

Trowel and Error – Lessons from the 2025 Victory Garden

Garlic

- We planted 50 cloves in the fall of 2024. Despite the renovation of the trial gardens paths and other construction work near the garden, we harvested 40 grocery store sized bulbs.
- Planting the garlic near the tomatoes worked very well. By the time the tomatoes had grown large enough to fill the space, it was time to harvest the garlic. Succession planting 101 for the win!



Tomatoes

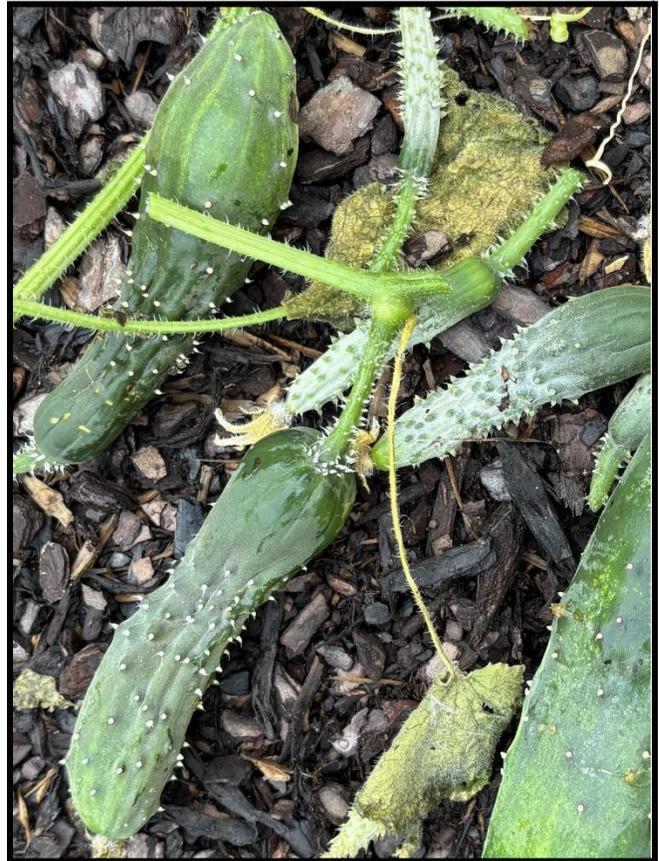
- Not going to lie to you. Using the Florida Weave Method for staking the tomatoes was a twice per week job. Once they reached the desired height, pruning suckers was also a twice per week job. We did not anticipate how much ‘work’ this was going to be.
- Growing them vertically in a wall made harvest so much easier and kept the garden looking neat all season long. All in all, we harvested almost 40 pounds of tomatoes. Yes, we weighed each harvest session!
- The heavily laden vines literally pulled the end stakes inward so that we had to reinforce them with additional support stakes. In the future we would brace the outer stakes in a tripod design at planting time.
- The garden twine did not last the entire season. We added a few more strands. By the time most of the twine had broken, the vines were so intermingled that they held themselves together in our tomato wall. In the future we would choose a stronger twine or even nylon cord.
- The Yellow Pear tomatoes were not as flavorful, and if not completely ripe were very mushy. We would not plant them again although they sure were pretty in a bowl full of mixed varieties.
- We did notice two tomato horn worms, but because we planted herbs and other flowering plants that attract parasitic wasps, they took care of them without any intervention from us. Mother Nature for the win!



Wall of tomatoes – Tomato hornworm with parasitic wasp eggs

Cucumbers

- The cucumbers looked absolutely amazing...until they didn't. The vines literally collapsed overnight.
- We diagnosed the issue as a white fly infestation. Those little sap suckers are cousins to the dreaded aphids.
- Despite pruning out wilted vines and treating with neem oil, we were unable to salvage them.



Cucumbers with white fly infestation

Swiss Chard

- The Swiss chard added so much color to the garden and we harvested the equivalent of 10 paper grocery sized bags. It was a popular give-away vegetable.



French Breakfast Radishes

- These flirty little girls stick their bare shoulders out of the ground when ready to be harvested.
- They are a very 'short to maturity' crop; 28 days from planting to harvest so we were able to replant many times.
- They grow quickly and also bolt quickly so they need to be watched closely.



Peppers

- We planted the tiny transplants and immediately added the tall tomato cages to keep us aware of where they were in the garden. We received several snide comments about such large cages. “Do you really expect them to get that big???” Well, they did. In fact, several of them grew taller than the wire cages. So now we are firm believers that the best staking method for pepper plants are tomato cages, BIG ones!
- We harvested 610 peppers. Yes, we counted!



Peppers fill the cages with foliage and fruits

Lettuces, Herbs and Edible Flowers

- The edible flowers did great when planted among the early lettuces. And, the herbs filled in beautifully once the lettuces were finished. Again, succession planting for the win!



We enjoyed sharing what we learned; what worked as well as what didn't. Visitors to the garden, garden workday volunteers, War Memorial staff and the War Memorial chef reaped the benefits of our labors.

So much fun was had in our test kitchens. Check out the recipes on the Victory Garden webpage. www.gpgardencenter.org Click on the Gardens and then the Victory Garden pull down tab.

We are looking forward to 2026. Crop rotation is the key to successful vegetable gardening, so stay tuned to see what we have in store for you next year!

See you in the garden!!! Katherine and Alaine