GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES
A presentation given by Mike Gliddon, Rutgers Master Gardeners of Mercer County

THE BENEFITS!

- Joys of homegrown fresh veggies.
- Grow vegetables not readily available in stores.
- Fresh air/sunshine/exercise.
- Watching plants grow.
- Know chemicals used (preferably no synthetic pesticides).
- Get information: http://ieees.rutgers.edu/pubs
- FS1054: Smart Food Choices-Veggies For Health
- FS1079: 22 Quick/easy Ways To Eat More Veggies

WHERE

- Fruiting veg. 8 hours minimum sun / day
- Root veg. 6 hours minimum sun / day
- Leafy veg. 4 hours minimum sun / day
- Access to water source
- No competition for sun or water from trees or shrubs
- Fertile soil
- Good drainage
- Level area

DEALING WITH ADVERSE CONDITIONS

- Examples: special needs
  - poor drainage
  - contaminated soil
- Solution: raised beds or containers
- FS055: Container Gardening With Vegetables
  - Important to use potting mix or garden soil heavily enriched with organic matter

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EXAMPLES OF RAISED BEDS

CROP SELECTION
- Plant what you like to eat and in the quantity you will eat
- Go for high producers: tomatoes, lettuce, squash
- Important to recognize there are:
  - cool season veggies, e.g. peas, kale
  - warm season veggies, e.g. peppers, tomatoes
- Check catalogs/seed packets for sowing/harvest dates
- FS681: Varieties For NJ Home Vegetable Gardeners
- FS1163: Mail Order Vegetable Seed Sources For NJ Gardener

LAYOUT OF YOUR GARDEN
- Plan, plan, plan
- Start out small if inexperienced
- FS129 A Home Vegetable Garden
- Perennials in one section (rhubarb, asparagus, horseradish, strawberries, perennial herbs)
- Annuals in another section
- Taller veg. on north end (e.g. tomatoes, cucumbers, pole beans, corn)

LAYOUT OF YOUR GARDEN
- Put plan on paper (graph paper pref.)
- Internet software available (e.g. www.vegetablegardener.com)
- Garden size (e.g. 20ft by 20ft)
- Space between and within rows
- Crops and varieties
- Planting dates
- Seeded crops
- Transplanted crops

PLAN

WHAT TO GROW, IMPORTANT TO KNOW FOR CROP ROTATION.
- Cruciferous: cabbage, broccoli, kale
- Solanaceous: pepper, tomato, potato
- Cucurbits: cucumber, summer or winter squash
- Allium: onion
- Legumes: beans, peas
- Root: parsnips, carrots
- Zea: corn

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TYPICAL COMMUNITY GARDEN

SOIL PREPARATION
- Soil is the basis for successful vegetable gardening
- Organic matter added annually will improve:
  - compacted clay soils
  - freely draining poor sandy soil
  - heavily cropped soil

DEALING WITH ADVERSE CONDITIONS
- Fertility poor; add compost or soil amendments

SOIL PREPARATION
- Get a soil test-fertilizer and pH recommendations
- pH only also available
- FS 797: Soil Testing For Home Lawns And Gardens
- FS 904: Liming NJ Soils For Vegetable Crops

SOIL PREPARATION
- Some nutrients must be supplied for effective growth, fruit maturation and sustain chemical reactions/life processes for growth
- Supplied by green manures (e.g. clover) or fertilizers
- FS 626: Fertilizing The Home Vegetable Garden

WHAT TO GROW
- Seeds indoors, purchased transplants or direct seeding
- Seeds indoors, great variety available, much more work
- Purchased transplants, limited variety, easy
- Direct seeding, easy, early care important

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SIMPLE SEED STARTING SETUP

SOWING SEEDS INDOORS

- 65 to 75 deg. F.
- Bright light (16 hours artificial = 8 hours sun)
- Sterile potting medium
- Sterile containers
- Plants hardened off two weeks before transplanting

PLANTING

- FS 523: Grow Your Own Vegetable And Flower Seedlings
- FS 787: Starting Vegetable Seeds Indoors

TRANSPLANTING

- Homegrown or purchased plants should be stocky with a well-developed root system
- Minimize shock, plant on cloudy day or early/late on sunny day
- Mark row with twine
- Same depth as in pot, exception tomatoes
- Space per recommendation on seed packet/label

DIRECT SEEDING

- Mark row with twine
- Use hoe to mark channel at correct depth recommended for seed
- Cover with fine soil
- Water well
- Label!

PLANTING TIMES

- Frost free date for Mercer County, May 8th
- 4-6 weeks before this date:
  - very hardy seeds: lettuce, onion, peas, spinach, turnip
  - very hardy transplants: broccoli, cabbage, rhubarb

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PLANTING TIMES

- 2-4 weeks before this date:
  - hardy-seeds: beet, cauliflower, carrots, onion sets, parsnip, radish, early potato
  - hardy-transplants: brussels sprouts, collards, horseradish

- Frost free date
  - not cold hardy-seeds: snap beans, soybeans, squash, corn
  - not cold hardy-transplants: tomatoes (check the weather forecast)

- One week plus after frost free date
  - hot weather crops, seeds: cucumber, melons, okra, pumpkin
  - hot weather crops, transplants: pepper, eggplant, tomato

- Late June/early July
  - seeds: beet, broccoli, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, parsnip

- Summer
  - seeds: beans, cabbage, soybean, squash
  - transplants: broccoli, cauliflower (early August)

Maintenance

- Mulches are valuable:
  - Conserve soil moisture
  - Allow rain to penetrate slowly (need at least 1 inch per week)
  - Reduce weed growth
  - Modify soil temperature
  - Reduce disease problems (e.g. splashing of soil-borne disease on cucumbers, squash, tomatoes causes rot)

- FS 085 Mulches For Vegetables

MAINTENANCE

- Weeding—important, especially when plants are young. reduce by use of mulch

- Thinning—finely sown seeds such as carrot, beet, lettuce need thinning with garden scissors or shears

- Staking and tying necessary for indeterminate tomatoes, some beans, cucumbers etc.

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MAINTENANCE

- Pests-guaranteed to find you!
- Fungal
- Bacterial
- Viral
- Nematodes
- Insects
- Others: animals, birds, slugs, snails, spider mites, weeds

MAINTENANCE

- FS1123: Vegetable Insect Control For Home Gardens
- FS1124: Vegetable Disease Recommendations For Home Gardens
- FS230: Aphids On Vegetables
- FS391: Blackbirds In The Vegetable Garden
- FS397: Slugs/snails In The Vegetable Garden
- FS398: Tree Squirrels In The Vegetable Garden

IN CONCLUSION

- Remember the quote of Barbara J. Bromley:
  "You are not a master gardener unless you have killed at least 1000 plants"
- Don’t be afraid to try, savor your successes and learn from your failures.

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