

Home Gardens – A Thing of the Future

Americans planted victory gardens during World War II as a way to support the war effort. By growing produce to feed themselves and their communities, these home gardeners allowed the nation to divert more of the national food and fuel supplies to the troops. People felt personal pride in the labor they contributed, and the food they grew helped offset the hardships caused by war.

Some 20 million Americans answered the call of "Plant More in '44." Altogether, they produced about 40 percent of the vegetables consumed nationally that year. The victory garden concept changed gardening from a practical pastime to a civic duty and patriotic gesture.

Sixty-five years later, Americans are again struggling to make ends meet, and food gardening is experiencing a revival. This time around, the reasons have less to do with patriotism and more to do with saving money and promoting self-sufficiency. Reasons for having a home garden today include better-tasting and better quality food, saving money on food bills, and growing safe food.

When planning your garden, consider the associated costs. Options for gardening costs range from the labor-intensive — growing everything from seed — to the neighborly, such as swapping plants with friends or asking a successful gardener down the street for cuttings. Some gardeners average the cost out over a 10 or 20 year period, because they plan to garden for many years.

Before spending a lot to have a garden, make a list of the items you need, check to see what you already have, set a budget and stick to it! Remember that each garden will have different needs and you may already have the tools you need.

Another source available for you is Extension's Master Gardener program. This organization is made up of a diverse group of individuals with a common interest in learning about gardening. The only requirements for becoming a Master Gardener are an interest in learning about gardening and horticulture, having the time to attend an intensive training course on all areas of horticulture, and a willingness to share what you learn with others.

If there are items you enjoy eating but may not have in your garden, visit the Bibb County Farmers Market starting June 12. Farmer's markets have a rich history in the United States and are enjoying a strong revival. With the increase in number of small market gardens, farm operations and specialty food producers, farmer's markets cut out the middleman, making the transaction more profitable for farmers and more economical for consumers.

By bringing farmers and consumers face to face, it also creates a stronger sense of community. For more information on becoming a Master Gardener, check with our Extension office or visit us at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1120>

To learn more about how Extension can help you, to volunteer, or ask a question, please call us at 205-926-3117 or 205-926-4310. Or, visit us online at www.aces.edu/bibb

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