

endless Gardening

VOLUME 1 • 2012

Gardening *without pain*

Start a community garden

**Arkansas Fruit & Vegetable
Harvest Calendar**

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endless gardening

The benefits of gardening are endless — it can help you connect with nature, reduce stress and be a rewarding form of physical activity. It can provide nutritious food, and for those on a limited income help stretch those food dollars. Gardening gives a sense of purpose and rewards you with a harvest of gorgeous flowers or fresh fruits and vegetables to enjoy and share with others.

And while a change in your physical abilities might make gardening a little more difficult, it doesn't mean you have to give it up! Just a few modifications in gardening practices and tools will allow you to enjoy your favorite hobby for years to come. *Endless Gardening* is a great resource that will help return the joy of gardening to those with special needs. Inside you'll find tips and techniques for creating or modifying easily accessible gardens, advice on selecting ergonomic tools and low-maintenance plants, as well as directions for constructing raised bed planters.

Endless Gardening is a publication of the Arkansas AgrAbility program. Sponsored by the USDA, Arkansas AgrAbility promotes productivity and independent living to agriculture workers and their family members who are restricted by an injury, age or health condition. For more information on AgrAbility, contact your local Cooperative Extension Office, visit us on the web at www.uaex.edu, or follow us on Facebook.



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Increasing Capabilities Access Network
www.ar-ican.org

Arthritis Foundation Southeast Region, Inc.
www.arthritis.org

National AgrAbility Project
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A woman wearing a straw hat, glasses, a red button-down shirt, and blue jeans is smiling while watering a garden bed. She is holding a green hose with a spray nozzle that is emitting a large, fine mist of water. The garden bed is filled with dark mulch and various green plants, including some pink flowers. The background is a lush green hedge.

Gardening *without pain*

Just because you experience pain in the garden doesn't mean you have to give it up. Investing in the appropriate tools and using the correct techniques will help optimize your gardening experience — and minimize the pain!

Get a handle on your tools

There are many tools now available that can help to reduce the pain associated with gardening. Choosing the right tools can make a big difference in how much you enjoy your gardening experience, and how many aches and pains you experience afterwards.

Make sure your tools are the appropriate size. Choose a hoe, cultivator and rake that you can maneuver comfortably without bending. Tools with telescoping handles that extend your reach can be less tiring on your back and hands, while the forearm grip can give you additional leverage when digging or weeding. Watering wands are another useful tool to reduce the stress associated with over-reaching. Purchase lightweight and small-bladed tools to reduce the amount of load and resistance.

Tools with ergonomically designed handles reduce the force and range of motion necessary to perform certain tasks. Pistol grip tools, with an L-bend in the handle and a forearm grip, allow you to keep your wrist completely straight as you work. By keeping the hand and wrist in a natural and comfortable position, these specially designed handles ease the stress placed on the joints.

To extend the life and effectiveness of your tools, it's important to keep them clean and in good condition. Purchase gloves that are fast drying and can be hosed off when you are finished using them. Keep your tools clean, sharp and well-oiled. This will help avoid resistance when using them and cut down on the manpower needed to execute certain tasks.

Cultivate comfort

Prevent sore knees and backs by using benches or kneelers. Combination kneelers with handles allow you to help lower and raise yourself using arm strength and can be flipped over to use as a bench. Stools or benches with locking wheels make moving from weed to weed easier and reduce repeated standing and sitting.

Use a caddy or garden tool apron to keep your tools within easy reach. Aprons specially designed to be used with a wheelchair are available now. A large-wheeled cart will help you move plants and mulch around without having to carry them and is easier on your back than a wheelbarrow.

Protect your hands from blisters, thorns and cuts by investing in a good pair of gardening gloves. Cotton and cotton-polyester gloves are great for light



Ergonomically-designed curved and pistol grip handles (top) reduce the range of motion and force necessary to use gardening tools and ease the stress placed on joints. Garden kneelers with handles (bottom) allow you to help lower and raise yourself using arm strength rather than straining your knees and back, and can be flipped over to use as a bench.

gardening chores, while leather gloves are recommended for pruning and bush removal. Look for quality leather with a cloth back that will let the gloves breathe and keep your hands cool and dry. Chemical resistant gloves should be used when spraying pesticides, herbicides, acids, oils or other chemicals. Remember to get the gloves that fit your hands — the right size is important. You don't want the gloves to be too tight, constricting your movement. To determine the best fit try the gloves on both hands, make a fist and imitate movements you make when gardening.

And don't forget to protect yourself from the sun! Wear wide brim hats, light-weight long sleeved shirts, and sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Be sure to drink plenty of decaffeinated fluids, avoid being outdoors between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and allow time for breaks in the shade.

Garden smarter, not harder

Reduce the effort required to care for your garden by using low-maintenance plants. Opt for perennials, shrubs and trees instead of annuals which need to be



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**MASTER
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replanted every year, especially in hard-to-reach areas of the garden. Pull weeds after irrigating or rain, as moist soil makes it easier to pull weeds with less resistance. Use wood mulch to keep plants cool, to conserve water and to help provide a barrier to weeds. A small layer of newspaper under the mulch will also provide an organic, biodegradable landscaping fabric.

Save your back by placing containers where you want them before you fill them. A layer of stones or broken pottery will improve drainage and reduce the weight of the container if it does need to be moved. And buy smaller bags of soil — they are much easier to handle.

Consider bringing your plants to you by raising your workspace from ground level to waist-high with a raised garden bed. Not only can they provide better drainage and expanded growing seasons, they also make gardening more accessible by reducing the amount of bending required to care for your plants. For a great how-to on raised planter beds, see the article on page 7.

The right technique

Before you begin working in your garden, warm up your joints and muscles with a brief walk and some stretching. Work during the time of day that you feel best. For example, if you feel stiff in the morning, then save gardening activities for the afternoon. Don't forget to stretch during and after gardening as well to help keep muscles from becoming stiff. Review the exercises listed to the right for some helpful stretching techniques.

Switch Tasks Often. Repetitive motions or staying in one position too long can cause stiffness. Try to alternate bending or stooping jobs with standing or reaching jobs, and take periodic breaks. Avoid slouching over while you garden as poor posture can cause pain, fatigue and even strains.

Use your largest and strongest joints when possible. For example, when lifting use your legs instead of your back. When troweling, use your forearm and elbow instead of your wrist and fingers. And use the palms of your hands to push levers and tools instead of your fingers.

Most importantly, respect pain! If you feel discomfort, stop working and rest. Consult your healthcare provider if the

pain continues. Despite your best efforts, some aches, pain and stiffness can still result from a day spent in the garden. If you experience soreness or pain, reduce the amount of activity you do the next day. Try a warm bath to help relax stiff or sore muscles after gardening or heat and cold therapy to ease joint pain. Check with your physician or visit

www.arthritis.org for more information on which therapy is best for your type of pain.



**Most importantly, respect
pain! If you feel discomfort,
stop working and rest.**

Don't Let the Dirt Hurt!

Stretch your way to a healthier you and a better garden in just 12 minutes!



Shoulder Shrugs

Raise shoulders towards ears, hold 5 seconds. Relax downward to a normal position.



Wrist/Forearm Stretch

Place hands palm to palm fingers facing upward. Keeping palms together and elbows even. Hold 5 seconds.



Upper Back Stretch

Interlace fingers behind head with elbows out. Pull shoulder blades together. Hold 5 seconds.



Neck Tilts

Keep shoulders relaxed and arms hanging loosely. Tilt head sideways, hold 5 seconds. Tilt to the other side, hold 5 seconds.



Back/Hip Stretch

Bend left leg over right and look over left shoulder. Place right hand on left thigh and apply slight pressure. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat on right side.



Upper Body Stretch

Interlace fingers palms up, straighten arms above head. Elongate and stretch up. Breathe deeply and hold for 10 seconds.



Neck Stretch

Keep shoulders relaxed downward and arms hanging loosely. Gently tilt head forward. Hold 5 seconds.



Back Stretch

Lean forward, keeping head down and neck relaxed. Hold 10 seconds. Use hands to push back up.



Side Stretch

Hold left elbow with right hand. Gently pull elbow behind head to stretch shoulder or back of upper arm. Hold 10 seconds. Repeat on right side.



Wrist/Forearm Stretch

Place hands palm to palm. Rotate around until they face down, keeping elbows even. Hold 5 seconds.



Hamstring Stretch

Sitting, hold left leg just above and behind knee. Gently pull bent knee toward the chest. Hold 5 seconds. Repeat on right leg.



Hand/Finger Stretch

Separate and straighten fingers. Hold 10 seconds. Bend fingers at the knuckle. Hold 10 seconds. Repeat.

Stretching 4 minutes before, during and after you garden can reduce tightness, stiffness and increase productivity for any gardening activity.





Raise it up a Notch

BRING NATURE TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH RAISED BEDS

Whether planting flowers, herbs or vegetables, raised gardens can make gardening easier by reducing the need to bend or stoop. Not only do they make gardening more accessible, raised gardens can provide better drainage, expanded growing seasons and ease of maintenance. Raised gardening includes hanging baskets, large pots and vertical gardens such as trellises and arbors, and of course, raised beds.

If you decide to add a raised bed to your garden design, the options are almost limitless. Pick a height that makes it easier for you to garden and a shape that fits in with your landscape. The site should be flat and level, and there should be slight drainage away from the container.

For ease of use, a one-sided bed – such as those adjacent to a building – should be no wider than 2 feet. A two-sided bed should be no wider than 4 feet. This makes it easier to reach from one side or another without overexertion. Raised beds with wide borders can offer a place to sit while working.

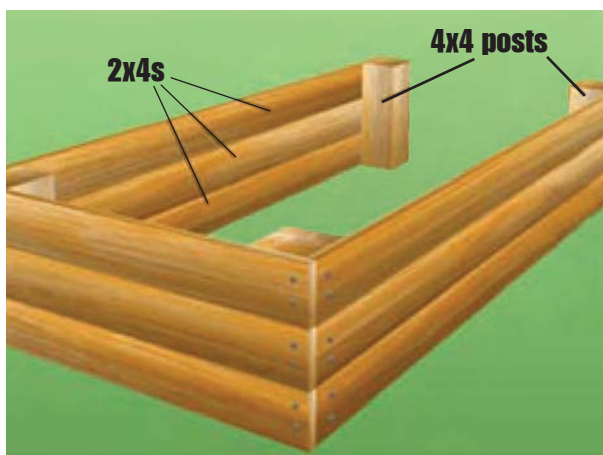
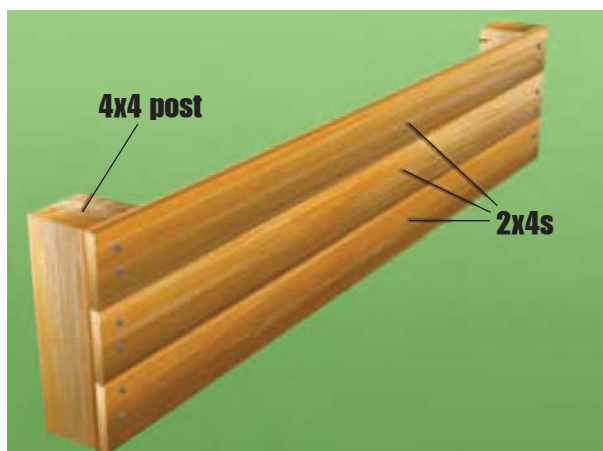
There are three basic types of raised beds: ground-level, semi-ambulatory and wheelchair-accessible. Ground-level beds are about six inches to a foot off the ground, while semi-ambulatory beds are a bit higher up at about 2½ to 3 feet off the ground. Wheelchair-accessible beds are somewhere in-between, at about 2

to 2½ feet off the ground or whatever height will comfortably fit a wheelchair underneath.

Be sure to build the bed near a water source to make watering easier. Use stones or cement around the spigot to ensure that the ground is not muddy, and make sure to have an easy pathway to your raised bed, using cement, concrete or bricks to make it more



Raised beds can be built high enough to stand at or designed to slip your knees under while sitting.



Raised Bed *How-to*

Prepare the site

- Depending on what you plan to grow, choose a site that will get the appropriate amount of sunlight.
- Be sure you choose a flat, level location with good drainage and easy access to water that allows enough room for you to work.
- Clear the container area of sod and weeds.

Build the container

- Decide how large your container will be. Select a length that best suit your needs; recommended width is no more than 4 feet.
- Determine how many 2x4s you want to use on the sides of your raised bed – this will determine your height. Cut a 4x4 into four posts equal to the desired height. Make sure the sides will be flush with the top and bottom of the 4x4s.
- Determine how many 2x4s you need for each side of the bed. Cut pieces to the length and width of bed. Remember to measure twice, cut once!
- Attach the first side of 2x4s to two posts with galvanized screws. Build the opposite side in the same way. Add the remaining 2x4s to the ends of the sides to form a box
- Use a level to make sure your frame is level in all directions to prevent drainage issues. If part of your frame is high, just remove soil beneath it until you have a level frame.
- Fill your bed with a good mixture of quality topsoil, compost and rotted manure. Once they're filled and raked level, you're ready to plant or sow seeds!

accessible for rolling carts or wheelchairs. This will also keep the area from becoming muddy.

The raised container described above is constructed of lumber, but you can build your garden bed from almost anything. Materials for building the bed usually come down to what fits best:

- **Wood** is easy to work with and inexpensive, but it can rot. Consider using cedar or a composite lumber.
- **Cinderblocks**, another inexpensive alternative, are easy to work with but are not as visually appealing.

- **Stone, brick and concrete** can be very visually appealing and offer a wide variety of options. However they can be expensive and may require a contractor to construct the bed.
- **Salvage materials** can be a cheap, even free alternative and allow more creativity than other materials. Just beware of safety hazards.

Remember, the most enjoyable type of garden is one that lets you work pain-free.



Brad Smith

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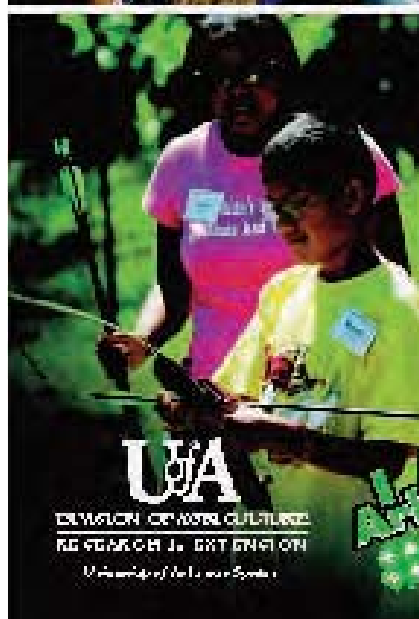
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Growing Communities

Community gardens are a great way of bringing people together, but they have different meanings for different people. Typically, they reflect the desires of those directly involved in their management and upkeep as well as the needs of the surrounding community. But whatever the reason, community gardens can be both rewarding and challenging.



Types of Community Gardens

Community gardens can be a great resource to individuals, families and communities alike. Benefits include food production, exercise, improving the environment, teaching outdoor education and enabling cultural opportunities. Community gardens exist in many forms:

- **Youth/School Gardens** introduce children to food production, nutrition, composting and ecological awareness. These are typically associated with classroom lessons and hands-on gardening activities.
- **Entrepreneurial/Job Training Market Gardens** are used by non-profit organizations and other agencies to employ youth and others while teaching them practical skills for future employment. Typically, they grow and sell the produce that they raise.
- **Communal Gardens** are organized and maintained by groups of people who share both the work and the rewards. Produce is usually distributed among the group members or donated to local food pantries.
- **Food Pantry Gardens** are maintained by volunteers and/or food pantry clients and all of the food is donated to the food pantry.
- **Therapy Gardens** are a way to provide horticultural therapy and are usually led by a horticulture therapist. Typical sites for a therapy garden are hospitals, senior centers and prisons.
- **Demonstration Gardens** are used to show the public different types of gardening methods, composting techniques and plant varieties. These are open to the public and used for demonstration classes. Often they are managed by those who have received training in horticulture and volunteer to educate the community on gardening, such as Master Gardeners.



Starting your own Community Garden

While it's true that community gardens have plenty of benefits, there is also a lot of hard work involved. A great deal of planning, organizing and group decision-making goes on behind the scenes to make the garden work. Before you get started, determine if there is a broad desire for a garden. What type best suits the community? Who will the garden serve?

Start a garden club. Once you determined what type of garden you want to create, start a garden club. It sounds fancy, but this is just a formal way of uniting your group. The club will help keep things organized and make sure the work is divided up evenly. Clubs establish rules, review garden applications, make plot assignments, collect any dues, pay bills and resolve conflicts. Typically, a garden club has at least two officers – a president and a treasurer, but you may have more depending on your needs.



Community gardens can be used in schools, job training, horticultural therapy or even demonstration gardens. Benefits include food production, exercise, improving the environment, outdoor education and cultural opportunities.

Locate a site. Now that you have your garden club established, you need to choose a site. To find and evaluate potential garden sites, tour the neighborhood. Be sure to consider churches, nonprofit organizations and businesses – any group that may have land they're willing to donate.

Make sure your site has a nearby water source and gets at least six hours of direct sun each day. Make sure you understand the site's history: determine how it's been used previously and how it's used now. You may want to have a soil test performed to judge what changes you'll need to make. Once you've found a potential location, identify the owner of the land and get a lease or agreement.

Identify resources. Community gardens can require a great deal of equipment, supplies and knowledge. The following questions can help you identify the resources you'll need to make your garden a success.

- Does your group already have access to tools and other gardening equipment?
 - Will your site need to be plowed or tilled?
 - Do you have access to compost or mulch?
 - Is there a shed available for storage?
 - Does your site need a fence?
 - How will the site be cleaned (removal of trash, branches, etc.)?
 - Are there trees on the site that need to be trimmed?
 - Will the site need to be mowed regularly?
 - Will your garden club have to carry liability insurance on the site?
 - Are there any community gardens or Master Gardeners in your area that are already established that your garden club can learn from?
- Do you need a community organizer to help facilitate your club?
 - Are there local government agencies, non-profit groups or businesses that are willing to sponsor the garden, make donations or provide other means of support?

Plan your garden. Your garden design can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose, but make sure to include as many people as possible in its design to create a sense of unity and keeps everyone involved in the project. Measure the site and make a simple, to-scale site map. Try using drawings or photos from magazines or other gardens for inspiration.

Some things to consider when designing your garden are the location and size of your garden beds – be sure to take into account existing trees, shrubs and vegetation if you plan to keep them. Plan for driveways and pathways, and consider incorporating common areas such as picnic tables and grassy areas. Don't forget details such as a place for storage, compost bin and the boundary of the site. And of course, you will need a name (and sign!) for your community garden.

Your garden design can be as simple or as elaborate as you choose.



Garden Club Guidelines & Regulations

1. All gardeners are required to complete an application. A plot fee of \$____ is due by _____.
2. All gardeners are required to sign up for one of the garden jobs/crews listed on page _____. Please contact the garden co-leaders for more information.
3. Garden meetings and work parties are scheduled throughout the season. Please plan to attend to get to know your fellow gardeners and help with garden upkeep and special projects.
4. Keep your plot and the adjoining pathways tended. If your plot appears to be untended for a period of time, and you haven't contacted the garden monitor, you will be contacted, and your plot may be assigned to another gardener. Call the garden monitor if you need help or if you will be out of town for an extended period of time. If you plan to discontinue use of your space, please let the monitor know as soon as possible so that your plot can be assigned to another gardener.
5. Plant tall plants and vines in places where they will not interfere with your neighbor's plot. Planting illegal plants is prohibited.
6. At the end of the gardening season, all dead plants and non-plant materials (string, wire, wood metal, plastic, etc.) must be removed and disposed of properly and all gardens left neat and tidy. If your garden is not cleaned up by _____, you could lose your gardening privileges for the next season or be reassigned to a new, smaller plot.
7. Pick up litter when you see it.
8. Please put weeds and dead plants into the compost bin provided. Do not leave them in the pathway. Any diseased plants or seedy invasive weeds are to be bagged and put in the trash so as not to contaminate the gardens. Old woody plants are to be placed in the brush pile to be carted to the recycling center.
9. Do not apply anything to or pick anything from another person's plot without their express approval.
10. Please do not leave the water on unattended. When finished gardening for the day, please roll up the hose at the faucet area, return tools to the shed and lock the shed before leaving the garden.
11. Smoking and chewing tobacco is not allowed. Tobacco can transmit a lethal virus to tomatoes, and cigarette butts are loaded with toxins.
12. Pets, drugs (including alcohol), radios, boom boxes and fires are not allowed.
13. Please supervise children in the garden.
14. For your safety, only garden during daylight hours.
15. Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to the garden co-leaders and police.
16. Use common courtesy, be considerate of your gardening neighbors and ENJOY.
17. Violation of Gardener Guidelines: If any of the guidelines are violated, you will be contacted by phone or e-mail and have one week to address the violation. After one week, if the violation has not been remedied you may lose your gardening privileges.

Making it a success!

Common problems. Community garden groups face many challenges, and you are bound to experience problems at some point in time. Rather than getting discouraged, get more organized. The key to a successful community garden is not only being able to prevent problems from occurring, but being able to work together to solve problems when they do appear.

One of the most common challenges is personal conflict within the garden group. Strong leadership and organization are crucial. Make sure rules are spelled out clearly, and a system is in place to enforce them.

These guidelines should include participation requirements – weeding, mowing, repairing equipment, etc. – and consequences of failing to follow through on agreed duties. A good leader can go a long way in minimizing misunderstandings.

Set up a schedule. Plan to visit your garden two to three times a week during growing season. Write it on your calendar or sticky note – since it's not located just outside your door it can be easy to forget there's work to do!

Plan meetings and workdays to bring everyone together. This will help the gardeners get to know each other and become part of your gardening community. It's also a great way to communicate various jobs and projects that need to be done to keep the garden in shape.

Educate yourself. Make friends with other gardeners. Experienced gardeners are an invaluable resource at your garden. Pick their brains for gardening tips, or visit their plots to see how they stake tomatoes or trellis beans.

Check out books from the library. Attend classes. Become a Master Gardener. Have gardening mentors in

place to teach and encourage new members so they don't become discouraged and give up. There's always something to learn about gardening. The more you learn, the more success you'll have.

Stay safe. Know your non-gardening neighbors. Take time to visit with them, learn their names and share extra produce. Visit with them about how the garden works. You may be surprised to find that people just assume that they can take food from the garden because it's a community garden. Be sure to harvest produce on a regular basis. Some people use the excuse that "a lot of food is going to waste" to justify taking food from a garden without permission.

Put a border or fence around your plot if your garden rules allow it. Even a simple barrier can be a deterrent. Report theft, vandalism and unusual activities to gardeners and the police. The more the garden, the more curbing unwanted activities.

And of course, use common sense. Even though your



Experienced gardeners are an invaluable resource for your garden. Have them share their knowledge with the group or mentor new members. The more you learn the more success you'll have!

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Chard			
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Cucumbers			
Eggplant			
English Peas			
Grapes			
Green Beans			
Kale			
Lettuce			
Muscadines			
Nectarines			

Sweet Potatoes and Apples

5 sweet potatoes
5 medium, firm baking apples
½ cup brown or granulated sugar
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
½ cup water

Cook sweet potatoes, then cool. Peel and slice into ¾-inch slices. Peel, core and slice apples. Layer sweet potatoes and apples in a buttered 9- x 13-inch glass baking dish; dot top with butter or margarine and sprinkle with sugar. Add water, cover and bake at 375°F. for 45 minutes. Uncover during last 15 minutes of baking.

Serves 8. Calories: 210, Fat: 2 g,
Protein: 2 g, Fiber: 5 g, Carbohydrate: 50 g,
Sodium: 30 mg, Cholesterol: 0 mg

Indicates summer months

Vegetable Harvest Calendar

[illegible]

Arkansas Fruit &

Crustless Spinach Pie

Vegetable cooking spray
3 egg whites or egg substitute
1 c. flour
1 c. fat-free milk
¼ tsp. fresh minced garlic or ½ tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. baking powder
12 oz. shredded low-fat cheese
4 c. fresh, washed and chopped spinach
(or one package frozen chopped spinach)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9" x 13" pan lightly with vegetable cooking spray. Beat eggs well. Add flour, milk, garlic and baking powder. Stir in cheese and spinach, and pour mixture into the pan. Bake for 35 minutes or until lightly browned.

Makes 6 servings, Calories: 204, Fat: 4.5 g,
Protein : 20 g, Fiber: 1 g, Carbohydrate: 20 g,
Sodium: 490 mg,
Cholesterol: 13 mg

	JAN	FEB	MAR
Okra			
Onions			
Peaches			
Peppers			
Plums			
Potatoes (white)			
Pumpkin			
Radish			
Raspberries			
Spinach			
Strawberries			
Summer Squash			
Sweet Corn			
Sweet Potatoes			
Tomatoes			
Turnip Greens			
Watermelon			
Winter Squash			

Fresh Strawberry Sauce

1 pint fresh strawberries, washed
with caps removed
⅓ c. sugar

In a food processor, combine strawberries and
vanilla. Puree, then chill. Serve over custard.

Serving Size = 2 tablespoons, Calories: 30
Cholesterol: 0 mg, Protein: 0 g, Sodium: 0 mg

Vegetable Harvest Calendar

[illegible]

tsp. fresh lemon or lime juice
tsp. vanilla extract

ries, sugar or lime lemon juice and
mustard, ice cream or pound cake.

1, Fiber: 0.5 g, Carbohydrate: 8 g,
: 0.5 mg, Fat: 0 g

Indicates summer months



Protect Your ears!

Loud sounds over 85 decibels can damage nerves and produce permanent hearing loss. Powered gardening tools such as lawn mowers, hedge trimmers and tillers can cause permanent damage to your hearing in just minutes. Don't forget to wear adequate hearing protection in the garden!