



High Desert Gardening

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Extension Service

Plant Profile

By Amy Jo Detweiler

Is this the year you start a vegetable garden? If so, why not plant one of the easiest plants to grow in a garden, one of the many varieties of leaf lettuce.

Exposure: Full sun to part shade. They do not like real hot weather so partial shade can be helpful.

Water: Keep them well-watered as they grow. Do not allow them to dry out, especially in hot weather.

Soil: Adaptable to most organic moist soils. Can be planted in the ground or in containers.



When to plant: Direct sow the seeds once the soil begins to warm. The optimum soil

temperatures for germinating leaf lettuce seeds is between 40-80°F. You can take the temperature of the soil at the 3-4 inch deep soil level using a soil thermometer. Be sure the soil temperature is remaining in the optimum range for several days before sowing your seed. Soil thermometers can be purchased where local garden supplies are found. You can also start seeds indoors if necessary.

A Few More Tips for Growing Leaf Lettuce: Give them lots of water in hot weather to prevent them from bolting and going to seed.

Sow seeds gradually instead of all at once to maintain a continuous steady harvest throughout



Lactuca sativa
Loose-leaf Lettuce
Height: varies' Spread: varies
The variety above is Merlot

the season

Varieties to consider:

- Flashy Butter Oak
- Royal Oak Leaf
- Red Deer Tongue
- Simpson Elite
- Black Seeded Simpson
- Merlot
- Red Sails
- Salad Bowl
- Tango
- Pom Pom
- Lollo Rossa

Beneficial insects

Source: Liz Douville



"We need to learn to identify the beneficial insects and plant a banquet table to keep them interested"

Planting for the encouragement of beneficial insects should be more of a priority with all homeowners not just gardeners. By encouraging beneficial insects we just may be able to reduce the usage of toxic chemicals.

When in the progress of mankind did we learn to shiver and shake every time we see an insect? Maybe this is the year to start learning the difference between the good guys and the bad guys and educate our families as well.

We are fortunate in Central Oregon that we don't have severe landscape damage from insects, but nevertheless unknowingly reaching in and cutting an aphid ridden stem is hardly a pleasant garden experience. The quick solution is to control the aphids with a sharp stream of cold water. The better, more long lasting solution is to encourage the insects that help control the aphid population. It would be great if we could just hang out a sign "Beneficial Insects Wanted, Free Food & Lodging" Since that won't work we need to learn to identify the beneficial insects and plant a banquet table to keep them interested.

Ralph Berry, Professor Emeritus-Entomology, Oregon State University in his publication *Insect Facts: Plants That Attract Beneficial Insects* describes the life cycle of some of the beneficial insects along with a list of host plants to attract these insects.

Lacewings, ladybugs, hoverflies, parasitic wasps, tachinid flies and damsel bugs work hard in our landscape controlling aphids, scales,



Photo: Ric Bessin, U. Kentucky

Pictured is a ladybug larva feeding on aphids.

mealybugs and spider mites to name just a few of the problems we could encounter. In many cases it is the larvae and nymph stages as well as the adult stage that aids in the control.

Many gardeners roll their eyes when yarrow is mentioned but it is probably one of the most efficient host plants in enticing beneficials into the garden. Golden marguerite, also known as dyers chamomile is another workhorse. Even the lowly dandelion serves its purpose by drawing in lacewings and ladybugs.

Destructive insects often locate their food by smell. Many plants, especially culinary herbs, produce strong scents which may confuse insect pests looking for a host to feed on. Garden vegetable plants such as garlic, onions, chives; herbs such as catnip, lemon balm, wormwood, mints, lavender and cutting garden flowers such as cosmos, zinnias, white sweet alyssum,

(Continued on page 5)

Tips for first-time gardeners



**“Choose
easy-to-grow
vegetables
that your
family likes...
choose high
quality
seeds”**

If you're completely new to vegetable gardening and want to enjoy your own homegrown tomatoes and summer squash this year, the Oregon State University Extension Service can provide the information you need to get started.

Gail Langellotto, an OSU horticulturist and statewide coordinator of the Master Gardener program, says there are several things novices can do to make their foray into gardening more successful.

Also, "Growing Your Own," a practical guide to gardening with more details, is on the OSU Extension Service website: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/html/grow/grow/>.

Among Langellotto's tips:

- Choose raised beds, containers and mounds, Langellotto recommends, if you live in the Willamette Valley, where clay soils do not drain well and remain cold into the spring. If you use containers, which can be just about any size and as casual as old tires, you can garden in any location and move the containers for optimal conditions.
- Choose a site where your garden will get at least eight hours of light, preferably sunshine. "Air drainage can be a problem. If you live on a slope, be sure to avoid cold air drainage in low spots and wind,"

Langellotto said.

- Get a soil test. Soil supplies 13 essential plant nutrients, primarily nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. A soil test will tell you if your soil has deficiencies and if it is too acidic or alkaline. See OSU Extension publications EM 8677 for testing laboratories serving Oregon .



- Build organic matter with compost to correct many deficiencies. Start a compost heap with two parts "brown" materials – leaves, straw, paper, sawdust – to one part "green" materials such as vegetable scraps,

coffee grounds, grass clippings and fresh manure from cows, horses or poultry.

An easy way to start a new garden spot, while improving soil structure and fertility, is called sheet or "lasagna" mulching. Wet soil thoroughly and add a layer each of overlapping cardboard, compost and six to eight inches of mulch (leaves and grass clippings). In about seven months the soil will be ready for planting.

- Choose easy-to-grow vegetables that your family likes, adding others in following years as tastes mature,

(Continued on page 5)

Fertilizing fruit trees

Source: *Planttalk Colorado*



**“Nitrogen
can be
applied in
late fall or
early spring”**

Fruit trees require nutrients to develop properly, so work phosphorus and potassium into the soil before you plant. The amounts you apply should be based on a soil-test report. Keep in mind that these nutrients move very little in soil. Applying phosphorus and potassium to the soil surface around fruit trees, rather than into the soil itself, seldom corrects deficiencies of these nutrients.

However, you can apply nitrogen to the soil surface because it moves down to the roots where it's needed. Nitrogen can be applied late in fall or early spring. In spring, nitrogen should be applied before bud break. The amount applied depends on the type of fruit tree and its growth status. Trees should be fertilized with enough nitrogen to promote optimal, annual shoot growth.

For non-bearing apple trees, shoot growth should be between 24 to 36 inches; for pears, 12 to 26 inches; and for peaches, 16 to 24 inches. In fruit-producing apple trees, shoot growth should be between 12 to 24 inches; for pears, 6 to 12 inches; and for peaches, 10 to 18 inches.

Growth at less than the recommended rates results in reduced fruiting wood and less fruit production. If you're starting a fertilizer program for stone fruits such as peaches or apricots, apply nitrogen to the soil around the trees at the rate of one-

eighth pound for every one inch of trunk diameter. Take the trunk-diameter measurement one foot above ground level. With apples or pears, apply one-tenth pound of nitrogen for every one inch of trunk diameter.



The amount of nitrogen needed is determined by the previous year's growth. If more growth is needed, increase the amount of nitrogen. If too

much growth occurred, it's best to reduce or eliminate nitrogen. Also, it's important to keep records of how much of a specific nutrient you apply each year.

Fruit trees in lawn areas may get adequate nitrogen from applications of lawn fertilizer. In some cases, fruit trees grow too much as a result of excess water and fertilizer they receive from lawns. Do not apply "weed-and-feed" products because they contain herbicides that may be harmful to fruit trees. If fruit production is desired in these instances, reduce the frequency of watering and the amount of fertilizer applied to the lawn.

Excessive pruning also will stimulate shoot growth and should be avoided.

Beneficial Insects

(Continued from page 2)

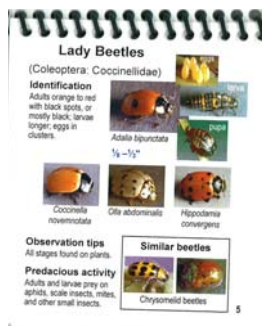
Lemon Gem marigold all seem to produce scents which seem to repel insects or mask the scents which attract insects. Dill, parsley and parsnip feature flat topped clusters of small flowers that have strong fragrances. They also seem to attract large numbers of beneficial insects, particularly predatory wasps and flies.

A certain level of insect protection can be achieved by carefully interplanting some of these as companions to vegetables or just incorporating them in the general landscape. Learn to know thy friends and avoid killing them inadvertently and note which plants are attractive to beneficial insects. Write down the combinations that seem to work for pest control and share your findings with others.

References:

A Pocket Guide: Common Natural Enemies of Crop and Garden Pests in the Pacific Northwest

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/ec/ec1613-e.pdf>



Insect Facts: Plants That Attract Beneficial Insects, Ralph Berry is available for \$6.50.

Mail check in that amount to:

Insect Facts, 18160 Cottonwood Rd. PMB #798, Sunriver, OR 97707



Tips for first-time gardeners

(Continued from page 3)

Langellotto said. She recommends five vegetables that like cool conditions: radishes, peas, leaf lettuce, carrots and spinach. Heat-loving veggies that should be planted in warm soil are bush beans, summer squash and tomatoes.

Other easy crops are kale and kohlrabi, beets, onions, garlic and annual herbs such as basil, fennel and parsley. Vegetables and fruits that do well in

containers are bush beans, beets, carrots, cabbage, swiss chard, cucumbers, leaf lettuce, bell peppers, squash, tomatoes, dwarf apple trees, blueberries, strawberries, turnips, eggplant, kale and green onions.



- Choose high-quality seed for your vegetable garden. Germination rates on the package should be 65 to 80 percent. The package also will tell you when to plant seeds, how long it will take them to germinate, depth of planting and spacing. Although more expensive than growing food from seed, bedding plants already sprouted work best for tomatoes, basil, eggplant and peppers. Check that they are not root bound in the pot and are stocky and deep green, not spindly and light green.

"If you run into problems, your OSU county extension office is there to help," Langellotto said. "Master Gardeners are on hand to answer questions."

Source: Gail Langellotto

Spring Gardening Seminar Classes include:



- Vegetable Container Gardening
- Greenhouse
- Perennials
- Conifers
- Garden practices
- Genetically modified food

And several others...

Calendar of events



- **April 24 - Spring Gardening Seminars** in Redmond at the Deschutes Fair and Expo Center presented by the Central Oregon Chapter of OSU Master Gardeners. Attend several garden classes and a fun garden market. For more information check our website at: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/>
- **May 1st - Opening Day for Hollinshead Community Garden** in Bend from 9:00 am—1:00 pm. Plots are 10 x 10' or larger in size and rent for \$25 for the season. All available plots are rented on a first come, first serve basis on opening day. For more information and to sign up for a plot contact OSU Master Gardener volunteer, Jacquie at 593-9305.
- Growing Farms...Successful Whole Farm Management Workshop Series presented by OSU Extension Service. Six classes that begin **March 30th**. For more information go to: <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/>

Favorite Seed Catalogs

In addition to our local garden centers and nurseries, listed below are some additional sources for seeds and plant materials. These favorite seed catalogs have great descriptions, references to cold hardiness, and relevance to seeds or container plants sold for this area.



- Territorial Seed Company—vegetables and organic vegetables. www.territorialseed.com/ 1-800-626-0866; 1-541-942-9547
- Nichols Garden Nursery-herbs and rare seeds. www.nicholsgardennursery.com/ 1-866-408-4851
- Goodwin Creek Gardens-herbs. www.goodwincreekgardens.com/ 1-800-846-7359
- Johnnys Selected Seeds-vegetables, annuals, perennials. www.johnnyseeds.com/ 1-207-437-4301
- Charley's Greenhouse & Garden Supply. www.charleysgreenhouse.com/ 1-800-322-4707
- High Country Gardens-perennials. www.highcountrygardens.com/ 1-800-925-9387

Garden Tips for April and May

APRIL

In the landscape

- Prune your deciduous trees and shrubs, using proper pruning techniques. Be careful not to prune your flowering trees and shrubs that bloom on last years growth (old wood), for example your lilacs. Wait until these plants are finished blooming and then prune shortly after the flowers die off. If you are not certain about when to prune your plant contact the OSU Extension Service or your local garden center to find out.
- Apply a dormant horticultural oil to your deciduous trees and shrubs with a history of insect problems, this product will smother overwintering eggs and the crawler stage of many insects such as aphids, spider mites and scale. A lighter horticultural oil should be used on your evergreens and deciduous trees and shrubs after they have leafed out.
- If you haven't fertilized your bulbs yet, now is a good time. Use a fertilizer high in phosphorous (the second number on the fertilizer bag) for example, 0-46-0.
- You may need to get out the lawnmower and mow the lawn by the middle of April.

Vegetable Gardening

- Direct seed your beets, lettuce, peas, radish, and spinach.
- Transplant your broccoli, cabbage, onions, that you may

have started from seed.

- Prepare garden soil for spring planting by adding organic matter including manures and compost or planting a cover crop (green manure) such as ryegrass, buckwheat, or barley.

MAY

In the landscape

- Continue to work your compost pile, by turning, adding materials and keeping it moist.
- Mid April through May is the best time to dethatch and aerate your lawn. Rent a dethatcher from the rental shop and pull up and remove thatch, follow with a fertilizer application to stimulate rapid recovery.
- Repair or change your sprinkler system to be more efficient.
- Now is the time to manage your weeds when they are small. First identify the weed, then remove by hand, mechanically, or chemically. Do not allow them to flower and go to seed.

Vegetable Gardening

- Direct seed your carrots, corn (late May), chard, kohlrabi, and potatoes.
- Transplant your brussel sprouts, cauliflower, cucumbers (late May), leeks, or peppers.
- Protect your plants and crops from frost by using row cover or walls of water.



**“Mid-April
through May
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time to
dethatch and
aerate your
lawn”**

High Desert Gardening

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Yes, send me a one year (5 issues) subscription to High Desert Gardening!

I would like this color newsletter: In hard copy for \$10.00 _____

In email for one-time charge of \$5.00 _____

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Weed, insect and disease problems? Environmental problems? Need help?

Ask an OSU Master Gardener™

Crook County
447-6228

Deschutes County
548-6088

Jefferson County
475-3808



Need some
information?

We've got a list of our
gardening publications
available—just give us a
call to receive this list!

Check out our website!

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/deschutes/>