

Flora & Fauna

Plan a Garden Swap Party

Just about every garden has one thing in common - over-abundance. Gardeners rarely plant "just the right amount" of anything. There always seems to be too much zucchini, more seeds than you can use next season, and way too many perennials. The solution? Host a garden swap party and share your over-abundance with friends!

Invitations

Send invitations out a few weeks in advance. An afternoon party is recommended so your gardening pals will have time in the morning to collect plants from their gardens. Be sure to suggest items for your friends to bring. Vegetables, seeds, bulbs, cuttings from hearty plants, pictures of their gardens and prized plants, books, magazines, or tools no longer being used are terrific things to share.

Menu

Serve delicious finger foods with a gardening theme. Flower-shaped cookie cutters can be used for more than just cookies. Use them on slices of different cheese varieties layered on crackers. Some carrots, celery, cucumbers, or tomatoes from your garden along with a delicious dip or two also make a terrific dish to share. Don't forget the iced tea and lemonade!

Supplies

Garden swap parties are working parties, so the hostess should have extra trowels, potting soil, and plenty of small, inexpensive containers available. Guests will also need a way of taking goodies home, so be sure to have a few bags or boxes on hand for guests to use.

Swap Station

Set out a table where your guests can display their favorite plants and seeds. Have some index cards and pens available so your guests can label each plant and list the care instructions along with any other information the new owner should know. Be sure to have some paper towels, plastic bags, and a bucket of water handy for wrapping up cuttings and delicate roots. Seed envelopes are also a must.

Share Stories

The best part about a garden swap party isn't the bounty you come home with, it's the bounty of information you share with friends. What did you learn this year? What funny stories do you have to share? What are your plans for next year?

Make Plans for Next Year

Before the party is over, ask who wants to host next year's party. Before you know it, your garden swap party will be an annual tradition you and your friends will look forward to every year.

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Cleaning Corner:

Five Tips for Caring for Your Broom

Tip 1: Some moisture is good for a corn broom. Periodically sweeping dewy grass – or rain or snow off steps – will clean the fibers and keep them supple.

Tip 2: To maintain the shape of your broom, hang it on a wall or store it upside down.

Tip 3: If the bristles become splayed, submerge them in warm water for 30 seconds. Then wrap a rubber band around the bottom and hang the broom for a day or two. When you remove the band, the bristles' form will be restored.

Tip 4: Add a rubber tip, such as a cane tip, to the handle of the broomstick. It will protect your walls from marks and help keep the broom in place between sweeps.

Tip 5: Clean the bristles by running them over a stiff edge, such as a deck stair or a front stoop.

July

- 1859 *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens is published
- 1923 Harding becomes first sitting president to visit Alaska
- 1940 The animated short "A Wild Hare" is released, introducing the character of Bugs Bunny
- 1962 The first transatlantic satellite television transmission
- 1971 Nabisco introduces the "Pop Tart"
- 1977 John Lennon is granted a green card for permanent residence in the U.S.
- 1977 The Medal of Freedom is awarded posthumously to Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.
- 1996 The smash hit song "Wannabe" by the Spice Girls is released in the UK, becoming the biggest selling single by an all-female group

Health Advice: Take Care of Your Bones

Bones play many roles in the body. They provide structure, protect organs, anchor muscles, and store calcium. With such an important role in our overall health, it makes sense to do our best to keep our bones as healthy and strong as possible. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Get plenty of calcium and vitamin D.** The organization known as American Bone Health recommends that you get 1,500 milligrams of calcium and 800 international units (IUs) of vitamin D on a daily basis.
Calcium is a mineral that helps build strong bones and teeth. While you need calcium throughout your life, the amount you need changes over time. Calcium is critical for kids during their growing years to build strong bones, a bit less is required during the middle years to keep bones strong, and much more calcium is needed later in life to prevent bone loss.
Vitamin D is critical for bone health because it helps the intestines absorb calcium – a major building block for bone. You can get vitamin D through sun exposure (our skin has a unique way of transforming ultraviolet rays to a precursor form of vitamin D), or by taking supplements or eating foods enriched with vitamin D.
- **Exercise regularly.** The best thing you can do to strengthen weak bones is to lift weights and exercise regularly. Bones are living tissue. Weight-bearing physical activity causes new bone tissue to form, which makes bones (and muscles) stronger. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) recommend a cumulative 30 minutes of exercise per day to improve cardiovascular health.
- **Quit smoking and cut back on the alcohol.** Smoking is a major risk factor for osteoporosis, a condition that makes bones brittle and prone to breaking. The quickest way to reduce your risk and improve bone health is to stop smoking and, if you drink, to do so moderately.
- **Get screened.** A bone mineral density (BMD) test measures bone density at various sites of the body. This safe and painless test can detect osteoporosis before a fracture occurs and can predict one's chances of fracturing in the future. A BMD is recommended for men ages 50 or older and postmenopausal women ages 50 or older. But it's best to talk to your doctor about your risk factors to see when or if a BMD would be beneficial.

Kid Corner: Talking to Your Kids about Not Smoking

Every day in the U.S., more than 3,000 kids under 18 make the mistake of "trying just one" cigarette. Many are barely in their teens. Nearly half of them will develop a long-term habit, and a third will die of tobacco-related diseases. It's important for all parents to talk to their kids early and often about not smoking.

Why "Just One" is One Too Many

It doesn't take much for adolescents to get addicted to tobacco – it can happen after just one cigarette. "Kids are more vulnerable because the brain is still developing and can rewire itself more quickly to crave nicotine," says Joseph DiFranza, M.D., professor of family medicine and community health at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester. His research indicates that roughly half of teens get hooked by the time they've smoked as few as 10 cigarettes.

The Effects on a Young Person's Body

Teen smokers find themselves short of breath three times more often than non-smokers. Higher rates of coughing, headaches, and flu make them twice as likely to feel in poor overall health. And, it takes longer to get well when you're sick and longer to heal when you're injured. Prolonged smoking leads to cancer, heart disease, fertility problems, and even osteoporosis.

Learn the Warning Signs

- **Odors** – Cigarettes leave a noticeable odor on clothes, hair, and skin. If your child claims the smell comes from other smokers, check his pockets, backpack, and room for matches or a lighter.
- **Suspicious Behaviors** – Suspicious behaviors include making frequent excuses to go outside, leaving bedroom windows open, and using lots of mouthwash, mints, or gum.

Voice Your Concerns – Calmly

Raise the subject when you're doing something together, such as watching TV or riding in the car. Start by saying, "I'm worried that you may be smoking." If your child denies it, don't push. He'll push back or shut down completely. Instead, tell him you're worried about his health and let him know you're always willing to talk and only want him to be healthy. Most teens who smoke say they want to stop, but don't know how. By calmly discussing your concerns, your teen will find it easier to ask for help.

Helpful Resources:

- www.teenquit.com – Teen Quit
- www.tobaccofreekids.org – Tobacco Free Kids
- www.lungusa.org – The American Lung Association

This simple recipe makes the perfect side dish to just about any meal, but you may find yourself so in love with the flavor and textures, you'll hardly save room for anything else!

Serves 1-2

Ingredients:

- 1 lb fresh asparagus
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Grated parmesan cheese
- Salt and pepper to taste
-

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Trim asparagus, snapping off tough ends.
2. Drizzle 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a baking dish. Spread the asparagus evenly in a single layer. Drizzle the remaining tablespoon of oil over the asparagus. Sprinkle with salt and freshly ground black pepper.
3. Roast for 5 minutes for crisp-tender asparagus. Roast 8 minutes for softer asparagus.
4. Transfer asparagus to a serving dish. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese; serve immediately.

Asparagus Facts

Asparagus has been enjoyed by the ancient Romans, Greeks, and Egyptians as far back as the first century. These graceful spears have always been a sign of elegance, and in times past, were a delicacy only the wealthy could afford.

Asparagus is very nutritious. Low in sodium, high in potassium, it has no fat or cholesterol. It is rich in thiamin, Vitamin C, Vitamin A, and it is an excellent source of folic acid. One-half cup of cooked asparagus contains a mere 24 calories, but supplies a lot of fiber. It is also a source of rutin and vitamin B6.

Organization Tips for Busy Moms

Keeping things organized in a busy household can be stressful and, at times, seem more difficult than putting a man on the moon. But with the following few tips and tricks, you'll discover that getting and staying organized is a lot easier than you once thought!

Assign a color. How many times have you asked one of your kids to pick something up only to get the reply, "It's not mine!" Put an end to that argument by color-coding your children's gear. All of little Johnny's things – his toothbrush, bath towel, and his back pack – are similar shades of green. Little Susie's things are all purple, Charlie's things are yellow, and so on and so forth. Buy a colored bin for each child to use as a handy drop spot for stray toys and clothes, too. Each night before bed, have your kids empty their own bin, returning items to their rightful places.

Hang it up. Install bathrobe hooks in your mudroom and/or laundry room. It will make it much easier for your kids to store their coats in the winter and their swimsuits and beach towels in the summer. Be sure to follow the tip above and color-code the hooks for each child!

Build a Household Notebook. Purchase a three-ring binder, a three-hole punch, and some divider tabs. Label them with categories such as Contacts, Food, Activities, Chores, Important Dates, Gifts, etc. The stock it with class phone lists, school lunch schedules, etc. Did you stumble across something in a catalog that might make a good gift for someone? Cut it out, tape it to a piece of paper, three-hole punch it, and put it in the binder. When the time comes for Christmas and birthday shopping, you'll have a list of ideas at your fingertips. For some downloadable forms, like a weekly chore sheet or a menu planner, visit TheProjectGirl.com and click on "free downloads."

Bag it up! Keep small, easy-to-lose items (craft supplies, game pieces, small toys, etc.) from getting lost by putting them into sandwich baggies or zippered mesh bags. Don't use solid cloth bags; the idea is to be able to see what's inside so there's no guessing later. Put these items in a bin in the closet or hang them on a hook in an accessible spot. It should help reduce the number of times you hear, "Mom, I can't find...!"

... Carpet Talk... Control Carpet Odors

Carpet is a wonderful addition to the comfort and appearance of your home, but if not cared for properly, it can attract dirt and odor like a magnet. Here are some things you can do at home to keep odor under control.

Mold/Mildew Odors. If you notice a musty smell from your carpet, you might have a mold or mildew problem. This is especially the case if your carpet is in a humid environment or was wet for an extended period. The best course of action is to call your professional carpet cleaner. He or she will have the proper chemicals to treat the problem, or will be able to advise you if it is necessary to replace the carpet for your family's health and safety.

Smoke Odors. First, if someone is smoking inside the house, encourage him or her to smoke outside. You cannot keep your carpet deodorized if someone keeps blowing smoke in your home. For occasional smoke odor, shake a bit of baking soda onto the carpet. With a corn straw broom, brush the baking soda into the nap of the carpeting to make sure it gets into the fibers. Leave it overnight. In the morning, give the carpet a thorough vacuuming, going over it several times to pick up as much of the baking soda as possible.

Pet Odors. Part of being a pet owner is cleaning up occasional vomit or urine stains on the carpet. Sometimes, however, we can't get to these little accidents fast enough and big odor problems result. You can use the baking soda method described above to remove some of the odor. If it persists, contact your carpet care professional.

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