



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

Tammy Dolejsi and son Brandon, a senior at Yankton High School, are glad for this season's harvest of cucumbers after past years of flash flood, hail, and drought at the gardens. They found a box full this evening.

## Plant Exchange

# 'What A Garden Should Do'

## Community Garden Harvest Offers Multiple Benefits

Share tips from your outdoor or indoor plant experience, give us a tour of your plant site, or just let us know what you enjoy most about the plants and people who grow them. Contact [news@yankton.net](mailto:news@yankton.net) Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON  
P&D Correspondent

Donelle Gerlach, assistant manager at the University of South Dakota Bookstore in Vermillion, is gathering produce at their family plot with son Derek who is five.

"This is our first year at the [Healthy Yankton] community gardens," Donelle said. "We had a bigger garden at our previous house." They have grown black tomatoes and tomatillos for the first time this year. "My husband's the tomato fan. We've tried others. Leaves and stem have a green / black tinge."

How did they know when it's ripe? "It's black. They're a cherry tomato. We picked twelve - fifteen tonight." It's their first tasting.

"Tomatillos we're struggling with," she said. "We'd eaten and cooked with them before." Now they're growing them.

"I think they're too close together. They look sick and [husks] are not filling with fruit. Usually we can fix it when a bug is on the plant. I'll have to look it up online," she said.

"The community gardens benefited us," she said. "We're so sold that next year we want a second plot. Our garden helps to feed us."

"That's what a garden should do," son Derek said.

"I know where my son is getting his food," she said. "It doesn't have pesti-

cides on it and I'm glad."

"Before I didn't like it, but the first time I tried corn, I loved it," Derek said. "The first time I tried corn on the cob, loved it too." About the produce in the bag this evening, he said, "I love yellow peppers. They're sweet and juicy. Mommy loves the onions."

Derek helps in the garden. "I check if they're ready. I pulled these onions."

"He's Mommy's planting buddy," Donelle said.

"You plant it with dirt on it and sunshine goes on it and it will grow, grow, grow," Derek said. "Sometimes when we come here it's a tiny fruit. Then when we come here again, there's a big fruit. See this pointy weed? If you pull it, ouchy!"

Then he pointed down. "See the tomato in the ground? I thought tomatoes grow [on plants]. Potatoes look like a big round rock." He walked on down the row, carefully avoiding vines.

"That's how I was raised," Donelle said. "We'd go strawberry picking with my folks. We'd fill an ice cream bucket. I remember it like it was yesterday. He's been helping me since he was two. I'd put in the seed and he'd pat. Boys and dirt."

Tammy Dolejsi and son Brandon talk while they harvest cucumbers. She works with Lewis & Clark Behavioral Health Services. He is a senior at Yankton High School and helps with Special Olympics sports during the school year.

"We've been here three years at the gardens but every year until now, the weather hasn't cooperated," said Tammy. One year some of the community gardens flooded from rain, one year hail devastated many gardens, and last year the heat and drought were a challenge.

"This year we've got lots of cucumbers," she said.

Why a better year? "No hail, no storms," Brandon said.

"We do this for fun, for therapy, for family time to hang out together. We like canning together," she said. Brandon helps with that too. "We've been making pickles."

Brandon doesn't mind working in the garden. "I just like it. I volunteered to help Mom." He said that the cucumbers have been coming in since mid-July.

"It looks like we'll get a couple more jars here," Tammy said. "I'm impressed that we've made it this long [mid August]. We've had the best water there is, rain this year. It's not helping onions, but you take one to get the other, I guess."

She continues, "We put weed barrier cloth and grass clippings down [around the cucumber plants]. We used that because the vines get weeds and it's hard to keep up. When the tomatoes come in we'll have a jungle!"

Their row of mature dill is fragrant. "It smells good if nothing else. It adds to the ambiance of the garden," she said.

They also have beans coming in. "We've been eating them as fast as they come in. One of the kids' friends said to sauté them, so the kids have been eating them. We don't have a lot extra. Planting for the right amount is hard to attain in a garden."

"My younger son also comes out and helps. Brandon had to either help Mom or Dad tonight and he chose the lesser of two evils," she laughed. My husband comes out too. We pull weeds and its good to be outside."

## September Plant Tips

Diane Hofer is owner of Backyard Gardens in Beresford, SD, located north on 2nd St and East at Prairie. For inquiries, Diane can be reached at 605-254-2949. When she retired as a music teacher, she opened a garden and antique center nine years ago to "keep herself busy". Her gardens that show how plants look as they grow, are always open.

She also adds antiques and craft items to her gardens. Mark your calendar for Backyard Gardens perennial dig about the last weekend of May for bare root plants at a reduced price.

- September is when I evaluate how things are spaced in my gardens. Since the plants are in full growth by then, it's easy to see what needs more space or where I could fill in with a plant or two.

- I try to stay diligent with the weeding. The better the garden looks in the

fall, the less work in the spring. I used a pre-emergent herbicide in the spring and weeds seem to be less of a problem, but they still come. My favorite tool for weeds at any time is a sharp kitchen knife. That way I weed under the plant, root and all, without disturbing the soil.

- Perennials definitely need deep watering in those hot September days. I aim for an inch of water each week.

- Daylilies, peonies and irises are perfect candidates

for division in the fall. I water them in well and choose a cooler part of the day to do transplanting.

- Deadheading annuals and perennials will extend their bloom time for the cooler months ahead. I especially pay attention to the perennials that seem to scatter seed to abundance. Nepeta or catmint, in particular, seems to appear all over the garden in the spring if I haven't cleaned them up a bit in September.

## Gardener To Gardener

Share what you find useful for gardening.

Jean Koupal of rural Yankton is an experienced gardener and recently completed Master Gardener training from South Dakota State University Extension. She shares some of her favorite perennials and growing tips for better results.

- Bee Balm** (Monarda) grows best in full sun but will tolerate light shade. It thrives in moist soil that is rich in organic matter such as compost, manure, or leaf mold. Allow good air circulation around Bee Balm plants to prevent powdery mildew. Cutting the flowers right after they finish blooming will stimulate a second flowering in the same year. In the fall, prune your Monardas to within an inch of the ground.

- Clematis** is a vine that grows best in sunny locations. At minimum, they should receive five - six hours of direct sunlight daily. Roots should be shaded to keep the root system cool and moist. Plant low growing annuals or ground covers around the base of the clematis. Apply mulch in spring to help keep the root system shaded and cool. Soil should be kept moist but not wet. Keep clematis watered during hot weather and dry spells. Prune clematis to promote flowering. But before you do, find out if your variety blooms on last year's or current season's growth. Check plant tag or request information where you purchased it. (Don't prune if you can't find out if your variety blooms on last year or current season's growth.)

A. Variety blooms on last year's growth: These varieties of clematis bloom early in the season and should not be pruned except for dead wood pruning in early spring after the leaf buds open slightly.



B. Variety blooms on current season's growth: Cultivars in this group mainly flower on new wood produced in the current year (new season's growth) and should be pruned back severely in late winter (February) when they are completely dormant, to about twelve - fourteen inches. Leave at least two pairs of buds on each stem of the plant.

- Coneflower** (Echinacea) has season-long colorful daisy-like flowers. Perfect perennial for sunny locations, colors include magenta, orange, pink, purple, white, and yellow. They are fragrant and produce masses of blossoms in mid-summer until frost. Coneflowers perform well in well-drained locations, but do not perform well in constantly damp soil. They may be deer resistant and I love them because they attract butterflies and birds into my gardens.

- Hostas** have many varieties of leaf shapes, colors, and sizes and plants are easy to grow in my shade garden. Leaves range from narrow to very broad or heart shaped. Leaf texture may be puckered, shiny, or smooth. Colors include yellow, white, and greens to blue-green. Hosta flowers are shaped like bells, and are great for attracting hummingbirds. Flowers are white, lilac or blue, on stalks that rise above the foliage in mid-summer.

- Oriental Lilies** are large and have exotic blooms that come in an array of colors. Lilies should be grown in full sun all day because shade can causes weak stems on plants. Good drainage is important. I use the compost from our compost pile to amend heavy, clay soils in my gardens and add a layer of mulch. I remove flowers as soon as they die, but do not remove too much stem. I cut right underneath the flower head. Keep the stems on the plant until they die back so they receive the nutrients necessary for the next growing season. I cut the dead stems down to the ground in late fall or early spring.

## Peppers And Pilsner



Vegetables grow in plant beds this summer on Madison Wisconsin capitol grounds to show simplicity and variety possible for small spaces. On Saturday mornings in downtown Madison, the right of way curbs for eight blocks around the capitol are filled with produce, flowers, honey, baked goods, meats, and crowds of shoppers. Community GroundWorks of Madison is a nonprofit organization that sponsors projects such as the capitol vegetable demonstration beds to feature gardening, urban farming, healthy eating, and natural restoration awareness for children and adults. An example of Community GroundWorks and Madison Chamber of Commerce cooperation is this local brewery that will feature Pepper Pilsner Beer after area grown peppers ripen. (Photos by Brenda K. Johnson)

## Plant Exchange: Blog With Us!

This blog is an interactive site for people of our USDA Zone 4-5a region to exchange ideas about plants. Want to read some past Plant Exchange features you missed or share a comment about plants?

- Area gardeners share flower and vegetable gardening tips
- See local nursery agave in bloom after 35 years.
- How does a local gardener raise Mason bees to increase fruit tree pollination?
- How does a local homeowner replace lawn with a cottage garden and personalize her backyard with Pinterest ideas?

- For what's blooming around the United States and elsewhere see "Garden Bloggers Bloom Day" September 15th link.

Check our blog at: [www.brendakjohnson-plantexchange.wordpress.com](http://www.brendakjohnson-plantexchange.wordpress.com)

# Keep Your Culinary Herbs Fresh All Winter

BY MARY ANN KING

Rain made lovely goodness for my garden. My culinary herbs have flourished this season. I will begin herb harvesting and storing using the following techniques for wintertime cooking.

These techniques are easy to do, just make sure the herbs are freshly washed and dry before they are stored. After gently washing remove the water with a ride in a salad spinner. Then layout the herbs on paper towels to air-dry.

### DRIED HERBS

Low moisture herbs such as Oregano, Rosemary, Dill, Bay, Sage, Thyme, Mint and Summer Savory are quite successful with this method. Cut healthy branches, remove any dry or diseased leaves and remove lower leaves along the bottom of the branch. Gather into a bundle 4 to 6 branches and tie together with a string. Hang the herbs in a dark but airy space



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON  
Mary Ann King tells how basil and other herbs can be preserved for fresh taste in few steps.

and let dry for several weeks. When the herbs are 'crunchy' dry they are ready storage. Label with name and date, airtight containers such as zip lock bags or glass jars. Whole leaves retain more flavor, so wait to

crush the herb until you are ready to use them. Be sure to discard any leaves that show signs of mold. Store you containers in a cool, dry place away from sunlight.

### FREEZING METHODS

I have found several ways to freeze fresh herbs; in oil or water or chopped and bagged. All green herbs do well with these methods.

Covering with oil or water seems to retain the bright green colors.

You simply place handfuls the cleaned herb in a food processor and pulse until chopped then add a slight amount of either olive or vegetable oil and pulse once again. I like chopped herbs not pureed.

Place the chopped herbs into an ice cube tray and freeze. Once frozen remove cubes and place in zip lock bags, remove air and pop back into freezer.

Sometimes I do not want oil with my herbs so I use water instead of oil. I rough chop the

herbs, place them in ice cube trays and pour water over the top. Freeze and store in the same fashion as the oil method.

There are times I will simply give herbs such as chives a chop or remove leaves of tarragon and place in a zip lock bag then freeze. Another method that I like to do for easy preparation and storage is to place branches Rosemary, Thyme, Tarragon, Sage and stems of Chives on a baking

sheet and freeze. For storage place frozen branches in zip lock bags, remove air and place back into freezer. Crumble off what you need for a recipe and put remaining back into freezer.

Be sure to date all containers and use herbs within a year of harvesting as they start to loose color and flavor.

Ah! The thought of a cold winter night with a pot of soup and my own herbs makes me smile. Yum! Bon Appétit!

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