

PLANT EXCHANGE

A Look At Jamesville Colony's Garden Methods

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Share tips from your plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or send your questions related to outdoor or indoor plants to news@yankton.net Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St, Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

Quality produce is a trademark of area Hutterite colonies. How is it grown? What tips can we learn that will improve our gardening? Along the way, how can we better understand our neighbors? Harry Wurtz has generously shared his methods and names of varieties that he has found to grow well.

Q: What are methods that help you supply fresh and winter storage produce for the Jamesville Hutterian Brethren?

A: Harry Wurtz has been Garden Manager for the Jamesville Hutterian Brethren of rural Utica, for the past 10 years. He also works with youth in their chores in summer, and in the school year teaches written and spoken High German for 5th – 8th graders, the language for religious training at the colony. Wurtz grew up at Jamesville Colony. His father was born in Canada and his mother came from the Bon Homme Colony.

Hutterite colonies usually have about 10-30 acres of vegetable garden. "Cooperation works for us. We help each other out. If there's hail or a bug problem, or other colonies need help picking their crop, we work together, hand in hand, at no charge," Wurtz said. "It's Hutterite tradition."

About 15 acres of Jamesville Colony vegetable gardens overlook the south bank of the James River. The gardens supply about 120 colony members with fresh produce, vegetables for canning and pickling, and for cooler and freezer storage. The public can purchase excess produce at the colony or at area farmer's markets such as Menno, Viborg and Davis. JoDean's Steakhouse and Lounge in Yankton also buys fresh produce from the colony for the restaurant.

TESTED METHODS

"We have two crops of cabbage," Wurtz said. "Winter cabbage is harvested about Halloween and tastes better after the first killing frost. It stores well; up to about eight months. Some other crops also taste better to be harvested after killing frost: carrots, parsnips, broccoli, winter squash, and winter potatoes. We can cover some carrots with straw for late harvest in March or April. This year we planted 2,000 lbs. of potatoes for our use and for selling. Winter potatoes have better shelf life."

"With 1,100 acres of clay loam bottomland out of production due to flooding of the James River, we had to adjust the garden. Some of the garden land is sandy loam and dries faster and some is clay loam. We use drip tape for irrigation on strawberries, cucumbers, peppers, and tomatoes."

"We start early planting as soon as the soil is dry enough to work. We use a moldboard plow in the garden. It's especially good for root crops such as carrots, as it plows deeply and turns the soil upside down. We plant carrots about 3/4"



Cultivated fields of Jamesville Colony gardens along the scenic James River are ready for next harvest. PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON



Cabbage for fresh use, canning and pickling, and winter storage means several timed crops, according to Harry Wurtz, Jamesville Colony Garden Manager. PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

deep instead of 1/4" and carrots grow straight." By mid June, according to Wurtz, radishes, spinach, asparagus, green onions, leaf lettuce, and early beets are in.

"I'm here every day except Sunday and holidays. My job is to keep the garden clean and producing. It takes about 30 women, boys, and men to weed and about 40-50 to harvest." Long rows are spaced for mechanical cultivation until plants are bigger. "Carrots are loosened with a mechanical digger and potatoes are harvested with a digger. Onions require hand harvest."

HOW TO GROW PREMIER PRODUCE

Cabbages before us are specimen quality. "This one probably weighs 9-10 lbs. (in mid July). We try to be organic and not use herbicide. Once bugs are on the plants, we have to use insecticides but try organic. One mixture we use has liquid fish, potassium, dishwashing detergent, and copper. We started winter cabbage at the end of June."

Onions are a favorite at the colony. "We plant transplants from Texas such as yellow and white Spanish, 'Big Daddy,' and 'Candy.' We plant onion bulbs too as they can go in earlier."

"I think we get quality transplants from Yankton Nurseries," Wurtz said. "We get our tomato, pepper, broccoli cauliflower, and herb plants from him."

We're standing before rows of 200 tomato plants with black plastic covering the ground. "We set them out April 20 with 30 gal. water bags around each one as a mini greenhouse. Plants were protected to 28 degrees F. A problem with the bags is managing the air exchange around the plants and we did lose some. A month later we set out more tomatoes."

The Colony needs some tomatoes at one time for canning. Here are rows of 1,300 plants. "We can tomatoes, pizza sauce, and salsa so we plant 'Belmont,' 'Big Boy,' 'Sunshine,' and 'Better Boy.' These plants lay on black plastic and are drip irrigated. Because air circulation is important, Wurtz has tried north/south

rows, but prefers east/west rows so wind can follow the row. Cherry tomatoes that bear until frost are caged. "We use cattle panel and make them in the shop."

Two hundred sweet bell pepper plants, with black plastic for weed control and moisture conservation, along with a few jalapeños, have begun bearing in mid July. "We rotate tomatoes/peppers and all produce every three years, and include fallow ground, so that none are back here until the fourth year."

"Our corn is in five patches and lasts until the third week of September. We want corn for freezing and corn on the cob, and like 'Bodicious,' 'Yellow Sweet' which is related to 'Kandy,' and 'Ambrosia' which is a bicolor corn."

Cucumbers are bearing well in mid July. "We picked 25 or so bushels today. I fog the plants with a mixture when their leaf pores are open." His mixture includes liquid fish, a fungicide, and copper. A large patch of dill is nearby for making pickles. "We pick it before the

head turns light brown. The stem can also be used for flavor."

One of the watermelons Wurtz has planted the past couple of years is 'Sangria,' an oblong melon, weighing 15 lbs or so. "It's sweet. These days with morning dew and more heat, they grow better. Sometimes we treat melon vines with an Epson salt and sugar water to help set fruit." We can see acres of various melons, including 'Super Star' cantaloupe. "We plant rows 15' apart and the vines grow together."

"We grow 'Snack Jack' pumpkins, about 4" in diameter, because they are full of seed. The naked seed have no hulls and are ready to bake. Other pumpkins are for pies. 'Pink Jumbo' winter squash are like butternut squash, and we grow them along with acorn and spaghetti squash."

TRADITIONAL FAVORITES

Wurtz is practical about what is grown in the garden. "We need volume for canning, variety for fresh, we stick with what most people like, and a few new varieties. We are standing before 1 1/2 acres of potatoes – Yukon Gold, Red Vikings, and russet white."

"This vine peach is an old German Hutterite food." It grows on a vine like cucumber. "The fruit is somewhat like a four-inch mango. It is canned with lemon, lime, or orange."

One pickle traditional uses winter melon. "It grows to about 10 lbs. and the meat is pinkish/red."

A special Hutterian Brethren mid-November meal that precedes Thanksgiving Day is called Hubchinka and comes at the end of produce harvest and poultry butchering. "It's for giving thanks to the Lord."

Traditions are a part of this century-old Anabaptist communal colony. According to Wurtz, the first Hutterite colony in the United States was established at Bon Homme near Tabor, South Dakota in 1874 with immigrants from Russia. In 1918, members of the Jamesville Colony went to Canada because of their religious beliefs about participating in war. Many Hutterite colonies remain in Canada today. Some moved back to the United States, as did the Jamesville Colony in 1936. Website about Hutterites: www.Hutterites.org

Throughout the season, Wurtz makes daily field checks for infestations or water needs. With laddered or staggered planting, he anticipates needs for the next harvest. Some ground is fallow, some has been succession planted to later crops, but all crops are rotated. Wurtz has planted many crops over several weeks to ensure fresh supply over the season. The colony continues to can, dry, and freeze produce for the coming year, with walk-in cooler storage cabbages, parsnip, potatoes and carrots.

Excess produce is for sale to the public until about the holidays, when Hutterites take time to thank God for abundant harvest. The public is welcomed to contact the colony for produce needs at 605.364.7347.

A VISIT WITH DR. DENNIS TODEY

Q: Is this 2011 growing season different from others in temperature and precipitation? Was temperature and precipitation different this growing season, April 1-Sept. 18, compared to past years?

A: Thanks to Dr. Dennis Todey, State Climatologist and Associate Professor, Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering, South Dakota State University, for providing data and comments. Data for average temperature included data from the years 1971-2000. Notice the difference as a positive or negative in the deviation from average temperature. Likewise, the difference in total precipitation can be seen in the deviation from total precipitation.

IS THIS GROWING SEASON DIFFERENT IN TEMPERATURE AND PRECIPITATION TO PAST YEARS?

Town	Avg Temp	Deviation	Total Precip.	Deviation
Academy	63.0	-0.3	22.47	6.17
Crofton	64.5	-0.6	21.95	2.48
Hartington	64.1	-1.9	23.72	5.63
Menno	65.7	0	14.36	-2.11
Tyndall	65.7	0.2	14.12	-2.8
Vermillion	66.4	-0.5	18.55	0.73
Yankton	63.2	0.5	22.09	4.16

Dr. Todey provided the data for towns listed from April 1, 2011-Sept. 18, 2011, since the question is about the growing season. He chose comparison data from the past 30 years.

"Average temperature and precipitation are compared to the 1971-2000 averages. The 30-year average is the standard we use. You will note that temperatures are all close to average," Todey said. "This is a bit misleading because we had cold early temperatures balanced by very warm July temperatures. Most of the growing-degree-day totals end up being close to average, also."

Some first frost dates were earlier than usual this year. "The locations that did go below freezing around Sept. 15 were a couple of weeks earlier than average," Todey said. "Average freeze dates (temperature less than 32 degrees F), are all in the last week of September to first week of October (in the Yankton and surrounding areas). So the conditions last week were a couple weeks earlier than average."

"The other piece that I always remind people about freeze-frost dates and averages is that the dates are an average. About half the time, the date is before, about half after. A week to 10 days around the average date is a very common time."

For information about South Dakota weather and climate in real time, cumulative data links, and his blog, see Dr. Todey's website: www.climate.sdstate.edu.

A DROUGHT-HARDY PLANT



Fuchsia blooms and variegated leaves of the drought-hardy ice plant in this hanging basket can take the hottest days of summer, according to Judy Utley of Yankton. In winter, enjoy the succulent indoors in a spot with some direct light. This plant propagates easily by breaking off portions and rooting them in sand. PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

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OCTOBER PLANT TIPS

Bill Conkling, who has just completed his master gardener training, is the owner of Green King Lawn Care. (605.660.0618) He has been in the lawn care business in the Yankton area for the past 12 years. Thanks to Conkling for the tips to prepare your yard for winter:

1. Lower the mowing height on your last few times you mow. Cut the grass shorter (2 - 2 1/2 inches). This prevents grass from getting matted down.
2. Remove leaves from your yard or mulch them in. Leaves left in the yard that become wet can smother grass and cause winter die off. If the leaves are dry and not too thick you can mulch them into the yard. This is a great soil amendment. If there are too many to mulch, rake them into bags and keep them dry. They will make great garden mulch next spring.
3. Blow leaves out of landscaped areas. This makes spring cleanup easier and prevents rotting leaves

from staining decorative rocks.

4. Trim bushes. This will also help prevent leaves and debris from becoming stuck in them.

5. Check trees for branches needing to be trimmed, especially branches hanging over the roof of your house. Heavy snow may force them to rub against the roof or potentially break and fall onto the roof. It is easier to trim them now than with 6 inches of snow on the roof.

6. Blow out your irrigation system. Many systems have a gravity drain, but lines can sink and retain water. This may result in the water freezing and the line bursting, requiring them to be dug up in the spring.

7. Clean your gutters. I recommend weekly cleaning as long as leaves keep falling.

Snow can come at any time and gutters filled with leaves and snow creates several problems. Not only will it prevent proper draining, but also the combination of leaves and snow can add significant weight to the gutters, causing them to sag.

Congratulations



Accents on Art Ribbon Cutting

The Yankton Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Committee hosted a ribbon cutting for Accents on Art located at 1506 Oakwood Dr. Louise Lyman owner works with original paintings done in oil, acrylic watercolors & pastels, and will customize and personalize special works including portraits. To see these art pieces you can go to: <http://accentsonart.madeinsouthdakota.com> or you can call her at (605)665-4265.

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