

Hello 4Hers! With school going on-line and so many things cancelled/postponed because of the pandemic, are you bored? One thing to do and help your family as well is plant a garden. This certainly sounds like something we could use now, with a myriad of people working from home! What better to get exercise, make your household somewhat self-sufficient, and connect with nature than a garden?

Ever heard of a “Victory Garden”? These gardens at private homes and parks were used to support the food supply during World Wars I and II. Gardens of vegetable, herbs, and fruit helped to indirectly support the war effort, and they were also recognized and promoted by the federal government as morale boosters.

The great thing is it’s not too late to plant. Anyone with a tiller, a shovel, or a molasses tub can enjoy the fruits of their labor right here in Moulton.

I will give a few basics and pointers for planting things that have done well here with my family for three generations. For planting seeds, ideally turn the soil with a tiller or shovel at least 3-4 inches, and for planting established plants, one should aim for 3-6 inches, if possible.

Now you may ask, what kinds of seeds will grow in late March? If you plant really soon, you can still sow beets, cucumbers, green beans, yellow and white squash, tomatoes, parsley, pumpkins and gourds.

Amazingly, you won’t have to go out of Moulton to buy your seeds. You can purchase them right here in town at Moulton Gin and Co-Op and Beran’s Gin. They also offer established plants from time to time, so check with them.

I will review and have a few pointers from experience. My family prefers to plant row crops from north to south, so that when the spring northers come, the entire row doesn’t catch the brunt of the gusty winds.

**Beets-** plant 1-2 seeds about two to three inches apart. Cover with no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of soil. This is also a fall crop in Moulton. The leaves are pretty and also good for salads.

**Cucumbers-** plant a pickling variety if you plan on canning. We like to mix salad cukes in the garden as well, so we get all kinds of surprises of shapes and colors when picking . They love water, and we’ve found that in the heat of July, they’re pretty much finished producing. Again, cover with about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch of dirt.

**Green beans-** Can be beaten up by the spring northers, but they usually come back and produce. If you have a wind block, that’ll help. “Contender” is a family favorite variety that always does well.

**Yellow Squash-** No need to fertilize in most soils here. We found out the hard way when we did fertilize with Miracle Gro, and got all leaves and little produce. Sometimes slow to start producing, so we have taken a male flower and pollinated the female flowers. After that, the bees and wind seem to continue the process and we have plenty squash!

**Tomatoes-** buying established plants is the way to go at this date. We plant “Celebrity” because we have the tomato wilt virus in our garden. We try rotating and not planting in the same spot year after year. Our best bet this year is to get a black molasses tub from feeding cattle and fill with black gumbo dirt about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the way, and then potting soil to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way full. We have 1 Celebrity and 3 cherry tomatoes as an experiment.

All in all, planting a garden during this time will enhance your time at home, eventually provide food for your family and neighbors, provide exercise, and give you something to take care of and look forward to. If you have any questions, please text or call Cathy Wenske at 361-550-5903. I will be more than happy to help with tips and gardening advice.