

Onions, Garlic, and Kitchen Gardening

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



PHOTO BY Herman Auer

Creating a kitchen garden can be a daunting task for the beginner. Shown above left is Mary Demeny in her kitchen garden. Mary will provide a “Kitchen Gardening . . . From Conception to Realty” seminar on Saturday at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office in La Marque.

A glorious thing takes place toward the end of summer along the Upper Texas Gulf Coast. We get another opportunity to reestablish the vegetable garden with hopes of a grand harvest in the cool fall climate.

Two of my favorite veggies to grow in the fall garden are onions and garlic.

As I write this column, it's warm and humid outside; rain clouds and distance thunder portend another round of showers.

I also decided to delay

my weekly ritual of mowing the lawn even at the risk getting a nagging letter from the notorious Home Owner Association's lawn-cutting enforcement squad. I would rather suffer the annoyance of an HOA letter instead of fighting hordes of salt marsh mosquitoes waiting at the front door to greet me.

But I know from experience that now is the time to start planning for the fall gardening season. I plan on planting onions as they are

easy to grow and well-worth the effort.

Since onions have a reputation for bringing tears to the eyes, one might ask why do so many home gardeners grow onions? There are multiple reasons including being easy to grow and requiring little space in the home garden and can be grown just about anywhere, including containers. Onions have been used for culinary uses since ancient times.

The onion has been uti-



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lized as an important ingredient in a variety of dishes over thousands of years by many cultures around the world. The Greeks, Romans and Egyptians have noted their many uses of onions. Onions were also part of the staple of early American settlers.

Onions rank among the more important culinary vegetables. One culinary expert said, "Without onions there would be no gastronomic art. Its absence reduces the diner to despair."

Studies have shown that both onions and garlic are rich in antioxidants. Antioxidants can help to protect the body against damaging "free radicals."

Garlic also grows very well in our Upper Texas Gulf Coast soils. We know onions and garlic are a very important part of our diet but we may not know when to plant them or how to grow them. Since fall is the ideal time to plant onions and garlic, our Master Gardener volunteers will be conducting a seminar on "Grow Your Own Onions & Garlic."

Master Gardener Ken Steblein will provide the seminar on Saturday, September 13, from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m., at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office located in Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519) in La Marque. Pre-registration is required (phone 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or e-mail GALV3@w.net).

SEMINAR ON KITCHEN GARDENS

The history of kitchen garden designs dates back to medieval times. They were the cloister or courtyard gardens of monasteries and castles. During colonial times, European settlers brought the kitchen garden concept to America.

In earlier times, the kitchen garden was located by the back door as it would be handy for everyday use and care in addition to providing some protection from two- and four-legged intruders. In colonial times, these gardens would have contained plants for medicinal purposes as well as culinary herbs, fruit trees and berried shrubs.

Modern-day kitchen gardens contain a variety of plants that serve the needs of the palate (i.e., provides food for the dinner table or raw consumption) and the needs of the soul (i.e., provides beauty in the home landscape and cut flowers for the interiorscape). In essence, vegetables can be used in imaginative ways to add beauty, interest, and utility to our landscapes.

Taking the concept of a kitchen garden from fantasy to reality can be a daunting task for the beginner. Help is at hand: A seminar on "Kitchen Gardening . . . From Conception to Reality" will be conducted on Saturday, September 13, from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m. at the Galveston County AgriLife Extension

Office located in Carbide Park at 4102-B Main Street (FM 519) in La Marque. Pre-registration is required (phone 281-534-3413, ext. 12 or e-mail GALV3@w.net).

Mary Demeny, a Galveston County Master Gardener, will discuss growing vegetables as an integral component of the home landscape. Gardening on a smaller scale and making use of vegetables interplanted in your flower beds and in pots will be emphasized.

Mary has grown a kitchen garden for several decades. Vegetables for discussion include: onions, carrots, tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, okra, beets, broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi, kale, leeks and more. September is a great time to get started on a fall vegetable garden and this seminar can help you get started with your own kitchen garden.

