

Rural Office Offers Garden Program

LAKE ANDES — Gardening season is upon us and the Rural Office of Community Services, Inc. in Lake AnDES is offering a Garden Program for low-income individuals and families.

The Garden Program provides garden seeds, plant and equipment vouchers and tilling vouchers for qualifying families to supplement their food budget by growing their own vegetables. Assistance is also available for qualifying community garden projects.

The Rural Office of Community Services, Inc. assisted 189 households and six community gardens in 2009. Clients estimated more than \$16,000 in combined savings on their grocery bills by growing their own food.

This program is available for households located in 20 coun-

ties, including Aurora, Brule, Bon Homme, Buffalo, Clay, Charles Mix, Davison, Douglas, Gregory, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, Sanborn, Tripp, Todd, Union and Yankton.

In order to qualify for this program, a household's total gross income must be at or below 125 percent of the Federal Income Guidelines. Income guidelines are as follows: one person household — \$13,538, two persons — \$18,213, three people — \$22,888, four people — \$27,563, five people — \$32,238. Please add \$4,675 per person over five people.

To request an application or more information, please contact the Rural Office of Community Services, Inc. at 605-487-7634 or e-mail bsieh@rocsinc.org.

VEGGIES



FLORENCE LOW/SACRAMENTO BEE/MCT

Mmmm, tomatoes. But what happens if you plant too many of the fruit isn't popular in your household?

Grow What Your Family Will Eat

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON

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SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Mel Bartholomew has watched many new gardeners tread down the same row to failure. Their common mistake? They plant too much.

"It's so easy to put more and more in," says the father of square-foot gardening. "You get carried away. But stop and think of the harvest. Are you really going to eat all those radishes?"

Growing our own groceries can be fun and money-saving. And a little planning can keep excess vegetables from causing headaches for the cook and the neighbors.

"That's what inspired me," says Bartholomew, who expanded on his garden-to-table concept in the recently released "The All New Square Foot Gardening Cookbook" (Cool Springs Press, \$19.99, 271 pages).

"When I first started gardening, I thought there was something wrong with the traditional system of rows. I'd watch people in our community garden plant 20 feet of cabbage because that was the length of a row — that's 20 cabbages," he adds.

"I'd quietly ask them, 'How many heads of cabbage did you buy at the supermarket last month?' All those cabbages are going to be ready at once. That's enough to feed three taverns on St. Patrick's Day."

Instead, plan your vegetable garden from the dinner table backward. That's the secret to more rewarding and economical "grocery gardening," say the experts. Start with what your family will actually eat, then plant accordingly (adding a few plants for the bugs).

Many inexperienced gardeners try to balance enthusiasm with appetite as interest in vegetable gardening continues to boom.

According to the National Gardening Association, 2009 saw a 19 percent jump — 7 million more families — in the number of Americans who grow their own vegetables. An increase of 10 percent is expected this year.

"We're off to a great start to spring," says Joe McFarland, Home Depot's western division president. "We've seen incredible interest in planting and growing vegetables and fruit."

And why not? Growing your own veggies can save money. Food safety is in the gardener's own hands. Transportation is not an issue. Gardening is good exercise and a family activity.

Plus, fresh-picked just tastes better.

"A few years ago, we used to stock a few tomato plants," McFarland says. "Now we carry an incredible selection with over 150 different varieties of vegetables. ... We've doubled or tripled the space for live vegetables and herbs in some stores and greatly

expanded the selection of packaged seed."

As for saving money, McFarland says, "The average consumer, for every \$100 invested in buying plants and supplies such as fertilizer, can expect to save \$600 at the grocery store. It's significant."

Robin Ripley, co-author of "Grocery Gardening: Planting, Preparing and Preserving Fresh Food" (Cool Springs Press, \$19.95, 256 pages), knows that too much of a good thing can be a garden turnoff.

Ripley, national gardening columnist for examiner.com, lives on a 20-acre Maryland homestead with a 1-acre vegetable and flower garden.

"I grow food I love to cook," she says. "But I don't grow large quantities. I used to, but I never had time to preserve it. I had my epiphany one summer when I had a huge harvest of cucumbers. My kitchen was full of cucumbers, and late Sunday night I decided to make pickles, even though I had an 8 a.m. flight for work the next morning. I was up all night."

"Now, I'll only grow what we'll eat."

Her advice for newbies: Start small. "Most people don't start small, but you'll have much better success," she says.

Start with a 4-by-4-foot bed close to the house — in view of the kitchen, if possible — and try to make it look like a garden, not a miniature farm.

"A vegetable garden can be very pretty with some flowers and ornamental plants," Ripley says. "If you think you want to garden, but you're not sure, just take a flower bed and squeeze in a few herbs. Make a border out of lettuce. Put cucumbers on a trellis."

But will the kids eat what you grow? Before planting, play show and tell. Take your children (and spouse) to the grocery store's produce department. Show them, for example, a rutabaga; have them tell you if they'd eat it.

Then plan accordingly. If everyone in your family hates squash, don't plant it. But if they can't get enough greens, stagger plantings to keep a steady supply.

"I really like cut-and-come-again vegetables," Ripley says. "For example, Swiss chard — you can cut off just the leaves you need, and it keeps growing. And it's very pretty in the garden."

Start with staples: green onions, carrots, herbs. They can be grown even with little space. Put them in containers or along borders.

Get out a calendar and a calculator. For example: Leaf lettuce takes 45 to 50 days to mature from seed and about a week to sprout. Seed planted today (depending on the weather) will be ready to harvest by Memorial Day.

HOME GARDEN

A One-Of-A-Kind Garden Mosaic

BY ALEXIA ELEJALDE-RUIZ
© 2010, Chicago Tribune

If you worried those arts-and-crafts skills you picked up at summer camp would go to waste, fret not: Your garden is rife with mosaic opportunities to make you a regular Gaudi.

Behold the watering can, a practical gardening tool crying out for some whimsy.

Using shards of china and porcelain figurines, mosaic artist Bonnie Arkin transforms old galvanized metal watering cans into adorable decorative pieces that have been sitting in her garden for years. Granted, the mosaic weighs the can down quite a bit so it's impractical to use the completed can for actual watering, unfortunately. The same technique can be applied to flowerpots, planters, stepping-stones, vases, birdhouses — and even bowling balls to create garden orbs.

Arkin, who has been teaching mosaic workshops at Chicago Botanic Garden for nine years, said the watering can is a sophisticated project, because the rounded surface will require you to work in sections and cut the pieces smaller as you go around the curve, which takes cutting skill as well.

TOOLS NEEDED:
(You'll find these items at craft and hardware stores.)

Goggles
Tile nipper
Plastic bags
Putty knife
Premixed grout and adhesive
Sponge
Gentle scrubbing cleaner, such as Soft Scrub
Craft knife

DIRECTIONS:

1. Treasure hunt. Collect beautiful or endearing items you want to piece together into a mosaic. Traditionally, these are tiles or shards of china that can be found at flea markets and thrift stores or donated from family members. But widen your scope: buttons, charms, beads, coins, pebbles, sea shells, jewelry and even Lego pieces. Arkin advises against using cardboard, paper or fabric because they're too fragile.

2. Break the china. Wearing work goggles, place a plate upside down inside a plastic bag; smack it once in the center with the tile nipper. (Arkin said one student who couldn't bring her self to bash her china double-



LANE CHRISTIANSEN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/MCT

Mosaic artist Bonnie Arkin presses glass shards into the adhesive grout mixture spread on a watering can while demonstrating how to make a mosaic at the Chicago Botanic Garden, March 3, 2010 in Glencoe, Illinois.

bagged it and ran over it with her car. For the sake of your tires and anyone in the vicinity, we are not recommending this.) This type of mosaic is called pique assiette.

3. Cut the shards. Keep your goggles on. To cut large shards into smaller pieces, hold a shard in the mouth of the tile nipper, less than one-quarter inch, and squeeze the handles for a clean break. That's called "nipping." You typically want your pieces to be the size of postage stamps, but go larger or smaller to stay proportional to the frame you're working with. To shape the shards into circles, use your tile nipper to nibble at the edges. That's called "chipping."

4. Apply the grout and adhesive. Traditionally, mosaic artists affix their pieces to the surface with adhesive before spreading grout on top — a good strategy if you're working on intricate designs; Arkin prefers to save time by purchasing premixed grout-and-adhesive-in-one (such as Simplex) and slathering it on in one step. Rest the can on its side on a towel. Using a putty knife, spread a quarter-inch layer of the grout-adhesive mixture over the can surface.

5. Design. Lay your items out like puzzle pieces and let your creativity guide you. You may

have to cut pieces smaller as you go around the curve of the can so that they will rest flat. It's important to "butter" the back of every piece with the grout-adhesive mix before pressing it onto the can so that it sticks better. If the grout starts to stiffen, dip your fingers in water and wet it. If you make a mistake, pull the pieces off, put them in water and start again. Wipe the grout off the front of the shards with a wet sponge as you go along to keep the grout from drying on top.

6. Wait. Let the can dry for a week. Because it's round, you have to work in sections, letting the first section completely dry before turning it over to do the next area, and so on.

7. Tuckpointing. Use a gentle scrubbing medium, such as Soft Scrub, and a scouring sponge to scrub and buff the surface; scrape off any dried grout with a razor blade or X-acto knife. The grout will shrink and crack as it dries, so you will need to spread another layer of grout on top of the finished piece to fill in the grooves. Smooth it over with a wet sponge immediately — you don't want the grout to dry on top.

8. Wait again. Let the can dry another three days, and you're done! If you wish, add more dec-

orations, like porcelain flowers or a string of pearls, with glue; Arkin recommends Household Goop.

BRAVING THE ELEMENTS

If your mosaic art is going to be living outside, take some extra steps to protect it from the elements.

Mosaic artist Becky Paton, whose recently released book "Garden Mosaics" (CICO Books, \$19.95) showcases 25 step-by-step projects for sun catchers, candle holders, placemats and papier-mache cone planters, offered these tips for helping your projects survive the outdoors:

Use waterproof and frost-proof grout containing sand.

If you prefer to glue your pieces to the watering can before you spread on the grout, use a cement-based adhesive. If the watering can is metal and painted, rough up the paintwork to add extra grip. If it's a plastic can, score fine lines in it with a craft or paring knife.

When working on porous surfaces such as wood or terra cotta, coat with a primer first. Make your own primer using one part P.V.A. (wood glue) and three parts water.

Bring your mosaic piece indoors during very cold weather.

Woman Finds Her 'Best Self' In Garden

BY KIM PALMER

© 2010, Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

MINNEAPOLIS — Oprah's mighty influence drives book sales, diet fads and even votes. But who knew that her power extended all the way to a garden in Stillwater, Minn.?

The talk-show queen lit a spark that inspired Sarah Buerkle to reinvent herself — and her landscape.

Ten years ago, when Buerkle was a new mom and disenchanted with her original career in fashion retail management, she attended Winfrey's "Live Your Best Life" touring seminar. "She said, 'Close your eyes, and see your best self,'" Buerkle recalled. "I had a vision of me on a hill, with flowers all around me."

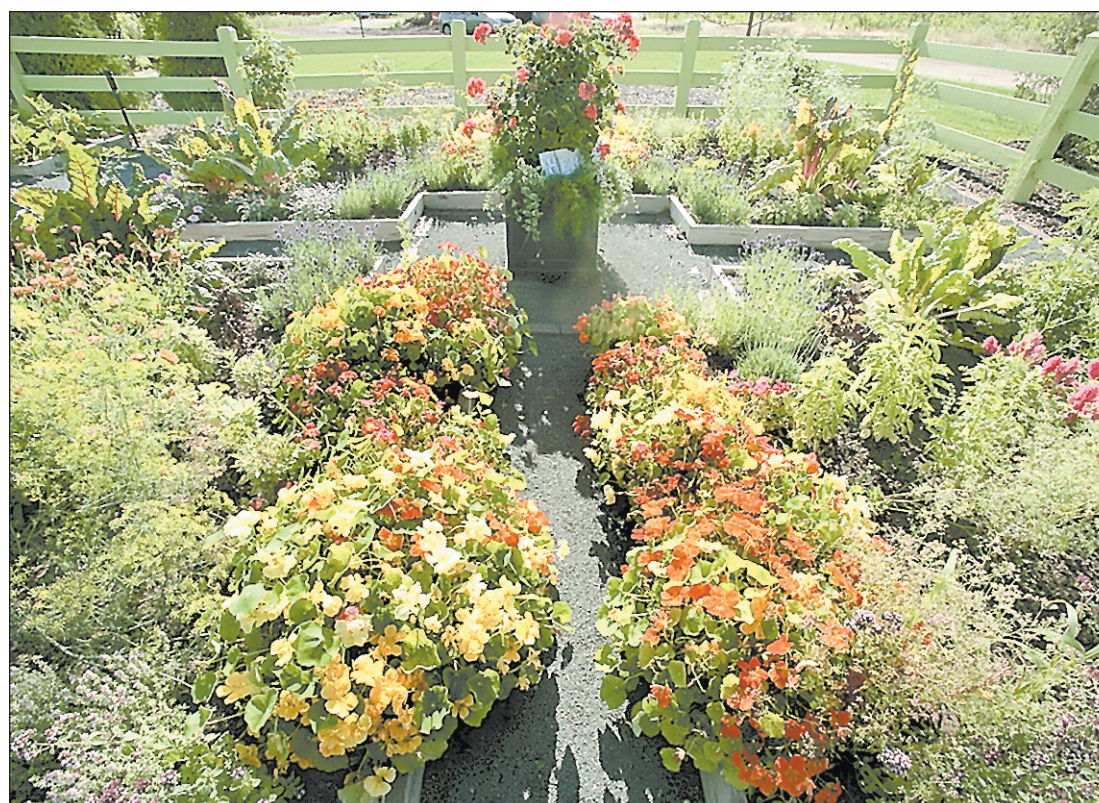
That vision ignited Buerkle's new life as a gardener. She didn't have much experience. But she had recently planted a container garden at their new home, and found she enjoyed choosing and arranging the plants. "I decided I needed something for me," she said. So she started poring over gardening books and experimenting.

"My boys were outside all the time, so I'd be outside, too: planting, weeding and reading books," she said. As she gained knowledge, she gained confidence. Soon she was helping her neighbors plant their window boxes.

When she ran out of garden space at home, she decided she needed a bigger canvas. She and her husband, Scott, began looking for land, and finally found an 11-acre plot a few miles away.

"It was a farm field, with no trees, and a little ravine in back that nestled into the woods," Buerkle recalled. "I wanted to do gardens in front, so you would drive through them to get to the house. And I wanted different garden styles and themes. I had the gardens planned before the house."

In just five years, Buerkle has transformed that farm field into a



JOEL KOYAMA/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT

Nasturtiums add color along a pathway at the home of the Buerkles in Stillwater, Minnesota.

series of gardens that cover about two of their 11 acres. She has a cottage garden, a cutting garden, an herb garden, a vegetable garden, a rain garden, a knot garden and a "wild" garden filled with native plants and the butterflies they attract.

Her favorite spot is the patio garden, with its "weeping wall" water feature. "Anytime you add water, birds come around," she said. "We get hummingbirds, finches, wrens, bluebirds, cardinals, blue jays and woodpeckers."

Buerkle has developed her own garden aesthetic, based on bright colors and creative combinations.

"Cottage gardens are my passion," she said, "but I like to mix in tropicals," including cannas (which she over-winters), mandevilla, banana plants and elephant ear. Buerkle gravitates to pinks and fuchsias, but likes to try dif-

ferent accent colors. "I try to shift a little every year; (last year), I pulled in oranges with the pinks," she said. To unify her palette, she keeps all her garden art in the same tone: dark. "I like bronze and rusted iron," she said. "It looks like it all goes together."

But Buerkle didn't just build a garden — she also became a master gardener and built a thriving garden design and installation business, Sarah's Cottage Creations.

It started with helping her neighbors with their gardens. Then a bigger challenge present-

ed itself. "I got the opportunity to bid on doing all of Liberty's (Liberty on the Lake) community gardens," she said. "It seemed so huge. I said to Scott, 'I'm going to need a trailer.' He said, 'Let's pull that old one up at the cabin out of the weeds.'"

They did. She got the contract, and business has bloomed ever since. Her yard has become her showroom, demonstration garden and laboratory. "It's turned out to be that, although I never meant it to be. I have to practice somewhere," she said with a laugh.

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