



Cold cherry tomatoes by Arden Miller

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2023 Seed Exchange



Our annual seed exchange will be in person this year!

Saturday, February 18, 2023

10 AM to noon

Rudy Gelnett Memorial Library
Selinsgrove
(Details on page 2)

Note to 2022 Gardeners:

If you want to reserve the same plot(s) for 2023, please return your [plot application](#) and check by March 1st.



Support the garden when you shop. AmazonSmile will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible purchases to the garden.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Garden News

Notes from the Garden Manager, Roy Swazey

We have several truckloads of leaves courtesy of Penn Township. and Selinsgrove Borough. Those of you who like leaves, take note.

Dave K.'s bees seem to be doing okay. They managed to produce some excess honey in what, locally at least, was a fairly low nectar production year as I have been told by some local beekeepers.

The days are lengthening, and spring fever is on its way.



Kathy & Jackie weed and mulch along the fence.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Annual Seed Exchange

Saturday, February 18, 2023
10 AM to noon

Rudy Gelnett Memorial Library, Selinsgrove
(downstairs in children's section)

Snow date: February 25



This FREE event is open to the public. All ages are welcome! We have a wide variety of seeds, including many heirloom types. There is plenty to go around, so even if you don't have extra seeds to give away, you will go home with plenty of seeds! If you have seeds to share, please bring them early or contact us at escgpa@gmail.com to arrange pick up.

Register for a 30' by 30' garden plot for just \$25. Smaller plots and raised beds are also available. Look for the registration table at the Seed Exchange or [click here](#).



Photo by Arden Miller

Flower Buckets Needed

The garden board is looking for donations of gallon buckets that we use to deliver fresh flower donations to area nursing homes. Plastic ice cream tubs work very well. If you eat ice cream by the gallon, please consider saving the buckets for us.

If you have buckets to donate, please email escgpa@gmail.com or call 570-374-5369. Thanks!

New to Gardening?

By Arden Miller

The success of your garden starts with some planning.

- 1, How much time do you have to spend in the garden? Gardens do best with weeding, watering, and pest management. Once your vegetables start maturing, you need time to pick and perhaps preserve. You may want to start small if you haven't gardened before.
- 2, What will you grow in your garden? Make a list of what you like to eat and what you might like to try.
3. Learn about growing the vegetables on your list. Can the seeds be sown directly in the garden or do the seeds need to be started indoors (your house or purchased at a greenhouse)? How much space do they need in the garden? How long will it take for them to produce vegetables?
4. Get your soil tested. Soil test kits are available at the Snyder County Conservation District. Directions for sampling, form completion, and mailing are included with each kit.
5. When is the last frost date in your area? When planning when to sow your seeds and set out your plants, you need to know the last frost date as well as the optimal soil temperature for seed germination. You should also determine how long it will take from planting the seed to harvesting the vegetable. In Central Pennsylvania we estimate the last frost date as mid-May so "tender" plants like tomatoes should not be planted until after that date. If you buy plants at a greenhouse, get advice on which plants can be planted before the last frost. If you plant seeds when the soil is still cold, they will not germinate well. Peas, lettuces and spinach can be planted when the soil temperature hits 40 ° F. Pumpkins, however, prefer the soil temperature to be at least 70° F.
6. Make a "map" of your space. This is a good reference for this year and for succeeding years. It will help you plan crop rotation to help minimize pests and plant diseases.
7. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Good resources are seed companies, Penn State Cooperative Extension, and gardeners at East Snyder Community Garden.



Cabbage seeds usually are planted indoors. The plant is transplanted to the garden in the spring.
Photo by Arden Miller



Carrot seeds are sown directly into the garden.
Photo by Lynn Bressler

The best way to learn about gardening is to get your hands dirty! We welcome help from individuals and groups alike. Please consider helping East Snyder Community Garden serve our community. If you or your organization would like to learn more about volunteering, [click here](#).



Photo by Arden Miller

ESCG 2022 Donation Report

by Arden Miller

In 2022 gardeners donated 1884 pounds of produce. The season started with spinach and ended with turnips and parsnips. Produce was donated to mainly to locations in eastern Snyder County: Loaves and Fishes, Meals4Seals, Martha's Table, Shepherd's Pie, The R.E.C., Kidsgrove Food Pantry and GraceWorks. Some produce was donated to the new food pantry at the YMCA and to Haven Ministries in Sunbury.

Cut flower donations were made to the Manor at Penn Village and Brookdale Grayson View.

"I can clear that plot in a weekend!"

By Jackie Lambert

I can clear that plot in a weekend!

Umm humm.

When I think about a garden plot, I see this lovely, freshly turned, dark earth ready to plant. And then there is reality – mowing grass, digging thistles, pulling weeds! In the fall of 2022, I wanted a second plot and, as luck would have it, there was a plot that needed weeding - Plot #40. How long could that possibly take? It's only 26' x 26'. From September 15 to November 9, I hand shoveled, hauled, and sweated for 52 hours to clear plot #40. Another 10 hours of help from friends added up to 62 hours of work to turn fallow land into a cultivated garden plot.

I frequently encourage new gardeners to dig out the thistles and perennial weeds in their plots then to cover half of the plot with cardboard and mulch to let nature compost the weeds. Having hand dug plot #40, I still have the same advice: sweet talk a friend or family member into sharing the labor!

If you would like to read the journal of my digging days, [click here!](#)



Before



After

Local Environmentalists Speak Up

Calli Lambard and Grant Rowe host *Big World, Small Bites*, a podcast produced by Susquehanna University. *Big World, Small Bites* delivers bites of advice to work bits of sustainability into our lives. Grant invited two members of ESCG as guests for one of the podcasts, "Don't Moss Around: Gardening's Importance to Sustainability." Roy Swazey and Jackie Lambert decided to try out their radio voices. Calli and Grant did a great job of editing our ramblings into a coherent podcast! We are sure everyone listening will be renting a plot in 2023 to support sustainability :) To listen to the podcast, [click here!](#)



Learning to Love Stinging Nettles

By Debbie Naha-Koretzky



A bowlful of nettles

Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is a common weedy plant found in moist woods, along trails, and in disturbed areas. It is well known for its ability to cause a burning or itchy sensation to the skin when touched. The entire plant is armed with stinging hairs that inject an irritating combination of chemicals into the skin on contact. But blanching the leaves and stems deactivates the sting, and nettles transform into a delicious wild vegetable. Just remember to use gloved hands when harvesting and handling the raw plant.

The sting of nettles is temporary, but welts or even blisters can occur on sensitive skin. There is no other plant in the US that has this stinging effect. Intentional exposure to nettle stings is a folk remedy that has been practiced by many cultures. The practice is called urtification. It is said to improve blood circulation and help with arthritis pain. There is actually some scientific evidence supporting such use for joint pain.

Identifying stinging nettle: The stinging hairs will be seen on leaves and stems. Leaf edges are sharply serrated. The leaves are opposite, or right across from each other, and are roughly textured, lance shaped or somewhat heart shaped, 2 to 5 inches long, and tapered to a sharp tip. Small greenish flowers hang in clusters from leaf axils.

Then there's always the "crash course" method to make sure you have the right plant. Many people have told me that this is what they did to confirm identification. Just brushing the leaves lightly will produce a stinging sensation.

A plant called white snakeroot (*Ageratina altissima*) has a similar appearance, and it is toxic. But white snakeroot does not have hairs on the stems. So check for the hairs. Two other "lookalike" plants, wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) and clearweed (*Pilea pumila*) are safe to eat.



Stinging nettles are covered in stinging hairs

Harvest stinging nettle in late winter and early spring. Many sources state that nettles should be harvested only before the plant flowers. Supposedly, older plants develop gritty particles called cystoliths that can irritate the kidneys. I have not been able to find any scientific evidence to support this. While it may very well be one of those myths that are repeated time and time again, err on the safe side and stick with the younger growth. Mature nettle plants can grow to 5 or 6 feet tall. If you find older plants remember the location for next spring. Harvest the upper parts of young plants. The top 4-6 leaves (or 2-3 sets of leaves) are the most tender. Back in the kitchen, give them a good rinse. Remove any tougher stems. Don't forget, gloved hands!

Nettles are nutrient-dense and have been used for food since ancient times. A 100 gram serving (½ cup cooked) provides your daily vitamin A requirement, along with significant amounts of fiber, potassium, calcium, iron, manganese, riboflavin, protein and other nutrients. Safety during pregnancy is not known, so best to avoid.

A brief submersion of stinging nettles in boiling water is all it takes to remove the sting. Season and enjoy as a side dish, or chop and add to casseroles, etc. Nettles make a nice springtime soup, and an infusion of the leaves yields a good tea.

Creamed Nettles

Stinging nettles are safe to touch and taste after a minute or so of cooking. Creamed Nettles are delicious served over toast.

- 4 cups chopped stinging nettles
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1/4 cup cream
- A sprinkle of nutmeg
- Salt and pepper

Add the nettles to a pot of simmering water and cook for 5 minutes. Scoop the cooked nettles out into a large bowl. Save the cooking liquid - it's nettle tea!

Rinse nettles in cold water, then squeeze handfuls to remove excess water.

Heat a skillet over medium heat and add the butter and garlic. Cook until golden, about 3 minutes. Add nettles, cream, and nutmeg. Heat through. Season to taste.

To read more about stinging nettles and other wild edibles, check out my book, *Foraging Pennsylvania and New Jersey*. Visit my website at: www.wildediblesnjpa.com

Debbie Naha-Koretzky (aka The Wild Edibles Lady) is a licensed nutritionist, foraging instructor, and author. Her focus is wild edible plants. She conducts walks and programs in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

The Rescue Tree

By Lori Lupolt & Dan Shannon



Part 1- This story began in December 2018 when I purchased a beautiful, cream-colored poinsettia with deep pink edges. I've never been a huge fan of dark red poinsettias, so I was excited to take home a plant so lovely and unique. After the holidays I didn't want to part with it, so I moved the poinsettia to our sunroom and cared for it throughout the winter. It did very well, but when the weather warmed, I worried that the sunroom was not the best place for it. In June, I moved it outdoors. I planted it in my plot at ESCG, where it thrived among the vegetables and flowers throughout the summer of 2019.

In September, I dug out the poinsettia, potted it, and brought it home, determined to see it bloom for a second Christmas. When I shared my plan with Dan, my garden neighbor, he offered helpful growing tips and lots of encouragement.

In October, I covered a box with dark fabric and set alarms on my phone, so I would remember to give the poinsettia 15 hours of darkness every day. It worked! The poinsettia was just as beautiful as before! (see photo)

After spending another winter in our sunroom, the poinsettia returned to the garden for the 2020 growing season. Then the pandemic began and brought with it the opportunity to transition more quickly to our new home in Gettysburg. I spent most of the summer away from my garden, visiting only occasionally. A volunteer squash plant took over my plot, but the poinsettia didn't seem to mind.

It was doing well despite my neglect. I promised that I would be back before the frost to take it home. ~Lori



Part 2- It was late October when I discovered Lori's Last Lost Poinsettia. At first, I thought it was dead, but down below the frost-burned foliage there were a few green leaves. I trimmed away the damage then dug it up. I shook off the old soil, and with a new pot and some clean soil, gave it a home in my window. Fortified by scores of YouTube videos, I set out to create my own Bonsai Poinsettia.

The next summer it moved back to the garden, next to the eggplants. They seemed happy together. In the fall it was trimmed both top and root, bathed in Safer Soap to remove pests, and planted in a shallow pot for the winter.

Last summer, after a trim, was spent on the porch, being watered almost daily during the hot weather in its small pot.

The next challenge was to get it to bloom. The poinsettia blooms when the days get short. That meant that it had to be protected from my deplorable habit of using electric lights and my landlord's enthusiasm for brilliant eye-searing "security" lights. I tried to move it under cover every night and I almost succeeded. There are little, tiny buds, and I broke off a branch moving it. It may bloom yet; I need to grow better roots, the adventure continues... ~Dan



Some Thoughts about Community

By Lori Lupolt

I love to tell the story of how my beloved poinsettia was rescued by a fellow gardener, but it is only one of many stories that illustrates the value of community.

The first time I visited the garden, I was greeted by Lynn who talked to me about the garden and encouraged me to get involved. She assured me that I would not be alone—she would help me and so would others. I went home with my arms full of fresh produce and my heart full of hope.

I can ramble on for hours about my experiences at ESCG and the advantages of community gardening. I benefited from the kindness, generosity, and wisdom of fellow gardeners. Here are just a few examples:

- Lynn and Maelee took me under their wing and generously shared their seeds, produce, and wisdom.
- When he saw me trying to turn over my new plot with a garden shovel, Jacobs stopped to show me how to use a spade fork to lessen the strain on my body.
- Naomi introduced me to shishito peppers and shared her delicious recipes.
- While working in our adjacent plots, I enjoyed the company of and conversations with Dan (and Terry too). They know more about gardening than I, and it was fun to pick their brains.
- I was moved to tears when I discovered that Jacobs used strawberry runners from his own garden to plant a row of strawberries in mine.

Moved by what others did for me, I offered help in return. One of my favorite things to do was secretly weed plots overwhelmed by thistles. I joined work parties and ran for the board. I started the garden newsletter, which is something I continue to do even though I no longer live in Selinsgrove.

The success of any community depends upon the willingness of others to get involved—to serve.

Some gardeners say, “I prefer to quietly take care of my own plot and go home.”

Meanwhile, someone *else* is mowing, so no one has to tromp through high weeds to get to his/her plot. Someone is arranging for mulch and manure deliveries, so individual gardeners don't have to source and haul organic material on their own. Someone makes sure tools are available and in working condition. Someone organizes outreach programs, serves on the board, coordinates donations. . . ALL are volunteers!

To those who just want to garden and go home I say, “You are missing the point of *community* gardening. You are also missing out. I hope that in 2023 you experience both the joy *and sacrifice* of being part of the ESCG community. Give your time and use your talents to do whatever you can to lighten the load for those who share and serve this wonderful community for you and with you!”

Winter Survivors

By Quinn Stanford

“*O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum wie treu sind deine Blätter!*” Oh, sorry, I was practicing my German while singing a familiar Christmas song. Crazy enough, Germany is where a lot of Christmas traditions, including the Christmas tree, started! Now that the festivities have ended, we prepare ourselves for the cold winter season. May the Christmas tree remind us that there are many plants that can survive (and thrive) in Pennsylvania’s cold winters.

Violas may make a beautiful addition to a string ensemble, but they are also beautiful flowers that can survive the bleak winters. These small flowers have a range of colors, including violet, blue, yellow, white, and cream. For best results, plant in raised beds or window boxes during the cold weather. They can easily survive most frost and freeze conditions and thrive in full sun or part-sun, part-shade. If you are looking for a pretty flower to get you through your blue Christmas, turn to the violas.



Viola photo by Lori Lupolt

“The Holly and the Ivy” is a well-known Christmas song for good reason. The holly plant can survive central Pennsylvania’s coldest bitter battles. The holly plant is pretty, but don’t eat its bright red berries or you won’t be home for Christmas -- you’ll be in the hospital with poisoning! The holly plants look similar to mistletoe, except you don’t need to kiss under the holly.

Hollies need full sunlight to grow and won’t transport well, so choose their final resting place before you plant them. “Have a holly jolly Christmas... and in case you didn’t know...” hollies can be planted in cold weather and will survive the snow.



Holly photo by Lori Lupolt

Agave (no Christmas pun or reference here) is a succulent, often confused with cacti. Agave plants have leaves whereas cacti don’t. Agave plants can be used to make agave syrup, an alternative to maple syrup. Blue agave -- which is one of two common varieties -- is often used in tequila making.

Lastly, the holidays can be a stressful time, so sometimes people just snap...dragon. Snapdragons are another winter weather plant that is good for anyone to plant. Snapdragons come in red, yellow, pink, burgundy, bronze, orange, white, and multicolored. These colorful flowers can range from 6-15 inches in height for low borders and up to 30-48 inches high for taller borders. These flowers only need full sun and partial shade to survive. They also are adept at surviving subfreezing temperatures. Don’t be a Scrooge this season and snap... dragon at someone, just plant some pretty flowers.

Even though it’s getting colder, don’t let your garden be forgotten. Ask Santa for some manure, or seeds, or even wish for a bountiful harvest next season. Until the crops can grow next season, use this often-ignored season of winter to brighten your mood and garden with a few winter plants.

Source: <https://caramanicolandscape.com/educational-articles/beautiful-cold-resistant-plants-winters-pennsylvania/>

Quinn Stanford is a 10th grader at Selinsgrove High School, an actor, comedian, and bathrobe enthusiast. He's in Forensics, FBLA, and the school newspaper, The Grove Gazette. In addition, he loves history and writing and enjoys biking around the neighborhood, cooking delicious dishes, and making artwork — not all at once though. He's a regular contributor to the ESCG newsletter.



Kids' Page

The Praying Mantis

Look what one of the gardeners found! Do you know what it is?



Photo by Roy Swazey

In late fall or early winter, most adult praying mantises die, but they leave behind an egg case called an ootheca (sounds like *oh oh theeka*). This case, which is about an inch or inch and a half long) contains hundreds of eggs that will survive the winter because of a foam-like substance that quickly hardens after laying.

When the eggs hatch in the spring the mantis nymphs will search for something to eat. Praying mantis eat spiders, all kinds of insects and even each other! We like them in the garden because they eat many pests that harm crops, but sometimes they also eat our precious pollinators, like beautiful monarch butterflies! Believe it or not, they sometimes munch on frogs, lizards, and small birds too!

Though they look kind of scary, a praying mantis will not hurt you. If you see a mantis or an ootheca, please be kind. Observe, but don't hurt it.

Learn more about the praying mantis

[National Geographic Kids](#)

[Animal Fun Facts](#)

[Watch this Cool Video by "Samiah Rose Knows"](#)

Looking for something to do this winter?
Take the spring newsletter challenge: **Share your favorite thing to do at the garden.**
Send drawings, photos, or creative writing to escgpanews@gmail.com



[Click here to download and print this coloring page.](#)

2023 East Snyder Community Garden Board

Group photo left to right:
Jennie Ressler, Treasurer
Roy Swazey, Garden Manager
Kathy Boushie, Secretary
Crystal Erskine, Vice-President

Kneeling: Jackie Lambert, President



Photo by Holly Chubb

***We invite you to share your wisdom, photos, stories, or creative writing.
Please email newsletter submissions to Lori: escgpanews@gmail.com***



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Photo by Lynn Bressler

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