

THE SCOOP

SENIOR CITIZEN COMMUNITY GARDEN – 2010

By: Ed Burnett

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At the request of the St. Clair Street Senior Center in Murfreesboro, I assumed the roll of project leader for their new "community garden project". The Community Care Center of Rutherford County has available land for community gardens, and they were very responsive to our request for a parcel of land which eventually became 80 feet long and 100 feet wide. The project started with 6 seniors interested and grew to a total of 30. The budget for the project was approximately \$500 with \$250 raised in a plant sale and the remainder in donations. The Senior Center provided a bus for members to travel to the garden once per week for approximately 20 weeks. The expenses included tools, seed, tomato stakes, landscape material, fertilizer, garden hoses, etc. Tomato and pepper plants were donated.

The objectives of the community garden were to solicit involvement from the seniors who did not have an opportunity to have their own garden, and to raise vegetables for use by the members. Both objectives were accomplished beyond our expectations. The gardening skills and physical abilities varied greatly, but the enthusiasm was exceptionally high for all members. We were able to allocate meaningful work for any member who attended regardless of physical condition. Although no formal record of total yield was kept, it is safe to say that many bushels of tomatoes, peppers, corn, field peas, eggplant, lettuce, mustard turnips, squash, beans, cucumbers, pumpkins and melons were harvested. During most harvest weeks, excess vegetables were taken to the Senior Center to share with members of the center

who were not participants in the community garden.

Recent graduates from the 2010 Master Gardener Class supervised, and assisted with the planting, maintenance and harvesting in the garden. Ed Burnett was joined by Reggie Reeves, Laura Buchner and Mark Murphy. Also providing assistance were Mark's wife, Lisa, and their daughter, Taylor.

Plans are already being made for the 2011 version of the Senior Citizens Community Garden. One meeting has already taken place to make plans for a fund raiser and to solicit more participation next year. We will again appreciate any and all assistance from new and veteran Master Gardeners. ♦

ALL ABOUT HERBS

By: Anna Paddon, CMG



“Thyme leaves are tiny and time consuming to snip from the stem – but worth the flavor.”



Right after the first killing frost, which usually occurs here about the third week in October, is the time to harvest the last of the annual herbs, harvest and preserve what you need from the perennials and prepare them for winter.

Basil:

This timing has one exception – basil. Basil is very tender and likely will be killed by even the lightest frost. Often edges of the leaves will turn black when temperatures dip to the mid-thirties. I covered my basil plant with a light row cover (Remay) on those two cool nights we experienced in early October, but now is the time to cut off all the stems and harvest the leaves for the last batch of pesto, and freeze it in serving-size containers. Cut stems of basil will keep in a glass of water – like cut flowers – for a couple of days, but longer than that, the leaves go limp and the edges turn black.

Chives:

Both regular chives and garlic chives can also be preserved by freezing. By this time in the fall, the chives likely have some dried stems among the green that you want, so cut the stems to the ground, sort out all the dried material and any of the rigid flower stems and discard, wash the green, let dry on a paper towel and snip into a plastic bag or small

container. Chives have bulb-type roots that will sprout again in early spring, so cover them with a light mulch after harvest.

Dill:

Dill is an annual herb that gives its best harvest of feathery leaves and seeds in mid-summer. It, however, often self-seeds, and an early fall rain will cause the seeds to sprout giving you a patch of dill seedlings, two or three inches tall before a killing front. These dill leaves can be snipped at ground level and used fresh to garnish a serving of salmon or dried and used later.

Oregano & Mint:

These spreading perennials should be harvested now and dried. They can be cut to ground level, the leaves dried, and the plants mulched. Drying can be by tying inside a paper bag and hanging in a dry place, using an electric herb dryer with perforated trays, or using a convection oven. The directions will likely be in your stove “user manual”. If the plants have become invasive, they can be dug up now or in the spring – and a rooted part of either of these herbs will survive during the winter in a pot in a sunny window.

Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme:

This foursome of herbs, the traditional seasoning for

Thanksgiving stuffing, usually stays green past the first frost, and since I began my Rutherford County herb garden, I have always had these four available fresh at Thanksgiving. Using fresh herbs instead of dried makes a big difference in flavor, and I’m sharing my stuffing (or dressing if you prefer) recipe.

- **Parsley** is a biennial, which means it may come back for a second season, but if it does, the leaves you want will be sparse and its energy will go to producing seed. I don’t harvest the last of my parsley until the temperature is forecast to dip into the teens. Parsley thrives in cool fall weather. When those below 20-degree temperatures threaten, I cut all the plant, wash it and keep it in a closed glass jar in the refrigerator. It will last for about a month. It is difficult to transplant parsley, because it has a carrot-shaped root that is almost impossible to avoid damaging. A pot of parsley can be grown from seed if one has a very sunny window and keeps parsley well watered.

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RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Poultry Stuffing Using Fresh Herbs*

From: Anna Paddon, CMG

Ingredients:

12 cups cubed day-old bread, whole wheat with some cornbread	1 Tbs. fresh sage, cut into chiffonade (thin ribbons)
1 cup melted butter	3 tsp. rosemary
¾ cup chopped yellow onion	1 Tbs. fresh thyme
1 ½ cups chopped celery, leaves included	1 Tbs. salt
¼ cup fresh curly parsley, chopped	1 tsp. pepper
	1 cup hot chicken broth
	1 egg, lightly beaten



**If substituting dried herbs use one-third as much of parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme.*

Instructions:

Melt the butter in a large skillet and add the onion, celery and herbs until the onion and celery are soft but not brown. Stir in the bread cubes until well mixed with the vegetables and herbs. Add the chicken broth and egg and mix thoroughly. Either refrigerate separately until you are ready to stuff and roast the turkey, or make the stuffing immediately before the turkey goes into the oven. **DO NOT** stuff poultry ahead of time or leave the prepared dressing unrefrigerated before or after roasting.

Serving Size: 12-15 lb. turkey

This is my Thanksgiving recipe, a modification of Betty Crocker's

Herbs

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- Fresh **sage** leaves and the needle-like foliage of rosemary can be snipped as needed until late fall. Although parts of these perennials may sustain winter damage, they can be pruned in the spring, and will likely continue to thrive next season. Mulch around the roots.
- **Rosemary** in pots is often trimmed in a pine-tree shape for a miniature Christmas

- tree. These will not likely live until spring in the dry air of our houses, and if put outside in the pot, the roots will freeze. It is best to treat potted rosemary like a live pine Christmas tree and put it in the ground immediately after the holidays.
- **Thyme** leaves are tiny and time consuming to snip from the stem – but worth the flavor. Pulling the leaves off the stem from tip to base with

your fingers also works. Thyme needs mulch too. It seems to get unruly, wiry stems after several seasons. Then replace the plant. Sage, rosemary and thyme can also be dried. Date each tightly covered container and replace the contents each year for peak flavor.

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FALL COMPOSTING

By: Anthony Tuggle, Rutherford County Director, UT/TSU Extension

As leaves continue to fall, many homeowners and gardeners will be raking and bagging them or moving them off the property, while others will be planning to use them for other purposes. If they are not sent to the landfill, they can easily be converted to beneficial organic matter through composting for use in vegetable gardens or flower beds. By doing this, they will not occupy space in the landfill that is necessary for less biodegradable materials.

Composting is a very good way to recycle nutrients found in leaves or grasses that will reduce space required for landfills and provides a good cultural technique to improve growth of vegetables and flower gardens.

When leaves and grass clippings are completely decayed through the composting process, they can be applied and worked into the soil prior to preparation for seeding or transplanting. By using in this matter, leaves will provide certain minor elements and add organic matter to the soil. Organic matter is very beneficial in that it

increases the moisture-holding capacity of the soil, increases nutrient-holding capacity of the soil and improves root penetration into the adjacent soil area. It improves soil tilth and work ability resulting in less compaction and crust formation.

Compost can be used as mulch around the plants. As such, it reduces weed growth around the desired plants and serves to maintain a more uniform moisture supply through the growing season. Improved moisture, especially in dry years, is very beneficial toward reducing vegetable production problems such as blossom-end-rot of tomatoes, peppers and watermelons.

How is composting done by the homeowner? Many people like to build a bin large enough to hold leaves or grass clippings resulting from mowing the lawn or raking and chopping the leaves. The bin can be almost any size depending on the need. It may be constructed out of wood or post and wire. Construction materials are optional as long as

they meet the need. It may be constructed out of wood or post and wire. Construction materials are optional as long as they meet the need of the specific gardener.

To make a compost pile, make a layer of suitable organic matter about six to eight inches deep. Sprinkle uniformly about one cup of a nitrogen containing fertilizer over the organic layer and apply a thin layer of soil. The nitrogen will act as a food source resulting in an increase of microorganisms and a faster rate of decay of the organic matter. Repeat these layers to height desired. Once a month, completely stir or turn the material to enable complete breakdown.

Several brands of special, rotating containers are available for making compost quickly. When using these, add finely chopped material all at once and follow the instructions as to moisture, additives and turning. These rotating containers can produce small amounts of compost in only a few weeks.



COMPOSTING

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Anaerobic (without oxygen) methods using airtight containers such as plastic bags that can easily be used by apartment gardeners who do not have the space for a large compost pile. The plant material along with a small amount of soil is mixed in a heavy-duty garbage bag which is then sealed. No fertilizer, water or later stirring are required for this method, but it does produce a bad odor; therefore, it should be kept in the open and **away** from living quarters. The compost will be ready

for use in one to two weeks.

Sheet composting is still another alternative. This works well in the fall when there is an abundance of leaves. With this method, the organic material is spread over the soil surface and worked into the soil. Nitrogen is added to speed decomposition. Do not plant in the soil until the decay process is complete. This process differs from mulching in that the organic material is worked into the soil. All organic wastes are not suitable for home

composting. Some organic material that should not be composted are butter, bones, cat and dog manure, cheese, chicken, fish, scraps, lard, magazines, mayonnaise, meat, milk, peanut butter, salad dressing and vegetable oil. Seeds or vegetative pieces of troublesome weeds including Bermuda grass, Johnson grass and nimble will, may survive the composting process Large tree branches and stumps may take many years to decompose unless they are chipped or shredded. ♦



**St. Claire Senior Center
Murfreesboro, TN**



**2010
Community Garden
Ed Burnett
Project Chairman**

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About Our Organization...

"The Scoop" is the official newsletter of the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, Tennessee and is published by email the first week of the month. Those members without email and who are not able to attend meetings may receive the newsletter by U.S. Postal mail. The deadline for articles, pictures, events, etc. to be included in the newsletter is due the fourth Friday of each month.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month at the Lane Agri-Park at 6:30 p.m., unless specified. Membership is \$25 for a single, or \$35 for a couple residing at the same address. All memberships are valid January through December and are pro-rated for new members only.

Memberships in the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County are open to those interested in learning, teaching, and volunteering for the purpose of educating the community in all phases of gardening.

Please note: Master Gardener Certification requires 40 hours of training plus 40 hours of volunteer service. Recertification requirements are 25 volunteer hours, plus 8 hours of continuing education per year. Attendance at meetings counts as 1.5 hours of continuing education and 1.5 hours of administration.

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