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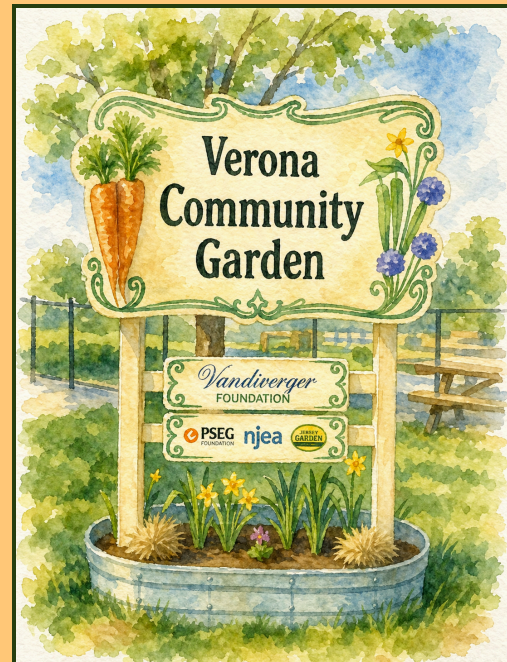
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VERONA COMMUNITY GARDEN

May 1, 2026
Newsletter #5

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17 Activities, Reminders & Tips



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Poems/Humor



Verona Community Garden and That's My Brick!®



17 Activities



Garden Orientation & Volunteer Day

Saturday, May 2

Volunteer Opening Day Tasks: 9:00 a.m.

New Member Orientation (2026 + any 2025 who missed last year): 9:15 a.m.

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May 18 at 4:00 p.m.

🌱 Montclair Community Farms Annual Plant Sale Fundraiser

Location: Montclair Community Farms

Friday, May 1: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 2: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (or until sold out)

🌸 Rutgers Master Gardeners of Essex County Plant Sale

Location: Presby Memorial Iris Gardens

Friday, May 1: 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 2: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

☀️ Additional Plant Sale Date

Location: Essex County Environmental Center

Saturday, May 9: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

📌 Reminders & Tips

Reminders

📱 Join Our WhatsApp Group

Please add the "WhatsApp" application to your phone. WhatsApp is a FREE messaging and video calling app.

We use it for garden communications.

On your phone: Open the link to join my WhatsApp Group:

https://chat.whatsapp.com/K1t0JL1FGt72U6wHc12ON0?mode=gi_t

The group is "VCG Gardeners."

🐰 Report Rabbit Damage

Please report any rabbit damage to the garden email address so we can assess how to address the issue.

🌊 Hoses & Nozzles

The hoses and nozzles are on and working. Report issues to veronanjcommunitygarden@gmail.com and include the hose number.

Tips

🌡️ Watch Overnight Temperatures

Overnight low temperatures are forecast to be historically low for the next couple of weeks. Avoid planting warm-weather crops in your beds. Ideal nighttime temperatures for tomatoes are 55-70°F (13-21°C). Temperatures below 50°F cause poor pollination and stunted growth, while temperatures below 32°F cause frost damage.



📅 Check Clyde's Calendars

Calendars are posted inside the right

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shed door for planting ideas and timing guidance.

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Soil & Compost Access

After 12:00 noon on Saturday, feel free to take soil/compost near the greenhouse or by the green storage container.

Pots Along the Fence

If you would like to place a pot along the fences to grow additional items, be sure to mark it clearly with your bed number. Sunflowers may be planted along the fence in pots or in the ground.

Perennials Policy

No perennials are to be planted in beds unless contained in a pot, including strawberries and herbs.

Seed Library

Located inside the left shed door: take some, leave some.



What's Up in the Vegetable Garden

Growing Tomatoes in the Home Garden

Tomatoes need at least 8 hours of direct sun each day. The area should be well-drained, and free from the competition of tree and shrub roots. If possible, plant tomatoes in an area where tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and potatoes have not grown for at least two years to help avoid soil-borne disease problems.



Preparations for any crop should begin with a soil test. Test envelopes and soil sampling instructions can be obtained at your local county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office. Soil testing forms and instructions can also be obtained online from the Rutgers Soil Testing Laboratory. The soil test report will indicate the pH of the soil, the level of major nutrients, and recommend the appropriate amendments. In the absence of a soil test, add about 3 to 4 pounds of a 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet or a 2-inch layer of well-rotted compost. If you haven't limed your soil in a few years add 5 to 10 pounds of limestone per 100 square feet. This will keep the soil's pH in the range of 6.0-6.5 which is optimum for tomato growth. Incorporate lime and fertilizer into the top 4 to 6 inches of the soil. Adding organic matter such as compost, or well-rotted manure will improve the soil's nutrient and water-holding capacity.

Variety Selection

some important cultural considerations.

Seed catalogs usually list a number beside each variety. This number indicates the number of days to maturity from the time of transplanting (not from the time of seeding). This is an approximation; the actual time will depend on your local growing conditions. The number should be used as a guide for choosing early, mid-season, and late varieties.

Varieties are also identified as being determinate, semi-determinate, and indeterminate.

Determinate plants produce many short branches ending in flower clusters with a very brief harvest. They are seldom used in the garden except as early varieties, since most people want a long harvest season.



Indeterminate plants are large and will continue to grow all season long. They may grow more than 6 feet tall if given support and produce fruit until frost. Semi-determinate varieties are more compact than indeterminate plants but will also produce heavy crops until frost. For the home gardener, semi-determinate and indeterminate varieties are usually recommended for long, continuous harvests.

The variety name may also be followed by several letters. These letters indicate if that particular variety is resistant to certain diseases. The letter V indicates resistance to Verticillium wilt; F resistance to Fusarium wilt; N to nematodes; T to Tobacco Mosaic Virus; and to EB Early Blight. It is highly recommended to choose varieties with resistance to important soil-borne diseases such as EB, V, and F, especially if tomatoes are planted in the same area each year.

Planting

Transplants can be purchased at a local garden center or started indoors by the gardener. When buying transplants, it's best to look for dark green seedlings which are short and sturdy. Avoid tall, leggy, yellowish plants. Transplants may have flowers but avoid those having small green fruit if they are in a six pack or small pot. Plants with immature fruits usually remain small and are low-yielding.



Gardeners who want to start their own seedlings at home have a much wider selection of varieties to choose from but special care is required if the gardener is to be successful (see FS523, *Grow Your Own Vegetable and Flower Seedlings*). Start your own seedlings about 6 to 8 weeks before you expect to plant outside. Use a sterile growth media (available in garden centers), ensure adequate lighting and humidity, and maintain temperatures in the range of 70°F during the day and 65°F at night. If plants become elongated and spindly, increase the amount and intensity of light they receive.

sensitive to frost and will be killed by temperatures below 32°F. If you must plant early, protect plants with row covers, hot caps, plastic containers, or some other means.

Tomatoes, unlike other vegetables, do better when the stem is slightly buried. Roots will form along the stem, establishing a stronger root system. Plants should be set so the soil level is just below the lowest leaves. When planting, place rows 3 to 4 feet apart. Tomatoes grown on stakes or in cages can be placed 1 ½ to 2 feet apart within rows. If plants are allowed to sprawl on the ground, allow 3 feet between plants.

Growth and Culture

Once outdoors, tomato plants should be kept well-watered. They will need at least 1 inch of water each week either from rainfall or watering. Watering should be done slowly and deeply so the plants form deep roots.

To keep your plants healthy, side dress the tomatoes with about 1/2 cup of 5-10-5 fertilizer per plant and work shallowly into the top inch of soil. This should be done when tomato fruits are about 1 inch in diameter and again when the first fruit is harvested. Water soluble fertilizers applied weekly or biweekly can also be used as an alternative to granular fertilizers. Follow the directions on the label for use rates and schedule.

Weeds can be controlled by shallow cultivation around the tomato plants or by applying mulch. Mulch can also help hold moisture in the soil and modify soil temperatures. The selection of mulches that can be used around tomato plants includes straw, salt hay, dried grass clippings, and black plastic. Straw, salt hay, and grass clippings should be applied in 3- to 4-inch layers after the soil has warmed up in the late spring. Some extra caution is needed with grass clippings to make sure they were not treated with an herbicide (if the lawn has been treated with an herbicide, wait at least three cuttings before using the clippings as a mulch). Black plastic sold in garden centers is an effective mulch which has the added benefit of warming the soil. These plastic sheets can be laid over the ground and secured by placing soil over the edges. Tomato transplants can then be planted through holes cut in the plastic.

Training Techniques

There are three training methods for tomatoes in the home garden, all of which have their advantages and disadvantages. The first method is to allow the plants to sprawl directly on the ground without any support. This requires little additional work after planting since the tomatoes are not pruned or tied. It is not recommended for home gardens, however, since plants grown this way require a lot of space. In addition, plants grown on the ground are more likely to be bothered by soil-borne diseases and pests. If this technique is to be used, select determinate or semi-determinate varieties which will stay smaller and use mulch to prevent fruit from lying on the soil.

A second technique is to grow tomatoes in wire cylinders or cages. These cages can be purchased at garden centers or built at home. Wire mesh for homemade cages should have 4 to 6 inch openings to allow access to pick the ripe fruit. Cattle fencing or wire mesh used in reinforcing concrete works well. A piece 6 feet in length can be bent into

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into the ground around the base. As the plants grow, they will be supported by the mesh. Any shoots which grow through the mesh should be gently pushed back into the cylinder. With this technique, the fruit is kept off the ground and away from some soil diseases that cause rot, while at the same time kept shaded and protected from sunscald.



Staking tomatoes is the third major cultivation technique and is the most labor-intensive. Stakes for tomatoes should be at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square, about 6 feet in length, and set 8 to 10 inches into the soil. The general idea when staking tomatoes is to limit the tomatoes to one or two vigorous stems by pruning. This is done by removing all of the "sucker shoots" which grow from the area between a leaf stem and the main stem. Suckers are easiest to remove by snapping them off before they reach 3 inches in length. The tomato plants can be tied to their stakes using soft string or thin strips of cloth in the shape of a figure 8 tied at the stake end. The stem will be in one loop of the figure 8 and the stake in the other. This method allows the tomato stem to grow without being damaged. The advantages to staking tomatoes include slightly earlier and larger fruit. Disadvantages include decreased total yields from each plant and fruit which is more susceptible to blossom end rot and sunscald. If a lot of tomato plants are to be grown, consider using the stake and weave method.



Common Tomato Disorders

The following is a list of tomato problems caused by environmental stress:

Blossom end rot: The blossom end of the fruit blackens and becomes leathery. The problem is caused by a lack of calcium in the fruit due to variable soil moisture conditions. Prevention involves keeping the soil evenly moist. Mulches are helpful in this regard. Fruit is perfectly safe to eat.



Sunscald: This appears as a white or yellowish spot on the part of the fruit facing the sun. To minimize this problem, never remove mature foliage from the plant.



Catfacing: Misshapen, severely deformed fruit, more common on the large-fruited or early varieties, resulting from incomplete pollination of the tomato flower due to cold conditions when flowering. To minimize damage, plant tomatoes after weather warms, avoid using large-fruited varieties, and harden tomato transplants by limiting water—not by lowering temperatures. Catfaced tomatoes are safe to eat.



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from the stem scar. Cracking usually occurs after a heavy rainfall following dry conditions. Keep soil evenly moist and avoid fluctuating soil moisture conditions.



All foliage, no fruit: This condition usually results from too much nitrogen in the soil, heavy rainfalls, or air temperatures too high (>90°F) or too low (<55°F) causing flower abortion. Unfortunately, you only have control over the added nitrogen. Avoid using fresh manure or fertilizer with a high nitrogen content (more than three times the level of Phosphorus or Potassium).

*Steve Reiners, Former Extension Specialist in Vegetable Crops
Peter Nitzsche, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, Morris County
Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station*



The Best (and Worst) Companion Plants for Tomatoes

Plant Herbs & Flowers with Your Tomato Plants

When I first started gardening, I planted 4 tomato plants in my little garden box. And nothing else.

It didn't take me long to regret planting this way. I waited months and months for those tomatoes to produce but ended up losing most of the fruits to the squirrels.



After growing these sad, solitary tomato plants, I had a realization: tomatoes need friends. If I filled the space around the tomatoes with herbs and flowers and veggies, I'd have things to harvest while I was waiting around for fruit. That way, I wasn't banking the success of my entire growing season on just one type of plant.

Now, I plant lots of smaller plants around my tomatoes.

What Is Companion Planting?

Companion planting is the practice of planting specific crops close to each other to provide certain benefits, whether that's enhancing nutrient uptake, deterring pests, encouraging pollination, or increasing production.

Good tomato companions include plants that repel pests or attract beneficial insects to prey on those pests. These plants also need to grow in the same season as tomatoes and not be bothered by regular watering.

Let's look at which herbs, flowers, and root vegetables make the best (and worst) tomato companion plants.

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keep these four things in mind when you're planning out your garden beds.

Tomatoes love to grow in warm weather, when the temps range from 65 to 85°F (18.3 to 29.4°C). You should wait until all chance of frost has passed before you plant your tomatoes in the garden. In hot weather, tomatoes will struggle to form fruit.

Give your tomato plants 8 to 10 hours of sunlight a day to maximize your fruit production. Smaller plants like herbs are ideal to grow around the base of tomatoes because they won't block too much sunshine from the leaves.

Tomatoes take up a lot of nutrients from the soil. When they're fruiting and flowering, it's particularly important they get a phosphorus-rich fertilizer to ensure they have everything they need to stay healthy. (Learn more about how to feed your tomato plants.)

Tomatoes need consistent water to form flowers and ripen fruit. Recently transplanted tomatoes should be watered every day. Established tomato plants appreciate one deep soak per week. The general rule is about 1 inch of water per week.



The Best Types of Plants to Grow with Tomatoes

There are so many tasty plants to grow in the warm season alongside your tomatoes. I recommend growing tomatoes in raised beds or containers that are at least 18 inches (45.7 cm) deep to accommodate their deep roots. With this raised bed height, you can grow pretty much any other annual fruit or veggie you'd like.

Let's first look at tomato companions that will help maximize your plant's productivity.

The Best Tomato Companion Plants to Increase Pollination **Flowers from the Daisy Family**

If you're growing any type of fruiting plant, then you want to attract as many beneficial insects like ladybugs and even wasps into your garden by planting flowers throughout your space. These insects will make sure all your tomato flowers are pollinated, which will maximize your harvest.



Some of my favorite flowers to plant near tomatoes are calendula, cosmos, zinnias, and marigolds, from the daisy family. The flowers in this family are composite flowers, which basically means the center of each flower is actually made up of many smaller flowers. Pollinators love composite flowers because they can drink their fill in one spot.

Lavender

Lavender flowers draw in bumble bees, which practice a particularly effective kind of flower dance called buzz pollination. The scent of both the leaves and flowers of lavender also repels whiteflies, spider mites, flea beetles, and nematodes.

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[The Best Tomato Companion Plants for Organic Pest Control](#)
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Flowers from the Daisy Family

Those same flowers that attract pollinators also pull in lots of pest predators. Ladybugs and lacewings eat everything from aphids to small caterpillars. You might not love the idea of welcoming wasps into your garden, but there's actually a type of parasitic wasp (called a braconid wasp) that's harmless to humans but deadly to my least favorite garden pests: cabbage worms and tomato hornworms.



All of these pest predators are attracted to flowers for their nectar and pollen, so that's why you want to plant as many flowers in your garden space as possible.

Calendula is also an excellent trap crop, which means any aphids that wander into your garden will likely go for the calendula stems instead of your tomato leaves.

If you only grow one type of flowers around your tomatoes, I'd say make them some marigolds. Marigolds release a compound called pyrethrum that actually repels the moths that lay tomato hornworm eggs. Marigolds have also been scientifically proven to reduce root-knot nematode populations, another pest that can cause significant damage to tomato plants. This is one reason I love to plant marigolds along the border of my raised beds (another reason is their beauty).



Other great flowers to add near your tomatoes are nasturtiums, salvia, and sweet alyssum. Nasturtiums in particular can actually deter pests while still attracting pollinators.

Chives

Alliums, or plants in the onion family, make beneficial companions to fruiting plants in your vegetable garden. Onions, garlic, leeks, shallots, and chives all have a particular smell that deters many pests, including aphids and hornworms.



Since chives grow well in the cool, warm, and even hot season, I typically plant chives around the borders of my raised beds to serve as a near-year-round form of organic pest control. When they flower, they also attract pollinators like bees, butterflies, and beneficial wasps.

Herbs from the Carrot Family

Dill, cilantro, and parsley are wonderful herbs to grow near tomatoes. These herbs don't actually like the same temperatures as tomatoes. They prefer it a little cooler and will bolt, or go to seed, when the weather warms. That's a-okay. In fact, that's what we want for max protection for our tomato plants. The dainty flowers of these herbs are magnets for beneficial insects like bees, ladybugs, and the wasp that kills hornworms—an all-around win for organic pest control.

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You can also grow tomatoes near any herbs from the mint plant family (think basil and then all the perennial herbs like rosemary, sage, oregano, and thyme). These herbs repel a number of different pests. Sage, for example, deters slugs, flea beetles, and spider mites, while thyme repels aphids, grasshoppers, and army worms. The blooms of these herbs attract parasitic wasps that kill hornworms.

The Best Tomato Companions to Improve Tomato Plant Health

Basil

Tomatoes planted near basil tend to be more productive. The scent of basil can also repel tomato pests, including aphids, tomato hornworms, and whiteflies.

Plus, tomatoes and basil just go so well together in the kitchen.

Garlic

Garlic not only repels pests with its strong scent, it also has antibacterial and antifungal properties that can protect tomato plants from soil-borne disease.

The Best Tomato Companions to Maximize Garden Space

Bush Beans

I love growing tons of bush beans around the base of tomato plants. The leaves of the fast-growing bean plants will shade the soil, which helps to retain moisture and nutrients.

Peppers

Tomatoes happily grow near peppers as long as the pepper plants don't grow too tall and block too much sunlight from the tomato leaves.

Some gardeners say not to plant tomatoes with peppers since they're from the same plant family (the nightshade family), but I've never had an issue with them attracting the same pests if my garden is filled with fragrant herbs and flowers.



What Would a Raised Bed Filled with Tomatoes and Good Companion Plants Look Like?

The planting plan below is for a 4' x 4' raised bed in the warm growing season. There are short zinnias and basil plants in every corner for pest protection, beauty, and production. Purple bush beans can be packed in and will produce a ton of beans and keep the soil nice and covered.

You can plant at least 2 indeterminate tomato plants on each obelisk trellis. Instead of planting on the inside of the structures, plant along the outer base so that you can easily tend the vines.

The Worst Companion Plants for Tomatoes

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anyway. (Learn more about which plants shouldn't be grown in raised beds.)

Other bad companions for tomatoes include broccoli and cabbage, which can stunt the growth of tomato plants. These plants should be grown when it's much cooler so that they're finishing up around your last frost date, before it's time to add tomatoes to the garden.



All these plants are varieties of cabbage: kohlrabi, cauliflower, Romanesco cabbage, broccolo sprouts, baby sprouts, and head cabbage and broccoli. Photo: Coops, Wikimedia Commons.

Lastly, fennel is said to secrete a chemical that inhibits tomato plant growth.

Fill Your Garden with Leaves, Roots, and Fruit!

Okay, now that you know what plants grow best with your tomato plants, there won't be any more sad tomato plants all by themselves in garden beds, right? Friends don't let friends plant tomatoes alone.

Grow your fruiting plants surrounded by lots of herbs and flowers so that you have plenty of things to harvest while you're waiting on those tomatoes to finally ripen already. You'll be more likely to step outside and tend your tomatoes if you know there's something else waiting on you to harvest it.

Nicole Burke © Published July 18, 2025, *Gadenary*

🌿 What's Up in the Herb Garden

How to Plant and Grow Basil

Basil isn't just for pesto—this fragrant, flavorful herb is a garden MVP. Whether you're growing it in your backyard, on a patio, or right on your kitchen windowsill, basil is easy to grow and endlessly useful. From starting seeds indoors to snipping the perfect leaves for your next meal, we'll walk you through how to plant, grow, and harvest basil like a pro.



About Basil

Basil is a member of the mint family (Lamiaceae) and one of the most popular culinary herbs. It's a warm-weather annual that can be planted outdoors once temperatures are consistently above 50°F.

Basil is not usually seeded directly into the soil; typically, gardeners transplant small starter plants purchased at a nursery. Or, they may start the seeds themselves indoors under grow lights.

Common or sweet basil, *Ocimum basilicum*, is the most common basil; other types include purple basil (less sweet than common basil), lemon basil (lemon flavor), and Thai basil (licorice flavor).

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If you're planning on making pesto, grow several plants. For other uses, one or two

basil plants yield plenty.

Planting

Where to Plant Basil

Basil will grow best in a location that gets 6 to 8 hours of full sun daily, though it can perform well in partial sun, too.

Soil should be moderately fertile and moist but well-draining. Basil works great in containers or raised beds, as these allow for better drainage. The pH of the soil should ideally be in the range of 6.0 to 7.5 (slightly acidic to neutral).



When to Plant Basil

To get a jump on the season, start the seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before transplanting outside.

To plant outside, wait until the soil has warmed to at least 50°F (10°C)—preferably around 70°F (21°C) for best growth. Nighttime temperatures shouldn't drop below 50°F (10°C).

Don't rush basil. Without heat, the plant won't grow well!

How to Plant Basil

If you are sowing seeds directly into the ground, sow no more than 1/4-inch deep. Seeds should germinate within 5 to 7 days. Once they have developed 2 to 3 pairs of true leaves, transplant them.

If you are planting the germinated seedlings or starter plants in the ground, spaced 10 to 12 inches apart, basil should grow to about 12 to 24 inches in height.

A 2- to 3-inch mulch of compost or ground-up leaves retains soil moisture and minimizes weeds around the plants.

Tomatoes make great neighbors for basil plants in the garden—and on the plate—so many gardeners will plant the two warm-weather friends around the same time.



Growing

How to Grow Basil

Make sure that the soil is moist. Basil plants like moisture.

If you live in a hot area, use mulch around the plants (the mulch will help hold in moisture and suppress weeds).

During the dry periods in summer, water the plants freely.

After the seedlings have produced their first six leaves, prune above the second set. This encourages the plants to start branching, resulting in more leaves for harvest.

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first set of leaves.

Fertilize sparingly throughout the season with a 5-10-5 fertilizer.

After about 6 weeks, pinch off the center shoot to prevent early flowering. If flowers do grow, just cut them off.

If the weather is going to be cold or if a sudden frost is imminent, be sure to harvest your basil beforehand, as the cold temperatures will destroy your plants.

Harvesting

How to Harvest Basil

Start picking the leaves of basil as soon as the plants are 6 to 8 inches tall.

Once temperatures hit 80°F (27°C), basil will really start leafing out.

Harvest in the early morning, when leaves are at their juiciest.

Make sure to pick the leaves regularly to encourage growth throughout the summer.

Even if you don't need the leaves, pick them to keep the plant going. Store them for later use!

If you pick regularly, twelve basil plants can produce 4 to 6 cups of leaves per week.

How to Store Basil

The best method for storing basil is freezing. Freezing will prevent the plant from losing a good portion of its flavor. To quick-freeze basil, package whole or chopped leaves in airtight, resealable plastic bags, then place them in the freezer.

Another storage method is drying the basil (although some flavor will be lost). Pinch off the leaves at the stem and place them in a well-ventilated and shady area. After 3 to 4 days, if the plants are not completely dry, place them in the oven on the lowest heat setting with the door slightly open. Remember to turn the leaves (for equal drying) and check them frequently. See more about drying basil, tomatoes, and paprika.

Catherine Boeckmann
Almanac.com



Recipes

Taverna Salad

Lidey Heck

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(S&S/Simon Element, 2024), is inspired by two dishes: classic Greek salad (also known as horiatiki) and fattoush, the Lebanese salad of vegetables and pieces of fried pita. The ingredient list may look long at first, but each ingredient contributes to the harmony of the salad: bell pepper and cucumbers for crunch; shallot, olives and capers for a bit of tang; chopped tomatoes for sweetness. Pan-fried halloumi adds richness and heft, but you can skip the searing process and instead opt for a 6-ounce block of feta, if desired. To save even more time, you can add a large handful of crumbled pita chips instead of making your own.



Total Time: 45 minutes

Prep Time: 25 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Yield: 4-6 servings

INGREDIENTS

⅓ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 teaspoon minced garlic (1 small clove)

½ teaspoon dried oregano

Salt and pepper

3 medium tomatoes, cored, seeded and diced into ½-inch pieces (or 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes)

1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, rinsed

1 orange or yellow bell pepper, halved, seeded and diced into ½-inch pieces

½ large English cucumber, halved, seeded and diced into ½-inch pieces

½ cup pitted Kalamata olives

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

¼ cup minced red onion or shallot

2 tablespoons (drained) capers, coarsely chopped

2 scallions, thinly sliced

1 (6-inch) pita

1 (8-ounce) block halloumi cheese, patted dry and cut into ¾-inch-thick slices

PREPARATION

Step 1

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Step 2

In a large bowl, combine the tomatoes, chickpeas, bell pepper, cucumber, olives, parsley, red onion, capers and scallions. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss well.

Step 3

Chop the pita into 1-inch pieces and place them in a small bowl. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil, sprinkle with salt and toss to coat. Heat an 8-inch skillet over medium. Add the pita pieces and cook, tossing often, until toasted and golden brown, about 5 minutes. Return to the small bowl to cool, reserving the skillet.

Step 4

Place the halloumi slices on a small plate and drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Heat the same skillet over medium-high heat, and cook the halloumi until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board and cut the slices into bite-size cubes.

Step 5

Add the pita and halloumi to the salad, toss well and serve.



Lovage in the Garden

Liquor.com

This cocktail was created by Los Angeles bar pro Matthew Biancaniello, author of *Eat Your Drink*, who specializes in "culinary cocktails." The list of ingredients does include flavors more common in salads than in alcoholic beverages, including golden-orange Sun Gold cherry tomatoes; lovage leaves, which lend a celery-like flavor; ghost pepper salt; even a hopped vodka.

In this cocktail, these unusual components combine to produce a savory, spicy, gently bitter, and ultimately wonderfully balanced result. Surely you've heard of (and likely partaken in) drinking your dessert? Why not drink your salad, too?



Ingredients

3 Gold cherry tomatoes

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2 ounces Hophead vodka
 1/2 ounce Luxardo bitter aperitivo (can substitute Campari)
 3/4 ounce lime juice, freshly squeezed
 Pinch of Hepp's ghost pepper salt
 Garnish: lovage sprig

Instructions

Add the cherry tomatoes, lovage leaves and agave syrup into a shaker and muddle gently.

Add the vodka, Luxardo bitter aperitivo, lime juice, and ghost pepper salt, plus ice, and shake until well-chilled.

Strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice.

Garnish with a lovage sprig.

Enjoy responsibly.



Poems & Humor

Tomato Sandwich

paul-r-mott

What poetry do we say sounds like the truth or life?

How many paint a proper picture of things before us on an internal canvas?

But how many things bring out the poetry all on their own?

In this way, a proper tomato sandwich contains much more than juice, seeds, skin, and pulp-

It contains the thanks of a season's worth of work, wrapped up in a translucent layer, tough enough to veer a dull knife into finger, but thin enough to steer a sharp blade into herbaceous flesh,

Funny Puns and Jokes about Tomatoes

I like to put coriander on my blended tomatoes. It's soup-herb.

I planted my tomato plants too late this year. Now they're playing ketchup.

The only way to fix a broken tomato is with tomato paste.

When you cross a fruit with an amphibian, you get a toma-toad.

There's a new customizable tomato. It's cus-tomato.

I made a mistake in my ketchup recipe. In Heinz sight, I see what I should've done.

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of simple starch, waiting for the juice of a life grown outside rather than mixed in a sterile kitchen.

This fruit emerges from a jealous ground who would stockpile these gems away from the mineral salt and the crushed spice that brings meaning from the ground

Is this why the tomato harvested from another's nearby garden tastes all the sweeter than that plucked by an anonymous picker miles away from the pleasure it provides?

The summer provides the climate to agitate one so deeply that they burrow into the soil to find the refreshment that would quiet the tongue of hunger and bring resolution to a disquieted mind, so far removed from comfort.

Sadly, the kid did have flu but he was asymp-tomato-ic.

I had no choice but to stop growing tomatoes. I was given an ul-tomato-m.

If you want to help me grow tomatoes, I'm vine with it.

You ripe what you sow.

It's an au-tomato-ic reaction now.

Why do bacon lettuce and tomatoes have the lowest IQ out of all the foods? Because they're in-bred!



Building Legacy One Brick at a Time

[Verona Community Garden and That's My Brick!®](#) have joined forces to raise money for our project! The Verona Community Garden is located near HBW Middle School.

The goal of this space has been to create a multi-use community centerpiece. The garden has given community members an opportunity to learn, connect and grow together.

This cherished spot has grown over the last 4 years and is fully funded by grants and donations. As the demand for the garden has grown we need a walkway in our public section of the garden. We are asking for your support through an engraved brick fundraiser.

Help us create a legacy for the community by showing your support with this fundraiser.

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Stay Connected with VCG!

Join our vibrant community online! Follow us on **Facebook** (*Verona NJ Community Garden*) and **Instagram** (*veronanjcommunitygarden*) for updates, photos, and event highlights. You can also stay in the loop by joining the **VCG WhatsApp Group!**

VCG WhatsApp Group

VCG Manager:

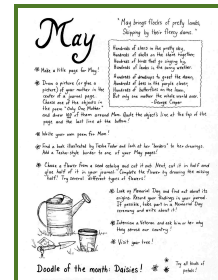
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