



Extension News Column

*University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service, www.uaf.edu/ces/
fycit@uaf.edu, 907-474-5211, FAX 907-474-6885*

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 907-474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Author: Roxie Rodgers Dinstel, Tanana District Extension Faculty, HHFD

It's May! The grass is beginning to green up and thoughts are running to what we can plant. This year consider planting some vegetables to stretch your budget.

A small investment in seeds and water along with some hard work can give you a bumper crop of vegetables over the summer. If you have a sunshiny spot in your yard, that is a perfect place for a garden. Or if you have less sun or less yard, plant a few plants in a container. Planting leaf lettuce can give you salad all summer. Just pinch off the lower leaves as it matures, leaving the plant to continue growing.

In making a container garden, the container can be a ceramic, plastic pot, or a planter. You can even recycle 3 pound coffee cans, large containers, or plastic buckets. One year as a project, my kids and their fellow 4-Hers lined a milk crate with a plastic bag, placed soil in it and grew a salad garden. They planted one tomato plant, leaf lettuce, a cucumber plant, and few carrots. A container garden can be used to grow herbs or a few green bean plants. One of my kids grew a potato plant in a 5 gallon bucket. Sure was easy to harvest it at the end of the summer, we just dumped it out on the ground and picked the potatoes out.

We have a great publication on growing vegetables in a container available in the office. It's called "Raising Vegetables in Mini Gardens." Drop by the office or download it from the web at www.uaf.edu/ces/pubs/catalogue. If you are looking at the publications list on the web, be sure to take a gander at all the offerings we have there, you might find something else you need to read.

I saw in the newspaper this morning that there are garden plots available in the community garden. They are \$75 and come supplied with water and I'm sure, plenty of advice from your fellow gardeners. Basic gardening equipment is included as well as mulch and compost. Not a bad deal at all when you consider the cost of water for a garden and what it costs to get the basic equipment together.

Be sure to choose plant seed varieties that grow well in this environment. We have a suggested varieties publication that tells you what grows well here in Alaska. Written by Michele Hebert, the Land Resource Agent in our office, it has varieties to plant, the time to maturity, the yield and even some helpful comments that will help you know what to expect.

I'm the first to tell you that I'm not an expert on growing things here in Alaska. I grew up in an area that the tomatoes started producing in early May and didn't quit until the summer sun got so hot it baked the vines. Anyone could grow a garden there. But we do have an excellent group of individuals in the Extension office that can help you grow in this Arctic environment.

Bugs are eating your veggies? Call Diane Claussen, she's the Integrated Pest Management Person for the office. Bugs are her job, she can identify and tell you how to control them.

An unidentified problem that is causing your garden not to grow? Call Michele Hebert for help. She has excellent information on how to grow and how to take care of your plants.

And when you get those vegetables ready to freeze or can, give me a yell, that's what I do! Call the Extension office at 474-2450 and the receptionist will refer you to the right person to answer your question, no matter what it is.

.