

GARDENING: Growing an edible garden can boost morale

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innovating, networking with other gardeners and seeking out information through classes and local resources.

Whether it's hungry wildlife, frosty mornings, or a lack of knowledge, growers need all the help they can get. Classes are available covering topics like choosing the right plants, soils, protecting plants from a hard freeze and other Central Oregon climate challenges. Luckily, there are many hardy, tenacious folks who have overcome adversity and produced a bounty of vegetables, herbs and flowers. Resources abound like the OSU Extension Service guide for growing vegetables in Central Oregon, the Sisters Garden Club, and the nonprofit Seed to Table. Local farms like Rainshadow Organics and Mahonia Gardens have done an amazing job growing in Sisters Country. They provide a wealth of insights and a great source for local produce.

Beginning April 30, Audrey Tehan, the executive director of Seed to Table, is offering a four-part series, "Growing Resilience – A Deep Dive Course to Turn Central Oregon Gardens into a Food Oasis."

Seed to Table staff will be online answering questions during classes. Tehan offered the class last year and had 10 students. This year over 60 people are enrolled so far. This new gardening trend is affecting veteran growers, sellers, and newbies alike.

CORRECTION

The raptor featured in the photo on the front page of *The Nugget* April 22 was incorrectly identified as a golden eagle. In fact, it is a large red-tailed hawk. Thanks to Sue Tank of Paulina Springs Books for the correction.



PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

Tehan says it doesn't have to be about fear of a food shortage, but more a return to self-reliance and the rewards of fueling your body with the healthiest, freshest produce possible. Getting hands back in the soil can be cathartic, rewarding and even a stress reducer — at least until fragile plants like tomatoes are frozen overnight. People like Tehan have mastered the skills and strategies to increase chances for a successful, delicious harvest with enough to share with neighbors or those in need.

With increased interest, seeds are selling fast, and supplies for some are depleted. Vegetable and herb-starts are selling quickly. Local stores like Locavore in Bend are asking Sisters Country growers to provide more plants daily. Cathy Stadeli of C & C Nursery has seen a big increase too.

"Starts are flying out the door!" said Stadeli from their Sisters nursery on South Pine Street.

"Vegetables are kind of like toilet paper this year," said her husband Chad with a laugh.

Sisters Country grower Gayle Hoagland has been growing and selling vegetables, herbs, and flowers for many years. In the past, Hoagland purchased some of her organic starts from a big grower in the Valley. But that wasn't an option this year. With the grower's inventory moving out the door as fast as they could start more plants from seeds. "They told me demand for their vegetables is up by 500 percent. They can't keep up with the demand even with 30 greenhouses," said Hoagland from her Sisters Country operation.

Hoagland is doing all she can to keep up with the pandemic-related demand.

"I just started a whole bunch more seeds in my greenhouse. It's early here to plant much of anything unless you have hardy greens or a greenhouse. My sales are significantly up from last year. I need more help, so Erik is transplanting seeds for the on-going demand. I am part of a Facebook group called Central Oregon Gardener and it's really growing too. There's more

interest from people new to gardening or the area."

Tehan is excited that people recognize there's a lot to learn about gardening.

"We've gotten away from that in the last few decades with changing lifestyles," she said. "More people want to regain that skill set. Seed to Table grows 40,000 pounds of food on an acre and a half. You can grow all your salad in containers on your porch. If you have five kale plants, they will keep providing the whole season. Small spaces are powerful in providing food. We live in a desert; we might as well use the water for something edible. People are looking at their spaces differently and getting creative about how to use what they have."

Tehan appreciates the sentiment of a victory garden.

"We are in a trying time and wondering how we're going to overcome this," said Tehan. "It's about keeping our families healthy. Minimizing exposure for most involves the necessity of going to the store. It's also filling our time and minds with productivity. There's nothing more exciting than watching a seed grow and then preparing a meal with it."

Learn more about Seed to Table on their website, seedtotableoregon.org. Visit the OSU Cascade Extension Service at <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9128>; Gayle Hoagland can be reached at gaylehoagland@aol.com.

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