



Grow It Eat It: Go Forth And Cultivate

Lee Royer, Special to Frederick News Post

Interest in homegrown food increases daily as our recession deepens and folks want to continue enjoying healthy but often higher priced organic local vegetables and fruits. The Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) has heard the word and is responding with an exciting new initiative called Grow It Eat It. The Grow It Eat It mission is to “Help Marylanders improve health and save money by growing fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs using sustainable practices.” The vision is “one million Maryland food gardeners producing their own affordable, healthy food.” Supported by MCE staff, Master Gardeners and the Home and Garden Information Center volunteers are leading the way.

The Grow It Eat It campaign will help address major issues that concern the Maryland Cooperative Extension, including increasing food safety and security, improving quality of life and human health, and environmental concerns such as improving water quality, protecting natural resources, and encouraging the use of alternative energy. Big issues, yes, but learning how to start and maintain a food garden is something that can be done at the individual level and if accomplished in large enough numbers, will have an impact on each of these pressing problems.



Grow It Eat It in Frederick County

Frederick County Master Gardeners will be supporting the GE initiative in a variety of ways. Our FNP columns will feature educational articles pertaining to homegrown veggies, fruits, and herbs. We will be offering seminars and classes on grow-your-own and related subjects. On Thursday March 5, there will be a seminar entitled “Eating Well from Small Spaces: Growing Your Family’s Produce presented by Moira Weldon and Ted Lambert.

The MG booth at the Great Frederick Fair in September will have a display devoted to the subject and attended by experienced knowledgeable volunteers ready to answer questions. Grow It Eat It information will be available at our plant clinics, “Ask A Master Gardener”, held each week at the Baughman’s Lane Farmers Market on Saturdays and on Tuesdays at the Ft. Detrick Farmers Market.

What is MCE?

Those of you unfamiliar with “the Extension office”, as it is often referred to, will appreciate this explanation from their web site at <http://extension.umd.edu/about/> “Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) is a statewide, non-formal education system

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within the college of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. MCE educational programs and problem-solving assistance are available to citizens and are based on the research and experience of land grant universities such as the University of Maryland, College Park.”

What is The Home and Garden Information Center?

The HGIC, can be reached in Maryland by calling 1-800-342-2507 or out of state at 410-531-1757 and online at <http://www.hgic.umd.edu/> . At this frequently updated site you will find monthly Hot Topics (February’s include Spring Frost Dates and Over Seeding Your Lawn), Publications (some free to download, others for sale), Invasive Species Alerts, and an award winning Plant Diagnostic Site which offers photographic keys to help diagnose and solve plant problems, using Integrated Pest Management principles.

Who are the Master Gardeners?

Maryland Master Gardeners are specially trained volunteer educators for the University of Maryland who teach the public about safe, effective, and sustainable gardening practices. There are approximately 200 Master Gardeners in Frederick County. Our MG Coordinator is Susan Trice. The office number is always at the bottom of this column.

Now that you have been introduced to the Grow It Eat It initiative, and introduced or reminded of the roles of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Home and Garden Information Center, and the Master Gardeners, we hope you will join us in our efforts to produce affordable, healthy, sustainable food right in your backyard. You know how to reach us, we’ll be there when you call. As Jon Traunfeld, Extension Specialist, and the architect of Grow It Eat It, says, “Go forth and cultivate!”

For more information about horticulture or the Master Gardener Program in Frederick County, call the Frederick County Office of the Maryland Cooperative Extension, 301- 600-1596, or visit <http://www.frederick.umd.edu/>. Our mission is to educate Maryland residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.