

Children's Garden Club
Volume # 6, Sheet #3
March 5, 2005
Vegetables from Around the World
Sherwood's Forest-Nursery & Garden Center
2651 Barrett Station Road

Welcome to the March meeting.

I would like to Thank You all for coming and especially Dave for hosting this month's meeting. Dave has some neat and fun things planned for today. How is everyone's dish garden doing from last month? Did everyone send in there application for the youth entries for the Home Show?

Today we are going to focus on cool weather vegetable crops. For those of you who were with us in 2002 might remember it was the year of the spinach.

Spinach is one of these cool season crops that germinate and grow at lower temperatures in the spring and fall and are not injured by light frost. There is a difference between a frost and a freeze. Do you know? An inexpensive way to protect small plants is to cover with a milk jug with the bottom cut off. Be sure to push the edges into the dirt a little to prevent cold air from creeping in underneath.

As a general rule, begin the vegetable-growing season St. Patrick's Day (March 17th), again, weather permitting. There could be snow on the ground. You can begin with the planting of Cole crops-cabbage, kale broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, peas, spinach, garlic and onion sets. Cool season crops generally perform poorly during periods of extended hot temperatures. Leaf lettuce and other greens bolt and produce flowers and the foliage tastes bitter. Peas stop producing pods. Crops such as onions, garlic and potatoes require cool weather to become established before producing the harvest during the summer months.

Outline of Cole Crops: Cabbage, Kale, Broccoli, and Cauliflower:

What are Cole Crops? They are member of the Mustard Family - Brassica.

Cole cultivation - History has been cultivated for over 3000 years - which Evolved into several distinct vegetables - wild cabbage - which is found Growing from Southern England & Western France to Northern Spain.

Kale - is mentioned in Greek literature around 600 B.C. - cool season crop - Will tolerate light frost does not grow well during heat of summer.

Cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*, Capitata group) Developed from wild, leafy Non-heading plants which occur throughout Europe.

Modern (present day) Cabbage thought to have originated in Germany - both red/white/green by 1150 heading cabbage were in use by 1500's

Broccoli (*Brassica oleracea*, Italica group) Developed from various leafy cabbage forms in eastern Mediterranean spread to Northern Europe from Italy in 18th Century - first called Italian asparagus. Plants grow as a cool weather crop the flower head or green branching stalk, best if harvest with heads together with 6" inches of stem before the yellow flower develops. Broccoli is one of the most popular Cole/Cabbage crops families with home Gardeners and is highly productive. It has many Health benefits associated with eating Broccoli.

Brussels sprouts (*Brassica oleracea* Germmifera group) they have been grown near Brussels, Belgium for hundreds of years, first reached England & France around 1800. The Sprouts or small heads along the upright stem Best to harvest when they develop around 1" to 2" inches in diameter.

Cauliflower - originated with cabbage is grown in southern Europe it is most Difficult of the family to grow. Grown for the White head called a curd. Most cold sensitive of the family and does not tolerate heat.

Kohlrabi (*Brassica oleracea*, Grongulodes) Originated in northern Europe in 15th century. The Stem remains short and grows forming edible corm which is rounded budlike, best harvested when young up to the size of a tennis ball, peel before cooking due to the skin. Kohlrabi taste like cabbage but sweeter. It is usually a direct sow seed plant.

History of Greens (Collard greens) date back to prehistoric times, and are one of the oldest members of the cabbage family. Collards are also known as the tree cabbage or non-heading cabbage. Greens originated in the eastern Mediterranean, but it wasn't until the first Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia in the early 1600s that America got its first taste to the dark green leafy vegetable.

VEGETABLE GARDENING WITH YOUR CHILDREN

When you start to garden with your children, be patient; try to forget your adult perspectives. Remember sometimes their attention span is not as long as yours. Do not attempt to keep their interest in an all day planting.

Children love to play, to dig in the dirt - why fight it! Just substitute soil for dirt - confine the area, add some of Mother Natures Magic - sow some seed or plant some transplants/cell packs and turn play into a family oriented adventure, and experience America's # 1 outdoor activity.

Many parents are finding gardening as an excellent way to spend quality time with their children. Everyone is able to learn more about Mother Nature and teach each other lessons of working with nature, farming down scaled to a home garden. Understanding our environment and being aware of life around us. Give Your children a gift: A LOVE FOR GARDENING!

What does gardening do for Kids? It helps them build self-esteem, teaches them to respect the environment and provides hours of fun. Better still, it's inexpensive and just outside your back door!

Children build self-esteem by tackling new projects and producing successful results. Since the results of gardening are highly visible, eye-catching and fragrant, your kids will feel justifiably proud of what they have grown and accomplished.

Help your children in thinking about what will be happening when they are planting seeds and (or transplants seedlings - cell packs) the time it will take to turn into plants and onto produce fruit/vegetables. By this process your child can learn the magic of Mother Nature.

Getting back to the kids attention - they are also impatient; so they like to see results - soon - for a quick early spring crop I might suggest the Radish - with sandy loose organic soil with Broccoli and tomatoes would/could be a good start.

Although half of the fun of gardening is watching the plants grow. To keep their interest you now can give them their own child-sized rakes, hoes, spades, gloves, and wheelbarrows and they can handle the chores at their speed.

Before you get too far along into the project I might recommend making a journal. This project is great right after you have started and they can record what

they have done so far. This journal/book can be a spiral notebook, a 3 ring binder or whatever works for you. Collect/save your seed packets, pictures, stickers of flowers, vegetables, bees, butterflies, bugs, birds, etc. This is especially good for those learning to count. Record what seeds/plants you planted, the date, day of the week, time. How long it took, how many. Did you start the seed yourself indoors? The Date of the first blossom/s and of course you're first picking/harvest. How was the weather, any garden visitor's bees, butterflies, birds, rabbits, squirrels snakes?

Also - Always let them allow them to be creative and do some of there own drawings who knows they could become a most treasured art.

Getting Started: It's best to select a sunny spot in your yard with a nearby water source. Be sure soil is moist not wet - soil should crumble in your hand. The older children and adults turn soil over while younger set stomp clods or break them up. Please note do not take dig larger than you can handle the first year, its best to add then to have too much to do. Teach TOOL SAFETY and appreciation of them especially the rake to be prong down or could end up in you face and really hurt.

Beyond starting with cool crops I also suggest to choose seeds that are easy for young fingers to handle and count, such as sunflower, pumpkin, watermelon seeds. Herb plants are also good such as parsley, chives, mint they can smell them and taste them early in there growth. (Beware of the mint it can take over great as a container plant if necessary plant pot).

