

Down to Earth

By Anne Haehl

Is this your first year with a bit of ground for a garden? Or have you made some attempts to garden before, and had little return for your efforts? If you're strictly in the beginner class, this article is for you.

One note, first. Some of us are discouraged by the idea of the "green thumb". I thought some people could just make plants grow, and I couldn't. Or our more mystical friends may talk to plants or claim to really, deeply understand them. While there may be some truth to these ideas, if someone gets a better harvest than you, he probably knew better what that plant needed, and more conscientiously provided it.



With courage, then, proceed to get information for your garden. Three sources make a good start: seed catalogues, the county extension, and a book setting out the Ruth Stout system.

Seed catalogues are advertised in all types of magazines. If you have any trouble finding them, check a gardening magazine or pg. 56, *WHOLE EARTH CATALOGUE*. Not only do they offer a chance to compare price and qualities of seed varieties, but they offer essays on topics such as double-cropping and wide-row planting.

The second main source of information is the Douglas County Extension. They will send materials if you call, but I'd really recommend you make a trip

there (2210 Harper) to look over the wealth of pamphlets available. Be sure to get "Recommended Vegetable Varieties for Kansas" and "Kansas Garden Guide". Note that planting hearty varieties will help avoid the need for insect sprays. If you have problems later, the extension agents are most willing to help.

Finally, I recommend getting one of the books by Ruth Stout, such as the *NO-WORK GARDEN BOOK*, Bantam, 1971. This marvelous, no-nonsense New England woman tells you how a heavy, year-round mulch will help you avoid the expense and danger of poisons, save water and weeding, and eliminate roto-tilling.

Now, armed with all this information, and drooling over the beautiful pictures, you can plan your garden. You need two plans--one for space, and one for time. For the space plan, sketch the area(s) where you might plant your vegetables. Be sure to include trees and fences or buildings that will shade the garden. You might scratch down some notes about soil and drainage if you have a large area. (Incidentally, the extension can arrange soil tests, too.) You may well want more than one spot--for example, tomatoes in full sun to get a good start, a few plants by the house to bear through the hot summer.

Plan your time on a big calendar, considering your other commitments as well. It is very important to consider harvest times as well as planting times, or you may find, like me, that the beans dried out before they were noticed. Seed packets will list how many days it takes plants to reach maturity, and it's easy to count off from the time you expect to plant. Some dates will need to be estimated and later adjusted, depending on the exact date of the last freeze and so forth. (The extension column in the newspaper lists such useful facts.) Remember to list 2nd or 3rd crop plantings.



The final stage of preparation is to buy your materials. Of course, you have your seed catalogues, but you'll probably want to get live plants from a local nursery. I've found them knowledgeable and anxious to help. Remember, the nursery

and the seed companies have a stake in your success. Their reputation depends on it. Anyway, why should you just get seeds when you can get seeds plus information? Good luck and good harvest!

Gardening for your Health

Do it Walter's Way!

By Walter Babbit

Growing a garden can be a healthful pursuit. In the last five years more people have taken up gardening than ever before.

They have watched their neighbors save money by eating vegetables out of a garden in their own backyard. Not only do you save money, but one gets valuable experience that could save on doctor and hospital bills.

Things to do this month:

- 1) Transplant asparagus plants.
- 2) Buy tomato plants and put in garden soon as it is warm.

- 3) Plant seeds of vegetables such as peas, potatoes, onions, carrots, beets, and lettuce.

Why should you have a garden?

- 1) Save money
- 2) Will force you to exercise a little more.
- 3) Be good for your health.
- 4) You will have fresh vegetables to eat, and not depend on shipped in vegetables.
- 5) You will have better nutrition.

PLANT A GARDEN IN 1978!!!!!!!!!!!!

"Grab A Spoon And A Lb. Of Butter"

By Susie Hanna

James Dresser likes to work with his hands. You can see the years of hammering, hoeing, digging, carrying and tinkering in his large, strong hands. Dresser's passion for "puttering" is written all over his North Lawrence home. Gardening magazines covered the living room.

Cacti, tropical plants, tomato plants, spring seedlings, tulips and houseplants of all kinds are growing in brick planter boxes, which Dresser built, toward the large sunny picture windows on the north and south walls of the family room. Dominating the room is a large, round, fireplace which Dresser and his son built from bricks, using an old airplane tail pipe for the chimney.

In the garage and the basement is an incredible collection of old motors, parts, scrap metal, boxes, refrigerators, washers, and other old appliances which have been pushed out for the arrival of newer, more modern replacements. "Of course, I can't throw anything away," Dresser explains. "It might come in handy some time."

But Dresser's main interest lies outdoors in the rich North Lawrence soil where he annually plants a garden on an acre of ground.

As a child growing up on a farm south of Lansing, he learned about gardening by watching his



mother. Irish potatoes, their staple crop, took up an acre of their huge garden plot.

"We ate a lot of potatoes," he chuckled.

Dresser and his wife lived in East Lawrence from 1926 until 10 years ago when they moved to North Lawrence. But the good, river-bottom soil of North Lawrence had attracted the Dressers long before they moved. They've

been gardening north of the river for 30 years.

"To appreciate North Lawrence, well you have to understand it," Dresser explained. "North Lawrence kind of has a bad image, you know, like East Lawrence. But this North Lawrence soil, its partly sand, it'll grow anything."

Dresser keeps several hundred pounds of potatoes in a root cellar in his basement through the winter both for table use and for spring seedlings. Although Dresser sells some of his produce locally, most of the vegetables and fruit they grow is used by the family. They can it, freeze it and even press it.

Dresser is particularly proud of the apple cider press he built. Every week in the fall on what they call "Cider Sunday" the Dressers sell their freshly pressed apple cider. What they don't sell in the fall is stored in wooden barrels in the basement.

Dresser is still learning about gardening. He's attending weekly County Extension classes on gardening. He's an avid reader of seed catalogs, gardening magazines, and books. And, he's always ready to try a new method.

"I've been finding out that I've been doing some things wrong for over 20 years," he said. "There's always new things to learn."

The Dressers grow a wide variety of vegetables along with fruit trees, berries and flowers. But Dresser's speciality is the sweet potato. He's been growing them for 20 years.



Dresser says he grows sweet potatoes because they're fun. The fun is in the comparison, he says. "We had a four and half pound sweet potato this summer and I told a fellow about it that lives here north of town and he shut me up real quick. He said he had one laying out that weighed six pounds! So I quit braggin' about it there."

Sweet potatoes are also fun to eat. With at least 20 years of experience behind him, Dresser has concluded that the baked potato is the best.

"The best way to eat a sweet potato is to get yourself a pound of butter or oleo and a sweet potato baked. Break it in two and get a spoon and start eatin'."