



The Gardeners' Club
Santa Cruz County,
California
MAY 2020
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IS SOCIAL DISTANCING A NATURAL THING FOR GARDENERS?

By Elizabeth Licata



A better term is “physical distancing,” which is literally what I have to do when I am working in the front garden and anyone walks by. Rather than tread on soil soggy from April rains, I retreat down the walkway as it’s the only way to put enough feet between me and the sidewalk. Otherwise, nothing stops me from my usual spring chores. Garden centers are open, many deliver, and working outside on my own property seems safe enough.

The usual conclusion is that gardening offers a satisfying outlet in these days of uncertainty and fear. I even wrote a column that started, “If you’re a gardener, this is your time.” It’s true, as far as it goes. But then I realize how social the gardening world really is. One good barometer is our Facebook gardening group, which is receiving dozens of requests to join on a daily basis. I think this is as much about people reaching out from isolation as it is about people wanting to start gardening.

Is it really completely satisfying to watch spring perennials and bulbs burst into color and bloom with nobody else to see it? To a certain degree, it’s nice, but then you want to share it somehow. We’re all doing that on social media, but nothing compares with the humblebrag walk along the perennial border with a friend, making sure to point out the problems, not the triumphs. This is so universal, it appears in just about any novel that has gardener characters in it. Even those in rural isolation find ways to share.

That’s why I have all digits crossed that our midsummer garden

walks will emerge intact as COVID-19 begins to wane. I have to be realistic and think it must be 50-50 best, and, if these events do survive, they will be very different. Everything will be very different.

I would like to show somebody my hellebores.

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THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

By Lise Bixler

Speaking of hellebores....



The Good: My hellebores are happy. So happy many of the mature ones are having babies—many, many babies. I will wait until they are a little larger to pot them up. I look forward to the day, whenever it comes, when I can share them with all of you at the plant table!

The Bad: This is a tale of patience. Over 15 years ago I fell in love with a climbing hydrangea at the Japanese Garden in Portland, Oregon. I had to have it. The one I lusted for was not *Hydrangea petiolaris*, but a relative, *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*, native to Japan and China. “Slow to establish, sometimes as long as 7 years” they say, but mine has waited twice as long to develop enough vigor to climb a fence. But the snails don’t care. They have been mercilessly devouring it. (cont’d.)



(Continued from page 1)



Thank goodness for my chickens. If I remember to go out in the morning and collect the snails, the hens are very happy to have them for brunch. I just ordered more Sluggo.

The Ugly: My mother was extremely proud of the dining room table I inherited from her, and would be quite dismayed to see how I'm mistreating it. It was too cold to start seeds in the garage, so I sacrificed the table. It is large enough for two long grow lights.



As usual, I had mixed results with seed starting. I enrolled in the Joe Lamp'l seed starting course but never finished watching it. I did learn from it that is important not to start your seeds too early—of course, I had already started mine long before I watched that episode. I experimented with self-watering seedling starters and pots. They work if you don't forget to fill the reservoirs. Or put them outside to harden off and then don't have enough time to get them into the ground. The biggest success I had was with bronze-colored snapdragon seeds from Floret—I have many, and we'll see how they do this summer.



What is good, bad, ugly or beautiful in YOUR garden? Share, and we'll put it in the next newsletter.

(...most of the time...)

LOVE LETTER TO A GARDEN

By Jessica Tunis

I came home late from working at the store today; it was already dark when I got in, and the night was gentle and cool. I didn't go in right away, though I was ready for dinner and a shower. I walked instead through the garden, the mulched paths soft underfoot, sensing the moisture of well-watered soil, and the dim shapes of familiar plants defined against the pale straw mulch. In the new moon evening, the pea flowers gleamed whitely at the top of their stems, and the densely planted patch of Russian kale foliage looked so elegant, all silver and ferny in the moonlight. Even the mismatched assortment of trellis and bean sticks and tomato cages looked beautiful in that half-darkness. I didn't need to harvest anything, and there was no real reason to drift once more through the garden before the nighttime rituals. No real reason but love.



I wish for everyone the kind of love that I feel for my garden. I don't go a day without telling her that I love her, and I often kiss a stray leaf or flower that might chance to brush my face. I feel that this relationship is entirely mutual; I feel loved in return, provided for, even appreciated. I am proud of my garden, and she is generous with me, despite poor soil and a tall hill of redwoods that blocks the last few hours of sun. The garden encourages sharing with easy generosity; abundance as a mindset, and a full harvest basket. But our relationship is not all walks in the moonlight and tender kisses. There's sweat in that garden, and blood from torn knuckles, and stiff back muscles, and most recently a bruised shin from where the wheelbarrow fell over onto it while full of compost. I've shed tears in that garden, flung myself on her earth over and over, worked out my sorrows and frustrations with a ruthless weeding. I like to take my morning coffee out and sit in the garden whenever I can, just smelling the day and listening to the birds begin their racket. And I like to end the day in the garden, that little walk before bed, as though like a child I require reassurance that she will still be there when I get up in the morning. We have a relationship, is what I'm saying.

Gardening is about relationships; between garden and gardener, yes, but also the relationships between plants and plant families,

(Continued on page 3)

the way that different species interact with each other, and with soil and compost and water. It's a web of connected relationships, not all of them moon-kissed and dewy; migratory birds are deadly to young seedlings, and woodrats once ate

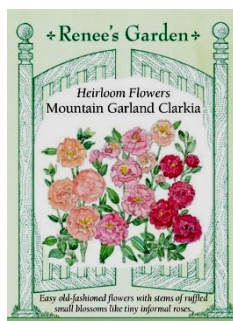


Every. Single. Zucchini that I planted, one hot, dry summer. There are gophers to contend with, and weeds, and wire-worms, and sowbugs and banana slugs and spider mites and aphids and plagues of

grasshoppers. There are chance seedlings that might be a prized heirloom or a waste of space. There's friendly fire, too; the native clarkia wildflowers that I planted on the steep slope above the garden all flung seed down into the flat, rich soil where I like to grow peppers; I had several lovely Jimmy Nardello plants last year that never got as big as they should have because they were half-buried in a mass of blooming clarkia that I had no heart to pull out. This year I got wise, though, and dug up all the little clarkia seedlings when they were small enough to transplant, and moved them somewhere less troublesome. A garden, like a relationship, is a work in process, and not a fixed destination.

So everyone's a gardener now. The amount of seeds and starts flying out of the store is mind-boggling. But it makes sense. Some gardens are being built as a way to make use of so much time at home, and others are rooted in reaction to worries about food security. Others, like my own, have been there for years, but this time at home has enabled me to expand and invest labor that I might otherwise have spent working outside the home; I've added at least a third of newly usable space to the vegetable garden this year. We see so many people taking solace in the act of gardening right now, and it warms our collective heart. Gardening is a connection, to the natural resources of soil and water, and to the great and tiny cycles of life that are spinning all around us. We are all about it.

But gardening can also be mystifying, frustrating, confusing, or overwhelming. It is a learned skill, and new successes and failures, weather and pest pressures make every year different from the next. If you haven't spent your years digging in the soil and tending lettuce in a balmy spring heatwave, the learning curve may feel steep and sharp. While success is always more fun than failure, there is a lot to be learned from flailing around and trying new things. Gardening, more than anything else, is about paying attention. It is about observation before action. I would even call it a kind of listening, though I do not mean listening that we do with the ears. But plants are communicating all the time. We may not know all of the information that is passed from root-tip to mycelium beneath the soil, but we can see the plant on the surface, and interpret a lot of what it needs from that. If you see your plants wilting, you should know that wilt causes stress to the plant. Every time a plant wilts, it is damaged and has to recover from the wilt. But you can't water in the blazing heat of midday, because water burnsthe leaves



like tiny magnifying glasses in the sun. So how to keep moisture in? Well, mulch is a tremendous help. Whether it is a mulch of wood chips or rice hulls, or straw or even pulled weeds, a layer of protection between earth and sun will help keep the plants from wilting. And compost added to the soil will help it retain water like a sponge so that the roots can access it even in the heat of midday. Even the simple act of watering, when we pay attention, leads us from plant leaves to sun to mulch and to soil.

Why didn't the squash seeds come up? Are the seeds still there? Dig down and look for one. You might find a gopher tunnel that traces the line of careful seeding, or notice a flock of beautiful spotted towhees that hop through the garden every morning. It's OK not to know all of this right away. Even lifelong gardeners get flummoxed sometimes, or forget that we knew something! But at every stage in your gardeners' existence, paying attention to cause and effect will serve you better than a dozen gardening books. What we love, we understand, we grow to share its nature.

So here is a love note to my garden, my dear friend and provider, who challenges and delights me in every season. And here is one for all the gardeners out there, the new ones and the ones with callouses from all the pruning. Keep growing! Keep trying new things. Learn what you love, and what grows well in your care. Share the bounty, watch the seasons. The garden will give back to you whatever you put in it, and more.



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www.mountainfeed.com (831) 336-8876

Ed. Note: Jessica's letter first appeared in an e-newsletter from Mountain Feed and Farm Supply. If you don't subscribe, I encourage you to do so. It is full of tips, and great recipes. Got to their website to get the recipe for Rhubarb Jam with Rose Geranium and Raspberry Vinegar—how can you resist?



<https://www.mountainfeed.com/blogs/learn/156285255-rhubarb-jam-w-rose-geranium-raspberry-vinegar?>

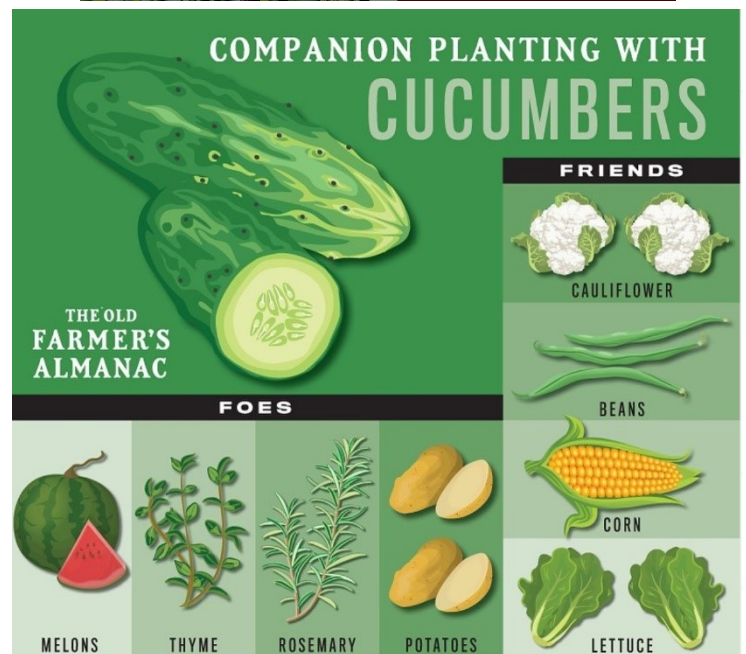
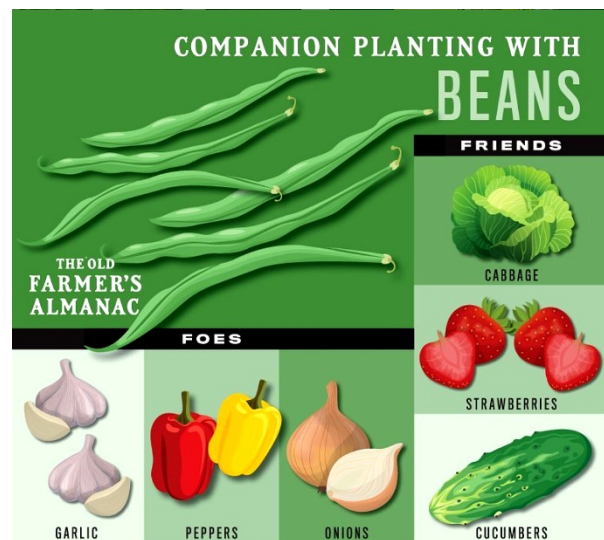
Their nursery is open—they only let a few people in at a time, but you CAN shop. Or you can shop online and do curbside pickup.



"*Fresh Made Simple* is organized by texture — think smooth, smashed, and tossed instead of breakfast, lunch, and dinner — and filled with vibrant sketches and easy recipes. You'll almost taste the food, the love, as you turn each page."

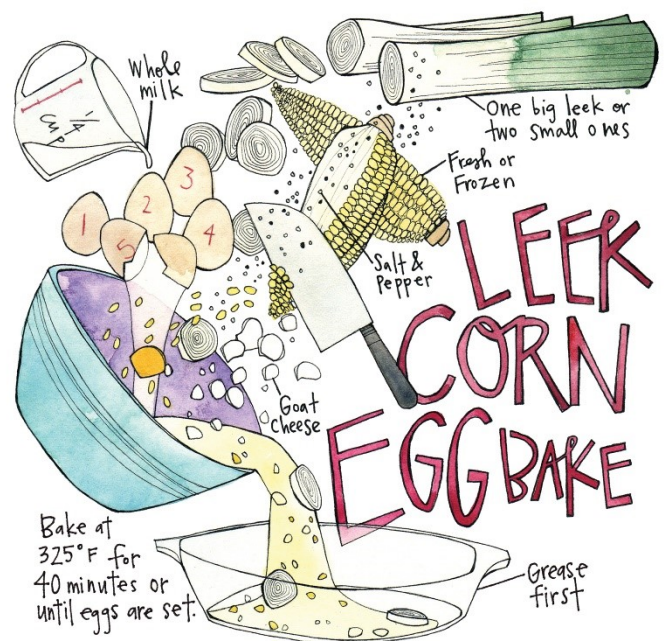
— Beth Hillson, food editor, *Gluten Free & More*;
author, *Gluten-Free Makeovers*

Recipe from *Fresh Made Simple*:



LEEK

The dark green tops look cute sticking out of your market bags, but stick to the white & light green parts for this egg bake.



Thank you, Mary Gonzalez, for sharing this article from



BENEFITS OF CINNAMON ON PLANTS

Gardening Tips and Information for Using Cinnamon For Pests, Cuttings and Fungicide — By Anne Baley

Cinnamon is a wonderful flavor addition to cookies, cakes and any number of other foods, but to gardeners, it's so much more. This versatile spice can be used to help root cuttings, to prevent fungus from killing small seedlings and even for keeping pests away from your home. Once you learn how to use cinnamon powder for plant health, you'll think twice about grabbing harsh chemicals for your gardening needs.

If you have a problem with ants in your home or greenhouse, cinnamon is a good deterrent. Ants don't like to walk where cinnamon powder lays, so summer ant problems will be decreased. Use cinnamon for pests inside and outside your house. Find their entryway and sprinkle cinnamon powder in the path to help keep them from coming inside.

Cinnamon as a rooting agent is as useful as willow water or hormone rooting powder. A single application to the stem when you plant the cutting will stimulate root growth in almost every plant variety. Pour a spoonful onto a paper towel and roll damp stem ends in the cinnamon. Plant the stems in fresh potting soil. The cinnamon will encourage the stem to produce more stems, while helping to prevent the fungus that causes damping-off disease.

Damping off disease is a fungus-based problem that hits small seedlings just as they begin to grow. Cinnamon will help prevent this problem by killing the fungus. It also works with other fungal problems exhibited on older plants, such as slime mold and with deterring mushrooms in planters. Take advantage of cinnamon fungicide control by making a cinnamon spray for plants. Stir some cinnamon into warm water and allow it to steep overnight. Strain the liquid through a coffee filter and put the results into a spray bottle. Spray the stems and leave of affected plants, and mist the potting soil in plants that have a mushroom problem.



MESSAGE FROM CASFS

"The campus decision to close the CASFS Farm and Alan Chadwick Garden during the pandemic has been especially hard because we know what important places these are for inspiration and learning. With planting suspended at the Farm & Garden, CASFS has donated its seedlings to other non-profit farms, including the Homeless Garden Project and Pie Ranch, whose members will reap the benefits. CASFS has also continued to make some great Farm & Garden style learning available online for free, with a new article full of spring gardening tips, online gardening tip sheets and grower guides, instructional videos, and more at casfs.ucsc.edu."

It is amazing what you can find on their site. If you've ever wanted to take one of their fruit tree pruning classes and haven't had the time, you can watch one online. Their YouTube channel is https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdNOdHei9NV0PifB4KVrbGy0ZkDzq_C6c.



Fruit Tree Pruning with Orin Martin

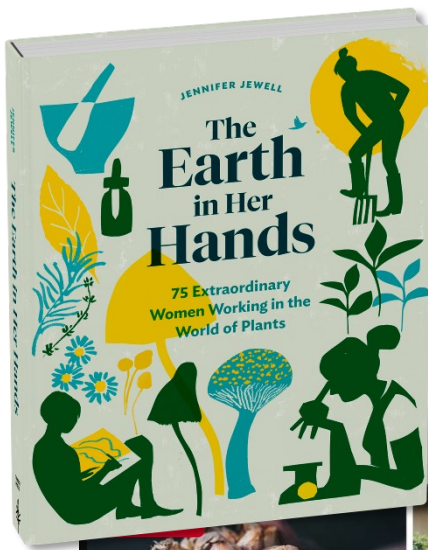


For more info, go to <https://www.growbetterveggies.com/>

Love Apple was out of stock on a bunch of things, but recently got in quite an assortment of new tomato varieties and peppers, as well as other fun veggies and herbs. Click here <https://www.growbetterveggies.com/files/yellow-sheet---order-form-variety-list-5.4.20---sheet1.pdf> to look at their current availability sheet. Feel free to walk in any day between the hours of 2 and 5. All other hours, please pre-order. Pick-up is at their retail location, behind Ivy's Porch, located at 5311 Scotts Valley Drive in Scotts Valley.

They are continuing to hold their small group classes. Upcoming May classes are:

Designing the Perfect Vegetable Garden - May 16 (\$59); Compost, Vermiculture & Soil Fertility - May 17 (\$59); Beginning Cheese Making - May 17 (\$99); Drip Irrigation Simplified - May 24 (\$69); Summer Vegetable Gardening - May 30 (\$79)



Sorry not to have gotten the word out to you about this book before Mother's Day—it would have made the perfect gift! In this beautiful and empowering book, Jennifer Jewell—host of public radio's award-winning program and podcast *Cultivating Place*—introduces 75 inspiring women. Working in wide-reaching fields that include botany, floral design, landscape architecture, farming, herbalism, and food justice, these influencers are creating change from the ground up. Profiled women include flower farmer Erin Benzakein; codirector of Soul Fire Farm Leah Penniman; plantswoman Flora Grubb; edible and cultural landscape designer Leslie Bennett; Caribbean-American writer and gardener Jamaica Kincaid; soil scientist Elaine Ingham; landscape designer Ariella Chezar; floral designer Amy Merrick, and many more. Rich with personal stories and insights, Jewell's portraits reveal a devotion that transcends age, locale, and background, reminding us of the profound role of green growing things in our world—and our lives.



May Gardening

Plant more lettuce, spinach, arugula and peas while the soil is still cool enough.

Divide phlox, coreopsis, coral bells. Pinch back Sedum Autumn Joy, asters and mums.

Beef up borders with perennials before the soil warms too much. Cooler soil encourages healthy roots.

Thin leafy greens so plants have plenty of room – about two inches apart is just right.

Loosen roots of annuals crammed into cell packs so they spread out and grow strong.

Sow seeds of corn, squash, carrots and cucumbers. Sow bush beans 2 inches apart. Pole beans need a foot between plants – and a trellis to climb

Snip off faded daffodil flowers. But remember to let the foliage stay to feed the bulb.

Feel the heat. It's the "safe planting date" for heat-lovers like eggplants and petunias. And, it is tomato time! Support or cage tomato plants early.

Loosen or remove stakes from trees planted in winter.

Deadhead and groom geraniums for longer flowering.

Nature doesn't encourage bare soil and neither should we. For shrubs, trees and ground covers, use at least 1" of compost and 3" of shredded native tree trimmings or shredded hardwood bark. Mulch vegetable gardens with 8" of partially completed compost or straw. Mulch preserves moisture, eliminates weeds and keeps the soil surface cooler which benefits earthworms, microorganisms and plant roots.



Message from Cabrillo Horticulture

"Hello Plant Lovers! Please excuse the tardiness of this announcement. The Shelter in Place order really disrupted our Mother's Day Plant Sale preparation.

The fantastic staff at Hort Hill has put together an online store for you to shop from home and pickup curbside at the Cabrillo Horticulture Department parking lot. Please check back on the website periodically as we will be continually adding more plants to the inventory. You can access the store at <https://cabrillo-horticulture-department.myshopify.com/>. We are currently planning for online orders to be picked up curbside on every Tuesday from 11-2 until all plants are sold. Thank you all very much for your continued support of the 42nd annual Plant Sale (online)."



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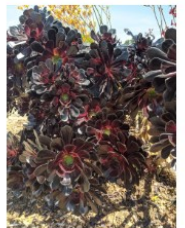
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*To know someone here or there
with whom there is understanding
in spite of distances or thoughts unexpressed,
that can make of this world
a garden* ~ GOETHE



Gardener



Gardener

Social Distancing



Gardener

During Quarantine



Gardener

After Quarantine

Thank you, Nikolara, for sharing this!

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