



## **Season 1 Episode 7—Planting the Garden with Dani Carroll**

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Announcer

Welcome to the *Southern Ground* podcast provided by Alabama Extension through Auburn University. Extension educators Shane Harris and Dr. Chip East discuss seasonal lawn and garden topics, address common questions, and provide the practical solutions you want to know. Let's dig in to our southern ground.

Shane Harris

Hello everyone, and welcome to *Southern Ground*. I'm Shane Harris. Sitting across from me is Chip East and we have a very special guest. We have Miss Dani Carroll, who's also part of our home horticulture team. Today we have a room full of horticulturists for our podcast today. Hello, Dani. How are you on this beautiful spring morning?

Dani Carroll

I'm doing very well. How are you doing today?

Shane Harris

Sure are glad to have you day, Chip this is a special treat for us.

Chip East

It's a special treat. Glad we've been working with Dani. A long time. And we're glad she's here with us today.

Shane Harris

Well, this topic is definitely hers, and we specifically wanted her to be part of this one. As we think about spring weather and spring season coming in and Dani has mentioned this in a lot of her talks about planting the garden. Is it time to plan the garden? Do we have to plant the entire garden all at once?

Shane Harris

Why should we have a have a home vegetable garden? So those are the things we want to try to address today on our *Southern Ground* podcast.

Chip East

Shane, I remember years ago, my earliest memory of gardening was not about gardening is about rocks. My job was getting the rocks out of the garden and to be honest with you, that wasn't fun. But that was the job. That was what I could do. I was little, you know, that's all I could do. They wouldn't let me touch a hoe because I might do something with it. Chop something. I shouldn't be, working on.

Shane Harris

My memories of pawpaw all coming down with the curb tractor on a Saturday, and the whole group had to be out there, including us kids. And it's time to plant the entire garden. I mean, all half acre, full acre of that. And I had to plant the seeds as I got older, a little bigger. I had to pull the the plow, you know, had to be the donkey.

Shane Harris

Yeah. And in this case.

Dani Carroll

Hey, Chip, that's actually my husband's job. Now he has to get the rocks out of the soil because I don't trust him with the hoe, because sometimes I don't know what he. If he knows what he's doing.

Chip East

That's probably why that was my job is just the most ignorant person on it. That's what you put to do in the rocks. But yeah, that was the job. Picking up the rocks and.

Shane Harris

Everybody had a role pop up on the tractor. Mama planting the seed, somebody putting the fertilizer out, somebody covering it. Pulling the weeds. It was, is is definitely a, a family tradition in the past. But we want to talk about, why we want to do a spring, or home, vegetable garden. There's lots of reasons for doing that.

Dani Carroll

Well, number one, everybody likes to know where their food comes from, but I think that's probably the most important for a lot of people. It's more than that. It's it's more than a hobby. It's just the way they were brought

up. It's the way of life. And y'all are talking about your earliest memories of gardening. Man was actually popcorn. So, we had huge fields of popcorn.

Shane Harris

Wow. We didn't have that from Clay County.

Dani Carroll

My grandmother, we would get the popcorn, the harvest, the corn, and she would run out. I want to say shell or I know that's not what it called, but it busted the kernels off. Yeah, they would go pop the popcorn. It wasn't the buttery microwave yum yum that we have today, but it was pretty tasty.

Chip East

I like that.

Shane Harris

When you try that. When we haven't done a demonstration with Dani on popcorn, we need to have the top of it at some point.

Chip East

That's a good idea.

Dani Carroll

That would be pretty cool.

Shane Harris

Because you mentioned having, knowing where your food comes from. But a lot of people like it because it's fresh eating. You go out there and pick a squash picked corn, pick a fresh tomato in the summertime, for a, for a quick meal. So a lot of people still even to, even today maybe have small gardens.

Shane Harris

They don't plant a big garden like maybe in the past or don't have that big, large family, but they like to do like fresh, fresh produce.

Dani Carroll

Yeah. And it's very convenient because it like you say, you don't have to put on your grocery list or if you, you don't have a peppers like, oh, we're not we can't make this because we don't have one. You just can run out there and pick a couple of things, and you can always have something to make a meal.

Shane Harris

We always talk about things like this. Save money. I don't know if we're going to save a lot of money. We had to plant a lot of crops. But that is one reason some people want to have a garden. They like to try to save some money.

Dani Carroll

Save some money. And it's just it's really good exercise too. It's good for you.

Shane Harris

Good physical health and mental health. It is always joke in our talks about go out there and take your frustration out, pull the weeds, do a little hoeing or yanking the weeds out or.

Dani Carroll

Get the rocks out.

Shane Harris

Mash up. Mash a bug chip.

Dani Carroll

Hey, and those rocks always come in handy. We always put them in a big bucket. And that way when we need a bunch of rocks to do something with, we have them.

Chip East

You're right. We're still using those rocks. They're, they're doing their job where we put them out right now.

Dani Carroll

But yeah. So we're getting ready. I say getting ready. You know with a garden you're doing we can do something year round. There's garlic growing right now. There's onions growing right now. Some of the cool season crops I mean they're kind of getting ready here in the middle of March to kind of end their life cycle.

Dani Carroll

But to me there's no let's start the garden today because it's just always it's always there.

Shane Harris

In the Deep South. We say about ten, 11 months out of the year that you could be growing something, right?

Dani Carroll

I mean, there could be something grow in 12 months when you've got garlic and onions and some of your frost hardy collards grow and all that mean still growing. Now that we're planted last.

Chip East

Year, use a row cover to like a farmer would do and extend that season.

Dani Carroll

That's right. But everybody right now I think is getting the the warm weather frenzy like my mama used to say. Do you do you have your garden planted? I'm like a mama. The garden has been planted for five years. But she, you know, to her it was tomatoes and okra. If you got tomatoes and okra in the garden, that means your garden been planted.

Shane Harris

Yeah, there's always a peak time. Maybe here in Alabama is around April. Their base. And and we've been looking as spring has been teasing with us now is people been breaking up their gardens, getting them ready. If it's a quarter acre or a half-acre plot, they're already tilling that ground and getting it ready. And it's always a family tradition, historical tradition of let's go plant the entire garden at one time.

Shane Harris

And that's the way we grew up. Chip is, we went out there and planned the whole time. But as years now we're talking, off the air. But you gotta have a reason to to do that if you want to put the whole thing in, it could be good or bad.

Chip East

And there are reasons to do that. I work a lot with farmers and in like Dani, working with home producers. Same way I want to plant over time a little every couple of weeks, or it kind of depends. I know people plant sweet corn. I know one that plants every three days, you know, just kind of depends on how much we're growing and what we're doing with it.

Chip East

But I don't want to pull something out of the freezer when I can be pulling it out of the garden. It took a lot of work to get it in that freezer. Now, if you plant the whole garden at one time, you want it all come in at one time and we put it up and put it in the freezer.

Chip East

There's, as I understand, that's the reason for doing it all at once.

Shane Harris

We don't have the people doing that is in the past people. A lot of people don't do the canning. They still may do a little bit of freezing. Most people will have one, a few small plants around the home of a smaller plot, because it's is easier to go by it.

Chip East

A lot of times you don't even have the space in the. I mean, I guess it depends on where you live it, but if you don't have a big freezer, you can't put much in it.

Shane Harris

They'll have the big families will have a lot of people to feed.

Chip East

Planting all summer. So good idea here.

Dani Carroll

There's that. And these, these vegetable plants just behave differently. Like do you take squash for instance, something that we're going to direct seed really easily. You don't have to have transplants. That to me the it germinates in the soil temperature much less, you know even up to ten degrees less than some of the other ones. So, my squash will go in, you know, sometimes ten days before I even think about putting a tomato out and peppers even maybe a week later than that.

Dani Carroll

And then you get into okra and sweet potatoes well, you know, when it is so hot outside and humid that the Bermudas growing and we're fanning ourselves? That's the temperature they like. So that's not even to me going into May.

Chip East

I remember being at a farmers market. Dani and everybody there had squash, and that's about all we had because what you said is right. Well one it don't take as many days to grow it as compared to tomatoes, for instance. But you're right, we have it. So, we got to think about when we want it. And then we'll decide when we're going to plant it.

Chip East

I got to think about what the temperature is going to be and then make solar thermometers. We got publications on what the, the, the best. They'll give you a range of low to high where the soil temperature needs to be. And then all your garden centers, they sell solar thermometers that we can check.

Shane Harris

I think the bottom line is what are we going to do with it once it's successful? And the harvests come in? Do you need bushels and bushels of potatoes? Bushels and bushels of corn? What if you don't have the freezer space? You don't have the family. You're not going to can it. That's maybe you're going to give it away.

Shane Harris

Maybe you're going to sell it. And so, Dani, why do you think traditionally everybody's so geared up in the spring? We've got to plant the entire garden the entire plot. Why do people still are hesitant to do what we call succession planting?

Dani Carroll

I think it's because you just get it over with. You go out there and plant once and you're, you're done. That's, that's what I think the reason is. But I like the succession planting. And I also just kind of like to time things differently. Just be real. Take squash for instance, because you mentioned squash. Have you ever noticed how much water squash takes?

Dani Carroll

You know how in the heat of the summer. And it'll kind of deflate itself? Now, I know sometimes that's because the squash vine bores, but it really needs that water, so I like to get it in early. What it takes 55 days. So, after 75 days, you've had weeks of harvest and then get it on out of there and then wait till fall and plant it again.

Shane Harris

As you started to talk about why do succession or multiple plantings or at the end of the year, we don't have to put everything in the ground at the same time.

Dani Carroll

Nor does it want to be in the ground at the same time.

Shane Harris

But pest problems is definitely a reason to stagger it either early or later or heat. We got a lot of things that heat problems in the Deep South. When it comes to July and August, things just don't work.

Dani Carroll

Well, I say that the okra, Malabar spinach, sweet potatoes. Now, that stuff's leaving me in the squash. Not so much.

Chip East

I've planted corn a lot of different times over the years. And during the same season, plant several times, and I may plant six times a year, which is nothing compared to what farmers may do. But my worst planning is always the last planting, because the critters get it Dani more so raccoons and deer and that sort of thing.

Chip East

And why they don't, it's not a big deal in the summer. And I'm not saying they can't get it, but that last planting I've had it where they got more of the corn than I ever got.

Dani Carroll

So they've been watching you for years. They know that's their last chance.

Chip East

They know when to go harvest right.

Shane Harris

Review with us. Our calendar of seasons of we got cool season, we got warm season. Just go through with us when things should be planted, sort of in general and then go into more about what can be replanted, throughout the growing season.

Dani Carroll

It's funny in Alabama cause it's we, we always lump things in the cool season and warm season, but we also have that hot as heck season and that cold as mess season. Those two don't last. Well, the hot the hot season seems like it lasts the longest, but. So, I kind of break it down into those four. And really it depends on where you live in Alabama.

Dani Carroll

So, when we talk about those, we'll always like the asparagus, Irish potatoes. Those are going to be kind of your February thing. But when we talk about the cool season crops like your, your brassicas, your collards, your broccoli and all that good stuff, you know, fall is usually the better time for that type of cool season crop.

Dani Carroll

Just because we warm up so quickly. I mean, it's 80 degrees right now and it's what, March

7th or eight?

Shane Harris

March 11th.

Dani Carroll

March 11th. I was close

Shane Harris

We know we wear t shirts and shorts at Christmas a lot of times in the South.

Dani Carroll

That's right. So we do have to be a little, little cautious about those kind of things. But as we're going into into this season, this is like the really mixed season because when we talk about the cooler things like lettuce,

radishes, those are perfect right now, your cilantro for some of the other stuff, like the really hard core cool season crops, they're going to start bolting really, really quick in this hot weather.

Dani Carroll

So we're in that transition stage in mid-March where we're kind of getting rid of or cleaning, cleansing the garden of those, those crops we had planted last November. And we're going into those warmer season crops, the corn, the squash. To me, that's always the first things I think about because they like they can do cooler temperatures than some of the other vegetables.

Dani Carroll

And then we're going straight into, you know, whether you're doing bush beans or pole beans and the tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, all that good stuff. And then I'm going to the what I call the hottest mess crops that I'm going into planting okra, sweet potatoes, Madagascar spinach, some of the tropic things that we can grow here. And then just as soon as all that's getting ready, it's like into July and you're like, it's time to think about cool season stuff again.

Dani Carroll

But at the same time, July, I'm replanting tomatoes. August, I'm replanting squash.

Shane Harris

There are a lot of people that time of year. They're, they're starting to harvest and they're sort of getting tired of the garden. The excitement is sort of waned off a little bit.

Dani Carroll

It has. And I encourage people to keep going because it's a lot more fun to garden in winter than it is in the summer. It's a lot cooler.

Chip East

Dani, I've heard you talk before a lot, and I remember years ago my grandparents when like a lot of people did grow cotton and it was a big deal to who made the first bowl of cotton. That was a big deal. And a lot of people, a lot that with a tomato. Oh, I'm going to pick a tomato, I think in two days or three days or something like that. Dani, I've heard you talk. It's important. Who's got the last tomato or the last whatever.

Dani Carroll

Oh, yeah. Things gets, things start getting scarce. You know, when that heat comes in, man, which is. And I'm guilty of it myself, it's like, oh, it's just too hot. And then eventually weeds take over, diseases take over, insects take over because you're not watching it as much. But I mean, if you. This is why I like smaller gardens.

Dani Carroll

Now, because my gardens got bigger and bigger and I thought, I need more and bigger and bigger. And it got to a point that even my kid was like, no, no, ma'am, not another garden. And so we started scaling back and I'm like, I'm getting more than I did on the smaller garden because I'm taking care of it and I'm watching it.

Chip East

Manage what we have better

Dani Carroll

Manage it better than I could. The larger one. But yeah, if you if you really start taking care of those plants and then you think about what varieties you're going to do best at different times, and you're replanting like tomatoes in that July 4th, or even a little bit after having those fresh tomatoes for Thanksgiving.

Chip East

I think that's a big deal. Right?

Dani Carroll

And I really love it when those temperatures start coming down in the fall, like when we were used to those 90 fives and 92, when it starts getting into those low 80s and those the 60s at night, oh, those tomatoes and peppers in the fall just go nuts.

Chip East

Things start setting and fruit again. And they might of slacked off when in that high night-time temperatures. Yeah.

Dani Carroll

It's great time to garden.

Shane Harris

Let's go back to what you said about small gardening, small plots, maybe a raised bed or small area. You could have one to 1 or 2 tomatoes, a couple things of cabbage, 1 or 2 squash, or be an ideal arrangement, I guess, depending on what you like. We always recommend grow what you like. Don't grow something you don't like eating.

Dani Carroll

So, if I, if I were not going to put vegetables up which I do and I share but if I, if I were not going to do that the perfect amount for my family or my big family of two would probably be two tomato plants because you're going to use that to make sauce, whether you're canning them or not, you're still going to make a lot of different sauce and things like that.

Dani Carroll

And see, I'm going to be different from everybody else because I'm going to throw in, two eggplant because I love grilled eggplant peppers. Again, everybody's going to be different. I'm going to have four hot four hot peppers, a couple of bell peppers, some peppers to put on the smoker. I love a smoked stuffed pepper. I mean that's hard because everybody's going to be different.

Dani Carroll

As I talk. My garden keeps getting bigger and I got a parrot back down. But I mean, I can get by with, you know, when we think about something like okra, we think, oh, you got to have this huge patch. I could have ten okra plant and be just fine to have the okra for supper once or twice a week without having too much that I had to put up.

Chip East

Depending on the garden size, I always think corn and melons and sometimes peas and beans, but they take up a lot of space to me.

Dani Carroll

They do.

Chip East

Where tomatoes and squash and cucumber, like you say, peppers, okra. We can grow a lot of that on a smaller area.

Dani Carroll

We can. And in those smaller areas. I have started doing the bush beans. Now I'm not I'm not harvesting enough to put up in the bags and have, have beans for, Christmas dinner or anything, but I can go out there and grab, you know, at least once a week and I'll have 30 or 40 pods in my hand, and that's just perfect for a meal.

Chip East

I always like to say grow the things, too, that are the hardest to get fresh.

Dani Carroll

That's true. And for me, corn's not it. I don't have enough room for corn now. I love corn and I love when that, when the farmers around me, when their corn comes in and I can go buy from them. But I just don't have that kind of space.

Chip East

Nothing. I mean, there's a good crop. You just need the space if you're going to grow it. Always think about that. When we go and have tunnels and things with them, we can grow them. They just take up space.

Shane Harris

So, I would add watermelons, sweet potatoes, all those that run, those vining plants that take a lot of space. There's only so many watermelons you can eat it when, when sitting.

Dani Carroll

I like a good sugar baby watermelon.

Shane Harris

And a speaking of space and that's part of succession is take. Once it's finished, rip it out. Put something back.

Dani Carroll

Either rip it out, I like to I like to rip stuff out. And then I like to go in. Either I'm going to plant something directly behind it, or I'm just going to like say, okay, you rest for just a little bit and I might throw some buckwheat or something out just to make sure that soil is covered.

Dani Carroll

You get a lot of pollinators, you get a lot of beneficial insects that come in, and those guys are helping you with the pest insects on the other stuff, and it's just pretty. I mean, I really like to tell people 25% of the garden should be dedicated to a pest management that include beneficial plant.

Shane Harris

These concepts are a little bit odd for folks that from the traditional methods, because they want to plant everything at one time and it's done. It's done. What we're trying to suggest is people do succession planting mix and match throughout the year and extend that growing season. You don't have to plant the garden all at one time.

Dani Carroll

You don't.

Chip East

When that crop is done and we get it, I want to get it out. We're just harboring could be insects and disease, but I really think disease, we're harboring, so I want to get it out as soon as I can, whenever I think it's done and I'm through picking, that's something I would do as well.

Dani Carroll

It comes out and then that's when, when the goodie comes in.

Chip East

The something goes back in behind it. Right?

Dani Carroll

Flower zinnias. The buckwheat is a cover crop. Just something that that is good for the garden.

Chip East

We have a lot of information on the growing cover crops, and if it's vegetables, we're talking about all that on our website. And if you just go to your local extension office, they can provide all kind of information that'll help you in your gardening venture.

Shane Harris

Dani, we want to thank you for joining us here on *Southern Ground*. Our very first guest, Chip.

Chip East

Oh, so glad she joined us today.

Shane Harris

For our podcast. We thought this be a great topic. This is definitely your specialty area. We love hearing you do these talk on vegetable gardening. And again trying to educate people and change their concept, but thinking about planning our garden. Hey, if you want to plant the entire garden to spring, go ahead or I'll do it. That's your preference.

Shane Harris

We hope you have a bountiful harvest. Chip, another good *Southern Ground* podcast. We look forward to you all tuning in on future podcasts that we can address some of those topics and some of those issues you may have, questions about. Thank you, Dani, for being with us.

Dani Carroll

No, thank you all for letting me drop in.

Shane Harris

Chip. Glad to see you today.

Chip East

Thank y'all.

Shane Harris

For more information on how we can help you, you can reach out to the Alabama Corporate Extension System at [WWW dot ACES dot edu](http://WWW.ACES.edu) or contact your local Extension service so your land grant universities throughout other states. We appreciate you listening today. Thank you for everyone for tuning in to *Southern Ground*.

Announcer

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