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News Release

### **Extension Offers Backyard GROWceries Workshop in March**

A growing number of Alabamians are ready to take up their shovels and hoes this spring. They and countless others across the nation have decided to grow some of their own food this year in home gardens.

There's just one problem with that, says one horticulture professional with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

"Many of the people who are most excited about trying their hand at vegetable gardening really have no experience at all," says Kerry Smith, a leader with Extension's Home Grounds team. "What they have is a lot of passion and a lot of questions."

But a new Extension program initiative is taking aim at those questions. *Home Grown Traditions* is a series of gardening workshops that Extension professionals will lead across the state beginning in March.

Shane Harris, a regional Extension home grounds agent, says the first workshops will focus on the basics.

"We are going to talk about things such as site selection, soil testing, raised bed construction and container gardening," says Harris. He adds that many of the workshops will include demonstrations and hands-on components.

Smith emphasizes that the program effort will be statewide.

If you are interested in learning more about vegetable gardening, the St. Clair County Extension office has scheduled the first of a series of Home Grown Traditions workshops called Backyard GROWceries. The workshop will be held on Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup>. It will be held at Jefferson State Community College—Pell City campus from 9 a.m.—3 p.m. The cost is \$10, which will cover materials and lunch. To attend, you must pre-register no later than Monday, March 16<sup>th</sup>. Registration forms and more information about the workshop are available at the Extension office, located on the lower level of the St. Clair County Courthouse in Pell City, Suite 103, or on our website at [www.aces.edu/StClair](http://www.aces.edu/StClair).

*Home Grown Traditions* will also be a continuing effort. Workshops are already being developed for this summer and next fall.

"New gardeners will learn about the challenges of summer vegetable production in Alabama, including managing diseases and pests, as well as how to use drip irrigation to efficiently water," says Smith. Harris adds that fall workshops will show ways to extend the vegetable growing season beyond the summer months.

"Veteran gardeners know that fall gardens can be extremely productive," says Harris. "But for novice gardeners, the prospect of a fall garden with fresh lettuces, greens and other vegetables may be a welcome surprise."

Smith says that the growing interest in vegetable gardens may be linked to a number of factors including a certain amount of media hype.

“But for most of these people they are interested in becoming more self-reliant and helping create a more sustainable environment around their homes. For many, they are remembering the stories their parents and grandparents told them about raising their own food and preserving. Now they are learning those skills and passing them on to their own children.”

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