

# The Garden \$aver

## Welcome to the first edition of the 2015 Garden Saver!

This is the monthly newsletter of Grow Well Missouri that will run through the 2015 growing season. We hope to offer timely and practical gardening advice for gardeners at all levels – whether you are brand new to gardening or have been gardening your whole life. Have an idea for us? Please talk to Bill or Darren in person or contact Bill at 573-882-4973 or [McKelveyWA@missouri.edu](mailto:McKelveyWA@missouri.edu). Good gardening to you!

## Spring is Near

The first official day of Spring is March 20, the Spring Equinox, when the length of day and night is about the same. This also marks nearly the earliest you can begin planting cool season crops in the garden (though some will tell you the time to plant potatoes is on St. Patrick's Day – and we won't argue with them).

One thing to think about when starting to plant outside is **soil temperature**. Most vegetable seeds can sprout within a range of temperatures, and each has an ideal temperature when it will sprout the fastest. See the chart below for a list of **Cool Season Vegetables** and the best soil temperatures for sprouting.

Vegetable	Ideal Temp (F)	Ideal Range (F)
Beet	75	65-85
Carrot	80	45-84
Kale/Collards/Mustard	85	45-95
Lettuce	75	40-80
Pea	75	40-75
Radish	85	45-90
Spinach	70	45-75
Swiss Chard	85	50-85
Turnip	85	60-105

**The main way to know the soil temperature** is to use a simple cooking for food safety thermometer (**Only** use it for this purpose. Don't reuse it for cooking meats because you could get sick). Measure at a depth of 2 inches during the middle of the day for a few days and take the average. Soil temps in the 40s-50s generally mean it is safe to plant lettuce, peas, carrots, radishes, spinach, kale, collards, mustard, and Swiss chard. Temps in the 60s are good for beets and turnips.

You can also check the soil temp in your county or a county near you at this MU Extension website:

<http://agebb.missouri.edu/weather/reports/soilTemp2.asp>.

## Spring Garden Prep

Spring into action with a few garden jobs that can make your planting easier.

- **Do some planning** and make rough sketch of where and how much to plant. Don't forget to leave room for warm season/summer vegetables.
- **Get your tools in order.** If you have a tiller, make sure it is ready to go when you need it.
- **Rake off old, dead plants and debris.** This will allow the soil to warm and dry faster.
- **Get compost**, well-aged manure, or check your own compost pile to see if yours is ready. Keep this on the side of the garden until you are ready to dig or till.

When you are ready to dig in, be sure to **test the soil for wetness** by picking up some soil and making a soft fist. If the soil breaks apart when you poke at it, it is ready to be worked. If it stays in a clump, the soil is too wet and you should give it some time to dry out.

Use some compost when you work up the garden by spreading a 2-3 inch layer across the planting area. This doesn't have to be dug in deeply, but it should be mixed to some degree.

For those with soil in good condition or with existing gardens, minor tilling and digging may be all that is needed. See what you can do without doing a major till or dig. You might be surprised.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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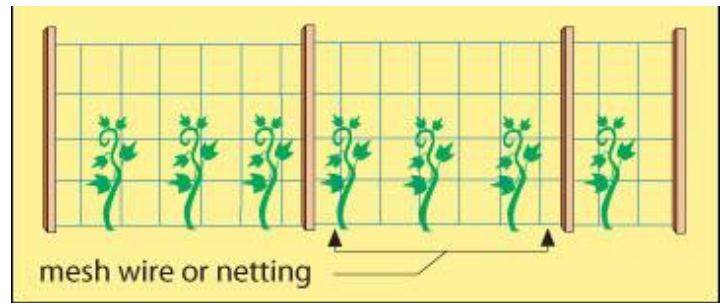
573-882-4973

## Growing Green Peas

The green peas offered through Grow Well Missouri are called **shell or snap peas** (the variety is Sugar Ann). The peas can be eaten in two different ways. They can be harvested before seeds inside the pod have fully matured, removed from the pod, and then cooked. Harvested a little sooner, the peas can be eaten **pod and all** after they have been “snapped” – meaning that the stringy fiber growing along one seam is removed by snapping off the tip attached to the plant and then pulling along the seam.

Green peas can be planted in a row, 1 inch deep, 2 inches apart. Rows can be 2 feet apart.

Green peas will do better when grown on some type of trellis or fence. These Sugar Anns shouldn't get taller than four feet. Create a structure by putting some posts or rods in the ground and then attaching any type of fencing material to the posts. Watch them climb!



## Small Plot Gardening

If you garden in a very small plot or container, please keep in mind that you may be able to get away with spacing your vegetables closer than what is recommended on Grow Well Missouri seed packs or those bought from the store. Most directions on these packs are for more traditional gardens with rows and room to walk between rows.

With small plots or containers, people often use **square foot or intensive gardening** methods to save space and get more plants per square foot. Look for books at your local library or tips on the internet.

With these methods, you'll likely need to water a bit more and provide more compost or fertilizer. This is because you'll have more plants in less space and there will be more competition for water and nutrients. You'll also probably have to do part of your weeding by hand since there may not be room to use hoe or other weeding tool.

## Taste it at home!

### Roasted Snap Peas with Garlic and Herbs

#### ALL YOU NEED:

- 1 pound or more of snap peas with stems and strings removed
- 1-2 tablespoons olive or other vegetable oil
- 2 or more cloves minced garlic
- Herbs – thyme, rosemary, parsley, you decide
- Salt and pepper

#### ALL YOU DO:

- Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
- Spread peas on a baking sheet.
- Sprinkle the rest of the ingredients and mix by tossing and turning.
- Spread peas in an even layer.
- Bake for 8 or so minutes until tender but firm.

