Get Up & Move!

Community Activity
Series 1: March

Community Gardening
This month you have learned about eating green and living green. Now you and your club have the opportunity to grow your own greens! This month, you and your club can plant a vegetable garden in your community. When your vegetables begin to grow, you might want to donate them to a local shelter. You might want to plant your garden where your club meets, but you can choose a different location if it has better soil or access to water. Below are some general guidelines for starting your community vegetable garden.

Location, Location, Location:
Your club should pick a sunny location with good soil. You should not place your garden in a low spot if possible because night air settles in the low areas. The ground shouldn’t be too hard or too sandy. You should make sure you can reach your location with a hose and sprinkler.

Watering:
If you can, you should water your garden every day when it doesn’t rain. Preferably you should water in the morning. If this is not possible you can water in the afternoon, before dark. Watering in the afternoon encourages the growth of fungus, but it is better than letting your plants die from thirst.

When you have seeds in the ground it is alright to water the ground by hand with a hose and nozzle. Make sure you don’t spray too hard because you could unbury your seeds with a jet stream of water. Water enough to wet the ground a couple of inches down. A better method of watering is to use a hose and sprinkler. When your seeds are in the ground it is important to keep them moist. Once your plants begin growing it is better to water more intensely and less frequently, as opposed to a little every day. Also, make sure that water is not running out of your garden.

Safety When Gardening:
Always use sunscreen when working in your garden. If the weather is warm, try to work in the garden either early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Remember to bring water to drink with you while you work in your garden. Gardening can be a demanding job and staying hydrated is always important while being active. Also, try to limit the use of herbicides or pesticides in your garden.
Preparing Your Garden:

If the location of your garden is covered with grass or weeds, here are a few tips for starting your garden:

1. Water the spot well.
2. Lay down several layers of regular newspaper.
3. Water the area again.
4. Put at least one inch of soil on top of the papers (you might need adult assistance for this).
5. Plant in the layer of papers and soil, digging holes straight down into the layers. You should put your plants in the holes you have made. If you are planting seeds, like beans, make sure you have enough soil on top of the paper.
6. The papers that you have laid should prevent extensive weed growth in your garden for at least one year.
7. When you have chosen the vegetables you want to plant, make a sketch of your plot so you will remember what you planted and where. You can use popsicle sticks to label plants, but sometimes they get lost as your plants grow.

Mulching Your Garden:

Mulching your garden is one of the most important ways to maintain healthy plants. A mulch is any material applied to the soil surface for protection or improvement of the area covered. Nature actually produces mulch with large quantities of fallen leaves, needles, twigs, pieces of bark, flower blossoms, and other organic materials. There are two types of mulches, organic and inorganic. Organic mulches are made of natural substances such as bark, wood chips, leaves, and pine needles. They decompose over time and need to be replaced after several years. Inorganic mulches can include gravel, pebbles, and black plastic and landscape fabrics. They do not attract pests and do not compose. Mulching can:

- Help fight off weeds
- Help keep moisture in the ground
- Help to maintain even soil temperature
- Helps to add nutrients to the soil
- Help to nourish the garden for the following season

What to Plant:

Your club can decide together what vegetables to plant in your garden. Some ideas include tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, broccoli, and corn. Other easy-to-grow veggies include radishes, onions, beets, and zucchini. You can grow vegetables from baby plants you buy or from seeds. On the back of the packets of seeds are directions you need to follow.
Garden Upkeep:
Make sure that you water your garden enough. You won’t have to water as often if you mulch. Your club should make sure that someone checks the garden almost every day to make sure that animals and bugs are not eating your plants. If animals are becoming a problem, you can purchase special fencing to protect your vegetables. This fencing can be moved around as needed. You should also take a bucket with you when you visit your garden if there are veggies ready to be picked!

Source: (www.homeandgardensite.com; www.hgic.clemson.edu)