reducing the growth of the vegetable plants.

How do we control weeds? The best way is using a hoe because you chop the plant off. Many will grow back of course, but you reduce the weeds this way and reduce the competition. Using mulch to smother weeds is another way and it reduces the need to use a hoe. Using herbicides will work but this takes careful application with a sprayer & can destroy desirable plants if you are not careful. With any weed control method, you need to be persistent & make weed control routine to keep the weeds from taking over.



APPLYING MULCH

Mulches can be an effective way to make soil moisture "last longer" in the landscape and garden.

Applying mulch around the base of plants can have many benefits. Mulching is probably the easiest way to save water, moderate soil temperatures and control weeds. It can reduce rotting by keeping vegetables such as squash and tomatoes out of contact with soil. Organic mulches also lessen soil compaction, slow down erosion and improve soil texture when later tilled into the soil. Fresh green grass clippings should be used when dry instead of wet so they do not repel water or encourage mold.

Mulch material includes: bark chips, straw, hay, grass clippings (dried out), cottonseed hulls, and sawdust (untreated). In the fall, these mulches can be tilled in and become composted organic matter for the next year. Organic matter can supply fertilizer, and good drainage for your garden.

TRAINING YOUR TOMATOES

In small garden areas, tomatoes can be staked to conserve space. This usually produces earlier tomatoes because vines are pruned to promote fruit growth.

Many gardeners choose to use cages or trellises for each plant. This keeps tomatoes and foliage off the ground and conserves space while allowing plenty of foliage protection during the hot summer months.



Place the cylinder or a cage over a single transplant and allow the plant to grow normally. You don't have to tie the plant to the cage, but you may have to push stems back in if they grow out of the holes. Using this method, you should have ripe tomatoes until frost.

FERTILIZING YOUR PLANTS

California Wonder Pepper – Use 2 tablespoons of all purpose fertilizer in June.

Crimson Sweet Watermelon - Use 2 tablespoons of all purpose fertilizer in June. Side dress when vines begin to run.

Big Mama Hybrid Tomato – Use 2 tablespoons of all purpose fertilizer in June. Side dress when first fruits are small (walnut size).

Mammoth Sunflower – Give each sunflower 1 tablespoon of all purpose fertilizer in June and July.

(Side dressing is the application of fertilizers in a shallow furrow or band along the side of vegetable row or in a circle around individual plants.)

BE ON THE LOOK OUT FOR SPIDER MITES!

Spider mites tend to be serious pests of cultivated plants. Two-spotted spider mites seem to flourish in hot, dry weather. They are small, active creatures that look like specks running around the undersides of the leaves. They vary from almost no color at all to pale yellow. Spider mites feed on the foliage by withdrawing juices and chlorophyll from the plant. A convenient way to detect mites is to strike a few branches of the plant with one hand while holding a white piece of paper under the branches with the other hand. If spider mites are present, they can be seen running on the paper. If they appear on the leaves of your tomato plants, spray the plants thoroughly at least two times (7-10 day intervals) with horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, or malathion.



Pepper Power

Peppers have a lot going for them!

They are low in calories and are loaded with good nutrition. They come in all sizes and colors. Some pack heat. Others are sweet. You can get peppers fresh, frozen, dried, or canned. Of course, growing your own are the best option!

All varieties of peppers are excellent sources of vitamins A and C, potassium, folic acid, and fiber. Plus, the spicy ones liven up bland food, making it more satisfying. You've probably seen green, orange, yellow and red bell peppers in the grocery store. Red peppers pack the most nutrition, because they have been on the vine longest. Green peppers are harvested earlier, before they have a chance to turn yellow, orange, and then red. Compared to green bell peppers, the red ones have almost 11 times more beta-carotene and 1.5 times more vitamin C.

Peppers are very versatile. You can add raw ones to everything from dips and salads to pasta dishes. Roasting peppers is easy, too. Cut a small slit near the stems. Grill or broil until blackened. Then let them steam by zipping into a plastic bag for about 15 minutes before scraping off the skin and removing the stem, core, and seeds. Toss red peppers in a stir-fry for a hit of color, too.

When working with hot peppers, remember that they can burn your skin and eyes. Wear rubber gloves while you're handling them, keep your hands away from your face, and wash your hands as soon as you're done.



SOIL RAINBOW

Soils can be very different from one place to the next. Soils can be made up of different materials and be different colors. Find at least six sealable plastic bags and go on a soil hunt. Fill each bag with soil from a different place around your neighborhood. Each sample you take should have a different color. Label the bag and write where the soil came from. When you have filled your bags make note below what the differences are.

