

Garden Update for week of March 23, 2020

By Kathleen Cue, Nebraska Extension Horticulture Educator in Dodge County

Garden Bits

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If you're at home and practicing social distancing, the one bit of good news in all of this is that we can be outside to tinker with plants. Spring is an exciting time, full of promise and possibilities. If you're not a gardener, no worries, learning how to garden is a trial and error process. The definition of a gardener, after all, is "one who kills many plants." Heaven knows I've killed my share and I've learned far more from my failures than my successes. Even now, umpteen years of gardening and two horticulture degrees later, I still relish the challenge of growing a vegetable I haven't grown before, planting a tree I've only seen in catalogs, and searching for that elusive new cultivar I've heard about.

Now is a great time to plant the seeds of cool season crops like radishes, lettuce, and snap peas into the garden. Broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage transplants can be set out too. Tomato and eggplant seeds can be started indoors for moving plants outside after danger of frost is past. If fresh herbs are your thing, start basil, dill, parsley and cilantro inside, planting them outside after frost. Whatever kind of edible gardening you like, new as well as veteran gardeners can add something different each year. What new favorites are just waiting for you to try them?

'Montmorency' and 'North Star' are two sour cherry cultivars that have been around for a long time. Now, new releases of shrub-form cherries offer cold tolerance, shorter stature, AND high sugar content. From the University of Saskatchewan comes the Romance Series of cherries, with cultivar names like 'Romeo', 'Juliet', 'Cupid', 'Crimson Passion' and 'Valentine'. These tough cherry shrubs are new enough to the green industry that finding them can be problematic. This doesn't mean they are impossible to find but ordering early is important.

Extension Master Gardeners are gearing up for Growing Together Nebraska, a joint service program between Nebraska Extension's Nutrition Education Program and Master Gardeners to grow vegetables for the food insecure. Even if you don't have a Growing Together Nebraska program in your county, be sure to donate excess produce from your garden to local food pantries.