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State Master Gardener Conference
September 23-25
Quality Inn, Hannibal.
Theme: Gardening in America’s Hometown.

EATING LOCAL IS NOT THAT HARD TO DO...PART 2

If you haven’t read part 1 of “Eating Local Is Not That Hard To Do” that was in the March issue, I recommend you read it first before reading part 2. Last month I talked about using fresh, local vegetables, meat and milk. In this issue I want to talk more about meat, tropical fruit and food miles.

You may be wondering if we eat any tropical fruits, and yes, I love tropical fruit! So, I do buy bananas, kiwi, an occasional mango and pineapple. These fruit all have a skin on them that is peeled or cut off, so I’ve heard it’s safer to eat these foreign products than those that are not peeled. If I want these products, I do have to buy them regardless of where they are from.

How many of you like mandarin oranges? My three year-old loves them. I cannot find any U.S. grown mandarin oranges. I have looked at three different grocery stores in Kirksville, and every can I found says product of China. What am I supposed to do, the kid loves them? All I can do, is buy them anyway. “When shopping for more exotic ingredients like chocolate, coffee or bananas, look for products labeled "Fair Trade" or "Rainforest Alliance Certified." The fair trade label means that farmers and farm workers in developing nations receive a fair price for their product, work directly with buyers, and prioritize sustainable farming methods without forced child labor and the use of a dozen of the most harmful pesticides. To be fair trade certified, products must be grown by small-scale producers who are able organize themselves in either cooperatives or unions. Fair trade products and companies are certified by independent third parties like Trans Fair USA or Fair Trade Labeling Organization International. Companies selling fair trade products have also shown commitment to helping the farmers they work with develop long-term sustainable communities and businesses”. Source-Sustainable Table, http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/whybuylocal/#econ

For New Year’s Eve 2010, I bought a shrimp ring. You probably have heard in the news, (it made headlines on the NBC Nightly news about three months ago), how seafood is raised and processed in some countries, and how antibiotics are put into filthy water to keep fish and other seafood alive. Well, I messed up again in my quest for local/U.S. grown food. I bought a shrimp ring and didn’t look at where it was raised. I got home and saw that is was a product of Thailand, the part of the world where we have been encouraged not to eat seafood from. If you look closely in grocery stores, you will find U.S. raised or “wild caught” shrimp. I just need to pay more attention next time. But, I admit, it is often difficult to shop with two very young kids and I get distracted, and just grab what I need or want so we can hurry and get out of the store before one needs a diaper change or the other has to use the restroom.

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My husband loves to fish, so we also have crappie and sometimes catfish as another local meat option. He goes fishing at a local lake and we are able to enjoy fish a couple of times a month. Other local meat options we have are deer and frogs. We like deer meat, especially the loins and roast. I do not like deer burger. My dad kills a deer or two every year and shares it with us. Justin, our three-year-old, really likes deer meat, and probably eats it better than any other meat. Some summers when we visit my parents in July, my husband and dad go “frogging” or some may call it “gigging,” in my parent’s ponds. They kill several frogs and then my mom cooks them up with some fresh garden vegetables. They are good, but just the thought of eating a frog is kind of gross. Through the years, I have tried many kinds of meat, including snails, alligator, squid, octopus, oysters, (lots of seafood), elk, moose and caribou. My dad and some friends used to go elk hunting in Colorado and bring home elk. One of his friends had family in Alaska and each New Years Eve when I was a kid we would have a neighborhood (it was out in the country) party, and they would serve moose, caribou and salmon from Alaska.

In the fall my mom and I and Justin like to pick persimmons and make cookies. Black walnuts are also ready then, and I have a great uncle that picks them up to use for cooking. So, in your quest to eat local food, take a look at what’s around you. Do you have space for a garden or fruit trees or maybe some brambles? Maybe you can grow some things in containers. Do you like fish? Go fishing and stock up on fish to get you through the winter months. Be sure you have a license and only catch your daily limit if not a private pond. Make the connection with some local meat and egg producers. If you are in Adair and surrounding counties, and don’t know who they are, I would be glad to tell you. Visit your farmers’ market each week and purchase things you are not growing. Buy extra and freeze it. Also, the farmers’ market is a great place to buy local honey, jam, jelly, preserves, pickles, salsa, etc. Farmers’ Markets in Missouri typically run from the first of May until the end of October. You might consider joining a CSA (community-supported agriculture). We only have one in Adair County that I know of, but if you are not in this county, there could be one where you live. CSA’s supply you with fresh produce, herbs, and sometimes eggs during the growing season. You could visit a wholesale auction and stock up on fresh produce. A wholesale auction is where growers go to sell their products and where buyers come to purchase them. Produce is often sold in large quantities, but there have been several times when I have found small lots of produce. You can even buy “cull” tomatoes if you are interested in them for canning purposes. The closest one to Kirksville is in Drakesville, Iowa. It runs May-October.

We’ve not talked about food miles yet. “In the U.S., the average grocery store’s produce travels nearly 1,500 miles between the farm where it was grown and your refrigerator. About 40% of our fruit is produced overseas and, even though broccoli is grown all over the country, the broccoli we buy at the supermarket travels an average of 1,800 miles to get there. Notably, nine percent of our red meat comes from foreign countries, some as far away as Australia and New Zealand. Our food is trucked across the country, hauled in freighter ships over oceans, and flown around the world. A tremendous amount of fossil fuel is burned to transport foods such long distances, releasing carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter and other pollutants that contribute to global climate change, acid rain, smog and air and sea pollution. The refrigeration required to keep our fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats from spoiling during their long journeys burn up even more fossil fuel. In contrast, local and regional food systems produce 17 times less CO2". Source: http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/whybuylocal/

“Economics of local-The significant difficulties of earning a living wage as a farmer are often masked by headlines about subsidies and record high crop prices. In reality, farmers are earning less producing crops these days than they did in 1969, despite the fact that American farmers have almost doubled productivity over the past four decades. Farmers aren’t just earning less, current prices do not even cover the cost of production. Until just recently the difference between farm income nationwide and what it cost to grow and raise American crops could be counted in the billions. To make ends meet, and often to get health insurance, more than half of American farmers work a second off-farm job”. Source: http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/whybuylocal/

Think about ways you can be more sustainable and eat local foods. There are numerous websites out there with information on sustainability and buying and eating local, and as spring approaches think about some things you can plant in your garden that you can freeze, pickle or preserve to enjoy through the winter months. Other Sources: http://www.localharvest.org/
ALL-AMERICA SELECTION WINNERS-VEGETABLES

All-America Selections is pleased to announce the first seven of the 2011 AAS Winners. Following a trial period where these new, never-before-sold varieties are "Tested Nationally and Proven Locally" the AAS judges have submitted their evaluations and selected only the best performers as AAS Winners. With this announcement, these varieties are available for immediate sale and distribution. Commercial growers and retailers should contact their favorite seed supplier and request AAS Winner tags from tag and label suppliers. Home gardeners will find seeds and plants available in time for their 2011 gardening season. See color photos at http://www.all-americaselections.org/Winners.asp.

Tomato ‘Lizzano’ F1 AAS Vegetable Award Winner—‘Lizzano’ is a vigorous semi-determinate tomato variety with a low growing, trailing habit excellent for growing in patio containers or hanging baskets. In the garden, some staking will benefit this plant despite a nice compact and uniform growth habit. The durable, appealing plants grow 16 to 20 inches tall with a compact spread of only 20 inches. Expect abundant yields of high-quality, bright red, baby cherry sized fruits. The small 1-inch fruits weigh about 0.4 ounces. The plentiful fruit set allows for continual harvest beneficial for the home gardener. Judges noted better eating quality, yield and plant habit than comparisons. ‘Lizzano’ is the first Late Blight tolerant cherry fruited semi-determinate variety on the market. Disease resistant plants will last later into the growing season. Harvest begins 105 days from sowing seed or 63 days from transplant. Bred by Pro-Veg Seeds Ltd.

Tomato ‘Terenzo’ F1 AAS Vegetable Award Winner—‘Terenzo’ is a high yielding red cherry fruited ‘Tumbler’ type of tomato that is a prolific producer on a tidy low-growing, trailing plant. The round fruit is a standard size cherry having an approximate size of 1½ inches and an average weight of 0.7 ounces. A brix sugar content of 6.0% ensures this is sweet tasting tomato. With a plant height of only 16 to 20 inches, this compact variety is suitable for growing in hanging baskets or containers as a patio type tomato. This very easy-to-grow determinate bush variety requires little maintenance and produces fruits that are more resistant to cracking. ‘Terenzo’ is loaded with a bountiful harvest of flavorful, easy-to-pick fruits throughout the summer heat. Bred by Pro-Veg Seeds Ltd.

Pumpkin ‘Hijinks’ F1 AAS Vegetable Award Winner—‘Hijinks,’ defined as lively enjoyment and unrestrained fun is an apt name for this pumpkin winner that offers loads of seasonal fun for kids. This winning pumpkin variety produces small-sized, 6 to 7 pound fruits, of a very uniform size and shape. Smooth deep orange skin with distinctive grooves gives a very classy appearance to fall decorations and is ideal for painting or carving. The strong durable stem makes a great handle. Gardeners can expect high yields, notable resistance to powdery mildew, easy fruit removal from plants and excellent stem attachment. Allow plenty of space in the garden for long vines that spread up to 15 feet. Early to mature, this Cucurbita pepo is ready for harvest in about 100 days from sowing or 85 days from transplant. Bred by Sakata Seed America, Inc.

SOURCE: http://www.all-americaselections.org/Winners.asp

VEGETABLE GARDENING WORKSHOP TO BE HELD IN BROOKFIELD AND KIRKSVILLE

A vegetable gardening workshop will be held Thursday, March 3, from 10:00-3:00 at Park Baptist Church in Brookfield. Topics to be covered include: buying and eating locally grown food, growing vegetables for market, safe handling of produce, soil basics, making and using compost, companion planting, using raised beds, chemical-free pest control, and preventing and controlling tomato diseases. There is no cost to attend. Lunch is on your own, or bring your lunch. You must pre-register by March 1 by calling the Adair County Extension Center at 660-665-9866 or email schutterjl@missouri.edu.

There will also be a vegetable gardening workshop held in Kirksville on March 24 from 9:30-3:00 at the Missouri Department of Conservation Northeast Regional Office. Topics that will be covered include: buying and eating locally grown food, growing vegetables in the home garden, growing small fruits, safe handling of produce, soil basics and compost, companion planting, and chemical-free pest control. A boxed lunch will be available for $5. Please pre-register by March 22 by contacting me at 660-665-9866 or schutterjl@missouri.edu and indicate if you would like a lunch. Lunch must be paid for by March 22. Please give your phone number where you can be reached if necessary.
GARDENING TIPS FOR MARCH

VEGETABLES ALL MONTH:
- Fertilize the garden as the soil is being prepared for planting. Unless directed otherwise by a soil test, 1-2 pounds of 12-12-12 or an equivalent fertilizer per 100 square feet is usually sufficient.
- Cultivate weeds and remove old, dead stalks of last years’ growth from the asparagus bed before new spears emerge.
- Delay planting if the garden soil is too wet.
- Asparagus and rhubarb roots should be planted as soon as the ground can be worked.
- Plant peas, lettuce, radishes, mustard greens, turnips, Irish potatoes, spinach, & onions (seeds and sets) outdoors. Plant beets, carrots, parsley, & parsnip seeds outdoors. Set out broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, & cauliflower transplants into the garden. Start seeds of tomatoes, peppers, & eggplants indoors.

ORNAMENTALS:
- To control Iris borer, clean up and destroy old foliage before new growth begins.
- Fertilize bulbs with a “bulb booster” formulation broadcast over the planting beds. Summer and fall blooming perennials should be divided in spring.
- Loosen winter mulches from perennials cautiously. Gradually start to pull back mulch from rose bushes.
- Dormant mail order plants should be unwrapped immediately. Keep roots from drying out.
- Trees, shrubs, and perennials may be planted as soon as they become available at local nurseries.
- Seeds of hardy annuals such as larkspur, bachelor’s buttons, Shirley and California poppies should be direct sown in the garden now.
- Heavy pruning of trees should be complete before growth occurs. Trees should not be pruned while the new leaves are growing.
- Apply sulfur to the soils around acid-loving plants such as Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Hollies, and Dogwoods. Use a granular formulation at the rate of ½ pound per 100 square feet.
- Apply a balanced fertilizer such as 6-12-12 to perennial beds when new growth appears.
- Spring bedding plants like pansies and toadflax may be planted now.
- Ornamental grasses should be cut to the ground just as the new growth begins.

FRUITS:
- Gradually remove mulch from strawberries as the weather warms.
- Continue pruning grapes. Bleeding causes no injury to the vines.
- Continue pruning apple trees. Burn or destroy prunings to minimize insects and diseases.
- Apply dormant oil sprays. Choose a dry day when freezing temperatures are not expected.
- Spray peach trees with a fungicide for the control of peach leaf curl disease.
- Aphids begin to hatch on fruit trees as the buds begin to open.
- Peaches and nectarines should be pruned just before they bloom.

Source: Missouri Botanical Garden

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 1: Salt River MG mtg, 7 pm, Palmyra Sesquicentennial Building.
March 1: Heartland MG mtg, Brookfield Career Center, 7 pm
March 3: Vegetable Gardening Workshop; See page 3.
March 7: Fabius MG club mtg, Presbyterian Church, 6:30.
March 8: Sullivan County MG mtg, 6 pm, REC Building, Milan.
March 12: Sandhill Farm Maple Sugaring Open House; 1-5 pm, RSVP: 660-883-5543. Join us for a walk to the maple yard, see how the sap cooks down and enjoy yummy maple treats!!!
March: Magic City MG mtg, no info available at this time.
March 15: Kirksville Area MG mtg, 7 pm, Kirksville TCRC.
March 18: Environmentally Friendly Gardening Workshop, Apple Basket Restaurant, Macon. Pre-register by emailing me at schutterjl@missouri.edu or call 660-665-9866. A rain barrel will be given away.
March 23: Growing for the Market, 10-3 in Memphis. Call the Scotland County Extension Center, 660-465-7255 for more information and to pre-register.
March 24: Vegetable Gardening workshop in Kirksville, See page 3.
March 28: Macon-Shelby MG mtg, 6:30 pm, extension office.