

## Master Gardener Favorites Warm Season Vegetables

I grow 4 or 5 varieties of *tomatoes*: this year ***Roma, Early Girl, Celebrity, Fourth of July, and Burpees Big Mama. Peppers: Anaheim, Jalapeno, Sweet Bell, Thai Chilies. Zucchini, yellow crooked neck squash and Armenian cucumbers.*** I start the tomato and pepper seeds in January, the others in late February. I have tomatoes and peppers in the ground now under row covers. I hope to get the squash in this week.

I grow things we like to eat which are usually varieties that are not readily available in supermarkets. Some items are found at farmers' markets.

***Zucchini - Cozelle*** - sweet flavor, abundant producer

***Wax Bean - Pencil Pod*** - yellow pod with black bean

***Green Bean - Blue Lake and Contender***, bush varieties

***Pop Corn - Japanese White Hulless***

***Eggplant - Ichi Ban*** - long thin Japanese variety, do not need to peel

***Leek*** - whatever seed I can find

***Frying Peppers - Italian Curly and Armenian*** (heirloom seed from a friend)

***Winter Squash - acorn (from seeds I saved), Jarradale, Blue Hubbard***

My favorite vegetable is ***Nantes Carrots***. They are so sweet and juicy.

***Zephyr*** is a ***zucchini*** that has one half yellow skin and the other half is green. ***Flying Saucer summer squash patty pan***. It is green with a white ring around the edging. Shaped just like a flying saucer. Both of these are unique, weird looking, but taste just as good as the usual mundane varieties. Exciting veggies excite kids who are wary of things that are supposed to be good for them.

I like growing ***eggplant*** because there is nothing like the taste of an eggplant when it is fresh off the vine. I started my seeds in late February. I've grown white, purple, pale purple & green eggplants in a variety of shapes and sizes. I think the ***Japanese eggplants*** are my favorite, if I have to pick a favorite. I've also grown ***purple potatoes*** and found them to be amazing. I like the unusual color and the taste is great. One of my friends canned her potatoes in mason jars, cut into cubes. I've never tried it, but what she ended up with was very fresh tasting and perfect for just rinsing and dressing as potato salad. They could simply be heated for mashing or as a hot side dish also.

Your timing is great. I usually get my garden planted late March or early April. Bought ***Japanese cucumbers*** yesterday. Tried this variety last year and I loved it.

I also grow ***basil, Japanese eggplant and squash***. I do have a nematode problem in my vegetable garden so have to only plant tomatoes with the VFN on the label. I know I can solarize, but would have to forego a summer garden for several weeks. I rotate crops.

My fav's are ***Italian curly peppers & Armenian cucumbers***. I did some fun ***white egg eggplants*** and I still do ***potatoes*** and tons of ***basil***.

I had good luck with these vegetables last year:

***summer squash, patty pan var. 'Sunburst F1'***

***snap bean, yellow wax var. 'Carson'***

***bean, red yard long var. 'Red Noodle'***

***okra, var. 'Millionaire'***

***corn, sweet bicolor var. 'Delectable F1' (se+)***

The yellow wax bean and the okra were very good pickled. I also grew 35ft. of zinnias var. "Benarys Giant Mix" for cutting and some black-eyed susan vine. Everything but the patty pan squash was on drip. I will keep track of my planting times this year. Most of the seed came from Johnny's Selected Seeds. Planted ***potatoes, Yukon Gold and***

**red**, on Feb. 17 of this year. Last year, I had to control Southern Fire Ant on the Yukon Golds. They eat the stems to pieces but don't bother the red potatoes at all.

I have to say **Swiss Chard** is my favorite! It is so easy to maintain and it gives and gives and gives! I usually plant a four-pack -- or a six-pack when I can't find a four. If it gets reasonable water it is happy and I'm able to pick from those four plants constantly throughout the summer and fall. Also, this past winter I threw some frost cloth over that bed on a simple loop frame and had chard through January!! The only thing that's tricky as far as pests go are snails! So I'm a big fan of Sluggo Plus (which is the organic version, Sluggo is still good, but Sluggo Plus is better in that respect) so I try to keep the snails at bay with that. But snails are really the only pest I've had attacking my chard and they are pretty easy to keep under control without much effort. Chard is my favorite, easiest summer veggie. And I'm partial to the **ruby red variety**, but they all look great in the garden!

My summer garden is heavy on the **peppers and chilies**, usually planted in early April. I've had great success with the **Northstar bell pepper**. **Felicity** (a heatless jalapeno-type) and **Gusto** (which can be rather hot) provide nice thick-fleshed peppers with good flavor. The **habanero** family has also been consistently successful. I tend to plant them a little later. Last year I had both **habanero and Caribbean Red peppers** in abundance. The latter were too hot for my husband and me, but make a fantastic pepper spray or dried pepper flakes. I use both to deter pests in the garden. I have enjoyed growing **8-Ball Zucchini**: the fruit is abundant and the plant provides nice shade for my **Italian parsley**. The fruit's odd shape seems to make it more appealing as a "gift" to unsuspecting non-gardeners than traditional zukes--very useful at the height of the season. While they may not fit the category, **potatoes** are among my favorite vegetables of summer. I plant them in March and we enjoy them until mid-summer. **Yukon Golds** are favorites, and I'll admit we eat them all as new potatoes. They've never lasted long enough to reach the storage stage. **Tomatoes** have been problematic for me. I love the heirlooms, but so do the nematodes. This year I'll finally get smart and grow some in containers and only plant disease-resistant varieties in the ground. **Green Zebras** are always popular around here, both for eating straight or for use in salsas.

We like **tomatoes**-- **Grape tomatoes** and other tomatoes **Beefsteak**. For the past several years we have been growing Burpee seed and starting them at home in Feb and setting them out in the garden in mid to late May. In fact I'll be doing some today. We've tried a variety of seed: **Rutgers, Big Daddy, Brandy Boy, Super Sweet (cherry) and Napa Grape** this year. We'll see how they grow and produce. I also grow **cucumbers: Straight eights and Armenian**. We have difficulty with these plants in the garden and have begun planting them in large pots and have had some success. Something always cuts them down on the ground when they are small. We also grow **bell peppers and hot peppers (Fresno variety)**. We had one pepper plant that was protected from the frost that continued to grow and produce over 4 seasons. It did get killed by the frost this winter.

This year I will be experimenting with **'Cavili' zucchini** and **'Silor Minor' cucumbers**--both are parthenocarpic veggies--neither require fertilization by bees or other pollinators. I'll let you know results later in the season. I'll also plant our old favorite **'Benning's Green Tint Pattypan' squash**, a very prolific heirloom with a sweet taste and firm texture - when picked small.

My favorite vegetable is **parsley**. Although commonly known as an herb, it is actually a vegetable related to the carrot family. My garden contains both curly parsley and Italian flat-leaf, a sweeter and stronger flavored parsley. It's my favorite because it's a hardy biennial plant requiring little care until it's ready to bolt. It complements many dishes, can be deep-fried, dried or frozen for future use. It's dependable because, after all the neighbors' gardens are bare, I can still provide them with something from my garden. Seed germination ranges from 2-5 weeks, and grows in most soil. A heart-healthy vegetable loaded with vitamins A, C, K and folic acid, not to mention a good palate cleanser and breath freshener.

One of my favorites is the **Armenian cucumber**. They are mild, crunchy and an attractive lime green with a fluted edge. They are hard to get small and unblemished even at farmers' markets. They'll grow huge but are tastiest under 6 inches.