

It isn't too early for gardens

Though planting is far off, planning can begin now

Food, being the basis of life, can be the ultimate in "doing it yourself" activities.

February is too early for Oregon gardeners to launch into their muddy plots and plant, but by March they can at least begin preparing for planting time, which usually comes in May, according to the Lane County Extension Service.

The "early bird" work involves starting seedlings indoors which can be transplanted outdoors later in the spring. Although it's some-

times easier to purchase the vegetable transplants at planting time, starting the seeds yourself can be fun.

According to the extension service, tomato, pepper and eggplants require six to eight weeks to mature enough from seed for transplanting. That means these vegetable seeds may be started indoors in mid March. Cabbage and lettuce, on the other hand, require a four to five-week indoor growing season.

The soil in which you plant the

seedlings is important. The extension service suggests blending equal parts of sand, loam and peat moss if you prepare the soil yourself. Otherwise, pre-mixed soils are available commercially.

When you plant the seeds, place their containers in a plastic bag, tie the bag and place in room temperature until seedlings appear. Then, remove the bag and place seedlings in maximum light.

As the seedlings grow, you may have to transplant some of them into larger pots. When the final transplanting comes (from inside



to outside), prepare the plants first by slowly exposing them to the cooler outside temperatures for about 10 days.

The plants should be six to eight inches high when transplanted.

As planting time approaches, more information about gardening will be available from garden centers, nurseries and supermarkets.

Garden Space

One of the biggest problems for many would-be gardeners living in a city such as Eugene is lack of garden space. Unlike a farmer who can easily mark out a home garden in one of his fields, the city dweller usually has a limited space for gardening.

There's at least two solutions:

You can convert a lawn into a garden by stripping the sod. Duane Hatch, Lane County extension agent, advises against mixing the cut sod into the soil to avoid weeds. Instead, he suggests removing the sod to a compost pile where it can decompose and become good fertilizer later on.

Another route the city dweller can take for establishing a garden is the community garden plot. Several of these plots are located around town and a space in one is yours for a minimal fee, which usually includes water and soil preparation.

There's at least five community gardens around town where gardeners can sign up for summer plots. Most plot sizes average 18 square feet.

The community gardens are as follows:

• **Eugene Community Gardens** — Headed by Lynn Mathews of the Eugene Parks and Recreation Department, these three gardens have a capacity for about 150 plots. The largest plot is on North Polk Street by the Willamette River. The other two are at 15th Avenue and Hayes Street

and Coburg and Cal Young roads. Cost is \$11 for a seasonal plot; \$8 for a year-round plot. Water is included in both and soil preparation in the seasonal plots. Plot size is 20 by 30 feet and signups are in March.

• **Ida Patterson Community Garden** — Signups begin in April for the 70 plots available. Plot size is 18 square feet. Cost is \$7.50, which includes water and soil preparation. The garden, headed by Margo Drivers, is at the community school, 14th Avenue and Chambers Street.

• **Lincoln Community Garden** — Limited to Lincoln area residents (roughly, residents living between Van Buren and Kincaid streets between 7th and 18th avenues). Plot owners from last summer may reclaim their plots now. Signups will open to the public beginning Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at Lincoln Community School, 650 W. 12th Ave. Located next to the school, the garden has 21 plots which sell for \$5 apiece. Cost includes water and soil preparation. Plot size is 17 by 20 feet. The garden is maintained by Molly Stratford.

• **Willamalane Community Gardens** — Headed by Don Lindley of the Willamalane Parks and Recreation, these two gardens are at Guy Lee Elementary School, 755 W. Harlow Road, and at 16th and G streets in Springfield. Cost is \$7 per plot and includes water and soil preparation.

In addition to community plots, garden space and instruction are available through the University. Students in spring term's "Spring Garden" course, Landscape Architecture 406, will divvy up a plot behind Murphy and Me tavern for individual gardening. Students can cultivate either individual or communal gardens and should plan on living in Eugene through the summer to reap their full harvests.

Downtown service substitutes energy, know-how for bucks

Problem one: Frank has three pairs of socks that need darning, two pairs of jeans that need patching and a shirt that needs mending.

Problem two: Jane has a leaky faucet in her kitchen and a plugged drain in her bathtub.

Neither Frank nor Jane has the skills to solve their respective problems. But Frank knows a little plumbing and Jane can sew.

Solution: The two go to the Community Energy Bank, find out about one another and exchange services. There's no money involved, no red tape, no outrageous fees.

The Community Energy Bank, 454 Willamette St. in Eugene, is a network of persons in the community who rely on each other for services, skills and materials they don't possess themselves. The system skips over the usual mode of obtaining the items through monetary exchange and opts for a "credit hour" approach to keep track of debts.

"The credit hours system is a mythical beast we created to replace money," explains Dan

Wenzel, a bank member who oversees the bank office.

"A person can mow another's lawn, for example, and then he'll be eligible for an equal amount of work from someone else in the bank."

If two persons exchange services between themselves, it's called a direct exchange, Wenzel adds. If a person offers service to one bank member, then receives an equal amount of service from another bank member, it's called an indirect exchange.

Becoming a bank member is easy. Anyone who fills out a bank application automatically is a member and is listed in the bank's resource file.

The bank application includes services, skills and materials the member can offer and ones the member needs. It also details how the member can give advice, teach, help organize, perform certain tasks and loan or trade tools.

The resource file provides a quick link between bank members needing and offering a particular service.

Wenzel emphasizes, however, only bank members have com-

plete access to the file. Non-members who call in, he says, have access to only those members who have agreed to open their services to the public.

More than 300 members have joined the bank since its opening in May, 1977. Although most members are individuals, others are community organizations such as Hoedads and Oregonians Cooperating to Protect Whales.

One of the bank's primary goals, explains Bob Pierce, a Vista volunteer helping to organize the bank, is recycling the community's resources. Pierce says the bank was established to provide community involvement, not just an alternative to the monetary exchange system.

A non-profit organization, the Community Energy Bank relies mostly on fund raisers and voluntary 50-cent monthly dues from its members to meet its overhead.

Office hours are noon to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, contact the bank at 485-8133. The bank will have an exhibit at the Survival Center's seminar next week in the EMU.

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