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Time to Get Picking!

Dear Homegrown Gardeners,

It's payoff time! We have entered into the period I like to call the "summer glut" — the time of year when you can be generous with your harvest, when family and friends start showing up at your door, ready to munch on some homegrown goodness!

As we hunt for our fresh veggies, we need to keep in mind that all of our plants need individualized attention to ensure that we are harvesting at the height of freshness. If you are like me, you come out a few days too late to find that your beans are too tough to eat, or that your zucchinis have turned into monsters!

In this issue, we will explore harvesting techniques to help you procure perfect produce.

We are so excited to report that we have hit our goal of installing over 200 gardens in Homewood, and that we hit a new record for class attendance in July! Thank you all again for your participation and for spreading the word! I also would like to announce that in October, we will team up with 412 Food Rescue and the YMCA to offer free cooking classes. We will be sending details in the mail, so keep an eye out and respond quickly. Slots fill up fast!

As always, we love to hear from you with questions and comments, so don't be shy — we are here to help out in any way we can. We hope to see everyone soon and we will be in touch.

Happy harvesting!



inside

Boost your health with **tasty eggplants**

Learn the tips and tricks **for the perfect harvest**

Try this healthy and quick **eggplant chips recipe**

Meet this issue's remarkable **Homegrown Hero**

Select photos © Adam Milliron

For Your Health

Eggplants are a delicious and nutritious food to add to your diet. Learn more about these power plants!

Digestion – Eggplant is high in fiber, which helps your body to absorb nutrients. Fiber tells your gut to secrete gastric juices that break down food. As an added bonus, fiber has also been linked to heart health. It helps



to remove bad cholesterol from your blood — the cholesterol that can build up and cause stroke and heart failure.

Managing Diabetes – Since eggplant is high in fiber and low in carbs, it fills you up without causing crazy spikes in blood sugar. This makes it a great option for anyone who suffers from diabetes. It is also a great, low-carb option for anyone who wants to manage their waistline!

Brain Health – Eggplants are brain food! Phytonutrients (a fancy word for compounds found in plants) are often what give veggies their bright colors.

These nutrients can help to promote blood flow to your brain, keeping neural pathways strong and your mind sharp and focused.

Note: Eggplants have great health benefits, but these can easily be counteracted if you choose to fry them. Eggplants will absorb a lot of the fat from frying, overriding some of the health benefits of low cholesterol. Instead, try baking, grilling or boiling eggplants to use in stews, stir-frys, dips or pasta dishes!

Upcoming Events

Homegrown Garden Club Programs

Second Thursday of each month | 6 – 7:30 p.m.
Homewood-Brushton YMCA
7140 Bennett Street
Meet other gardeners and learn from guest speakers.

Homegrown Good Food Fest

Sat., Sept. 9 | 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
7100 Block of Kelly Street
Celebrate the harvest with food samples from local vendors, live music, cooking demos, children's activities, a farmers market and more!

Homewood YMCA Farm Stand

Second and fourth Thursday of each month | 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Homewood-Brushton YMCA
7140 Bennett Street
Purchase fresh, affordable, locally-grown fruits and veggies.

Cooking Classes

Tuesdays: Oct. 10, 17 and 24
Homewood-Brushton YMCA
7140 Bennett Street
Learn tips and tricks for making healthy and delicious meals. Participants must R.S.V.P. as space is limited.

Recipe of the Month: Eggplant Chips

2 eggplants, sliced thin (1/8 – 1/4 inch thick)
Olive oil

2 – 3 tablespoons any combination of spices:
salt, pepper, garlic powder, smoked paprika, onion powder,
oregano, sage, thyme, tumeric

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Slice eggplant into disks between 1/8 - 1/4 inch thick (the thinner they are, the quicker they will cook). Use either a mandolin or sharp knife to make the slices thin and even.
3. Place slices on baking sheets and lightly coat one side of each slice with olive oil.
4. Mix spices in a small bowl. Choose any combination you want — get creative! Dust each eggplant slice with seasoning.
5. Place sheets in oven and bake for 25 – 30 minutes, flipping the slices about halfway through to ensure even cooking. Keep an eye on the chips so they don't overcook.
6. Let cool and enjoy!

Note: Chips may become slightly soggy if they sit for a while, but don't toss them out! If they are soggy, just put them back in the oven at 250° for a few minutes to crisp them back up.

Garden Tips: Harvest Techniques



Tomatoes: Leave your tomatoes on the vine until they are bright red. They should still be firm, but just starting to soften.

Peppers: As soon as peppers reach desired size, cut them off with a sharp knife or scissors. If you want red peppers, leave the green peppers to ripen on the plant.



Green Beans: Beans tend to hide under the leaves, so look closely! Most varieties are ready when they are about 4 – 6 inches long and a little fatter than a pencil. They will be tough if you leave them on the vine for too long.

Collard Greens and Kale: When they are about 10 inches long, harvest the bottom leaves first and work up the plant as it grows. Leave the top three or four leaves to continue growing, and you will be able to harvest into the fall and early winter!

Zucchini: They tend to hide out under the leaves, so look closely and harvest when they are about 6 inches long. Although impressive, they tend to get tough and flavorless if they grow to be too large.

Cucumber: Pick cucumbers when they are about 1 – 2 inches in diameter and before they show signs of yellowing. You want a nice, consistent green color.

Tip: Frequent harvesting stimulates growth, so the more you harvest, the more produce will grow!



Homegrown Hero: Edith Booker



In the early spring we got a call from Edith asking if our program would be able to install a garden for a high rise apartment building. Normally, Homegrown only installs at private residences, but after hearing the commitment, passion and excitement in Edith's voice, we were all in!

As soon as she heard about Homegrown, she got to work getting other residents in the building excited, and eventually recruited 11 people to participate. Determined to make the project a reality, she gained permission from the building manager, and then it was full steam ahead!

Edith is an amazing organizer and is truly passionate about the garden for the enjoyment of her fellow residents. She realizes that some are less able to manage the garden, and encourages those who are able to pitch in so all can reap the rewards. The garden has been so successful that they recently harvested two full bags of kale and 10 enormous cucumbers. Edith's passion for making her community a better place is apparent through her efforts. The garden at Bennett Place wouldn't be a success without her!

contact us!

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