

Flowercraft Garden Center

San Francisco's #1 Nursery

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HOME

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GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

April Success Tips

1. It's Spring Planting Time!

Now is the time to plant both *edible* and *ornamental plants* to create a more beautiful yard and home. Enjoy the spring weather while you plant!

2. It's a great time to **plant warm-season vegetables** and **herbs**. We have a large selection of organic starter herbs and vegetables! Try new vegetables, and some new varieties of old favorites. We have an excellent collection of selected varieties that do well in our area.

3. **Release some of our ladybugs** to help control pests safely and naturally. Read the label directions to improve results. If you have serious pest problems, you'll need one of our sprays to provide immediate control. We have some excellent organic sprays that take care of most pest problems.

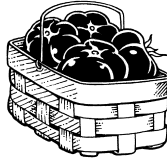
Create Beautiful Roses!

With just a little care your roses will look their best! Feed roses throughout their growing season, beginning in early spring when growth first appears. Use our *Bayer All-in-One Rose & Flower Care*, which contains a fertilizer, a systemic insecticide that kills aphids and other insects feeding on the plant, plus a systemic fungicide to prevent powdery mildew, rust and black spot.

Protect Your Roses Organically

Keep a sharp eye out for rose diseases, especially this year because of our unusually wet weather. An excellent multi-purpose organic product that controls rust, powdery mildew, and black spot on roses is *Green Light Rose Defense*.

The active ingredient in this product is *neem oil*, which is derived from the tropical neem tree. Neem oil has low toxicity to mammals and beneficial organisms. Plus it controls many insect pests, too, and completely biodegrades within a few weeks, so it is an excellent product to use on all roses.



Container Vegetables!

Think about the extraordinary taste of sun-ripened vegetables and the convenience of having the ingredients for a gourmet meal right outside of your kitchen. A container vegetable garden is an easy way to have all that!

Select containers about 18-24 inches wide and at least a foot deep. This gives the roots enough room to grow, and reduces the need for frequent watering. Use our *Edna's Best Organic Potting Soil* and *EB Stone Organics Tomato & Vegetable Food*. The soil levels should be about 2" below the rim of the pot to allow for deep watering. Be sure to provide support, such as tomato cages (which can be used for other vegetables too), trellises, or poles.

Some vegetables to plant in containers include **bush beans**, **cucumbers**, **peppers**, **eggplants**, **compact squash**, **leaf lettuce**, **chard**, and everyone's favorite: **tomatoes!** Add **herbs** or low-growing **annuals** around the edge of the pot to make the planting more decorative.

Prepare Your Soil and Then Plant

It's April, and serious planting time has begun! We're well stocked with all kinds of flowers, vegetables, herbs, shrubs, trees and groundcovers to plant now, with new stock arriving almost daily.

Prepare your soil properly to ensure success. Whether you have been preparing your soil every year or are working on a new plot, you will want to use a soil conditioner—*EB Stone Organic Sure Start* and *Greenall Soil Booster*.

This combination enriches the soil and promotes healthier plant growth by enhancing air circulation and allowing greater water and nutrient availability.



Grow Your Own Blueberries

In recent years more and more excellent new blueberry varieties have become available that bear fantastic crops in our California climate. Blueberries are a nutrition-packed "super food" that cost a bundle in stores. But you can grow plants that yield crops year after year. Blueberries are easy to grow, plus they are very attractive plants.

Plant at least two varieties for better pollination; about two plants for each household member. They prefer acid soil, so add our organic soil amendment and some sulfur at planting time, and when you fertilize use our acid fertilizer. Mulch them because they are shallow-rooted, water regularly, and enjoy a long season of plump, incredibly delicious fresh berries!

We have these and other berries in stock now, while the supply lasts.



Live Safer— Grow Your Own!

It's hard to stop talking about how much *better tasting* homegrown fruits and vegetables are than store-bought. But *food safety* is another important reason to grow your own. Here are three serious health hazards lurking in the form of foodborne illnesses and toxins on foods bought in stores.

The FDA found *Salmonella* and *Shigella* bacteria, (which are typically passed on from an infected person who handles them) on 3.5% of *domestically grown cantaloupes*. An amazing 7% of *imported melons* carried these disease-causing bacteria. Recommended: scrub store-bought melons with mild dish soap and warm water before slicing.

Salad mixes labeled "*triple-washed*" may still harbor germs. If you aren't growing some of your own greens, protect yourself by always washing store-bought greens under running water one more time. Remove and discard the outer leaves of cabbage and head lettuce before washing thoroughly as well.

Grow your own **peaches**, and avoid as many as *nine different pesticides* used to prevent skin blemishes. Health bonus—studies show the potassium found in peaches and other fruits and vegetables makes your body's pH more alkaline, which helps your body build more lean muscle mass!



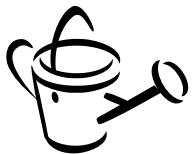
Water-Wise Thinking

We've had some welcome rainfall this winter, but it's always good practice to be "*water-wise*." Here are a few ideas:

❶ Select plants that thrive in our local conditions, soil, and climate. Many of our plants that are *native, Mediterranean,* and from *similar areas of the world* are low-maintenance, easy to care for, and have low water needs.

❷ Replace or reduce the size of your water-thirsty lawn with *edibles, perennials, and shrubs!* Since mowing, watering, and general upkeep can be quite time consuming, you'll love having more time to enjoy the variety of blooms, diversity of foliage, and added curb-appeal, plus some healthy food!

❸ Use rain barrels to catch the free water running off of your roof.



Plant a Pizza Garden!

"*What is a pizza garden?*" you ask? It is a fun project for families to plant, look at, and eat! Picture a circular area (about 8 feet in diameter) with 6-8 "slices"—each featuring a topping for your delicious homemade pizza. Here's how:

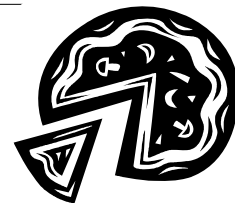
In an area that receives full sun, divide your circle into triangular slices with edging, bricks, or wooden dividers. String attached to stakes can also be used.

Start with **tomato plants**—about four will do. With their sweet taste and pasty consistency, Romas are a favorite choice. Avoid any varieties that result in a watery tomato sauce, as they will make your pizza soggy.

Herbs! Basil is the staple here; we recommend at least one *sweet basil*, and two other varieties to complete this slice. For the best flavor, pick leaves before the plant begins to flower. For variety, consider basil pesto instead of tomato sauce.

Other popular herbs are *chives, parsley, oregano,* and *thyme*. If planting one herb per slice, use three plants of each type. For multiple herbs, conserve space with just one of each.

Here are some favorites for your remaining slices: **onions** (red, yellow, or white), **scallions, sweet peppers, corn, eggplant, artichokes,** and **zucchini**. For those who like to add zip to their pizza plant **hot peppers** (several should be sufficient!), and **garlic**. An **olive tree** is a lovely addition outside of your pizza garden!



Do You Know Your NPK's?

Ever notice the letters "**N, P, & K**" on fertilizer packages and wonder what they meant? They represent the primary nutrients a plant uses. Deficiency of any or all of these can cause poor plant health. Here's an explanation of how each element helps a plant grow and thrive.



N: Nitrogen is necessary for growth above ground and for greening of the leaves. It's particularly important for leafy plants like lettuce, spinach, cabbage, and grasses.

P: Phosphorus increases root growth, improves fruit and flower formation, and improves disease resistance.

K: Potassium strengthens stems and roots, increases fruit size, and improves resistance to disease, drought, and other stresses. Root and tuber crops such as carrots, beets, and potatoes require larger amounts of potassium than other vegetables.

Secondary elements (*calcium, magnesium, and sulfur*) are also essential to plant growth, but plants don't require as much as they do of the primary nutrients. Required in still smaller amounts are micronutrients *boron, chlorine, copper, iron, manganese, molybdenum,* and *zinc*.

Proper feeding makes a huge difference in how well plants perform. Don't get just any fertilizer—ask us to recommend the best ones for your particular plants.

Buried Treasure & Happy Endings

While digging in his backyard, 3-year-old Ryan Baima, of Franklin, MA, found a set of wedding rings. Ryan's mother was able to locate Joan Mulligan, who had lost them while she was gardening back in 1976. Curiously, the rings managed to migrate to the other side of the yard from where they were last seen, and be found—despite a recent removal of over eight truckloads of dirt!

We wonder if Mrs. Mulligan remembered to take off her rings before gardening during the last 33 years? Bonus happy ending: the long-lost rings will be repaired just in time for the Mulligan's 50th anniversary.

