



Laguna Woods Village®

THE GARDEN CENTER

MARCH 2019

NEWSLETTER



A LITTLE BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE

If you missed our inaugural Garden Center newsletter, welcome to the March 2019 issue (our second publication). We covered many important topics last month, primarily regarding compliance issues and rules and regulations. Since the release of our first newsletter, we appreciate the efforts many of our gardeners have been making to follow the

In this Issue

- **New gardeners:** Get your plot off the ground
- **Organic gardening:** What does it really mean?
- **Plot enemy:** Stinging nettle
- **Featured recipe:** Tomato soup
- **Volunteer Corner**

GARDEN CENTER 1 | 23742 MOULTON PARKWAY • GARDEN CENTER 2 | 23102 VIA CAMPO VERDE | 949-597-4322

HOURS | BOTH CENTERS ARE OPEN SUNUP TO SUNDOWN 365 DAYS A YEAR



rules for the benefit of all visitors and plot holders. Thanks very much for your help.

However, weeds remain our single most troublesome compliance issue. Plot holders are responsible to rid their plots—as well as half of the area into the immediate walkway/paths outside of their plots—of all weeds. When clearing weeds, please be sure to remove them one half of the way out, front sides and rear, from your plot.

Everyone has a stake in the upkeep and appearance of the Garden Centers. It is our goal to keep the

grounds neat, orderly and compliant so everyone can enjoy the beautiful surroundings of so many different gardens.

“Gardening adds years to your life and life to your years.” —*Unknown*

If you require clarification of any Garden Center rules and regulations or compliance issues, please visit the business office at Garden Center 2 (open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to noon) or call 949-597-4322. Printed copies of the rules and regulations are available upon request.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and will benefit from its content.

Thanks to the volunteers who came out Saturday February 23 to help us weed the paths and common areas—the grounds are looking better all the time. We know it is a frustrating effort to rid the grounds and garden/tree plots of weeds, especially due to the heavy rains lately that stimulate rapid growth. Again, your efforts are appreciated.

NEW TO GARDENING?

There's a gardener in everyone just waiting to sprout. But how does a novice start? With an adventurous spirit, a little forethought and a few helpful tips, beginners can learn to garden and enjoy success.

Don't worry!

There's no joy like surrounding yourself with flowers or dining on a salad you grew yourself. So don't miss out on learning how to start a garden because you're afraid you might have a "brown thumb." Plants are designed to grow, although they'll grow better with a little help. Still worried?

How do I pick a garden plot?

Pick your spot with care. Plants can't survive without proper amounts of sunlight and water, so choose a place for your garden where plants can get all they need. Vegetables and most flowers need full sun, which means they need at least six hours of sunlight every day during the growing season.

Don't have a spot with that much sunlight? There are plants that thrive with less, but most don't flower as much or bear fruit. A spot near the outdoor faucet means less hose hauling or water can toting in the hot summer, which simplifies the process for you.

How do I start a garden?

Start with the soil. Healthy roots are vital. Roots live in the soil. The most important part of your garden is the area below ground. Most soil around homes isn't ideal for plants; improving it is the most powerful thing you



Seed-starting quick guide

- **Don't overdo it.** Keep your first garden manageable to avoid becoming overwhelmed. For beginners, our 10-by-20-foot plot is a good size. Or plant no more than half a dozen good-sized pots. That's enough to provide a satisfying harvest of herbs, greens or easy vegetables while you get a feel for the amount of time and effort it takes to water and weed.
- **Get a head start.** Many vegetables need to be started from seeds several weeks before it's safe to plant them outside. For beginners, it's easiest to let someone else do that in a commercial greenhouse and buy the small plants (often called "transplants" or "starts").
- **Sow some seed.** Even if you buy transplants for your must-have vegetables, take a chance on sowing seeds for a few easy plants such as radishes, lettuce, sunflowers or nasturtiums. Seeds are cheap, and misfires don't cost much. And there's nothing like watching the whole life cycle of a plant unfold before your eyes.

—*Courtesy Burpee Seed Co.*

can do grow a successful garden. How does one do this? By adding organic matter, which is broken-down plant parts, usually in the form of compost, shredded leaves or composted manure. Organic matter does wonders for soil. It holds water for plants' roots in dry spells and allows excess rain to flow away freely. It breaks up dense soil to make way for root growth and oxygen. It also provides food for many organisms that live in soil and provide healthy nutrients to your plants



WHAT IS ORGANIC GARDENING?

The word **organic** is bandied about often in connection with food and gardens these days, but what does the term really mean?

In simple terms, growing organically could be described as growing plants in harmony with nature without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides or other such products that upset the balance of the ecosystem.

Organic gardening can be complicated; however, happily for gardeners, organic gardening at home is a personal choice, and it's much more straightforward than for commercial gardens.

“Organic gardening is more than simply avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilizers,” according to Burpee Seed Co. “It is about observing nature’s processes and emulating them in your garden as best you can. And the most important way to do that is to understand the makeup of your soil and to give it what it needs. If anything could be called a ‘rule’ in organic gardening, it’s this: Feed the soil, not the plant.”

The role of compost

To feed the soil, gardeners must restore the resources their gardens consume by adding organic matter. That includes adding compost and possibly growing cover crops—so-called green manure—that are tilled into the soil. Compost makes both clay and sandy soils more plant-friendly and can be used as mulch on top of garden beds.

Compost is the nutrient-rich soil produced from the aerobic decomposition of organic matter. The garden itself is the source for many of the ingredients in compost, including grass clippings, plant waste and shredded leaves. Kitchen waste, such as vegetable and fruit scraps and peelings, coffee grounds, eggshells and dead houseplants,



make great additions to a compost pile, as does chicken, cow or horse manure. Do not add dog or cat feces or dairy and meat products; they may contain unwanted pathogens or attract pests to the pile.

To some, adding compost means healthier soil, and eating fruits and vegetables grown in healthy soil means healthier people. Plants, of course, get their nutrients and moisture from the soil; rich soil will help plants thrive.

Right plants, right place, repel pests

Choosing the right plant for the right place also is part of gardening organically. That means growing plants that are adapted to your region—and also suited to the conditions in your garden. A water-loving plant situated in a hot, dry spot may survive with a lot of help from you, but it will be constantly stressed. That's not emulating nature's processes. Plants that aren't already stressed are better equipped

to withstand insect infestations. That doesn't mean plants won't suffer damage. Organic gardeners generally allow for a certain amount of pest damage, because they understand that they are all part of a natural system that includes wildlife—even bugs.

Don't make life easy for pests by planting large swaths of one crop; instead interplant different kinds of plants. Also get to know your plants. Many organic gardeners find that they can keep damage to an acceptable level by checking their plants regularly for early signs of trouble.

Some insects can be controlled by hand-picking. It helps to know which bugs are beneficial and which are destructive pests, and when they are likely to arrive in your garden. Often, beneficial insects, such as lady beetles, are predators that eat the eggs or larvae of

pest insects, such as aphids—and when the two have similar seasons, it creates a nice balance in nature and your garden. If you know when seasonal infestations of particular insects are likely, use other defenses. Floating row covers prevent moths from landing and laying eggs, sticky traps capture airborne insect pests and collars (tin foil works well) around the base of plants deter borers, cutworms and similar bugs.

If all other methods fail, organic gardeners may need to use some deterrents that won't harm the environment or other living creatures. Most experts recommend the natural bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis*, or Bt, to get rid of caterpillars and other leaf eaters, but some caterpillars develop into desirable butterflies. Insecticidal soaps or horticultural oils can help eradicate pests, and sometimes just a good spray of water will do the trick.



Good gardening techniques apply whether you gardening organically or not. Choose disease-resistant plant varieties that are right for your garden's conditions, mulch your garden beds to retard weed growth and keep soil moist, and never dispose of diseased or infested plants by putting them in the compost pile.

VOLUNTEER CORNER



Weed-Pulling Winner!

Congratulations to Kook Choi of Garden Center 1 for winning the weed-pulling competition!



A Big Thank You!

Above left and middle photos: Lion's Heart Volunteers (from left to right) Kaylin Raibon, Ryan Cohen and Anna Keeling pulled stinging nettles along the tree plots. Ryan Hawkins pulled weeds and stinging nettles in the common areas.

Immediate left: Margot McCormack poses with Anna Keeling, Ryan Cohen and Kaylin Raibon.



STINGING NETTLE IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

A small but painful enemy is waiting for you in your garden or tree plot.

Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), also called common nettle, is a weed or perennial of the nettle family, and is known for its stinging leaves. It is distributed nearly worldwide but is especially aggressive in North America and parts of Asia. Stinging nettle is common in herbal medicine, young leaves can be cooked and eaten as a nutritious potherb, it has been used as a source of fiber for textiles and it is sometimes used in cosmetics.

Stinging nettle is an herbaceous plant that often grows to about 6.5 feet. The plant can spread vegetatively via yellow creeping rhizomes and often forms dense colonies. Tooth leaves are borne oppositely along the stem, and both the stems and leaves are covered with numerous stinging and nonstinging plant hairs, or trichomes. It can produce female or male flowers (dioecious) or bear both male

and female flowers (monoecious) depending on the subspecies. Tiny green or white flowers are borne in dense whorled clusters in the leaf axils and stem tips and are wind pollinated. The fruits are dry, one-seeded fruits, or achenes, and the plants produce copious amounts of seeds.

The stinging trichomes have bulbous tips that break off when brushed against, revealing needlelike tubes that pierce the skin. They inject several caustic chemicals, causing an itchy, burning rash in humans and other animals that may last up to 12 hours.

Hunting dogs running through stinging nettle thickets have been poisoned, sometimes lethally, by the massive accumulation of stings. This defense mechanism is an effective deterrent against most large herbivores, though the plant is important food for several butterfly species and aphids. The dried plant can be used as livestock feed, and heating or cooking the fresh leaves renders them safe for consumption.

Stinging nettle has a long history as a medical herb and is still used for a wide array of disorders, though there is limited clinical evidence supporting its efficacy. Tea made from the leaves has been used to treat hay fever and other common ailments, and fresh stinging leaves are sometimes applied to arthritic joints. Topical creams containing nettle also have been developed for joint pain and various skin ailments, including eczema and dandruff. —*Courtesy Melissa Petruzzello*

PLOT POINTS

Please remember to
return tools to the shed
based on color.



FEATURED RECIPE

Tomatoes, of which there are more than 100 varieties worldwide, are perhaps the most popular garden vegetable for amateur and seasoned gardeners alike. One of the most universal tomato-derived recipes is for the ultimate comfort food, tomato soup.

Creamy tomato soup with roasted garlic

Yield 5 cups (about 4 servings)

Ingredients

10 large cloves garlic, with skins
3 tbsp Horizon organic butter
1 c coarsely chopped onion
1 tsp Italian herb seasoning
1 28 oz chopped tomatoes
2 tbsp tomato paste
3 c vegetable or chicken broth, divided
3 tbsp flour
1 c Horizon organic half-and-half
Salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Place garlic cloves, in skins, on a baking sheet and roast for 35 to 40 minutes until very soft. Set aside until cool enough to handle. With a small, sharp knife, cut the end from each clove. Pinch clove to squeeze out the soft garlic “paste” within. Discard skins.

2. Melt butter in a large pot. Add onions and Italian seasoning. Cook for about 8 minutes, stirring often, until onions are soft. Add tomatoes, tomato paste and roasted garlic. Bring to a simmer. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

3. Place the flour in a bowl or measuring cup. Slowly whisk in about one cup of the broth to form smooth “slurry.” Stir the slurry into the pot, followed by the remaining two cups of broth.



4. Increase heat to bring soup back to a simmer. Reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. Transfer the soup in batches to a blender or food processor; process until smooth. Note: You may find it more convenient to let the soup cool before blending. Consider buying an immersion blender, which blends liquids in the cooking pot, if you cook lots of soup.

5. After blending, return the soup to the pot and heat to a simmer. Stir in the half-and-half and season as needed with salt and pepper. Soup can be prepared in advance and stored in the refrigerator for up to one week. In fact, the flavor improves with storage. Reheat on the stove.

Nutritional information per serving

Calories: 194
Protein: 6 g
Fat: 12 g
Total carbohydrate: 20 g
Saturated fat: 7 g
Cholesterol: 31 mg
Calcium: 151 mg (15% DV)
Iron: 3 mg (16% DV)
Sodium: 1,558 mg
Vitamin: A 1,805 IU (36% DV)
Vitamin: C 39 mg (65% DV)