IN THIS ISSUE:

Crop Rotation
Olla Irrigation System
Tomato Tricks
Fun Facts
Gardening Cartoon
CROP ROTATION

Many of us have heard of crop rotation and the importance of doing this, but do you know the reason why? According to Crop Rotation Made Easy article from the Bonnie Plant website, it helps keep the soil healthy and fertile. Planting the same plants in the same location repeatedly drains the nutrients from the soil that the plant needs to be at its peak performance. Second, rotating plant families helps manage soil-borne diseases like verticillium wilt & soil-dwelling insects like corn rootworms. These types of diseases and pests prefer certain kinds of plants, and the longer the plants stay in the same soil, the better the chance these enemies will cause problem.

As we all prepare to plant, lay out a plan of how you will rotate your garden for your best growing year. The article offered the diagram below which divides crops into four basic groups: legumes, root crops, fruit crops, and leaf crops.

Article and diagram from: https://bonnieplants.com/the-bonnie-blog/crop-rotation-made-easy/
Urban, Suburban irrigation is becoming more costly to use. Locally one area’s water prices have increased 300%. The cost will only increase as usage increases, rain decreases and drought becomes more enduring. So it is already widely known certain irrigation methods are more efficient - surface flooding is most wasteful, dry irrigation wastes about 25% of the water. In-ground irrigation from water storage areas delivered directly to roots of plants loses generally 5 – 7% moisture to surrounding soil and atmosphere. Many third world desert and drought areas use in-ground watering in their gardens including Africa, Near East, Mexico and some places in our deserts.

I am indebted to Debbie Clithero for inquiring about the use of Ollas and other in-ground watering systems - and why. Ollas are more recommended than semi-buried perforated plastic or metal containers. First look at perforated containers. Gravity pulls water out of punched holes into the soil until the soil is saturated. In some cases, the excess water will run off, leach minerals and nutrients, and possibly block oxygen from the plant root area.

What makes Ollas better to use? Let’s compare. An Olla is a porous clay pot. The water seeps through the walls when the moisture in the surrounding soil is lower than the moisture in the Olla container due to osmosis. As you know, plant roots grow toward moisture and water sources. So roots will suck moisture directly from soil and terra cotta pot walls. Hence, no leeching, no run-off, no water waste. You will find there is less weed growth, less disease on lower plant parts, and you will use less water and mulch.
Construction of Ollas

1. One terra cotta clay pot – any size (i.e. 2”, 4”, 6”, 10”)
2. One terra cotta saucer for lid to fit pot
3. Seal hole in pot bottom with DAP caulk
4. Press a tile or metal foil into the caulk and let dry

Bury the “Olla” pot in the soil up the lower rim. Fill with water, place saucer lid on top. Depending on the temperature and weather, fill the “Olla” as needed. There are many varieties of the “Olla.” Double pots sealed rim to rim with bottom holes sealed (as shown below). Double pots with tubes attached in the top to automatically fill the “Olla.” Be use to refill your Olla when it is 2/3 empty.

At the end of the season, put pots, clean white scum from walls by scrubbing or using muriatic acid.

Many thanks to Tom Bakie for writing this article!
Tomato Tricks

Tying up Your Tomatoes

Most of us are familiar with the plant tape used to tie up tomatoes however I came across a video (see link) which offered another option, both interesting and cheap! Nylon rope is stretchable, easy to tie and a spool of 330 feet can be purchased for around $8.00 on Amazon.  

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceKXPVKI7W4

KLOUD City White 120-Yards Length 1/8" Width Elastic Cord/Elastic Band/Elastic Rope/Bungee/ Black Heavy Stretch Knit Elastic Spool by KLOUD City $7.30

Single Stem Pruning

There are many benefits to single stemming tomato plants including an increase in airflow to the plant, decrease in diseases, more energy goes towards the fruit (increase in size) and the plants are able to be planted closer together, thereby saving some room in your garden. The process is easy as removing any suckers that would eventually develop into production stems. Single stem pruning is used for indeterminant tomato plants and should *not* be used if you have a determinant variety. Check out link this link for examples: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UfMBSJEGNhU
Increasing Production

Did you know that shaking the flower blooms on your tomatoes can increase the fruit production? In tomato plants, pollination occurs when pollen is vibrated/knocked from the male portion of the flower to the female portion of the flower. For instance this can be done by a bee or by you by simply flicking the flower blooms. See this video for a great and easy demonstration: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuDW-f3e-s0
Small pockets of air inside cranberries cause them to bounce and float in the water.

The difference between nectarines and peaches is that nectarines don’t have fuzzy skins. You can graft peach branches onto a nectarine tree or nectarine branches onto a peach tree so you have both types of fruits.

Trees are the longest-living organisms on earth.

The average strawberry has 200 seeds. It’s the only fruit that bears its seeds on the outside.
Garlic mustard is a member of the mustard family, not garlic. This invasive herb outcompetes native plants in the Eastern and Midwestern United States.

Peaches, pears, apricots, strawberries & apples are members of the rose family.

Cartoon Submission – by Charlotte Llewellyn