Growing fruit at home can be either a pleasant experience or a learning experience. Depending on how much homework you do, the results can be either rewarding or disappointing. Considering several important factors before beginning a home fruit planting can help to ensure reasonable success. Every gardener should be realistic and discriminating about what fruits to plant. Not all fruit crops are suited for your home. Available space, soils, water, microclimates, and natural resistance to pests are only a few serious considerations and limiting factors.

Adaptability
Plant performance depends on how well the growth requirements are met. Growing season, temperature extremes, frost pockets and availability of supplemental irrigation are all important factors.

Obtaining Plants
Plant sources should come from reputable nurseries or garden centers. There are a number of good nurseries that provide plants by mail. All you have to do is indicate to the nursery the best time for shipping and planting in your area.

Insects and Diseases
Unfortunately, insects and diseases are common with several fruit species. However, some fruit species have fewer pest problems than others. For example, most of the tree fruits are more prone to insects and diseases than the small fruits (blackberries, raspberries or strawberries). One exception would be grapes which are susceptible to diseases like black rot. Grapes also benefit from having regular scheduled spray applications. Any time natural resistance to pests is genetically or naturally present, less chemical sprays are required to obtain quality fruit, and that is a good thing.

Fruits to Consider
My list of recommended fruits for home planting includes apples, pears, peaches, sour cherries, grapes, blackberries, blueberries and strawberries. Apples require minimal care, but home plantings should consider only dwarf or semi-dwarf trees. It is also best if you select varieties (like Pristine and Liberty) that are highly resistant to major diseases such as fire blight, scab, cedar apple rust or mildew.

Pears are well adapted to Missouri growing conditions but be sure to select a variety that offers a strong resistance to fire blight. Starking Delicious and Kieffer are two excellent varieties but (like apples) they need pollinators. Peaches are one of the most rewarding of the tree fruits but they are not...
without problems. Brown rot is a major problem some years and must be considered in a regular spray program. I recommend Redhaven as a good variety of peach for fresh eating, cooking and preserving.

Sour cherries make great pies but need to be planted only on well drained soils.

Grapes, especially Concord and seedless varieties Canadice and Reliance, are good choices for fresh eating and make great jams and jellies.

Blackberries – especially the thornless upright varieties Navaho or Arapaho – provide excellent quality fruit with minimal care. Blueberries require an acidic soil (pH 4.8 – 5.2) and should be established on mounded beds for better soil drainage. I recommend using an organic mulch and then supply supplemental irrigation during dry periods. ‘Blueray’ and ‘Bluecrop’ are two highly recommended varieties.

Strawberries are possibly the best adapted fruit to Missouri. They are easy to grow (especially the Honeoye and Allstar varieties) with minimal problems for home production. Weed control is probably the biggest challenge with growing strawberries.

For more information on growing fruit, contact your county extension center.

Source: Gaylord Moore, retired SW Region Horticulture Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

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GARDEN N’ GROW TO BE HELD IN KIRKSVILLE & QUEEN CITY THIS SUMMER

It's time again to be thinking of children ages 8-14 who might be interested in participating in the 2010 Garden n’ Grow programs held at the Adair County Extension Center in Kirksville and the Schuyler County Nursing Home in Queen City. The program will meet in Kirksville on Mondays and Thursdays, time still to be determined. The Queen City day and time is still TBD. If you know of youth who might be interested please have them contact the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 or the Schuyler County Extension Office at 660-457-3469 for information. The cost to participate in the Adair County Garden n’ Grow program is $25, which includes a lesson book, plants and seeds, refreshments, certificate and tee-shirt.

The Adair-Schuyler Garden n’ Grow program was a 2006 National Gardening Association Garden Grant Winner, and a 2006 National Association of County Agriculture Agents National Finalist For Search For Excellence in Youth Award Winner. It is a wonderful learning experience for children as it teaches responsibility, the importance of working to achieve your goals, and the importance of sharing produce with those in need.

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JASON ANDREW SCHUTTER BORN FEBRUARY 26

Jason Andrew Schutter arrived on February 26, 2010 at 7:37 pm at Northeast Regional Medical Center in Kirksville. He weighed 7.2 lbs and was 20 inches long.

Dad is David Schutter, who is not really a gardener but does till the garden, make raised beds, and turn compost for me. Grandparents (who are readers of this newsletter) are: Robert and Patricia Schutter of Bicknell, Indiana. Grandpa Schutter is a gardener and even has a small greenhouse he enjoys working in during cold weather. Maternal grandparents are Gary and Nyalin Barnes of Mountain Grove, Missouri. Grandma Nyalin is a Master Gardener in the Tri-County Master Gardener Club and raises many different types of vegetables in her garden. Great Grandparents who are avid gardeners, and have taught me a few things about gardening through the years, are Raymond and June Barnes of Isabella, Missouri which is near Theodosia and Bull Shoals Lake. Great Grandmother Lorraine Schott of Cabool, MO, never gardened or even had an interest in gardening except for flowers. You will see Jason throughout the year at various activities and events with big brother Justin, whom many of you know.
TEN EASY STEPS TO INCORPORATE MORE LOCAL AND SEASONAL FOOD INTO YOUR DIET

1. Start slowly. Eating local and seasonal food often requires that you make some changes in food preparation, meal planning, and shopping. Your may find that your tastes, and those of family members, also change as you learn to eat locally available foods. Do not expect these changes to occur overnight. Set reachable goals by incorporating seasonal food slowly into your meals and shopping.

2. Be conscious of the source of your food. When at the grocery store, check food labels for their origin and then check to see if there are any alternative products that have been produced closer to home. If there are none, ask your grocer to start stocking local foods.

3. Develop a connection to your food. One of the most basic ways to do this is to plant a garden, even if it is only one potted tomato plant sitting on the porch. Another option is to become connected to the people whom you buy food from, be they vendors at a farmers’ market or CSA farmers.

4. Make a commitment that your food buying practices reflect your principles. Purchasing locally grown and seasonal foods can benefit the economy, the environment, and personal nutrition in many ways. Buying locally grown food benefits the local economy since most of the profit ends up in the local community. It also benefits local farmers since more of the money goes directly to the farmers and not to the “middle people.” The food is often more nutritious, fresher, and tastier than food shipped from other parts of the United States or other countries. Additionally, food that is produced without the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers is healthier for consumers and better for the environment.

5. Be creative and flexible in your cooking. Seasonal cooking presents a culinary adventure through a wide world of vegetable dishes. Some vegetables taste very different when they are fresh and well prepared. While you may have always hated beets that come from a can, you may find you love fresh beets prepared in a salad or borscht.

6. Plan for the winter—and do not despair when it arrives. With a little planning and some work in the summer, you can enjoy local foods all winter long. It is relatively easy to can your own tomatoes, pickles, and jams, and even easier to put some food away in a freezer or store squash and root crops in a basement. Some area stores and co-ops also carry locally grown crops, such as apples, beets, celeriac, sprouts, potatoes, onions, garlic, squash, turnips, and rutabagas, throughout much of the winter.

7. Learn how to substitute. This is a great way to incorporate unfamiliar foods into your diet while enjoying your favorite dishes. For example, substitute the long-storing celeriac root for celery in the winter. Try baking with local honey or maple syrup instead of cane sugar, which is grown in southern climates and uses large amounts of synthetic chemicals. Winter salads can have wonderful flavor and color with local sprouts and grated winter vegetables rather than lettuce shipped from California. Treat recipes as a starting point from which ideas can be generated, instead of something that must be followed exactly.

8. Buy fewer convenience foods. Convenience foods, in general, are more expensive, excessively packaged, and less fresh and nutritious than food you prepare at home. Additionally, the ingredients in these convenience foods are seldom locally grown or organic.

9. Encourage your favorite restaurants to consider purchasing produce from local farmers. Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago restaurants have the option to work with “Home Grown Wisconsin,” a farmer–restaurant cooperative that coordinates the supply and distribution of locally grown produce to restaurants. Look for (or develop) cooperatives like this in your region.

10. Enjoy it all. Enjoy the tastes, the challenges, the relationships you develop with producers, and the knowledge that you are doing something good for yourself and the earth.

Source: Lauri McKean, “Asparagus to Zucchini”, pg. 11
Garden Tips For April

VEGETABLES:
- Start cucumber, cantaloupe, summer squash, and watermelon seeds indoors in peat pots. Finish sowing seeds of cool-season vegetables not yet planted outdoors.
- Flower stalks should be removed from rhubarb plants if they develop.

ORNAMENTALS

WEEKS 1-3:
- Winter mulches should be removed from roses. Fertilize established roses once new growth is 2 inches long. Begin spraying for black spot.
- Shrubs and trees best planted or transplanted in the spring include butterfly bush, dogwood, Rose-of-Sharon, Black Gum, redbud, grapes, magnolia, tulip poplar, birch, gingko, hawthorn, and most oaks.

WEEK 4:
- Easter lilies past blooming can be planted outdoors. Set the bulbs 2-3 inches deeper than they grew in the pot.
- Apply controls for holly leaf minor when the new leaves are just beginning to grow.
- Evergreen and deciduous hedges may be sheared. Prune the top narrower than the base so sunlight will reach the lower limbs.
- Prune spring flowering ornamentals after they finish blooming.

FRUIT-ALL MONTH:
- Blemish-free fruits that are unmarred by insect or disease injury can rarely be produced without regular applications of insecticides and fungicides. See MU guide G6010, Home Fruit Spray Schedule. Protect bees and other pollinating insects. Do not spray insecticides on fruit trees that are blooming.
- Plant bare-root or potted fruit trees as soon as the soil can be worked.
- Remove tree wraps from trees now.
- Prune peaches and nectarines now.
- Leaf rollers are active on apple trees. Control as needed.
- Stink bugs and tarnished plant bugs become active on peaches.
- Destroy and prune off webs of eastern tent caterpillar.
- Begin sprays for fireblight susceptible apples and pears using an agricultural streptomycin.
- Spider mites and codling moths become active on apples.

LAWN & TURF
- Start mowing cool season grasses at recommended heights.
- Aerate turf if thatch is heavy or soil is compacted.
- Topdress low spots and finish over-seeding thin or bare patches.
- Apply crabgrass preventers before April 15. Do not apply to areas that will be seeded.

MISCELLANEOUS:
- Termites begin swarming. Distinguish termites from ants by their thick waists and straight antennae. Ants have slender waists and elbowed antennae.
- Honeybees are swarming. Wasp and hornet queens begin nesting.
- Hummingbirds return from their winter home in Central America.

-MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN-

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 5: Fabius Master Gardener club meeting, 6:30 Presbyterian Church, Memphis.
April 6: Salt River Master Gardener meeting, 7 p.m., Palmyra Sesquicentennial Bldg., Palmyra; program—Mike Brabo (Certified Organic Farmer, Vesterbrook Farm, Clarksville): “Natural Methods of Pest Control”. Mike grows vegetables, tree and bramble fruit, free range chickens, and grass-fed beef and lamb.
April 6: Heartland Master Gardener meeting. Time, location, program, TBA.
April: Sullivan Co. Master Gardener meeting, TBA.
April 13: Magic City Master Gardener meeting, 6:30 pm, Randolph County Extension Center. Program—raising worms.
April 20: Kirksville Area MG club meeting, 7:00 pm, Adair County Extension Center. Program—“Spring and Summer Care of Roses”.
April 26: Macon-SHELBY Master Gardener meeting; 7:00 pm, Macon County Extension Center. Program—making May Day baskets for historical society-working meeting.

Garden Talk!

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