

Home Gardening This Spring

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There's a joke going around that's pertinent to the stay at home situation many of us find ourselves in right now that goes like this: "I always said I never thoroughly clean my house from top to bottom because I don't have the time. It turns out that's not the reason."

So how's your time for gardening this year? From what I'm hearing this is the year a lot of families are looking to make a new or expand an existing garden. For anyone looking to make a garden for the first time, there are several things to keep in mind that will pay off dividends down the road.



First, if this is a new garden, it's actually better to not till the ground and instead pull out existing grass, weeds, or other plants. Tilling the soil mixes the top couple of inches and in those inches are A LOT of weed seeds. Stirring the soil brings many of those seeds to the surface where they germinate and start taking over your garden. If pulling up is too much work, put down a couple of layers of cardboard over the existing plants. The cardboard will suffocate most plants and given a month or more of having the cardboard down the undesired plants are dead and the weed seed problem is also avoided.

The best time to augment your soil is before you plant. The only way to tell what your soil might need is by doing a soil test. A call to the local agricultural extension office will give you the details on where to get a sample kit, how to take a sample, and who to send it to for analysis. If whatever was growing in the new garden area did great, there probably isn't a need to add anything. But the time for action is now. Soil testing is worth the expense and avoids guessing what's wrong after a failed crop.

Drip irrigation is a very handy and convenient way to water. Overhead sprinklers can cause problems by applying water on the leaves, which take too long to dry, which allows molds and mildews to develop. A drip system puts water where it does the most good for the plant, right at the top of the roots, and doesn't have to be complicated or be hooked up to a lawn irrigation system either. A simple system is raising a 55 gallon trash can up 3 feet or so, putting a faucet at the bottom, connecting your hose and drip lines, and let gravity water your garden. Minimum costs, no electrical hook-ups needed, and the time spent putting it together will be returned back to you after the first week or two of use.

Finally, plant only what you will eat, especially if this is your first garden. If you don't like zucchini but also don't like your neighbors and you want to let them know how you feel about them by anonymously leaving bags of the vegetable on their doorstep late at night, well then maybe plant zucchini. But do experiment with a new veggie from time to time and you might find you actually do like, lets say zucchini, it's just the store bought ones that you don't like.

Protect yourself from sunscreen and biting insects, and, oh yeah, avoid any viruses that might be floating around out there.

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