



Words from the Farmers



Hardening Off

It is that time of year where life gets very busy in our household. The number one reason is we are beginning a process called "Hardening Off" with the baby seedlings. All seedlings are grown in a nursery under very special conditions. The temperature, moisture, humidity, and light are carefully monitored to make certain the seeds have the best chance of sprouting and beginning their first few weeks.

What many people don't realize is the plants can't just be taken from the nursery, gardening store, or window ledge at home and be planted directly outside. It needs to be done slowly and gently so the plants can become acclimated to the weather and sun.

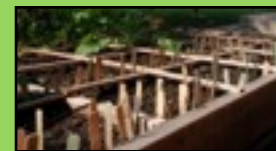
The first step is to place them where they can adjust to the temperature of the outdoors without being in the outdoors!

As you can see in the 2nd picture, we have ours on our 3

season porch. The reason the shelf is on wheels is that if the temps. drop below freezing (which can happen until May 15th in MN.) the cart needs to come inside for the evening. You can see in picture 3 that they have survived their first 3-4 days on the porch and now it is time to introduce them to the sun a little at a time. We start them out on our back porch which gets two-four hours of sun. We have them in special shelves that we can zip closed if the weather turns cold. For many years we just used plastic shelves and blankets. They spend about a week there before they are placed in full sun as picture 4 shows. As they go through this process reduce the watering and stop fertilizing. After the process is complete, make certain to keep pots moist and fertilized until placed in the ground. When you purchase seedlings, always ask your provider if they have been "Hardened Off".



What's Growing?



Tip of the Month:

Composting can be easier than you think and your organic garden will love it. An outdoor, spinning composter saves space and effort, reduces critter trouble, and looks neat and tidy. You just load and spin once a day. Keep a small indoor composter in the kitchen for easy disposal. Definitely choose an odor free model.

We'd be happy to help you get your compost system up and running. Just let us know how we can help.

Cooper's Corner

Joan and Coleen do not realize I have a serious responsibility in this "hardening off" process. If there is not a seasoned, hard working dog constantly protecting these babies from squirrels and rabbits, well, let's just say, they would be out of work!



Know that I am on duty and none of your plants will be eaten on my watch. Next month I will have a special guest columnist, to demonstrate how us pups open the vegetable coolers when the farmers are not looking:)

Recipe of the Month

Chickpea, Carrot and Parsley Salad

One of the first herbs ready to harvest will be parsley. This is a wonderful spring salad. Serves 4 as a main dish, and 6 as a side dish.

Ingredients

- small can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 c. loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, very coarsely chopped
- 1 c. loosely packed shredded carrot (from about 2 carrots)
- 1/2 c. sliced radishes (about 6 med)

- 1/2 c. chopped scallions, white and green parts (about 4)
- 3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. cumin
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 6 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/3 c. crumbled feta cheese or toasted pine nuts (optional)

Mash 1/2 cup of the chickpeas in a mixing bowl and mash them into a coarse paste with a potato masher or large wooden spoon. toss in the remaining chickpeas along with the parsley, carrot,

radishes, and scallions. Stir to combine. in a liquid measuring cup, whisk together the lemon juice, cumin, 1/2 tsp. salt, and a few generous grinds of black pepper. Continue whisking while adding the olive oil in a slow stream. Pour over the salad and toss gently. Season the salad and pepper to taste. Top with the feta or pine nuts, if using, serve immediately.

Serving Suggestions
Serve with warmed pita bread, sliced into wedges.

Kid's Corner

Why do you thin the seedlings?

When seedlings are overcrowded, they're forced to compete for light, moisture, and nutrients. Plants that have to struggle to live will be spindly and weak. Since you want only sturdy, healthy plants in the garden, you'll need to thin the seedlings to get them off to the best possible start in life.

The easiest method is to carefully plant only one or two seeds in each small hole. (unlike the seed packages say.) Then choose the healthiest looking seedling and remove all the neighboring sprouts. If you pull unwanted seedlings up, you may damage the roots of the seedling you want to save. Instead, use a pair of tiny scissors to snip the stem of any seedling growing within a finger's width of the chosen seedling. As the seedlings grow, you'll need to thin again. If you thin so that the leaves of one plant are not touching another, each seedling will have plenty of room to grow.



Spring garden with dome



New seedlings



Clip management



Garden Helper



Spring Salad



Try some strawberries

Vegetable Selections

Spring Season Choices		Summer Season Choices		Fall Season Choices		Multi Season Choices		Perennial Choices	
Arugula		Bush Beans		Arugula		Beets		*Asparagus	
Broccoli		Pole Beans		Kohlrabi		Carrots		*Blueberries	
Broccoli Raab		Slicing Cucumbers		Radish		Chard		*Rhubarb	
Brussel Sprouts		Pickling Cucumbers		Spinach		Kale		*Raspberries	
Chinese/Napa Cabbage		Miniature Cucumbers		Turnip		Leaf Lettuce		*Strawberries	
Cabbage		Cuke Nuts		Broccoli		Butter head/ Boston/Bibb Lettuce		*These perennials require their own bed.	
Cauliflower		Edamame		Chinese/Napa Cabbage		Batavia/Summer Lettuce			
Kale		Regular Eggplant		Cauliflower		Romaine Lettuce			
Kohlrabi		Miniature Eggplant		Pac Choi		Mustard Greens			
Leeks		Mini Pumpkins				Asian Greens			
Green Onions		Hot Peppers							
Bulb Onions		Sweet Peppers							
Pac Choi		Bell Peppers							
Shelling Peas		Rutabaga							
Snow Peas		Acorn Squash							
Sugar Snap Peas		Butternut Squash							
Potatoes		Cherry Tomatoes							
		Sun Sugar(Orange)							
		Sweet Million(Red)							

Vegetable Selections

Radish		Heirloom					
		Tomatoes					
		Brandywine (pink, large)					
		Peach (yellow, med)					
		Stupice (early, red, sm)					
		Black Russian (purple, med)					
Potatoes		Roma/Sauce					
		Tomatoes					
Spinach		Hybrid					
		Tomatoes					
		Early Girl					
		Big Beef					
Turnip		Summer Squash					
		Zucchini					

Herb Selections

Basil		Chives		Cilantro		Cutting Celery	
Dill		Fennel		Oregano		Parsley	
Rosemary		Sage		Thyme		Tarragon	
Mint		Marigold		Nasturtium		Marjoram	
Stevia		Sorrel		Calendula			

Please indicate your preferences in the box behind each vegetable using the following:

- !!- I really like this and want a lot,**
- XX- I don't like this and don't want any,**
- ??- I'd like to try this but not too much.**

To submit your vegetable selections:

1. Email your choices to: gardens@abackyardfarm.com
2. OR print, fill in, scan, and email
3. OR print, fill in, and snail mail!

If you are not sure, please email us and we would love to walk you through your choices!