VEGETABLES

How Much Can a Vegetable Garden Save in Food Costs?

Gail Langellotto, Statewide Coordinator of the Oregon State University Master Gardener Program, wrote a blog post last year summarizing studies regarding the savings a home vegetable garden can provide.

Gail looked at 8 studies and summarized the results. Values were adjusted to 2012 values. Overall, gardens had an average value of $0.74 per square foot of garden and a median value of $0.62 per square foot. That would equal $148 for a modest 200 square foot garden using the average value. Most of these studies included the cost of establishing the garden the first year. These costs would certainly be less in the years following.

Also, interesting were the crops that provided the greatest return per square foot. Those crops were tomatoes, salad greens, beets, broccoli and potatoes. However, be sure to plant crops that will actually be eaten. Vegetables that will not be used are a waste of time and money. To see much more detail, go to Gail’s blog post at http://tinyurl.com/ajrnebb. (Ward Upham)

MISCELLANEOUS

All-America Selection Winners for 2013

All-America Selections tests and introduces new flowers and vegetables each year that have done well in trials across North America. This year there were two flower winners, one bedding plant winner and three vegetable winners.

Descriptions and images below are taken directly from All-America Selection materials. For more detailed information including how to grow, see
Canna 'South Pacific Scarlet' F1, 2013 AAS Flower Award Winner

Allow 'South Pacific' to add a touch of the tropics to your garden with showy, 4-inch flowers that bloom all summer long in a delicious shade of scarlet. Large leafed statuesque plants reach 4 to 5 feet tall providing a back-of-the-border focal point. This variety is grown from seed, not tuber. Compact in habit and well suited for both landscape and container use. Canna 'South Pacific Scarlet' prefers warm and humid conditions over 77F. This variety is more vigorous, more uniform, and has more basal branching than Canna Tropical Red.

Echinacea 'Cheyenne Spirit', 2013 AAS Flower Award Winner

This stunning first-year flowering echinacea captures the spirit of the North American plains by producing a delightful mix of flower colors from rich purple, pink, red and orange tones to lighter yellows, creams and white. This wide range of flower colors on well branched, durable plants are sure to please the color preferences of any gardener. As an added bonus, ‘Cheyenne Spirit’ does not require a lot of water and offers a wide range of uses from the perennial border, in a mass landscape planting, in a butterfly garden or as a cut flower.

The AAS judges and their trial garden visitors raved about the attractiveness of the flowers and the range of colors while appreciating its sturdiness and low water needs. Even during wind and rain, this compact plant does not topple over like many echinacea. The variety of intense, bright colors adds sparkle to the garden from mid-summer through fall. As an added bonus, this maintenance-free echinacea doesn’t even need deadheading to provide summer long beauty.

Geranium 'Pinto Premium White to Rose' F1, 2013 AAS Bedding Plant Award Winner

This addition to the 'Pinto Premium' series is a must-have! Not only is the flower coloration unique and ombre-like, but the numerous 5-inch blooms are long-lasting in the garden. Petals start
out white then deepen to rose-pink as flowers mature, giving an attractive bicolor effect. Dense, well-branched plants sport deep green leaves with darker zones that contrast beautifully with the light-colored flowers. 'Pinto Premium White to Rose' is a great choice for carefree, colorful summer garden beds or patio containers.

**Melon 'Melemon' F1, 2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner**

The earliness, high yield on healthy, strong plants and superior taste all contributed to this melon becoming an AAS Winner. Judges related the taste of this melon to honeydew, but with a surprising and delicious tanginess. A uniform fruit shape makes it perfect for market growers as well as home gardeners. Each personal-sized fruit has refreshing crisp flesh and a unique sweet-tart taste.

**Tomato 'Jasper' F1, 2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner**

Excellent taste, a long harvest window and outstanding performance in the trials contribute to this cherry tomato’s success. Judges liked the texture and sweetness of the tomato as well as the uniformity of the fruits that grow on vigorous, healthy plants. Jasper is a high yielding variety with fruits that stay on the vine and then hold well after ripening both on the vine and post-harvest. Vigorous vines require little or no fertilization. An added bonus is fusarium resistance and the ability to overcome weather-related stresses.

**Watermelon 'Harvest Moon' F1, 2013 AAS Vegetable Award Winner**

The first ever hybrid, triploid seedless watermelon to win a coveted AAS Award! Similar to the popular heirloom variety, ‘Moon and Stars,’ 'Harvest Moon' is an improvement in that it features healthy, shorter vines that produce medium-sized fruits and sweet, crisp pinkish-red flesh. 'Harvest Moon' retains the familiar dark green rind with yellow dots, like that of ‘Moon and Stars’ but is seedless, earlier to ripen, higher yielding and better tasting. As one judge said, “What’s not to like?” (Ward Upham)
Now is a Good Time to Design Your Landscape

The dark, cold days of winter are a good time to dream and plan for the upcoming growing season. Have you always wanted to landscape your home but didn’t know where to start? We offer a number of publications available to help you accomplish your dream. This collection includes everything from general landscaping publications such as “Residential Landscape Design,” to specific works such as “Energy Efficient Landscaping,” “Landscaping the Farmstead,” “Naturalistic Landscaping” and “Low-Maintenance Landscaping.”

You can download printed publications free of charge from http://www.hfrr.ksu.edu/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=600 or request printed copies from your local K-State Research and Extension office. There may be a small charge for printed copies of larger publications. If you need to know how to contact your local extension office, go to http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/Map.aspx and mouse over your county. (Ward Upham)

Plants Deer Don't Like

With rising deer populations, damage to landscapes has increased because of browsing. But deer have preferences and will avoid some plant species if more desirable food is available. Following is a short list of plants deer normally do not bother. Even so, remember that feeding habits can shift because of changes in food supply. Also, some deer may have different preferences than most of the group.

Rarely Damaged:
Trees: Blue Spruce and Russian Olive, Smoketree, Tree of Heaven
Note: The deer may be on to something here as I don’t like Tree of Heaven or Russian Olive either. Blue spruce is beautiful if you can keep it alive in Kansas.

Shrubs: Barberry, Boxwood, Redosier Dogwood, Mahonia, Yew, Russian Olive, Rose of Sharon, European Privet, Vanhoutte Spirea

Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs: Yarrow, Ageratum, Columbine, Snapdragon, Lily of the Valley, Purple Cornflower, Lavender, Sweet Alyssum, Daffodil, Russian Sage, Marigold, Lamb's Ears, Thyme, and Yucca.
For more information on deer control, go to: http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/wldlf2/c728.pdf

For more information on plants deer don't like, go to: http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/hortcult/treeshru/resistan.htm  (Ward Upham)

**Newer Fluorescent Lights Available for Indoor Gardeners**

Many gardeners use fluorescent lights to start young vegetable and flower plants during the spring or to grow certain houseplants all year long. Traditionally, we have used fixtures with T-12 lamps suspended a few inches above the tops of the plants. However, there are newer lamps that may be a better choice for some indoor gardens. These are known as T-8 and T-5 lamps. The number after the “T” refers to the diameter of the lamp in eighths of an inch. Therefore, a T-12 lamp is 12/8 or 1.5 inches in diameter, and a T-5 is 5/8 of an inch in diameter.

So, does a smaller diameter mean less light? Not at all. In fact, the T-5 is the brightest of the three. A T-12 lamp puts out 1,500 to 3,200 lumens for a 48-inch lamp. This lamp has a life of between 10,000 and 20,000 hours. The T-8 lamp produces 2,800 lumens and has a 30,000-hour life expectancy. The T-5 is rated at 5,000 lumens but lasts only 30,000 hours. Well, actually 30,000 hours is a long time. If you had your lamps turned on for 12 hours every day, it would take almost 7 years to reach the 30,000-hour mark.

Another advantage for these newer lamps is they use less electricity per lumen. Our traditional 48-inch T-12 is rated at 40 watts. However, there are newer styles of T-12's that are 34 watts. The T-8 is rated at 32 watts and the T-5 at 54 watts.

This sounds too good to be true. Are there drawbacks? Of course there are. First is cost. Let’s start with T-5's. Even though T-5 lamps produce more light, the lamps are much more expensive and harder to find. Also, you must have special T-5 fixtures which are also very expensive. The 2 lamp fixture I located was priced over $250. Therefore, the T-5's would not be practical for this use.

So, what about the T-8's? First, you cannot use your existing T-12 fixtures for T-8's unless that fixture is specifically rated for both. However, the price for T-8 lamps and fixtures is not that much more than T-12's. Such was not always the case as it wasn’t that long ago that T-8' lamps and fixtures were much more expensive.

The question becomes, is it worth it? If you have a T-12 fixture that is rated for T-12's only and are satisfied with your results, then maybe not. However, if you are investing in new fixtures or have fixtures that can use either T-12's or T-8's, then go with the T-8's. They will use less energy, last longer and provide more light. (Ward Upham)
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To view Upcoming Events:  http://tinyurl.com/fswqe

The web version includes color images that illustrate subjects discussed.  To subscribe to this newsletter electronically, send an e-mail message to cdipman@ksu.edu or wupham@ksu.edu listing your e-mail address in the message.

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