

THE WISCONSIN VEGETABLE GARDENER

SUMMER 2017

QUARTERLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE





about us

Joey & Holly Baird are the founders of The Wisconsin Vegetable Gardener.

They are a married couple living in southeastern Wisconsin (just outside of Milwaukee). Joey & Holly make videos on youtube about how to grow your own food organically, reusing found items (or items you may just throw away), what to do with the food you grow, home canning and simple home living. Along with traditional ground gardening they also grow indoors year-round using up and coming methods along with winter growing in cold frames and low tunnels.

Their goal through their; videos, podcast, public lectures and online communities is to educate the average person how easy it is to grow food, store food, and reuse everyday items. Their motto is ;

“For The Health Conscious Organic Gardener Worldwide”

Joey and Holly enjoy speaking at garden expo's throughout the midwest. Holly is also an award winning home canner with a handful of ribbons from the Wisconsin State Fair including a Best of Show award for her home canning talents.

If you find this interesting and have any questions or would like to talk further we can be emailed at thewiveggardener@gmail.com

TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com



p4

Summer 2017

Corn ^{p6}

^{p17} Tomato Problems

Flowers ^{p8}

^{p19} Strawberries

Interview: David the Good ^{p10}

Herbs ^{p13}

Joey Baird-Program and Resource Manager President

Holly Baird-Marketing Director, Cofounder

Mulch ^{p15}

Norman Gaulin- Art Director

TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com



The Wisconsin Vegetable Gardener Radio Show

Saturdays 9am

WNOV 860am & 106.5FM, Milwaukee
TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com



Hsu
Growing made easy



Organic 
SEED STARTER KIT
 MOISTEN AND PLANT • NO MESS • NO HASSLE

**NO
 ADDITIONAL
 MATERIALS
 NEEDED!**



24 CELL INSERT & WATERING TRAY



Hsu
Growing made easy

Hsu Growing Supply
 P: 715-675-5856
 F: 715-675-5301
www.HsuGrowingSupply.com





Solutions: Corn

When people think of a backyard garden they think of tomatoes, beans, peppers, peas, zucchini and sweet corn. But corn may not be what you should use valuable grow area for in your garden. A lot of energy is used for a few ears of corn that could be bought for fairly cheap at your local organic food store or farm stand. If you choose to grow sweet corn in your garden, here are some things you don't want to do. We've found success in backyard sweet corn growing, but made some mistakes along the way. Before you just go and plant your corn seeds in the ground, you want to know how nutrient dense your soil is. Your soil needs to be rich in organic matter and nitrogen. Corn is an extremely heavy feeder of nitrogen. We combined several fertilizers to get an NPK of 32-28-18 and we were able to feed the soil and get very nice plants with good ears.

You want to plant it in blocks - ideally 4 plants per each square foot. You can plant in rows but make sure the rows are all next to each other in one garden patch. This is to increase pollination. Corn is air pollinated. This means instead of a pollinator like a bee moving the pollen from flower to flower, the air moves the pollen around. Each hair inside the tusk of the corn represents each kernel that will form on the cob. The tassel produces pollen that falls on the hairs at the end of the corn. If you don't have good pollination, the kernels will not form. You want to avoid planting corn in the same spot 2 years in a row. You will develop a fungus on the ear called corn smut (*Ustilago maydis*). Though corn smut is a dish in latin cooking, for most people its not an appetizing cuisine. It is best to keep your corn at

at a 3 year rotation. Corn needs water just as much as any other plants, if not more. Corn has a tendency to become stressed easily. To help avoid some of the stress and preventing the corn from going into survival mode, keeping the corn consistently watered and well-watered will help this problem. If you want to grow healthy and prolific corn something like a drip irrigation system may be a good investment for you. Finally, don't seed seeds from hybrid corn. Those seeds won't be true to the original plant. If you are going to save seeds from corn you grow then save the seeds from heirloom or organic corn plants. Saving the seeds from your homegrown corn will give you years of corn that has been acclimated to your own backyard growing conditions.

TheWisconsin
VegetableGardener.com





Flowers

By Holly Baird

Flowers are a good addition to any edible garden. While using that space for vegetables may seem priority, you can tuck flowers into many little places throughout your garden. You will find them as a benefit and a nice addition to your vegetable garden.

Flowers attract bees and other pollinators. Flowers don't have to be annuals; they can be a perennial, which simply means that they will come back year after year. Many people border their gardens with flowers. If you don't want to replant flowers every year then perenn-

nials are a great idea. You can plant annuals in containers if you don't want to take up valuable garden space, but its best to plant perennials in the ground. Just remember where you have planted them. If you want to be a true environmentalist and a good advocate for the earth, plan on planting flowers that bloom at different times throughout the gardening season that way bees and pollinators have something to feed on continuously.

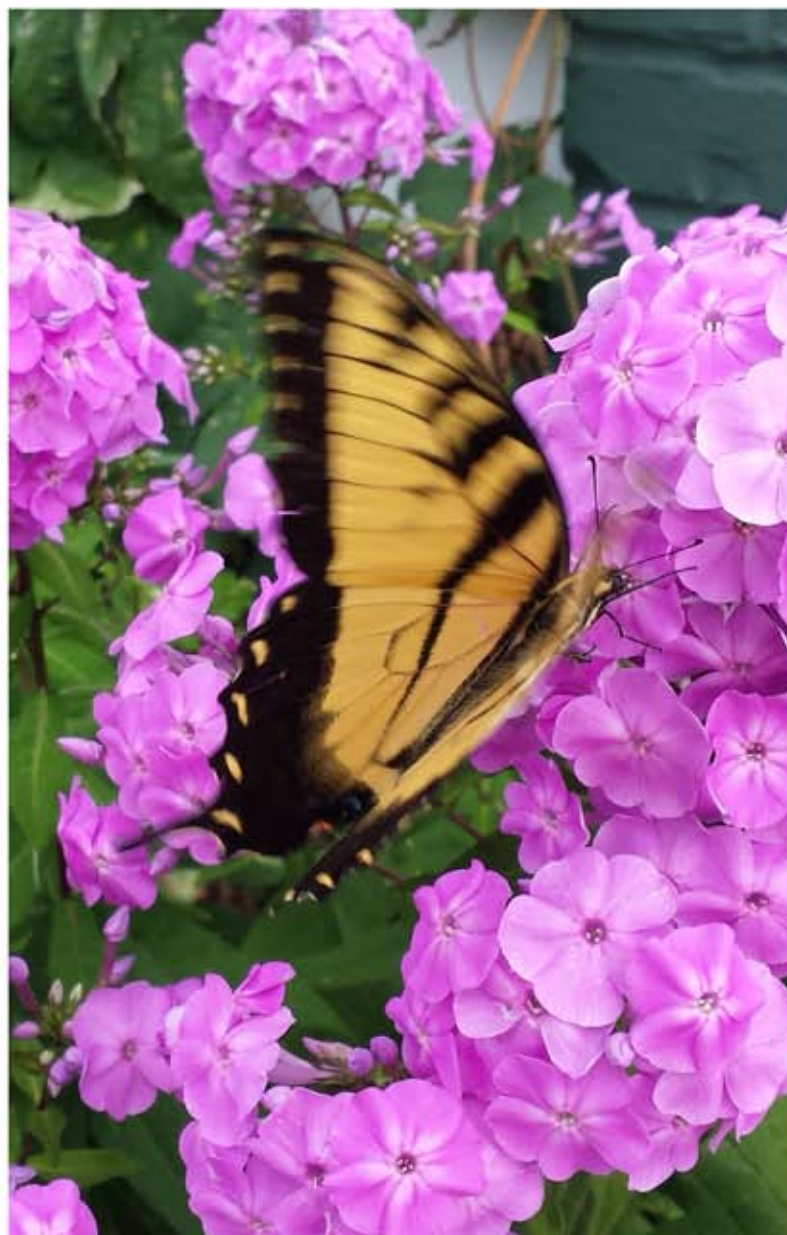
Bees are commonly thought of when you think about insects or wildlife that is associated

with flowers. However, many other species are. This includes butterflies, moths, caterpillars, ladybirds, humming birds and even bats. Bats are very beneficial to any garden or growing plot as they help control the bug population in your garden. Many people see them as a pest, but they are friends of the garden.

Even if you don't want to plant flowers, don't spray the dandelions that come up in your yard. Dandelions are actually not a weed, they are a perennial flower. This is the first food for bees in the spring and they are actually beneficial to you! You can do many things with dandelions and a simple online search will help you discover the many benefits of harvesting and using dandelions.

If you want more of an edible option, like the idea of a perennial, and want to invest in the future of your property – a fruit tree is a great option. Fruit trees bloom and flower and bees love them. This will not benefit the bees all summer long, but you are going to get fruit and shade. Trees are a big buffet for pollinators.

Pollinators are important not only for your garden, but for food production in general. They need food to live and to help grow food. Consider this while you plan and plant your garden this spring.



ORGANIC



POLLINATOR FRIENDLY



ABUNDANT GROWTH

SUSTANE
Naturally... 

SUPERIOR ORGANIC PLANT FOODS & FERTILIZERS



OMRI



SUSTANE.COM

interview: david the good



the survival gardener

Q: How did you get into gardening?

A: In Kindergarten I sprouted a bean in a Dixie cup as a school project. I was so amazed by how it grew that I subsequently looted Mom's pantry and planted all different kinds of beans, popping them into pots of sand I dug from the yard and marveling as they popped up and grew. The next year my parents started homeschooling me and I begged my Dad to let me have a space to garden. He lovingly sacrificed an 8 x 8' piece of the lawn in the backyard, picked up some railroad ties for borders plus some garden soil and seeds, and I started planting. From then on I never stopped. I would go to the library and bring home a stack of books on gardening whenever I could and read them

them cover-to-cover. All of my childhood from then on I had a garden, right through college. When I bought my own place, I started planting food even before I had furniture. I give full credit to my parents for encouraging my hobby. My great-grandfather also had a huge garden in Upstate New York that inspired me. I helped him on summer vacation as he pulled beets, picked potato bugs off long rows of beautiful potato plants and brought in piles of produce and berries for my Great-Grandmother to can. He sent me home to South Florida with seeds and lime for my garden – I was really blessed by a great family all around. When my friends

were asking for toys and videogames at Christmas, I was asking for seeds, tools, and rooting hormone. I still remember being thrilled to unwrap a big bag of potting soil and a trowel one Christmas.

Q: You lived in Florida and moved to the sub tropics about a year ago. What was the reason for your move? Was there hesitation from your family to make that move?

A: We moved for a few reasons. First, I have been absolutely obsessed for years with the potential for tropical agriculture and year-round gardening. Black pepper, vanilla, cocoa, jackfruit, plantains, breadfruit... the bounty of the tropics is incredible. Secondly, I believe the United States is an Empire in decline. We spent years prepping and planning for potential problems, then finally decided to go and raise our children someplace far from the craziness. Our family misses us, but we stay in touch and my wife and children really love it here in the middle of nowhere. We haven't given away our exact location because of my large following and the peacefulness of some anonymity, but we are quite happy we made the move. Sometimes we miss things like ordering a pruning saw on Amazon and having it delivered two days later, but the freedom of being outside the restrictions of the US is intoxicating. Here you can build a composting toilet system or plant a big garden in your front yard and no one will bat an eye or report you to the local HOA. It's a great place to practice simple living, off-grid building and traditional techniques without regulatory speed bumps.

Q: Since moving to the equatorial tropics and growing all of these new types of edible plants, is there anything you wish you could grow but can't now because you live in the tropics – such as cool weather crops?

A: I do rather miss peaches, apples and Jerusalem artichokes, but I am trying to grow some of these

down here and trick them into producing. We also have problems with insects chopping down seedlings in the garden, since there is no winter to knock out those pests. All of these things are learning experiences...and really, it's hard to miss temperate gardening all that much when you're eating fresh mangoes.

A: For most of the readers, they'll never live in a tropical area, what would you say is the most universal piece of gardening information you've learned there that would work for any gardener? Feed the soil first. If you get your minerals and organic matter correct and your soil nice and loose, success will follow. It is amazing how pest problems decrease and yields increase when you pay attention to the soil and keep it healthy.

Q: You're the author of 4 5 books – your book *Compost Everything: The Good Guide to Extreme Composting* (by David The Good available on amazon kindle and paperback) – you describe it as a must have for cheapskates, survivalists and people who are sick of throwing trash in the landfills. In writing this book, what was your most surprising discovery?

A: I worked on composting systems for more than ten years and my biggest realization was that gardeners are making compost production way, way too difficult. Compost the lists of rules! Meat, bread, paper –you can compost these things quite easily. We're all heard how the Indians taught the Pilgrims to bury beneath their corn plants – yet we're afraid to throw some chicken bones in the heap... then we go out and buy blood meal and bone meal for the garden. There are so many good ways to add this valuable organic matter to the ground that I could write a second book

on the topic and still not run out of ways to compost. In my research I observed nature and learned from indigenous methods and found that tumblers and complicated systems are completely unnecessary. Throw it on the ground!

Q: With the book what do you find that people get hung most about with composting?

A: Fear. It's mostly fear. "Will it go anaerobic? Will it smell? Will it attract rats?" Fear is the compost-killer. Fear is the little death that keeps you from rich humus. (All apologies to Frank Herbert.) If you want to breathe a big sigh of relief and start really making a dent in the material you send to the landfill, plus grow better gardens, check the book out. Or, if you like to see some of the methods in action, visit my YouTube channel and watch my composting playlist. It's really fun to compost when you lose your fear.

Q: You were a master gardener at one point, and beyond your years of experience in gardening – what do you believe is the biggest misconception to the average weekend gardener who does not garden fulltime as you and I do?

A: Too many people view gardening as an old person's hobby. It's not – it's a connection with your food supply. It's a way to grow organic produce for your family that is more nutritious and fresher than anything you can buy. It's a way to keep your family fed through hard times. When you know that you can tear up a piece of your yard and grow thousands of calories, you gain confidence and security. Even simple crops like potatoes taste incredible when you grow them at home. The first time I made French fries from home-grown spuds I was blown away. "Wow – so this is what real food tastes like!" I thought. Amazing men and women through history have worked the soil and brought forth nutritional wealth since the

the Garden of Eden. You're joining a great tradition. I think a lot of people give up after a failure or two. Don't! Learn from them and push on. As I tell people all the time, I've killed more plants than most people have ever grown. Learn from mistakes and press on. You will learn and you will find a satisfaction that money can't buy. I'll help you, too – I answer questions all the time and I want you to succeed.

Q: Being in the tropics you have wet and dry season. What have you found to be the best method to water or retain moisture during the dry season?

A: Harvesting rainwater with swales, mulch, cisterns and ponds is valuable. Also, learning to utilize wider spacing and growing with the seasons is a great idea. I grow many field crops just on the water that falls from above. I did this in Tennessee, in Florida and here in the tropics. There is a misconception that tiny beds and tight spacing will help you grow more food. I disagree. It works sometimes, but often the old ways are better. People think wide spacing in rows is part of "commercial" farming and was done for tractor usage. In reality, the practice was developed so each plant can find the moisture it needs in the soil and survive through periods of drought. I guarantee you that homesteaders on the prairie weren't watering their acreage with a garden hose and city water!

Check out David's
website and books at
TheSurvivalGardener.com

in the garden

Herbs

money saving

When its time to garden and the temperatures are warm, most gardeners think of planting radishes, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, etc., but forget about one of the most costly items to buy fresh anywhere, which are herbs! Herbs do not require full sun, many will grow in as little as 4 hours. They can even be grown indoors year round in a window. South facing windows are best, but east and west will work as well. One exception to the indoor growing rule is rosemary. It will grow decent indoors but is best to be grown outside, it just doesn't do well inside.

Herbs will grow in average soil. If you have an area in your garden they is high in nitrogen you can plant herbs there and they will pull some nitrogen for your soil. You don't need to plant many of the same species of the same varieties of

herbs as they will produce well. As always, plant only what you need and will use as you may end up with a lot of extra if you plant too much.

Once you've decided what herbs you are wanting to grow, now you need to plant the flavor you're wanting to accomplish. Some herbs, like parsley, sage and rosemary are all somewhat similar, but herbs like basil have different flavors. Basil has flavors such as cinnamon, lime, licorice, lemon, or with mint there is a chocolate mint. In Wisconsin, most herbs are annuals and warm weather crops. Some may come back a 2nd year for seed in more mild and could come back a 2nd year with the right conditions. Sage and rosemary will come back with the right climate. Herbs can be bought easily at your independent garden center or started inside under grow lights

or by a sunny window.

While most people think of herbs for cooking or baking, many herbs can be used for things like tea, to add scent to homemade cleaners, or even as natural aids. Lemongrass is a great herb for the scent and addition to hot water to make a nice herbal tea.

Best way to store them herbs is to dry them. A lot of people will chop them, add them to cooking oil, and the freeze in small portions to later add flavor for cooking. There are even many recipes online to make herb infused olive oil. Some people will even hang fresh herbs in their bathroom when they shower and the scent will fill the air as a natural air freshener.

If you have never grown your own herbs it is worth the try. You will save money and even maybe spice up your life a bit.



The Wisconsin Vegetable Gardener.com

Wood Prairie Farm
Bridgewater, Maine

Our 38th Year 1976-2014

CERTIFIED ORGANIC DIRECT FROM OUR FAMILY FARM

For Organic and NON-GMO Seed Potatoes
Visit woodprairie.com or call 1-800-829-9765



Whether you grow in containers, raised bed, or traditional ground, if you're not utilizing the benefits of mulch, you are creating more work for yourself. The advantages of using mulch, synthetic or natural, is to create a ground cover around the plants that you are growing. Mulch can reduce moisture loss in the soil, suppress weeds, prevent soil splash up on plants, as well a material to cover the bare soil, as in nature you don't find bare soil. There is always something covering the ground, such as leaves, grass, moss or any other natural ground cover.

Mulch can be synthetic (we do not recommend) or natural. Synthetic mulches such as rubber chips or weed fabric – neither break down quickly, but some gardeners see a benefit in using a weed fabric or plastic mulch fabric. There are an unlimited number of natural mulches. Some are common and some are not so common. Either way, they make a great soil cover. Dried grass clippings work well. You want to dry your grass clippings before using them as mulch so they don't mold. You can simply bag your grass clippings, spread them on your driveway to dry in the sun a bit, then collect them and use them as mulch around your plants. The best grass clippings are seed free and chemical free.

Leaves can be collected in the fall and used as mulch over winter or bagged and used in spring. Letting leaves break down over winter will add nutrients to your soil and leave some mulch there for you in the spring. Just move what is left aside, plant what you are planting, and move it back around the plants. Leaves do break down within 7 months so keep in mind by mid-summer they are mostly decomposed.

Another mulch that can be used is shredded cardboard or shredded paper. Some people prefer not to use this because of the ink on the paper and possible glue remnants from the cardboard. Shredded paper or cardboard may not look as natural as other mulches. These shreadings can blow away so it is best to water them down when first using them.

Pine needles can be used as mulch as well. They won't blow away or wash away like some mulch could. Also, they will not make the soil acidic as some people believe.

One mulch we would recommend not using is



One mulch we would recommend not using is shredded wood or wood chip mulch, unless you get them from a tree in which you know was disease free and you're going to put them on the ground for 3 to 5 years for them to break down. If you apply fresh mulch around your vegetable garden, they will rob the soil of nitrogen. Trees that have been mulched and contain disease will show disease still exists a year later. UW extension has proven this.



ALL-NEW HAPPY LEAF V2 OUT NOW

Optically Tuned OSRAM® LEDs



happyleafled.com



Tomato Problems

Most all gardeners grow tomatoes. They can be grown in the ground, containers, raised beds and even straw bales. However, there are a few common mistakes that many tomato gardeners make. Most of them have easy solutions.

Planting in *too much shade* can be problematic for tomatoes. Tomatoes like as much sun as they can get. If you are not sure as to how much sun your tomatoes need, 8 hours of full sun during the peak of the summer minimum is needed. If you have less you will have less production. More is ideal. We understand not every grow area is going to provide a full day of ample sunshine, but for growing tomatoes and other fruiting plants, using the space that gets the most sun is best.

As your tomatoes begin to grow outside they will need some type of *structural support*. This can be

tomato cages, stakes, or even strings like in the florida weave. The important thing is to get them off of the ground. Just like most living things, having access to air, sun and water is important. Supporting your tomatoes allows air to flow around them, increases sun rays to envelope the most of them and allows them access to water. You will increase your tomato production by 50% just by getting them off the ground. Drooping tomatoes are more susceptible to disease, pests and other possible problems.

If you grow your tomatoes in a container it is best to grow in the right size container. Tomatoes are a heavy feeder. This simply means they take up a lot of nutrients from the soil. If you plant them in too small of a container they will not get the nutrients they need from the soil and

will not do well, even possibly stop growing. A simple container for tomatoes is a 5 gallon bucket with holes for drainage. One tomato plant per bucket or 1 tomato plant per 10 gallon grow bag.

You generally want to add some type of fertilizer at the time of planting and throughout the season. When doing so, you want to follow the directions on the package. Too much is not good but not enough is not good either. If you are unsure about what your soil may need you can add an all-purpose fertilizer or get a soil test done at your local university extension for a nominal fee. Plants are only going to take up what they need so don't waste your time or money by overusing fertilizer.

Just like most things you plant, it is best to grow what you know you will eat and use. Look for that in your tomato varieties. Some tomatoes are meant for slicing and eating fresh, while the meatier tomatoes like romas and paste varieties are good for canning. Cherry and grape varieties are good for snacks and salads. Growing tomatoes is enjoyable and tasty. Growing them the right way will reduce frustration and increase production.



Migardener

HEIRLOOM SEEDS

- 99 cents • open pollinated • non-gmo
- organic • ship internationally • hand packed

migardener.com



Strawberries are a long term, low maintenance crop of fruit that can grow for many years with little effort from the gardener.

Growing Strawberries

There are 2 main types of strawberries that are available to grow – everbearing and June bearing. June bearing, as the name states, will bear fruit mostly in June. They may bear fruit a little before or after June. June-bearing varieties are often recommended for short-season northern gardens; they offer a bigger summer bounty than everbearers, but plants stop fruiting after the first harvest. Everbearing strawberries produce three periods of flowers and fruit during the spring, summer and fall. Everbearers do not produce many runners. Runners are how strawberries reproduce and are the easiest way to grow your strawberry patch. In the late summer, most varieties of strawberries produce runners, also known as stolons. These runners will eventually develop their own roots, resulting in a clone plant. This is a great way for you to

naturally grow your strawberry bed. As the runners grow and become established, your plants will increase.

The best way to start a new strawberry patch is to buy bare roots from an online source or a local garden center. You can buy the plant starts or plugs, but those are more costly. Bare roots are strawberry plants without dirt on the roots. They are typically stored by the store or the cellar in a freezer or cool unit to be shipped in a dormant state. From our experience we have found this is the best an economical way to start our 150 square foot strawberry patch that is now 6 years old. The other type of plants are the plug plants or the plant starts. These are live plants in containers that look much like flower starts.

They should be planted as soon as you get them but can stay in the trays for a short period of time. They have a higher survival rate and are more vigorous.

Strawberries are best grown in an area with full sun. At all costs any type of shade should be avoided. Strawberries prefer full sun and need it to produce best. Soil that is loose, well-draining and nutrient rich is best too. When planting strawberries you do not want to bury the crown. The plant will suffocate and die if you bury the crown at the time of planting.

When planted successfully, your berry plants will grow and produce for many years. On average the experts say 4 years, but can be up to 6. Ours have produced longer but since we have a lot of well-established runners some of the original plants may no longer be producing. Strawberry plants will produce more and more every year until they are done. They are a great addition to any garden.



Strawberries prefer full sun and need it to produce best. Soil that is loose, well-draining and nutrient rich is best too.

