

Augusta Benedict

Since my last missive from the Grove, tendrils of quiescent change have impressed their slender presence upon the Community Garden. We continue the meditative pursuit of dirt wrangling. To the uninitiated, this is the less-than-fun part: digging at Winter's still and sullen soil, mounding depleted and dull garden beds, turning-in the burdensome catalyst of compost. This is a quiet summons, distinct from the braggart's glory at Harvest. And, like so many activities of this nature, garden preparation offers neither hint, promise, nor prophecy of future reward. Upon faith and intrinsic joy of process does a garden begin each season.

There is a tactile and aural resonance to each spade full of soil that slides from blade to plot. Properly done, there is a long and leisurely wavelength to this rhythm, lending itself to comprehension. The parabolic curve of earth spreading over a garden bed accommodates careful reflection. Within this context the euphonic music of Christ's parable of the mustard seed sings true and with broad application: as in the Kingdom of Heaven, so too, with the simple seeding of our own gardens.

But let's not get bogged down too deeply in the fertile humus of allegory. Both humus and allegory can get richly cark, complex, and hot, even to the point of burning. After all, mustard seeds do have gardening applications apart from philosophical abstraction. What better moment to initiate the Herbal Information feature of this column. By no means comprehensive, each brief survey of a particular herb is meant to draw attention to that modest corner of the garden that might otherwise go overlooked. Those wishing a more in-depth study of anything mentioned will find the following works helpful: Rodale's Illustrated Encyclopedia of Herbs (Rodale Press) and A Modern Herbal by Mrs. M. Grieve (Dover Press). So, while on the topic, a quick review of the humble mustard plant.

Mustard. Or in Latin, *mustum ardens*. The name "burning must" refers to the French process of grinding the seeds of *brassica cruciferae* into the fermenting juice of wine grapes. Voila, etymological origins and the history of Grey Poupon in a nutshell. The plant itself has been valued for its culinary and medicinal properties since the ancient Greeks. Many mustard varieties are available. Most common are black (*brassica nigra*), white or yellow (*B. hirta*) and brown (*B. juncea*). A number of Japanese mustards (*B. japonica*) are worth searching out for their qualities. The Milke Purple, Osaka and a biennial, Kyona Mizuma, are tasty.

Cultivate mustard by seeding. Plants can be grown for either greens or seed. Young greens are vitamin rich and provide a tangy fillip to any salad. If you want to harvest greens, several plantings may be made from spring into early autumn. To harvest ripe seeds sow in the spring or late summer. A late summer planting will carry the young mustard plants through the winter and give you a head start on the next season's seed harvest. The mustard plant likes rich, well-drained soil in full sunlight. Plant seeds 1/8 inch deep and thin the seedlings to stand 9 inches apart. Water mustard liberally or it will become too hot to eat. And don't forget, it was with good reason that Christ chose the tiny mustard seed for

that parable. If you allow these plants to go to seed the poetry and romance of a good allegory becomes one hell of a weed problem.

Harvest all seed pods before they begin to open (why do I feel as if I'm writing the screenplay to a grade-B sci-fi movie?) in a manner thus: collect the pods after they've turned brown, but before they begin to open. Place on a tightly woven screen for a couple of weeks to ripen. Abrade the pods between your palms, winnow the seed, store in tightly covered jars.

After you've admired your jars of seed for awhile, try this recipe from Johnny's Selected Seeds Catalog of Albion, Maine. It's a hefty dose of hot mustard. If you find it too hot, temper it by altering the proportion of yellow and brown seeds.

Boil 1/3 cup of cider vinegar, 2/3 cup of cider, 2 T of honey, 1 T of chopped roasted hot red peppers, 1/8 t of turmeric, and 1/2 t of salt. While hot, combine with 1/4 cup of yellow mustard seed and 1/4 cup of brown mustard seed and immediately grind the mixture in a blender or pestal. When smooth, add 1 T of olive oil. Makes 1 1/4 cup.

Caution dictates a prudent study of any herb used medicinally. Through misidentification, mislabelling, or misinformation, an herbal remedy can be misused. Adverse reactions to improperly used herbs are varied. And, to be blunt, a number of herbs are downright dangerous. Pokeweed and aconite are toxic to the point of killing. Comfrey is a suspected carcinogen. Even good ol' aloe can cause a violent cathartic response of taken internally. Two important references to consult on these matters are James A. Duke's CRC Handbook of Medicinal Herbs (CRC Press) and The Honest Herbal, by Dr. Varro Tyler (Stickley Co.).

Taken internally, mustard is an appetite stimulant. In small doses it stimulates the mucous membrane of the stomach and increases the digestive secretions of the pancreas. Large doses of mustard seed (a tablespoon of mustard flour in tepid water) will induce vomiting. The herb has a mild laxative effect due to its high oil and fat content. Used externally, hot water poured over bruised black mustard seeds is said to provide a stimulating foot bath. Used as a poultice or plaster, powdered mustard seeds are a cure for chest congestion and respiratory ailments. It relieves congestion of various organs by drawing blood to the surface. Again, caution must be exercised in the use of this remedy, as the same qualities that make it a powerful internal irritant can cause blistering if left on the skin too long.

If you would like to become a Community Garden member and begin growing your own vegetables, flowers, and herbs, the volunteer-operated garden welcomes new members. Regularly scheduled work parties are held at the garden each Sunday morning from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. No experience, tools, or horticultural enlightenment are required. The garden's Sprout Queen, Leslie Sroufe, can be reached at 436-0738 for more information. The garden is located at the east end of Madison Street, in the Grove.



Life is short. play with abandon work hard. do what you love. listen. live with intention. choose without regret. live each day as if it were all you had.

Maryanne Radmacher-Herby '95



HELIOTROPE
NATURAL FOODS
"Salem's Widest Variety of Natural Foods"

2060 Market Street NE • Salem, OR 97301 • 362-5487
Mon-Fri 9am-9pm, Sat 9am-7pm, Sun 11am-6pm

Abundance
NATURAL FOODS We Are Only as Healthy as Our Surroundings

We can improve our surroundings by:

- reusing cloth shopping bags, bulk food bags & glass jars.
- recycling recyclable and reusable packaging.
- reducing our dependence on non-renewable resources with organic agriculture.

24th & Hilyard, Eugene Open Daily 8am - 11pm 343-9142

ARCADIA LANDSCAPING
LESLIE SROUFE
LICENSED BONDED LIC #6662
436-0738 Res Cannon Beach

FOOD FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT
1399 OCEAN ASTORIA
THE COMMUNITY STORE

Copies & Fax

PRINT SERVICES:
Graphic Design - Ad Layouts - Brochures - Menus - Flyers
Business Cards - Letterhead - Resumes - Wedding Invitations

OTHER SERVICES:
UPS Shipping - Office Supplies - Rubber Stamps
Self-Service Copies - 24-Hr Fax Service - Word Processing
Lamination - Macintosh Rental - Banners - Gift Items

1235 S. Hemlock Cannon Beach Phone: (503)436-2000 Fax: (503)436-0746

Pacific Produce

PRODUCE
JUICE BAR
WHEAT GRASS
SMOOTHIES

1235 S. Hemlock, Cannon Beach, Oregon
436-0232

Buy natural foods at 15% above wholesale from Mountain Peoples Warehouse Catalogue