

NORTHERN NEVADA GARDENING

By Diane Hicks

As I sit and watch the snow coming down, my mind turns to spring when a garden can be started. I know that if I am to be successful it is time to start planning and planting. Yes, I said planting! This is the time to start your seedlings and put them in the garage or a spare room with a light on them. I was able to purchase a small green house at Wal-Mart last year and have kept my herb plants in the garage all winter....they are happy, growing and sure do make a lot of difference in the taste of our winter meals. You can make a small green house with a shelf and plastic covering, just do not let the plastic touch the plants. Any light will work that can hang above the seedlings and let them stay warm.

If you have any left over seeds from last year they are still good. So many people throw left over seeds out and purchase new each year. It is not necessary and a waste.

A good potting soil and a container is all you need. I have used paper cups, egg cartons, and disposable foil pans with holes punched in the bottom, etc. You can put an old cookie sheet underneath as drip pans. Tomato plants are easy to start, just one seed per pot or per inch in a row. If you are using a flat pan, take a skewer and make rows one inch apart in both directions so you have little one-inch squares. Place one seed in each square. Since the seeds will be in the soil for sometime make certain it is deep enough to accommodate the roots, do not plant the seed deep. You can use this method for any seed such as squash, peppers, beans, etc. Seed for lettuce, radishes, carrots, etc should be planted directly into your prepared garden site and the proper time. Just a side comment on seeds: Many of the fruit and vegetables that we buy in the grocery are not good for seed collection. Some have been altered one way or another and will not produce the same looking fruit. The product you will get will return to it's familial form.

A raised garden is wonderful in the North because of all of the darling little cotton tail bunnies that come along with the spring. Some are as simple as using untreated wood, blocks, etc, and placing a fence around them. I have seen some that are basically built on top of saw horses. No bending, no bunnies and easy weeding.!

Ahh! And the beautiful fruit trees. It is an incredible sight in this area in the spring. The flowers are beautiful, the scent is unbelievable. It absolutely dazzles your senses. You can grow, peach, apple, pear, apricots, plum, etc., in abundance. Just feed the trees, trim when necessary and enjoy your own farmer's market. Many of these come in dwarf size. And then if you want to do something extra special, freeze or can the fruit as it ripens and use for next winter. There are several good books available that will walk you through process and it is well worth while. Did you know that when your tomatoes are

coming on in abundance you can rinse them, stem them and place them into freezer bags for chili and marinara sauce in the winter.

Have fun and if you have children it is a wonderful way to share time and teach them about growing food and taking care of it. It may sound like a lot of work but well worth the effort. Once it is done all you need to do is water, weed, and eat the benefits.

Enjoy your garden, save some money, eat really well and healthy. Have fun.

P.S. You can grow beautiful berry plants here. YUM!