

Over the Garden Fence

(Vegetable Gardening during a Pandemic)

By Bob Labozetta (UC Master Gardener, Mariposa)

Crazy times, eh? The COVID-19 pandemic is similar to past national crises in that people, fearing the shortage of life's essentials, are denuding grocery shelves of staples. Limits on various items for purchase or the outright unavailability of products place a burden on our well-being (physical, mental, and emotional).

So, what have we as a nation done in past times of seeming chaos? We can look to the victory gardens popularized during World Wars I and II. According to History.com, "The Victory Garden campaign served as a successful means of boosting morale, expressing patriotism, safeguarding against food shortages on the home front, and easing the burden on the commercial farmers working arduously to feed troops and civilians overseas."

In addition to following guidelines for protecting yourself and others from illness, it is important to get exercise and vitamin D. In other words, get outside, soak up some sunshine and exercise. Establishing your own Victory Garden is a great way to accomplish these goals. It's not just about food; it's about peace of mind and physical well-being. And, in case the food supply network is disrupted, your garden can now help alleviate the problem of food scarcity should it occur.

The UCCE Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are a tremendous source of information about establishing a food garden. Due to COVID-19 and statewide "shelter-in-place" orders, the UC Cooperative Extension office will be closed to in-person visits and our popular local events will be postponed. We may not be visible, but we are still open for business and working behind the scenes.

The Master Gardener Helpline is ready to help. Although we cannot take samples or visits at this time, we are researching and looking for answers to your gardening questions. You can submit your questions by calling 209-966-7078 or by emailing mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu.

The UC Master Gardeners are busy adding materials to our website on gardening and growing your own vegetable garden. Look for us at http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/ and check back often for

updates. You can also visit the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources website at <https://ucanr.edu>. Need help locating a resource for your needs? We would love to help you.

Don't forget to look for us on Facebook (@UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County) and listen to our Master Gardener broadcasts on KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 2 pm and Saturdays at 5 pm. In March, find out about mulching and in April, learn to deal with gophers in your garden.

UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are located at 5009 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa. For more gardening and event information, visit our website (http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/) and Facebook page (UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County). UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Mariposa County, including Greeley Hill, Coulterville, and Lake Don Pedro (209-966-7078 or mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu). Listen to us on the radio at KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 2 pm and Saturdays at 5 pm.