

THIS MONTH IN THE GARDEN

Sweet Basil Garden July Newsletter



The 2019 growing season has been different than most of my previous seasons. In Texas we have had much rainfall, cool temperatures, and more rainfall. We have also had incessant winds, hail (many rounds of hail). All of these weather events have been detrimental to many vegetables this year. I have replanted several vegetables which has delayed production. As I write this newsletter, I have had only 1 cucumber. In the past, at this time I was canning cucumbers but not this year! I have resorted to hand pollinating some of my vegetables and am hopeful for a crop later in July. Other seeded crops like snap beans, squash, and pumpkins were hurt early on with plant death and stunting. The pumpkins were able to outgrow the injury, but are stunted. As July approached, things have heated up and are growing and expanding in overall crop growth however, the plants are small and the overall yield seems to be reduced at this point due to extremes in the environment. I am hoping the weather continues to be stable. I anticipate yields and growth increase, but the crop production will be late. One vegetable that has done well in zucchini and I feel as though I hit the jackpot. I am celebrating small successes this year so currently it is all things zucchini.

In Season:

Yellow squash
Zucchini
Cucumbers
Eggplant
Tomatoes
Snap beans
Jalapenos
Chili peppers

GARDENING CHORES:

The dog days of summer are upon us and so is the heat. July tends to be less rainy if any at all. The humidity is low and it is just plain hot. There are no real specific chores for the July garden. You have to play it by ear. For me, I am keeping an eye on enough water, giving the plants a mid-season feeding, and assessing for those annoying garden pests. There are plenty of pests rearing their little heads. Squash bugs begin to emerge as do tiny beetles on eggplant. One of the joys I celebrate during July is the big daily harvest. In the blink of an eye zucchini gets very large, squash is not far behind, and the tomatoes are ripening every day. July is very hot so keeping tabs on rainfall and water as needed is critical. Most plants need 1 inch of water a week. If it is hot and dry more watering is necessary. Water deeply. Staying ahead weeds by pulling them before they flower. It could save you many more weeds if you pull them early. Mulching is beneficial especially in hot weather. I use straw and it has cut down on weeds and helps retain moisture during these very hot days. Enjoy your summer bounty! It will be over before you know it and get ready for fall planting!

Garden Fresh Recipes:

Summer Refrigerator Pickles

1 cucumber, cut into ¼ inch slices
1 small onion
8 whole cloves of garlic, peeled
2 cups apple cider vinegar
1 cup water
½ cup cherry tomatoes
½ cup fresh dill
½ tablespoon whole peppercorns
½ teaspoon coriander seeds
Kosher salt to taste

In a large canning jar layer slices cucumber, onion slices, tomato and dill. Combine vinegar water, garlic, salt, pepper, and coriander seeds in a saucepan and heat to boil. Allow to cool completely. Pour vinegar-water mixture over vegetables in canning jar, making sure all are completely covered. Refrigerate overnight (or 2 to 3 days ideally) before serving.

Grilled Eggplant, Tomatoes, and Zucchini

2 tablespoons salt, plus more for sprinkling
2 medium eggplants, trimmed and sliced
2 small zucchini, trimmed and halved lengthwise
4 Roma tomatoes, halved lengthwise
½ cup olive oil

In large bowl, dissolve 2 tablespoons salt in 3 quarts cold water. Add eggplant slices and weight with a plant. Let sit for 30 minutes. Drain and dry eggplant. Lay vegetables on a platter. Brush one side with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Brush grill with vegetable oil. Lay vegetables oil side down. Close lid and cook minutes. Brush dry side of vegetables with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Turn over, close lid and cook for 3-5 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature.