

# The Quarantine List

By Jess Draper  
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*Editor's note: The Nugget continues its series of recommendations for reading and viewing during the pandemic shutdown.*

"The Vegetable Gardener's BIBLE" by Edward C. Smith.

I've read my fair share of gardening books (during college I worked at a delightful garden store in downtown Seattle where we were encouraged to borrow the books) and this is the one that I open again and again — for the last 10 years!

In this 350-page reference book complete with full-color photos of plants, pests, and processes, Ed shares his WORD approach to successful gardening in America's northern regions: Wide rows, Organic methods, Raised beds, Deep soil.

My family's little garden here in Sisters is based on his methods and we do have successes (and plenty of failures since this is Central Oregon and nothing about gardening is a sure thing). Like most things in life, you need to consider your garden's success over the long term, not by an individual crop or season. This book shines here as it takes you through nurturing soil health, crop rotations, composting, and more.

The book is divided into three parts that cover planning your garden for higher yields with less work, how to nurture healthy soil and deal with garden pests, and a pretty comprehensive directory of vegetables and herbs.

Starting seeds indoors has been on my agenda recently (*see sidebar for a low-cost solution*). While it really is doable for anyone, understanding how soon to get seeds started before the last frost date, what temperatures different seeds germinate at, and when to fertilize your seed starts will greatly increase your success. Ed's book has you covered with all this information.

Crop rotation is a great topic to read up on. Did you know that when you rotate your crops around the garden from year to year in a planned manner you can reduce incidence of disease and pests since many eggs, larvae, and soilborne diseases spend winter in the soil? When you strategically change locations of your crops, the nuisances are less prolific because their preferred food or host

isn't readily available.

Folk wisdom says that "a very good gardener grows soil" because that is the keystone that takes seeds to harvest. Good garden soil is a collection of the myriad nutrients plants need for healthy growth as well as the worms, beetles, bacteria and fungi that help create the living ecology where plants thrive. This past weekend as I worked on preparing our garden beds it was thrilling for me and my almost-four-year-old to spy all the worms, beetles, and spiders buried in the ground and hiding under rocks.

Kohlrabi made its way into my garden lineup after reading about it in this book. As with all of the vegetables in the directory section, there are recommendations for choosing the best site, how to sow and grow it, and how to harvest and store it. I like to grow kohlrabi because you can eat young leaves as salad greens, the full grown vegetable is a great substitute for cabbage (without the insect troubles often associated with cabbage), and it stores well.

# Newspaper pots are eco-friendly, easy on the wallet

Easy — and free — seed-starting pots can be placed into a standard seed flat or whatever salad clam shell, large food storage container, etc. that you may have on hand. The only supplies needed are a couple copies of *The Nugget* (it's printed with non-toxic soy-based inks, in case you're wondering) that you're done reading, an empty toilet paper roll (or tomato paste can), scissors, pencil and a ruler. If you have kiddos, this is a fun activity to do together — my 4-year-old had a great time and was especially good at filling the pots with soil using an old coffee scoop.

Measure and mark three-inch vertical strips on your paper.

Cut the strips — I found about 10 sheets easy to cut through at once. Repeat until the paper (excluding folded spine) is all in three-inch wide strips.

Position a strip perpendicular to the toilet paper roll with approximately one inch overhanging the end of the roll. Wrap the strip around the roll the entire length of the strip, not too tight or it will be difficult to slide off.

Fold over the portion extending past the roll to create the bottom. Pinches the edges a bit so the form holds then pull the paper off the roll.

Gently fill the pots with seed starting mixture all the way to the top, firm the soil so they are good and full. We used an old coffee scoop to make filling them easier.

Line the filled pots up in your tray. Add seeds of your choice according to package directions — pay attention to planting depth, temperature required for germination, and how soon you should start seeds indoors before the last frost date. (In Sisters there may not be a "last frost" date, but when the



snow is off of Black Butte you should be OK to put your plants out with protection as needed.) I just started my tomato seeds for now. In a few weeks I'll start cucumbers, peppers, and zucchinis.

Remember that drainage is key to seed starting success, as is keeping the soil moist and warm. A sunny kitchen window usually works for me. Some folks like to get the germination started on top of the refrigerator for added warmth.

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