



OC Organic Gardening Club

October 2025 Newsletter

Fall Bonanza 2025



JOAN O'TOOLE

Our Fall Bonanza plant exchange meeting comes next Tuesday evening. You will be bringing the seedlings you grew and picking up plants that others grew. A list of the varieties that your fellow OCOGC members have been growing begins on page 4.

Make sure all your plants are labeled with the name of the plant you grew and its variety. For example: Pea – Cascadia. Please check in with the Bonanza Committee members on hand so we can track the germination rate and ensure that picked-up varieties are accounted for.

How to remove the plants from the cones without damaging them may not be obvious. We will send you a video via email after the Bonanza on how to do this.

I recommend transplanting your seedlings into four-inch pots and letting them grow a little bigger before planting them in their final growing place—either in a large pot or in the ground.



** ANNOUNCEMENTS **

GENERAL MEETING

Our regularly scheduled meetings are held every month, September through June, on the second Tuesday in the Silo Building of the OC Fair & Event Center, 88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa CA 92626.

The next general meeting will be on October 14 at 7:00 pm.

BOARD

The Board will meet at 6 pm before the general meeting.

REFRESHMENTS

Members whose last names begin with **A** through **M** are to bring this month's snacks.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

Deadline for the November newsletter is October 20. Send items to dfwinterstein@gmail.com with NEWSLETTER in the subject line.

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**It's Bonanza
time!**



Pat Welsh says OK to plant these in October:

From seeds: beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, fava beans, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard greens, parsnips, peas, radishes, parsley, rutabagas, spinach, Swiss chard and turnips. Also cress, cilantro and arugula.

From transplants: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cabbage, collards and celery.

Others: potatoes from seed potatoes; raspberries, artichokes, horseradish and rhubarb from bare roots.

Reference: Pat Welsh, Southern California Gardening



President's Posting

FRANCENE KAPLAN

The Most Productive Fertile Agricultural System in History!

Well, at least in Mesoamerica, the CHINAMPA (chuh-NAAM-puh) has been tried and true as a productive gardening method for almost 1000 years. When populations in the Aztec nation were farming, this system of agriculture increased food production to support more people.

The chinampa system creates raised growing spaces over water, yielding seven harvests a year. Simply, chinampa means "in the fence of reeds." Floating plant material is covered with brush, aquatic plants, weeds, and whatever else is available. Then lake mud is added to make a big sponge of organic material to plant in.

Chinampas do not have to be watered for a month or more, depending on rainfall. The original, rectangular floating gardens of Xochimilco currently are open for touring.

IF you are interested in getting a guest speaker on this topic, let me know!



passion fruit mousse



Easy passion fruit mousse

Recipe courtesy of Christine

Easy and quick recipe for passion fruit mousse made from passion fruit concentrate (fresh or frozen), cream, and condensed milk. This simple version doesn't use eggs or gelatin.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Chill time: 4 hours

Servings: 10 small 4-5 oz glasses or molds

Ingredients

- 1 2/3 cups of pure passion fruit juice – can also use unsweetened frozen concentrate
- ¾ cup of heavy cream
- 14 oz can of condensed milk
- ¼ cup sugar – optional, add less or omit if it's sweet enough with the condensed milk

To garnish:

- Fresh passion fruit pulp
- Whipped cream

Instructions

1. **Blend the passion fruit concentrate with condensed milk and sugar.**
2. **Add the heavy cream and continue blending until well mixed.**
3. **Pour into ramekins or small glasses, refrigerate overnight or for at least 4 hours.**
4. **Serve garnished with fresh passion fruit pulp.**



GARDENING ADVENTURES

Spinach challenges

DON WINTERSTEIN

Popeye didn't quite get it right when he claimed spinach gave him extra bursts of strength, but the nutritional value of this humble veggie is nevertheless pretty amazing. One cup of cooked spinach offers more than a quarter of an adult's recommended dietary allowance of beta carotene, riboflavin, vitamin B6, folate, iron and magnesium; and research indicates a diet that regularly includes spinach may help protect against certain cancers.



So spinach is a priority on the menu. But true spinach doesn't grow in our summers, as it's a cool-season crop. As an alternative, I grow water spinach (*kong xin cai*—Mandarin Chinese), a warm-weather alternative.

But I've often found it challenging to grow true spinach of adequate quality and quantity even during our cool season. It likes cool weather and short days, and we ask for only leaves, not fruits. Ordinarily, making leaves is what plants are good at. But while spinach will survive a lot of abuse, it will often do so in a semi-dormant state, where it just sits without growing any new leaves; or it grows so slowly it's practically worthless.

It took me persistence and extra effort to finally get results worth talking about. Starting with seeds of the Monnopa and Oriental Giant varieties, I undertook a massive spinach-growing campaign. I planted in September, November, January, February and March. By February I'd run out of Monnopa and Oriental Giant seeds, so I bought packets of Teton, Bloomsdale and

Correnta at local nurseries. By the end of March I had more than 300 spinach plants, and for the first time in my gardening career I was in spinach heaven.

Nevertheless, most of the 300 turned out to be duds. Only a handful of the ones planted before January ever made a significant contribution. The rest either yielded small, misshapen leaves or didn't grow at all. They didn't die, but they didn't grow, either.

Almost all the good production came from seeds planted the first week of January. And the yield from those plants was truly exceptional!

But already by the end of March some Monnopa and Oriental Giant plants showed signs of bolting, and by mid-April all the Oriental Giant were flowering. Bolting plants don't make tasty leaves. Even the plants that had not grown much for five months were putting on hefty flower stalks.



(The Monnopa plants from January, however, were not bolting and were still producing useful leaves.)

By mid-April the Teton, Bloomsdale and Correnta varieties planted at the end of February were getting ready to harvest. (Bloomsdale was the weakest.) Yields per plant of these three varieties turned out to be far less than those of Oriental Giant.

Why were the plants that were started before January such poor producers? I think it was our unseasonal hot and dry November weather. Daily temperature highs were commonly above 80 degrees, with several above 90 and two up to 99! After such heat many of the plants never made significant growth; it seems the heat stopped them in their tracks.

January overall was far cooler than November, and all the plants planted in January thrived.

So what have we learned? One lesson is that persistence pays—at least, it did this time! Under the

right conditions, spinach plants in southern California can have high yields. By planting much and often, the chance of hitting the right conditions goes up, and success becomes more likely.

Oriental Giant was by far the best producer. An important question is whether this variety would have bolted in April if it had been planted in February or March. According to the seed packet. It bolts when days exceed "14 hours of light" – meaning early April. Indications are that Monnopa, Teton and Correnta will produce well at least through April, so planting those varieties in February and March may be worthwhile

Fall Bonanza Varieties

JOAN O'TOOLE

Arugula

Rocket-Astro - Tender rounded leaves inject peppery pizzazz into mixed salads. Can be enjoyed as a salad soloist, simply accompanied by a vinaigrette dressing. Seeds can be sown any time during the season. Best harvested young. Arugula prefers cool weather.

Beets

Cylindra Formanova -- hails from Ontario, Canada, where a Mr. Reeves developed them from blood turnips. This globular beet first made its appearance in 1892.

Detroit – This popular all-purpose red beet, with uniform and smooth, blood-red roots that are sweet and tasty. The 14-inch tops make good greens, especially in the baby stage.



Golden - A glorious gilded beet with supremely sweet flesh and dense nutrition. The rich golden roots do not

bleed or stain. Perfect for raw eating, roasting, juicing, and more.

Broccoli

Calabrese - (*Brassica oleracea*) This delicious Italian-American heirloom produces 5- to 8-inch blue-green heads and many tender, succulent side shoots. Cooked, it has a buttery, soft texture and sweet, nutty flavor. It is a supreme choice for market gardening and home gardening alike. Hailing originally from Calabria, Italy, it was brought to America in the 1800s.

De Cicco – An Italian classic, De Cicco is a superb variety, producing numerous, small to medium-sized heads well into the summer for more delicious broccoli more often! We recommend harvesting the main head when it is 3" in diameter this will encourage side shoots. De Cicco is a good freezer variety. Leaves are also edible, cooked like chard. Seeds are excellent for growing sprouts!

Early Green - This early, short season variety yields large, tight heads that mature over a two-week period and are followed by succulent side shoots that extend the harvest period even longer. Plant in early spring or fall to enjoy the flavorful florets fresh, steamed or stir-fried.



Brussel Sprouts

Long Island Improved - Long Island Improved is a well-known heirloom variety, famous for its reliability, productivity, and relatively small plant size, making it suitable for home gardeners. Introduced in the 1890s, it produces 1-2 inch sprouts that are often considered more sweet and flavorful than older varieties, likely due to breeding that reduced bitterness. The "Improved" in

its name refers to these desirable traits, making it a popular choice.

Cabbage

Bok Choy – This Chinese cabbage with large green leaves and ivory stems has a mild, peppery flavor and tender-crisp texture. It is excellent in salads, stir-fries, and soups.

Copenhagen - Introduced by H. Hartman & Company in 1909, this Danish original has been a gardeners' favorite for over a century and is the standard of excellence for many varieties that were developed after it. Quick-to-mature cabbage heads are 6"-8" in diameter and 3-4 pounds, tightly wrapped, and perfect for small gardens. It resists splitting and stores up to 6 months.



Napa - (*Brassica rapa*). Very easy to grow and makes perfect heads. Here's a superior Napa-type Chinese cabbage variety that hasn't been seen in the U.S. much, but is very popular in the U.K. The medium-sized barrel-shaped heads are densely packed with crinkled, mild tasting leaves. Great raw or stir-fried, or in homemade kimchi!

Red Acre -- This deep red, sweet flavor with solid heads form early on small, compact plants making Red Acre an ideal choice for small gardens. Resistant to splitting and cabbage yellows disease. Heads store exceptionally well in the refrigerator or root cellar.

Savory Perfection -- The Savoy Perfection cabbage is a unique variety that does not produce the sulfur-like smell that other varieties of cabbage do when they are cooked. The plant produces heads that are approximately 5 to 7 inches in diameter, enveloped in crinkled outer leaves. The heads can be harvested after about 90 days. They have a sweet and delicate flavor, and make an excellent addition to many dishes

Cauliflower

Purple of Sicily - (Brassica oleracea) Beautiful, brilliant purple heads weigh 2-3 lbs and are of a fine, sweet flavor. The heads cook to bright green. Insect-resistant, it is also easier to grow than many white varieties, and it is rich in minerals. This colorful heirloom is from select Italian seed, and is our favorite purple cauliflower every year!

Rober - (Brassica oleracea). This is one of the most productive and adaptable cauliflowers we have ever grown. Rober can produce large, 12-inch heads with tight curds, despite fluctuations in temperature that would ruin many other varieties. This is a reliable and tasty variety from Poland.



Green Macerata- (Brassica oleracea). A delicious Italian variety with 2-lb, bright apple-green heads that are superb both cooked and raw in salads. The very attractive and vigorous plants are fairly early.

Snowball -(Brassica oleracea) A reliable early strain with concentrated maturity. This strain produces deep solid ivory-white heads that are medium to large (5-7 inches). The heads are well protected by inner leaves. Nearly self-blanching. Open-pollinated, 55 Days to Maturity.

Swiss Chard

Bionda Di Leone -- Also known as Swiss Chard Bionda Di Leone or Bieta, is a variety of Swiss chard with large, light green leaves and thick white stem. The pale green leaves are almost golden in color, and thick white midribs give this chard a different look. Makes exquisite baby greens at 25 days.

Bright Lights -- Nicely savoyed and glossy green or bronze leaves with stems of many colors including gold, pink, orange, red, and white with bright, pastel, and multicolored variations. The flavor is milder than ordinary chard, with each color a bit different. Consistent growth rate, leaf shape and texture, and strong bolt resistance across all colors makes this a superior mix. It is suitable for production year-round, but somewhat less frost hardy than other chards.

Tender - Renee's Garden crispy, nutty-flavored Baby Leaf chard is the fastest growing and best tasting, whether you use it in salads or steam, stir-fry or braise its handsome green leaves. Easily grown by the "cut and come again" method, seeds are sown thickly, then cut as needed at 4-5 inches tall, leaving crowns to regrow for multiple additional harvests. With its tender texture and milder flavor, baby leaf chard makes wonderful garden-fresh salads.

Dill

Bouquet - Originally named Long Island Dill, this tall billowing relative of Queen Anne Lace and carrots is perfect for edible landscaping, container gardens and, well, pickles, of course! All parts of the plant leaves, stems, flowers, and seeds can be used to impart dill flavor to dishes.

Kale

Mars Landing - Mars Landing kale is a nutrient-rich and visually captivating variety ideal for home gardeners and small-scale farmers. This open-pollinated kale produces deeply lobed, ruffled leaves in a vibrant blend of lavender, purple, and green tones. Cooler temperatures intensify its coloration, making it a standout in edible landscapes. With a mild, earthy flavor and tender texture, Mars Landing kale is excellent for salads, sautés, smoothies, and homemade kale chips.



Red Russian -- A highly nutritious kale variety with eye-catching color and form, Russian Red is very tender and mild at any size, but especially well suited to use as baby greens. The oak-type leaves of this pre-1885 heirloom variety have a red tinge, and the stems are purplish-red, adding color to the garden and the dinner plate.

Tuscan Lacinato – Also known as Dinosaur and Tuscan kale. This variety is a dark bluish-green heirloom with uniquely textured embossed leaves.

Dwarf Blue Vates - (*Brassica oleracea* var. *sabellica*). A truly astounding superfood, Blue Curled Scotch kale is packed with health promoting properties, including a range of antioxidants. Studies have shown kale to have anti-inflammatory properties. In a side-by-side study of different kale varieties, curled kales were shown to have the highest concentration of glucosinolates, which studies have shown to have anti-cancer properties. Aside from an incredible host of health benefits, Blue Curled Scotch kale has a pleasant sweet and nutty kale flavor, and is perfect for kale chips.

Kohlrabi

Purple Vienna - Because of its turnip-like appearance, kohlrabi is sometimes misclassified as a root vegetable. Leaves stand out like little spokes on the sides and top of the edible, enlarged stem. You'll welcome not only kohlrabi's unusual shape, but also its crisp texture and wonderful, delicately sweet, nutty, and very slightly peppery. Eat it like an apple, or try it steamed, sautéed, or pickled, too! One cup contains 140% of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C.



White Vienna - (*Brassica oleracea* var. *gongylodes*). Delicious, cabbage-

flavored bulbs that grow above ground. Pale green skin and sweet, white flesh; good cooked or raw. Kohlrabi makes a real staple crop with high yields, and it is also cold hardy. A pre-1860 heirloom.

Lettuce

Bronze arrow - 60 days. [California Heirloom] Very attractive large oakleaf-shaped leaves with a reddish-brown tips. High yields, cut and come again, slow to bolt, delicious flavor.



Great Lakes - Great Lakes lettuce seed produces crisp, sweet, and crunchy iceberg lettuce heads that are NOTHING like those from the store. Honestly, most people say iceberg has no flavor, but not when they are eating this variety. It's our favorite iceberg lettuce, grows well into the warmer months of the spring and can be planted early in the warm months of the fall.

Mustard

Mizuna -- A traditional variety from the mountainous Kyoto region of Japan. This variety boasts superb cold tolerance, especially during the germination stage, making Early mizuna well adapted to early spring sowing. This variety will remain tender, even after several harvests, and will not readily go to seed.

Tatsoi - (*Brassica rapa* subsp. *narinosa*). Tatsoi is nicknamed Vitamin Green, and rightfully so. This gourmet green is known as one of the richest sources of vitamin C and it is replete with other incredible vitamins, minerals, and health-promoting compounds! Tatsoi also boasts glucosinolates (which have been extensively studied for their potential to lower the risk of some cancers) and carotenoids, which promote eye health. The low-growing rosettes are comprised of tiny,

glossy spoon-shaped leaves that boast a crisp and juicy mouthfeel.

Peas

Cascadia – This variety is distinguished by its climbing growth habit and ability to thrive in a range of temperate conditions. The plant typically reaches a height of 2-3 feet, requiring trellising or support for optimal growth. Its foliage is dense and deep green, producing white flowers that develop into plump, edible pods. These snap peas are notable for their crisp texture and sweet flavor, making them a preferred choice for both raw consumption and cooked dishes.



Radishes

French Breakfast – These crunchy elongated beauties color up bright cherry-red with contrasting pure white tips. Worth growing for their showy colors alone, these French specialties are known for their refined shape, juicy, tender-crisp mild flesh and adaptability to a wide variety of conditions.

Spinach

Bloomsdale – The plant has glossy, deep green, delicious leaves. This variety does better in hot weather than most varieties

Summer Perfection - This wonderful new premier Dutch variety was bred for especially sweet flavor and a long harvest period in the garden. It stands up well to early summer heat with bright green leaves that have a succulent, crunchy texture and extraordinarily clean, sweet flavor you'll love. The upright leaves are easy to harvest and perfect steamed, sautéed or in fresh spinach salad. Plant again for ample fall harvests as Summer Perfection withstands autumn frosts for great cool weather greens.



Growing Onions in Containers

STEVE BERGER

If you're like most gardeners, a problem that probably confronts you every year is not having enough space to grow all the vegetables you want. The frustration comes in early spring when you're ready to begin planting warm-weather plants such as tomatoes, bell peppers, corn, beans, squash, etc., and your entire garden is filled with onions, strawberries, peas, lettuce and other winter vegetables, all still productive. If you have extra backyard lawn that can be converted to another garden, then great, you have a solution. However, if you have no more available growing space, then I have a possible solution.

One longtime gardener mentioned that she does all her vegetable gardening in pots and gardening boxes due to her lack of suitable gardening area. Thinking about it I decided I'd take her example and expand my growing area by placing sixteen 15 gallon pots on the backyard patio and the concrete walkway alongside the south side of my house that gets full sun exposure during the Spring months with the bonus of extra heat from the reflection of the sun from the side of the house.

I decided that onions would be a good candidate for container growing because harvesting isn't until June or July, which would interfere with the planting of warm-weather plants. The second decision was on the type of

container to use. Because I had some 15 and 20-gallon pots in storage, I decided to use them. Although it would have been more space-efficient to build customized elongated planter boxes for the area alongside the house, the pots were available and would allow for easier moving if necessary.



The third decision was on the potting mix. The quality of potting mixes can range from excellent to terrible. The better potting mixes are peat moss based. The lesser quality potting mixes use uncomposted materials such as ground up bark. Using garden soil would work but would leave the garden pot extremely heavy, making it an ordeal when moving the pot to another location. So I decided on a very simple mix of 60% peat moss and 40% pumice, which I can purchase by the bag or buy separately and mix myself.

In the past few years I've made things easier by purchasing bags of Pro-Mix Potting Soil. Purchasing of these products can be obtained from Orange County Farm Supply in Orange - tell them you're a member of the O.C. Organic Gardening club for a price discount. I know there is a finite supply of peat moss available in the world, but I have yet to find a better alternative. A 10% - 15% amount of sand can also be used but will substantially add to the container weight.

The fourth decision is fertilizer. Humic acid, seaweed extract, fish emulsion, steer and/or chicken manure and bat guano are great fertilizers. Coffee grounds are also good, and can be obtained free from Starbucks (just ask for 'coffee grounds for the garden'). Finally, be sure to top off with a 2 inch layer of organic mulch which should leave you about 1" to 2" from the top of the container.

Another decision centers on whether to use seeds or seedlings. For years I have bought onion seedlings from

Dixondale Farms. Planting the seedlings in the pots is a very direct one-step procedure. When I had previously started with onion seeds, I found that the time planting and then later thinning the seedlings was not an effective use of my time, plus having to reseed bare areas where no seeds germinated.

Spacing of the onions is important - I find that I can plant 9 onions in a 15-gallon pot without undue crowding when mature. If crowding does later become an issue, selective thinning will give you 'early' onions. Ten pots for onion growing will yield 90 onions at harvest. And most importantly, do not get 'greedy' and over-plant as crowding will soon become an issue.

Variety selection is another decision. Orange County is considered a short day geographical area. The three short day varieties that I have used for years are Texas Legend, Yellow Granex, and 1015Y Texas Super Sweet, and one intermediate day onion called Candy. I can only suggest you experiment with the different onion types to see which works best for you as weather variations, from coastal to inland environments, are considerable in Orange County.

Onions need to be cured at harvest time. The procedure I use is to wait until the green tops have fallen over and become brown and lifeless. Pull the onions out gently using a trowel. Keep the onions outside in a semi-shaded area for a couple of weeks to allow for complete surface drying. Finally, move to a cool, dry place for storage - I keep them stored on the north side of the house which, after July, is a shady area, until at some point I will move them into the garage. For many years by mid-October I still have plenty of stored onions and sometimes enough to last through December.

For many years one of our members has volunteered to coordinate a group purchase of onions in November from Dixondale farms. This year Dixondale charges \$16.70 for one bunch and \$133.50 for 30 bunches. With a group purchase of 30 bunches the price comes down to \$4.45 per bunch. There are between 65 - 75 onion seedlings per bunch. Hopefully someone will volunteer to coordinate this purchasing task this year. For more information, go to www.dixondalefarms.com

Officers, Advisors & Committees

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