

The Mysterious Appearance of Vegetables at the Library

By Sandy Chapman, Master Gardener

Would you like a freshly picked tomato with your mystery book? Or perhaps a spicy pepper with your romance novel? If you live in Dawson County, you are in luck as librarians at the Dawson County Library are serving up fresh vegetables from their community garden to patrons this summer. The garden is behind the library along with a stage, fire pit and recreation area to provide space for community gathering.

The planting boxes have been there for a few years but are being newly rejuvenated by the Georgia Mountains Master Gardeners (GAMMG). So, for the summer you can pick-your-own vegetable from the counter to go along with that How-To book you are checking out from the library.

Master gardener Susan Hurley from GAMMG applied this past April for seeds from All American Seed Company (AAS) who donates regional winning seeds for demonstration gardens. AAS donates seeds to “provide the public with an opportunity to view the newest AAS winners in an attractive well-maintained setting.” The seeds arrived in May and Hurley along with master gardeners Vivian Porter and Lynn Van Horn each germinated seeds at home. Thanks to their efforts, the vegetable garden is providing lots of bounty. A row of sunflowers is tall and ready to bloom and tomatoes and peppers are yielding nicely. Squash, broccoli and eggplant are blooming for a later season yield.



Master Gardeners (l-r) Susan Hurley, Vivian Porter, Janet Shelley and Wendy Bailey have created a demonstration garden from seed behind the Dawson County Library.



Vivian Porter checks on the progress of eggplants growing in the demonstration garden. Notice the purple flowers.

Hurley says, “we applied late this year and were excited to be accepted as a new display garden and received a few varieties to start. Germinating was a challenge at times because we had limited experience with these crops from seed. We even used hydroponic gardening methods to germinate the coleus.” She plans to add more varieties of vegetables for both spring and fall crops next year.

The GAMMG volunteers meet weekly to weed and pick ripe fruit for distribution from the library but are sometimes met with mysterious changes to the garden wrought by the library’s resident groundhogs. It seems lately the groundhogs are sampling the lower leaves on the sunflower plants. Cages around the squash plants and upturned soil in

the boxes attest to their previous twilight visits. The library staff even report “super cute” groundhogs greeting them in the parking lot to say goodbye in the evenings. “We understand they have been here a long time and have tunnels all around the library grounds, so while it causes damage, that is part of the gardening experience,” said Hurley.

With the constant care by master gardeners, it’s no mystery that the gardens are yielding nicely this summer. The master gardener’s support “enriches our community and provides a wonderful learning opportunity for our library visitors” according to Branch Manager, Stacey Leonhardt.

When you visit the Dawson County Library, take home a veggie with your tome – as long as the groundhogs leave any untapped bounty.



Janet Shelly (pictured left) and Susan Hurley (right), discuss care of purple broccoli and Dragon Fly peppers in the garden.



Wendy Bailey works to trim away remnants of groundhog foraging on the new sunflower plants. They will bloom soon.

Master Gardeners are volunteer educators affiliated with University of Georgia Extension and the local chapter serves Lumpkin and Dawson counties by researching horticultural options. Membership in GAMMG requires training through UGA Extension.