

**From:** Paul Parent Garden Club <newsletter@paulparentclub.com>  
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Edition 12.08	Paul Parent Garden Club News	February 23, 2012
	<p align="center"><b>FEATURED QUOTE :</b></p> <p>"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves." ~Mohandas K. Gandhi</p> <p align="center"><input type="text"/></p>	<p align="center"><b>Gifts for the Gardener</b></p> <p><a href="#">Here are some great ideas for gifts your favorite gardener will just love!</a></p> <p align="center"><b>Contact Information:</b></p>
<p align="center"><b>Wild Delight® Suet Cakes</b></p> <p><b>Suet is a popular food source for many birds. Suet provides high energy for birds.</b></p> <p>While many people often think of "low fat" diets, wild birds are just the opposite. They need very high levels of fat to survive. Wild birds have high body temperatures and use fat in a manner similar to the way a heat pump operates. Fat is used to produce heat during the winter and is used to produce energy and burn off heat in the summer months.</p> <p>Wild Delight offers a number of Suet products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deck, Porch N' Patio® Party™ Suet: perfect for attracting woodpeckers, nuthatches and jays.</li><li>• Woodpecker Picnic™ Suet: perfect for attracting woodpeckers, nuthatches and chickadees.</li><li>• Fruit N' Berry™ Smoothie™ Suet: Perfect for attracting fruit- and berry-eating songbirds.</li><li>• Nut N' Berry® Parfait™ Suet: perfect for attracting nut- and berry-eating songbirds.</li><li>• Gourmet Goodies™ Suet: perfect for attracting songbirds and other seed-eating birds.</li></ul> <p><a href="#">Click here for more information on Wild Delight products.</a></p> <p align="center"><input type="text"/></p>	<p align="center"><b>Suet Cakes</b></p> <p><input type="text"/></p>	<p><b>E-Mail:</b> <a href="#">Click to contact us.</a></p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> (207) 985-6972 (800) 259-9231 (Sunday 6 AM to 10 AM)</p> <p><b>Fax:</b> (207) 985-6972</p> <p><b>Address:</b> Paul Parent Garden Club 2 Blueberry Pines Dr Kennebunk, ME 04043</p> <p><b>Regular Phone Hours:</b> Mon.-Sat. 8 AM to 6 PM Sunday: 10 AM to 6 PM</p>
<p>I can remember the first time I saw the canna plant. I was on a family vacation in Florida and we were driving to Disney from the hotel. Because of the amount of traffic leading to the parks, the road was divided with a grass barrier to separate the traffic. In the style of Disney's Magic, this barrier was well planted with tropical trees, shrubs and flowers. I remember seeing large planting of cannas with bright orange, yellow and red flowers for height and surrounded for lower growing annuals like petunias, marigolds and geraniums.</p> <p>The planting were beautiful but the canna looked like tobacco plants I had seen many time growing all over central Mass. while at college at the University of Mass. Central Massachusetts was once an area of the country where the tobacco plants were grown for their large leaves. These large leaves of tobacco were produced in such towns as Hadley, Northampton, Hatfield and south to Connecticut were, I was told, they were used as wrappers for cigars. So you thought that tobacco only grew in the Carolinas, and so did I--until college. To the untrained eye those cannas looked like tobacco with nice flowers on them--not very exciting, just a big flowering plant.</p> <p>But today I have exciting news for you because the canna has been transformed into the "SPLASH" of color you always wanted for your summer garden, for your large containers--and even for your fish pond. Some people think cannas are lilies but that's not true, as they belong to the family of plants that has such members as bananas, ginger and heliconias. This is truly a tropical plant; it originated from the East Indies. They were brought to India and Africa by explorers and grown there for many years before they were introduced into European gardens during the mid-1800s.</p> <p>The plant has a rhizomatous type rootstock (like the iris) in your perennial garden, but the plant</p>	<p align="center"><input type="text"/></p>	<p align="center"><b>Tell your friends about Paul! Send them a copy of Paul's latest newsletter.</b></p> <p>(Note: this will not subscribe them to the newsletter, nor retain their email - it will just send them a copy from you.)</p> <p>Your e-mail [     ]</p> <p>Your name [     ]</p> <p>Their e-mail [     ]</p> <p>Their name [     ]</p> <p align="center">[Send &gt;&gt;]</p> <p align="center"><b>Where can I find Paul on</b></p>

produces large seedpods with seeds that are very hard and have a durable seed covering. That makes it possible to move the plant around the world easily without the plant dying during the move. If this rhizomatous type root system was not treated properly, it would dry up quickly and the plant would not survive the move--but the seed could.

The new varieties I want to tell you about are called "Tropicanna Canna" and were hybridized by the Anthony Tesselaar Plant Co. from Australia. Anthony himself found the first of the three new hybrids that his company has developed growing in Africa while visiting friends during a plant seeking tour. The early beginning was growing in a garden of a friend as a sport or sucker from the common canna. His team of hybridizers worked for several years to improve the plant to what it is today and they called the plant "Tropicanna." When you see it, you will know why!!

Before I tell you about the three new plants let me tell you about the original canna plant. First of all, as I told you earlier, the plant grows from a rhizome or swollen root, like the common iris that grows in your perennial garden. The plant could be divided every few years to make new clumps of plants. The original canna plant grew 3 to 5 individual tall-growing stems with big leaves that were broad, flat, oval, grew alternately on the stem. The noticeable veins that were raised on the leaf gave it most of its character. It had to be planted in mass to make a statement, but it was unique and if you lived in South Carolina and south, it was a perennial plant and it came back every spring in your garden.

The flowers were nice; they came in red, orange, yellow and some spotted varieties. The plant did flower most of the summer until the frost came in the fall, killing the plant back to the ground for the winter. The plants did stretch, and by the end of the season they looked tired and the flowers lost their excitement.

Now, about the new "Tropicanna Cannas"

**ONE:** Tropicanna, the original, will grow 4 to 6 feet tall and wide, forms a clump of multi-headed stems--and new shoots continue to develop during the year, unlike the common canna. The stems of the plants are bright crimson-red. As the large leaves begin to unfurl, the drama will begin. These leaves are not green: they are several shades of crimson red, cream and green striped on the leaf; as the leaf matures, the colors continue to change, no two leaves look alike on the plant at the same time. The intensity of the color of the leaves is determined by the amount of sunshine the plant receives and the amount of water you provide the plant during the summer.

If that is not enough color for you, strong crimson stems begin to form on the top of the plant and long pointed red flower bud clusters form. The plant begins to flower in early July and the large blooms--4 to 6 inches in diameter--are brilliant tangerine-orange. They stay clean and the plant will continue to flower until a good hard frost. Try to place the plant in your garden or container where the sun is behind it, so you can enjoy the electrifying stained glass appearance to the entire plant on a sunny day, WOW! If the plant begins to get too tall for you, cut back the tall stems and new shoots will quickly develop at the base of the plant to replace the ones you removed.

**TWO:** Tropicanna Gold, a sport/hybrid from Tropicanna that will also grow 4 to 6 feet tall and wide, forms a clump of new shoots and grows the same way as the original Tropicanna. The stems of this hybrid canna are bright kelly green, and the large leaves that form give you the appearance that they were painted on the plant. Each leaf has hundreds of alternating green and cream stripes on them that cover the leaf in such a pleasing fashion you will not be able to take your eyes off them. The lines of color run horizontal from the center of the leaf but curl up to the sides of the leaf.

Strong kelly-green stems begin to form long green flower bud clusters that open up to delight you with startling orange/yellow flowers with a speckled orange throat. As the flower matures, the flower will develop a ring of yellow on its edge, giving it additional color and texture. Like the other Tropicannas, make sure the sun is behind the plant so you can enjoy the stained glass appearance as the sun penetrates the foliage.

**THREE:** Tropicanna Black, the newest hybrid created by Tesselaar Plants, has something very unusual for you--magnificent foliage that has shades of purple blended with black on it. The foliage looks to be soft, smooth, and has a shimmering gloss to it, making the perfect contrasting plant for your garden or container. The color is similar to the dark-leaf sweet potato vine we all enjoy in our window boxes instead of vinca--but much richer looking. The stems are the same magnificent dark color. The leaves of this plant are a bit more narrow but still large and showy. The flower buds that form in clusters are vibrant scarlet, and when they open the large 4 to 6 inch flower just seems to explode above the plant. To enjoy this plant to the fullest you must plant regular green leaf plants at its base for the wonderful contrast it will produce.

All three types can be also set in a fish pond or tub of water if you can completely submerge the pot under water. The roots will keep the water clean, and when added to a water feature these new cannas plants will be just as exciting as the fish in the water. I added 2 pots of these cannas to my fish pond last year--and everyone who saw them loved them.

When you plant these Tropicanna cannas in your garden or container, add Espoma Plant-tone fertilizer directly in the hole and a handful around the plant on top of the soil. No additional fertilizer will be needed for the rest of the year. If growing in a container, the pot should be 24 inches or larger; the plant will need room to grow. Even a whiskey barrel with vines planted at its base will look incredible.

These plants love a moist to wet soil, so water often--especially during the hot days of summer. Try to keep plant out of the wind as the leaves are large and strong winds will tear them. In the fall, let the frost kill back the plant back to the ground, cut back the plant to the ground and then move the pot into a cool basement for the winter and keep it moist. If growing in a garden, cut back the plant the same way and dig the plant from the garden. Place the clump of rhizomes in a bushel basket or wooden box, cover with soil or peat moss for the winter, and keep moist. You can replant directly into the garden in early May, once the ground has warmed up, or can start them indoors in large container 4 weeks before planting into the garden for a head start on

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growth.

For more information (including where to buy) and pictures of this plant go to [www.tesselaar.com](http://www.tesselaar.com). Enjoy!

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During the last couple of days, I asked several people: "When I mention the herb basil, what country do you think of first?" Italy and France were the top answers...what do you think? To my great surprise and to the surprise of all that I talk to, the native home of basil is India and the Middle East. Yes, sweet basil is native to countries that are known for hot and spicy foods, who would think that? So let me tell you how we got this wonderful herb into North America. Spice traders brought it out of India in the 16th century while selling spices to the Mediterranean countries. It was brought to America with the early European settlers like the Pilgrims and those that followed to our shores.

Basil has a wonderful history and great lore. With this the start of Lent this week, you might like to know it was said to have grown around the tomb where Christ was placed after his death on the cross and started to grow after his resurrection. Some Greek Orthodox churches use it to prepare their holy water and pots of basil are often seen at the base of their altars.

On the other extreme both Greeks and Romans believed that they should "curse" as they sowed basil seed in their gardens to have better germination. (My father did that when he planted radishes, as they would not grow for him for some reason and only produced foliage--no radish globe roots ever developed. So, every Father's Day I always gave him a big bunch of fresh picked radishes from my garden and I can still see the big smile on his face.) Western Europe thought the basil belonged to the Devil and used it to keep witches from their homes. I just like it in fresh salads and use it often when I cook, the hell with the Devil. He can get his own--but not from my garden.

If you love basil as much as I do, always start the plant from seed indoors in pots and transplant to the garden when the soil warms up. I start my seedlings in mid-April to set out in mid-May. If you want to plant your seed directly into the garden, wait until the soil has warmed up or the cold soil will limit your seed germination. Unlike most other seedlings, basil has a taproot and does not transplant well as individual seedlings.

When you start seedlings indoors, use a sterile seed starter soil and keep the soil moist but never wet as basil will have problems with germination and has an additional problem called "damping-off," causing young seedlings to rot at the soil line, fall over, and die. Also never water your seedling late in the day when in pots as wet feed at night will encourage root rot problems. In the garden it is OK to water late in the day because of good drainage but wet foliage will encourage leaf eating insects like slugs to feed on them, so get your watering done by mid-day so the foliage and the garden soil has had time to dry up.

Your garden soil should be well drained and never have standing water. It should be rich and fertile for the best plant growth, so be sure to condition the soil before planting seeds or setting out potted seedling into the garden. Basil loves animal manure, well-seasoned compost and if you can add seaweed kelp when planting, you will be in for all the basil leaves you can pick. Now select a location in your garden that get plenty of sunlight during the day and is sheltered from the wind. This will prevent the plant from having brown edges on the foliage if the weather gets hot and the soil dries out around it. Plant in-between peppers, rows of lettuce, or even in planters with other types of herbs.

The main thing to remember is to pick basil often and prevent it from flowering or the foliage will become bitter tasting and the plant will become woody and stop producing new foliage. Pinch your plant every time you go into the garden and eat the wonderful tasting foliage right there in the garden if you don't need it for cooking. I will say it again: flowering basil will spoil the taste of the plant and stop foliage production, so keep picking off those flower buds as they develop. All basil plants are annual and must be replanted in the spring.

Fertilize every other week with Rooting and Blooming fertilizer or Miracle-Gro. If you want to stay organic, use compost tea made with your compost and water. One last thing: basil is the most popular and widely grown of the cooking herb both indoors and in the garden today. Basil comes in many heights, shapes, colors, and flavors so let me give you a few examples of what you will find in the seed rack or in the mail order catalogs.

**Sweet Basil** is number one! It will grow to 18 inches tall and just as wide. It has a wonderful strong sent to the leaves and is best used in salads, pesto, and of course in pasta sauce. The leaves are medium to deep green, smooth, shiny, oval in shape and the leaf will often curl under on the edges giving it a rounded appearance.

**'Dark Opal' Basil** has wonderful shiny purple foliage, is flavorful, and is a clean-looking plant. Grows 12 inches tall and just as wide. Great for salads and gives the salad great color along with taste. Gives the herb garden color with its foliage and it also has a bright cerise-pink flower--showy.

**'Purple Ruffles' Basil:** Another purple leaf variety but has larger leaves that are crinkled and ruffled looking--and add character. The leaf edge will curl and this plant will become bushier growing in your garden. Good eating and a wonderful garnish for all dishes you make. The foliage has more red in it and is not as dark purple as the 'Opal' basil.

**'Cinnamon' Basil** has a wonderful olive green leaf with tinges of purple on it. This variety is best



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known for the wonderful cinnamon-scented foliage when rubbed or crushed. The foliage is spicier tasting than sweet basil and is also great for spicy dishes and salads of fresh greens to bring out flavor. It will grow 18 inches tall and has clean-looking foliage.

'**Green Ruffles**' Basil has wonderful light green foliage that almost looks like mint. The plant has larger leaves than sweet basil and they are crinkled, curled and ruffled all at the same time--showy when planted with the other types of basil. It has a spicy taste and is wonderful in salads and all types of cooking.

**Lemon Basil** has smaller leaves that are lighter green in color, narrower, and sometimes almost yellow. The foliage has a wonderful smell and flavor of lemon when used in salads or cooking.

**Greek Basil** has the smallest leaves of all; there is no chopping needed, just add to your salads or cooking. It grows very compact and bushy--under 12 inches tall and wide, almost like a shrub. Great texture for your garden of assorted basil plants for all your cooking needs. Enjoy!

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When I was a freshman in high school, I got a wonderful job as a gardener on the weekends. When summer came, I got to work 3 or 4 days a week learning what I love to do today. This man was my first teacher and was responsible for me going to college. He was also responsible for my love of sweet peas. One of my first jobs in the spring was to clean out the sweet pea clumps and install the cages for them to grow in and repair the trellis that others grew on. Next to the fenced pen where his two hunting dogs lived during the day, as tall growing climbing sweet peas covered the fencing on the outside. One reason for the sweet peas on the fencing was for the fragrant flowers and less dog smell!

I quickly found out that when he got married 51 years earlier, sweet peas were in his wife's bridal bouquet. When they purchased this house, all she wanted was a sweet pea garden. Like a general talking to his troops he told me that first day, that I had been assigned to care for this garden and it better look good or we would both pay the price (if you know what I mean). I listened very carefully and did everything he said--and by summer, we were both heroes--yes!

So let me tell you what we did to get started on the sweet pea garden, so you too can become someone's hero. Let's begin with the annual types, because they need more care and must be planted every spring. First, you will need a location with full sun all day, not just half a day but all day for the best plants. Your soil "MUST" be well drained and never have standing water or the plants will get root rot and die. Next--and again, very important--good air circulation, because during a wet seasons or humid summer sweet peas can develop powdery mildew disease-- and that is not a good thing. So be sure to give them lots of room to grow without competition around them.

The soil must be conditioned every year, as these wonderful plants will reward you, if you do a good job and make it rich and fertile. Sweet peas are heavy feeders and the more you condition the soil with compost, animal manure, and conditioners like seaweed, worm castings and organic fertilizers the more flowers your plants will make for you. Blend these soil amendments into the soil as deep as possible up to a foot deep or the depth of your shovel or garden spade before planting.

If your soil is acidic, be sure to lime every year spring or fall with powdered limestone or use wood ash from your fireplace or wood stove--better still use Jonathan Green Magic-Cal lime substitute for instant results. Fertilize monthly with Dr. Earth Organic 6 Flower Garden Fertilizer with Pro Biotic or Espoma Flower-tone All Natural Plant Food with Bio-tone@ Microbes.

You can start your seeds indoors in pots 4 weeks before planting into the garden for a good head start and flowers earlier in the season. Or you can plant directly in the garden in early May, as the seed will germinate better in warm soils. Seedlings will not tolerate frost, so don't rush the season--and they love the heat, so cold nights don't help them either. The secret to good germination is to soak the seed overnight in a glass of warm water--just over night and not longer. Any seeds that float to the surface and do not swell..throw them out, because they are no good. I have had great results also by using a large pair of nail clippers and cutting into the thick skin coat of the seed, before planting into the garden(a nick not a gouge).

Plant the seed one inch deep and 3 inches apart and thin to 5 inches when plants reach 3 to 5 inches tall. Seeds will take from 7 to 14 days to germinate if the soil is warm and kept moist (but not wet), so go easy on the water and check the soil before you water the garden. Now, when the plant has developed 3 to 4 sets of new leaves pinch off the top set and watch the plant quickly begin to branch out and develop. Once you pinch the plant, spread compost or mark mulch around the plants 2 inches thick to keep the soil evenly moist during the summer heat and control weeds.

If you're going to pick the flowers from the plant, pick them early in the morning before it gets too hot out. Pick often and the plant will keep blooming. If you don't, it will make seed and slow down on making flowers. As soon as the first flower bud opens on the stem, pick it and it will last longer for you in your vase of water. Like all flowers in the garden, the flowers stems seem to get shorter later on during the season and there will be fewer buds to the cluster but they are still beautiful. Plants will flower for most of the summer if kept watered and well fed. Annual sweet peas come in all sizes from 12 inches to the vining types that grow 5 to 10 feet again depending on your soil preparation.

The color selection is almost endless so check your seed racks but expect to find better selections in seed catalogs or on the internet. Sweet peas have always been a favorite of the British people

and they have developed many new hybrids so look for English hybrids. If you're coming with me to the Chelsea Flower show in England your selection will be endless--and your garden will be the talk of the town this summer--so come with me!

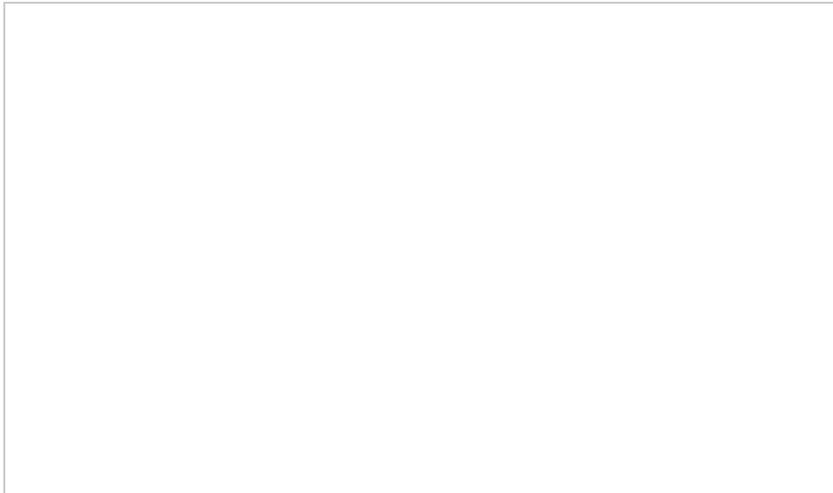
Now, perennial sweet peas are much easier to care for, because once you prepare the soil and plant, the sweet pea will come back every year all by itself. Just clean the area where they are growing carefully and remove all the dead foliage from last year. Add a couple handfuls of organic fertilizer like Espoma Flower-tone or Dr. Earth Organic 6 Flower Fertilizer and you're ready to go.

Place your wire cages around the area so they have something to climb on and hold on to--or provide a trellis for them to grow on--and you're ready to go. You will have to tie them up every now and then as they climb up the trellis but you do have some help from their "leaf tendrils," a modified leaf stem that will twist around a structure to help hold up the plant as it climbs.

Perennial sweet peas do not have the fragrance that the annual types do but they make just as nice a bouquet of cut flowers. For northern gardens, the perennial sweet pea has a limited flower color selection but the plant will do very well even in Central Maine, N.H., VT, western Mass. and northern NY State down to zone 4.

These perennial sweet pea plants are better to naturalize an old fashion country stone wall or a long wooden or wire fence bordering your property. They are much more drought and wind tolerant than the annual climber types and they come back every year. If you like the look of a rambling rose but not the work needed to keep them looking good for your stone wall or fence, this is your plant. Plant along the side of the road and don't worry about the winter weather, as they are much stronger than most flowering vines for that purpose. I love perennial sweet peas when planted up against a brick or stone fireplace on your house. Finally, both types are loved by butterflies and hummingbirds. Enjoy!

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## A Customized Gardening Tour of England and the 2012 Chelsea Flower Show

Paul Parent hosts a tour that includes the Wisley Gardens, the Chelsea Flower Show, Tower of London, Roman Baths & Pump Room, Riverford Organic Farm, Garden House, Rosemoor Gardens, Lost Gardens of Heligan, Village of Mevagissey, Stonehenge, the Wilton House Garden Centre and more.

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### This Week's Question

The Euphorbia family has almost as many succulents as the Cactus family, but also has some non-succulent plants. What popular non-succulent Christmas plant is a Euphorbia?

Note: Since we had to drop the trivia for a while, this is a repeat of the last question - those who already answered it are still in the running!

### This Week's Prize:

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## FEATURED RECIPE:

### Terrific Turkey Chili



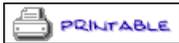
#### What You'll Need:

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 1/2 pounds ground turkey
- 1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon chili pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can beef broth
- 1 (7 ounce) can salsa
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can crushed tomatoes, or coarsely chopped tomatoes packed in purée
- 1 (7 ounce) can chopped green chili peppers
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 3 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced

- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

**Step by Step:**

- Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large stock pot over medium-high heat.
- Crumble turkey into the pot, stirring with a wooden spoon to break apart as much as possible.
- Season with taco seasoning mix, coriander, oregano, chili flakes, and tomato paste, and mix until meat is evenly coated with seasonings.
- Continue cooking, reducing heat if necessary, until turkey is well browned.
- Pour in beef broth, and simmer to reduce liquid slightly, about 5 minutes.
- Add salsa, tomatoes, and green chilies, and continue cooking at a moderate simmer for ten minutes. Adjust the thickness at any time by adding water.
- While chili is still cooking, heat one tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
- Cook onion and green bell pepper, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes, or until onion is translucent and bell pepper is lightly browned.
- Add onion and bell pepper to the chili, and continue cooking at a very low simmer.
- In the same skillet in which you cooked the onion and bell pepper, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat.
- Add the zucchini, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until lightly browned.
- Add the zucchini to the chili, reduce heat, and continue cooking 15 minutes more. Again, adjust the consistency by adding water as needed.
- Ladle chili into serving bowls.
- Top with sour cream, green onion, and cheddar cheese, and serve.



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