

Vegetable Garden Action

Distribute 04-06-2017

There is still time to plant tomato transplants in the garden. In fact if you plant the transplants in one gallon containers that are available at area nurseries they will begin setting fruit shortly after you plant them. Look for the heat setting, determinate selections such as HM 1823, Tycoon, Red Deuce, Celebrity, Phoenix, Valley Cat, 444, BHN 602, Tasti-Lee and BHN 968. BHN 968 is an outstanding cherry tomato that rates very high for flavor in local taste tests. You may want to compare it to the taste of HM 1823 and Tasti-Lee. Both are promoted as superior in their blend of acid and sugar for good taste. Tasti-Lee and BHN 968 are available in limited numbers so watch for them at your favorite nursery.

It is now a good time to plant peppers in the vegetable garden. I plant a few mild jalapenos and some banana peppers but there is a large selection of hot peppers from which to choose and several varieties of large mild peppers. I plant the banana peppers as a mild pepper for fresh eating, salads and stir fry recipes because it goes into production quickly and produces over a long season. The large green peppers have always been less predictable in my garden.

Plant green beans, cucumbers, cantaloupe, watermelon and summer squash be seed or transplants. If you have had trouble with squash vine borers limiting summer squash production, consider using tatum squash. It is also called Mexican squash and taste to me like summer squash. The squash vine borers don't seem to attack tatum squash like they do the summer and zucchini squashes. The bush green beans are faster to produce than the vining beans, but the vining selections produce more over a longer season.

Okra and eggplant require more heat than the tomatoes and peppers but both can be planted later in the month. There are many okra varieties from which to choose. Some will grow to 10 feet tall and other varieties such as "Oscar" okra stay at about 6-7ft. tall. Clemson Spineless is the most common okra found on nursery seed racks. Use eggplant transplants. Three Black Beauty plants provide my wife and me plenty of eggplant for recipes plus there is plenty of eggplant fruit to help supply the neighbors.

Your Crawford lettuce is probably too bitter to use now that the days have warmed up but let it go to seed if you want a naturalized crop to return close to the parent plants next fall. The seed can also be collected if you want to plant it in a new location. When the seed heads get fluffy like a dandelion, cut off a few and place them in a paper sack until the autumn.

Most of the fall planted cool weather crops are past their prime and can be relegated to the compost pile. Carrots are an exception. They store well in the ground and can be harvested as you need them through the month and into May.

Onions and potatoes were planted in mid or late winter for spring harvest. Both signal you when they are ready to be harvested. The onions flop over when they are done growing their bulbs. That may be at the end of May. Side dress them every 3 weeks with a winterizer (fast release) lawn fertilizer until early May.

When the potato plants bloom they can be harvested as you need them for "new potatoes". Harvest the remaining crop when the tops die back.