

Green Garden News

Great vegetable gardens often come in small spaces

You don't have to have a lot of room to plant a vegetable garden. With a little effort, you can turn a small space into a great place to grow plenty of fresh produce.

Square-foot gardening and raised-bed gardening are two terms often used to describe ways to plant gardens in small spaces.

A raised bed has other advantages, too. Planting in these beds provides greater drainage and may allow the use of otherwise poorly drained areas. It also makes garden chores more amenable.

Raised beds allow for planting earlier in the spring, too, because they warm up quicker. Pest control can be easier, too. Placing hardware cloth at the bottom of the bed can keep out burrowing varmints, and netting can keep out birds and some insects.

Raised beds are fairly easy to make and can range from the rudimentary to the elaborate. They can be temporary or permanent. Pressure-treated lumber makes an excellent siding to confine the soil. Just don't use creosote-treated wood. You can make raised beds without sides, but

they tend to erode.

Make the sides of the bed 6 to 8 inches above the ground. It's good to include sand, compost or other organic matter in the bed, but it's best to spade or till the soil underneath. Mix it in the bed so at least a third of the bed is actual soil or added topsoil. Mix in any needed lime at this time.

Only small tillers can be used in permanent beds. Once the bed has been prepared for the season, you don't generally have to till again.

Make beds no more than 4 feet wide so you can access them from the sides. This allows for weeding, planting and harvesting without actually stepping into the bed.

Vegetable yields are greater when you use raised beds with plants spaced much closer together. The closer spacing enhances weed control, since the dense canopy shades out weeds. The idea is to have the plants close enough to just touch but not compete with one another.

Generally, if you place plants or seeds a little farther apart in the

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The use of trade names is solely for the purpose of providing specific information. It is not a guarantee, warranty, or endorsement of the product names.

March Gardening Tips

Flowers

- Annual flowers that can be planted in March include: ageratum, alyssum, amaranthus, aster, baby's breath, begonia, calendula, celosia, cosmos, dahlia, dusty miller, gaillardia, geranium, hollyhock, impatiens, marigold, nicotiana, ornamental pepper, penta, phlox, rudbeckia, salvia, sweet William, torenia, verbena, vinca and zinnia.
- Caladium bulbs are extremely sensitive to cold soil. There is no advantage to planting early. Purchase caladiums while there is a good selection, but wait until late March or April before planting them in shady beds.

Trees and Shrubs

- Finish pruning summer flowering shrubs such as althea, hibiscus, abelia, oakleaf hydrangea and oleander.
- Delay the pruning of azaleas, camellias, spiraeas, gardenias and other spring flowering shrubs until after flowering is complete.
- Prune any cold weather-damaged plants after new growth appears.
- If needed, fertilize shrubs and small trees with a slow release fertilizer. A good general-purpose landscape fertilizer is a 15-0-15.
- Mature palms should receive an application of granular fertilizer. Use a special palm fertilizer that has an 8-2-12 +4Mg (magnesium) with micronutrients formulation. Apply one pound of fertilizer per 100 sqft of canopy area or landscape area.
- Last opportunity to spray shrubs with dormant horticultural oil.
- Pick up all fallen camellia blossoms and remove them from your property. This practice helps to prevent petal blight next season.
- Prune ornamental grasses.
- If you are in the market for specific colors of azaleas, visit the local nurseries and garden centers this month. Though this is not the most ideal planting time you are assured of the right flower color without having to wait until next blooming season.

Fruits and Nuts

- Time to finish planting bare-root fruit trees.

Vegetable Garden

- This is the month for establishing a spring vegetable garden. Early March plantings have about an even chance of avoiding a late frost.
- The warm season vegetables that can be planted this month are: bush beans, pole beans, lima beans, cantaloupes, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, southern peas, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, summer squash, winter squash, tomatoes and watermelon.
- The cool season vegetables that can be planted this month are: beets, carrots, celery, collards, endive, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, bunching onions, parsley, English peas, Irish potatoes, radish and turnips.
- More conservative gardeners might wish to wait until the middle to latter part of the month to risk tender plants such as tomatoes and peppers.

Lawns

- Remove excessive accumulation of leaves from the lawn. This will increase the effectiveness of fertilizers and pesticides applied to the lawn.
- If a preemergence lawn herbicide is needed to control summer weeds, it should be applied in early March. Make certain to choose one that is safe on your kind of grass.
- Keep lawn herbicides away from the root zones of desirable flowers, shrubs and other plants.
- Fertilize the lawn only after the danger of frost has passed and when the grass has greened up. Fertilize using a complete fertilizer applied containing at least 50% slow-release nitrogen.
- Service the lawn mower: include a sharpening of the blade and adjusting of the cutting height for your type of grass.
- Anyone considering establishment of centipede-grass from seed should hold off until the soil warms up and stabilizes above 70°F.

Expect Rainbow Knock Out this Spring

Rainbow Knock Out is a name that may cause you to get excited about the 2007 All-American Rose Selections. William Radler, the same breeder who brought us the award-winning Knock Out, bred Rainbow Knock Out.

The All-American Rose Selections committee introduced three winners for 2007: Rainbow Knock Out, Moondance and Strike It Rich.

Even more productive and disease-resistant than its famous parent, Rainbow Knock Out is a bushy and compact landscape shrub rose with short stems bearing glossy, dark green leaves. Abundant blooms are single-form flowers that start as pointed buds and appear throughout the growing season. The delicate, 2-inch, five-petaled flowers are a deep coral-pink color with a yellow center finishing nicely to light coral.

Rainbow Knock Out produces late for a lovely fall bloom. While it does not exhibit a strong fragrance, the petals emit a delicate, sweetbriar scent. Suitable for container growing in small spaces, this rose is the perfect accent to any garden. It is winter hardy to zone 4 and fully resistant to black spot, mildew and rust. The Knock Out family includes the original Pink Knock Out with cherry red blossoms, Blushing Knock Out, Rainbow Knock Out and Double Knock Out that was a hit at the Fall Flower and Garden Fest last October in Crystal Springs.

As heavenly and lovely as its name implies, Moondance is a floribunda characterized by large clusters of creamy white, beautifully formed flowers contrasted by very glossy, dark green foliage. Upright and well branched, it is an extremely vigorous, tall plant with stems that are typically 14-18 inches long. Rose buds are pointed and oval-shaped, leading to high-centered flowers of about 25 petals each which open flat to more than 3 inches in diameter.

Moondance has an exceptionally delightful

spicy fragrance for a white floribunda. Its impressive long stems can be arranged into an elegant bouquet for displaying in the home. Moondance is highly resistant to black spot, mildew and rust.

A modern version of the classic 1950 AARS award-winner Sutter's Gold, Strike It Rich resembles its famous ancestor with its strong, spicy fragrance and elegant buds of deep golden-yellow swirled with ruby red. This contemporary cousin is much easier to grow because of its great disease-resistance and strong natural vigor. This true grandiflora bears loads of long-stemmed blossoms offset by very dark green leaves and unusual, deep red stems.



Strike It Rich -- Strike It Rich is a modern version of the classic Sutter's Gold with a strong, spicy fragrance and elegant buds of deep golden-yellow swirled with ruby red. It bears loads of long-stemmed blossoms offset by very dark green leaves and unusual, deep red stems.

A medium-tall upright bush, Strike It Rich boasts clusters of awesome double and informal flowers that are up to 5-inches in diameter with about 30 petals each. The flowers are long-lived and retain their blend of gold, orange and red tones to the very end. The blooms are stunning in a bouquet or in the landscape.

The 2007 winners excelled in two years of rigorous testing against 15 criteria including ease of maintenance and disease resistance. The AARS winner distinction ensures that the rose will perform best for gardeners nationwide.

Every year, rose hybridizers submit top performing roses for the two-year review in 23 test gardens in varying climates across the country, providing similar conditions and challenges inherent in most American gardens. Of the many roses that are tested, only a select few are crowned winners every year.

As you read rose catalogues to decide which ones you'll go buy at your local garden center, consider this year's 2007 All-American Selections winners. They sound awfully impressive.

—by Norman Winter, MSU Horticulturist, Central Mississippi Research & Extension Center

Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday: *Plant Diagnostic Clinic.* This free clinic is open to the public from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Santa Rosa Service Center at 5819 Gulf Breeze Pkwy.

March 3, 2007: *19th Annual Forestry Conclave and Lumberjack Festival.* Lumberjack competition— adult events: all day, children events: 9:00 to 11:00 and junior events: 11:00 to noon. Door prizes all day. Free admission!! Free Tree Seedlings will be given out while they last. \$3.00 registration fee for event participation only. Each additional event - \$1.00 per person. Children, Senior Citizens & High School Students Compete for FREE! For additional information call (850) 484-4463 or see the PJC Lumberjack website: www.pjc.edu/milton/lumberjack.

March 21-25, 2007: *Festival of Flowers.* Providence Hospital Campus, 6801 Airport Blvd. Mobile, AL. For more information visit their website at <http://http://www.festivalofflowers.com/>

March 30-April 1, 2007: *11th Emerald Coast Flower and Garden Show.* Open Friday 12 noon-4 p.m. and on Saturday & Sunday 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. UF/PJC Milton Campus, 5988 Highway 90, Milton FL, Free Admission, Open to the public.

March 30-April 1: *Plantasia.* Mobile Botanical Garden Spring Plant Sale. For more information visit <http://www.mobilebotanicalgardens.org/sps2007/sps2007.htm>.

April 5-June 3, 2007: *Epcot's International Flower and Garden Festival.*

For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact the SRC Extension Office at least 5 working days prior to the program so that proper consideration may be given to the request.
(850) 623-3868

Slash, Cut or Fluff Roots at Planting

You are ready to plant a new shrub or tree and when it's removed from the container, all you see is roots -- lots of them. The root ball is solid white to a yellowish-orange color with roots. What should you do?

It's not uncommon to purchase what gardeners and professionals alike call pot-bound plants. Some plants formed lots of roots naturally, yet others just stayed in the pot too long before the sale. So what do you do at planting? Do you slash, cut, pull or fluff the roots apart?

You have to do something. Allowing the plant to remain pot bound means you are going to be unhappy. Most likely, the plant is going to make slow growth, and in a few years it might die. Once tight in that root ball, the roots are not going to grow out into the surrounding soil. The only way to help the plant begin growth into the soil is by loosening the root system. Often, you do have to damage roots to help them regrow.

Many types of plants are affected by pot-bound conditions -- even annuals, perennials and houseplants. At planting time, the root systems should be disturbed in some way. With trees and shrubs, the recommendation is to make shallow, slashlike cuts into the root ball in three or four areas down the side. I prefer to think you and I might be able to just pull the roots apart.

Perhaps preparing the root ball for planting is just as important as digging the hole properly and watering. After all, if the root ball is not ready to make proper growth, all the other preparations might be useless.

One other thing you might think of is selecting plants that are not pot bound at planting. It's not always possible but worth checking before you buy.

—by Tom MacCubbin, Ext. Agent, Orange County

Questions and Answers

Q: I've been smelling something awful in my mulched rose garden near my front door, and now I'm seeing a bunch of pinkish-red things that look like some kind of weird mushroom/fungus sort of thing, and I'm pretty sure that's what's causing the smell. Could you please help me identify it and tell me how to get rid of it?

A: What you describe is probably what is commonly called a "stinkhorn". This is a common name for a family of mushrooms, the *Phallaceae*. They come in many shapes, sizes and colors but they all have one thing in common—a horrible smell. The smell attracts insects. When insects visit the stinkhorn, they bathe in the mushroom's spore "ooze". They then fly away and disperse the mushroom spores.

The stinkhorn emerges from a structure just below the soil surface known as a "witch's egg". These are more common in rich, moist soil or mulch where they live on decaying organic matter.

The good news is that the stinkhorn is short-lived and does not cause plant damage.

There is no treatment for this problem other than quick removal as soon as it is observed, or smelled. Be sure to remove all parts of the mushroom, including the witch's egg and place the entire structure in a sealed bag for disposal. Do not attempt to compost or bag them for plant recycling pickup because they will create problem for others.

As with other mushrooms, they live on decaying organic matter in the soil so tilling the soil may speed up the decomposition process. However, the mushrooms will return each spring and fall, when the weather is cool and there is sufficient rainfall, until their food source is depleted. Sometimes they are imported into a landscape with mulch so be sure to purchase mulch from a reliable source to avoid these smelly homesteaders.

Q: I plan to establish a centipedegrass lawn from seed this spring. When is the best time to do this?

A: Seeding is an acceptable method of starting a centipede lawn, but don't get in a hurry. This grass

doesn't germinate well until the soil warms up. The recommended planting time is April through June. Follow soil preparation and seeding instructions carefully and be patient. Even under good conditions it takes about 3 weeks for seedlings to germinate.

Q: Is now the time to put out a weed-n-feed product on my lawn?

A: Early March is the right time to put out a pre-emergence herbicide to control summer weeds. However, it's still too early to fertilize our lawn grasses.

Preemergence herbicides are available so you don't have to use a weed-n-feed. If you had a problem last year with summer weeds, I would recommend that you get a preemergence out now and fertilize in April.

Timing is critical when applying preemergence herbicides. We usually will target early March for applications. Specifically, it should be applied when day temperatures reach 65° to 70°F for four or five consecutive days. These application timings generally coincide with blooming of landscape plants such as azalea and dogwood.

Pre-emergence herbicides for lawns are sold under a number of trade names. Be sure to select one that's labeled for use on the turfgrass species you have in your lawn. The tolerance of turfgrass species varies among the different herbicides on the market.

A UF/IFAS publication by Drs. Unruh, Brecke and Trenholm is available and provides several preemergence herbicide options. This publication titled "Weed Management in Home Lawns" is available online at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP141>.

Below are a few preemergence herbicides that are safe to use on centipede and/or St. Augustine lawns.

Chemical	Brand Name
pendimethalin	Pendulum® Lesco Pre-M® Turf Weedgrass Control® Scotts® Halts® Crabgrass Preventer
dithiopyr	Dimension® StaGreen CrabEx®

Vegetable Gardens

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row than normal and then use that same spacing between rows, the space will be adequate. For instance, rather than spacing cabbage plants 10 inches apart in rows 36 inches apart, space them 15 inches apart in rows 15 inches apart.

For vegetables such as beans, it's best to plant parallel to the row. Plant crops that require fewer plants across the row. Plant faster-growing plants, such as radishes, between slower-growing crops. You can harvest the faster crops quicker and get them out of the way.

Trellis tomatoes, cucumbers and pole beans so they take up more room vertically and less horizontally. You'll be amazed at how many fresh vegetables you can grow in a small garden.

—by William Terry Kelley, University of Georgia



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