

Succession Planting – Lettuces followed by Edible Flowers and Herbs

Lettuces

Because we will be implementing succession planting, we have chosen fast-maturing varieties of lettuce that can be ready to harvest in as little as 30 days. We will also use the cut and come again method of harvest. This method cuts the lettuce just above the crown and allows the plant to grow again for another cutting. Once the weather turns to the heat of early summer, the plants will undergo a final harvest, and the next crop will be planted in their place.

Edible flowers

1. Calendula – annual, full sun, moderate moisture, space 10-12 inches apart
 - a. A daisy type flower in yellows and oranges, the blooms open at sunrise and close at sunset
 - b. Prefer cool weather; sow seeds in spring after danger of frost is past and again in early September for fall bloom
 - c. Petals are edible – can be used in salads and as a cheap alternative to the expensive spice, saffron
 - d. Blooms attract beneficial insects
2. Lavender (Munstead) – perennial, full sun, well-drained soils, space 2 feet apart
 - a. Grows to 1.5 feet tall and wide
 - b. Blue to purple flower stalks in mid-summer
 - c. Blossoms are edible and are also frequently used in soaps and lotions
 - d. Deadhead spent blossoms to encourage a second flush of bloom
3. Marigolds – annual, full sun, well-drained soils, space 10-12 inches apart
 - a. Bloom in reds to yellows and oranges, some have mixed flower colors
 - b. Deadhead spent blossoms to prevent self-seeding, or seed save your favorite color combinations
 - c. Attract pollinators, repel mosquitos
 - d. Blossoms have a mild flavor and are used in salads and teas
4. Nasturtiums – annual, full sun, well-drained soils, spacing depends on the cultivar
 - a. Blooms in reds, oranges, pinks, purple/blues and yellows depending on the cultivar
 - b. Can grow 8 inches to several feet, depending on the cultivar
 - c. Used as a trap crop for aphids and squash bugs, repels white flies and cabbage loopers
 - d. Blossoms and leaves are edible. Use their peppery flavor in salads and as garnishes
5. Violas – annual to short lived perennial, full sun, well-drained soils, space 6-10 inches apart
 - a. Bloom in a plethora of colors
 - b. Flowers are edible and can be used in salads and desserts; frequently candied and used on cakes and other confections

Herbs

The key to successfully growing herbs is to embrace 'right plant, right place.' Growing herbs near the vegetable garden is a great way to invite natural pest predators. But the gardener must consider the water needs and life cycle of each individual herb for the best results.

- Many herbs prefer dry soils and will suffer root rot if placed in a garden with water loving vegetables.
- Many of the annual herbs may be fine alongside other garden vegetables, just check the plant tags to make sure they like it moist.
- Growing perennial herbs in a garden that gets a top dressing of compost each year will require digging up the herb so it is not buried over time.
- Some herbs are very aggressive and want to take over the garden completely.
- For the above reasons, it may be best to plant herbs in a container or at least is a garden section for dry loving plants.

Herbs found in the Victory Garden

1. Basil – annual, full sun, well-drained soils, space 12-18 inches apart
 - a. Grows 18-24 inches tall and wide
 - b. Both the flowers and leaves are edible. To encourage the plant to grow bushier, keep it from going to seed by frequently pinching off the top where the flowers want to form.
 - c. Basil is commonly used in Italian dishes and salads.
2. Chives – perennial, full to slight shade, well-drained soils, space 12 inches apart
 - a. Grows 10-12 inches tall with grass-like leaves and purple blossoms in early summer
 - b. Both the flowers and leaves are edible. They add an oniony flavor to soups, dressings, dips, and to many egg and potato-based dishes
3. Dill – annual, requires full sun, well-drained soils
 - a. Grows to 3-5 feet tall and 2-3 feet wide
 - b. Blooms yellow in late summer
 - c. Leaves, flowers and seeds are used in seasoning pickled foods
 - d. It self-sows easily so keep it deadheaded unless the seeds are needed
 - e. Dill is the larvae host plant for the Eastern black swallowtail butterfly
4. Peppermint – perennial, full sun to part shade, well-drained soils
 - a. Can be very aggressive - grow in pots to prevent garden takeover
 - b. Can grow 1-2 feet wide and tall
 - c. Pink blossoms in summer
 - d. Leaves are edible and frequently used in teas and other beverages
 - e. Scent of peppermint repels many bugs such as spiders and ants
5. Oregano (Greek) – perennial, full sun, well-drained lean soils – prefers to be dry
 - a. Can be very aggressive – grow in pots to prevent garden takeover
 - b. Can grow to 1-2 feet tall and wide
 - c. Oregano is a key ingredient in pizza and pasta sauces as well as Mexican and Greek dishes
 - d. Attracts beneficial pollinators. Deters cucumber beetles, cabbage worms and aphids
 - e. Toxic to pets

6. Rosemary – annual to tender perennial, full sun, well-drained soils – prefers to be dry
 - c. Mature size can reach up to 6 feet and 2-4 feet wide after several years. The life expectancy of a rosemary plant can be up to 10 years
 - d. Rosemary is used in a wide variety of recipes, from breads to vegetables and meat dishes
 - e. Rosemary's scent repels aphids, cabbage moths and flies
 - f. Growing rosemary in a pot allows the gardener to move it indoors for the winter
6. Thyme (variegated lemon) – perennial, full sun, well-drained soils, space 12-24 inches apart
 - a. Grows 6-12 inches tall and wide. The life expectancy of a thyme plant is 5-6 years
 - b. Thyme is used in a wide variety of recipes from breads to soups and stews, and in meat and vegetable dishes
 - c. Thyme attracts beneficial insects, birds and butterflies. It repels mosquitos, flies, ants, fleas and ticks. It also repels cabbage loopers and whiteflies as well as tomato hornworms

Harvesting lettuces, edible flowers and herbs

1. Lettuces
 - a. Harvest lettuces in the early morning.
 - i. Use the cut-and-come-again method by snipping off the leaves above the plant's crown. New leaves will re-grow for another harvest
 - ii. Pull entire plant and cut off roots. This method also allows for thinning the bed
 - b. Tender leafy lettuces do best if plunged immediately into moderately icy water. This helps them retain their crispness and prevents wilt
2. Edible flowers
 - a. Harvest flowers that have just fully opened
 - b. Harvest in the morning after the dew has dried for the best flavor
 - c. Cut the flower with its stem to the point where it meets another stem or leaf node
 - d. Brush off any soil, check for insects
 - e. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 4-6 days (depending on the type of flower)
 - f. Depending on the plant, use individual petals or the entire flower head
3. Herbs
 - a. Harvest herbs by cutting off up to 6-inch stems. This allows the plant to continue to grow
 - b. Harvest herbs in the morning after the dew had dried for the best flavor
 - c. Herbs are most flavorful before they flower when the oils are concentrated in the leaves
 - i. Deadheading flowers extends the herb harvest season
 - d. Herbs can be dried or frozen for storage
 - e. When using dried versus fresh herbs in recipes, replace the called for amount of dried with 3 times fresh.

For more information, search our website for our 'Garden to Fork' series of articles and recipes: Brewing Herbal Vinegars; and Herb Butters and Herb-Infused Simple Syrup.

Alaine Bush, Advanced Master Gardener