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GROW YOUR OWN GREENS

Have you wanted to grow your own salad greens but not sure how to get started? Let our local Master Gardener volunteers guide you at the upcoming fair.

Economic recession and concern for food safety in Maryland created an overwhelming public demand for food gardening information in 2008. University of Maryland Extension responded quickly and creatively with a comprehensive statewide interdisciplinary campaign, Grow It Eat It (GIEI), to connect people with fresh produce.

In a coordinated effort, Master Gardeners throughout the state have taught thousands of residents' food gardening skills. These skills have led to hundreds of new and expanded backyard, community and school gardens. Local Master Gardeners will have a Grow It Eat It (GIEI) display at the Great Frederick Fair this coming Saturday-Saturday, September 17-24, from 10:00 am-7:00 pm, in the Farm & Garden Building 14A. Volunteers will be on hand to answer your gardening questions.

The University of Maryland, Home and Garden Information Center, has set up a comprehensive GIEI network that links gardeners through social media tools. There are 85 YouTube video clips to show new gardeners the how-to on starting a garden. You can view them at <http://www.youtube.com/user/UMDHGIC> For city dwellers they demonstrate special gardening tools for container gardening in an urban environment.

If garden newcomers are reluctant to try their hand at a green thumb, they can feel more confident, knowing that they can get 24/7 answers to gardeners' direct questions. On the HGIC homepage, www.growit.umd.edu you can send questions and photos and receive answers in 1-2 days. It is like have a personal farmer to hold your hand. There is also a toll-free phone at 1-800-342-2507 that operates 8:00 am-1:00 pm, Monday-Friday.

One of my favorite gardening tools is the University of Maryland Salad Table™. According to Jon Traunfeld, Director of the Home and Garden Information Center and State Master Gardener Coordinator, "the table is a great way to grow salad greens right outside your back door. With Salad Tables, you can do your gardening at waist-level and move the garden to capture or avoid sunlight. We recommend keeping the tables in full sun from April through mid-June and again from mid-September through November.

You can find directions on how to make the UM Salad Table at the website or for a hard copy call the toll free number. When you find out how easy, it is to grow your own greens try these delicious salad recipes.

TOSSED GRAPEFRUIT SALAD

1 head romaine lettuce
4 green onions, sliced
1 stalk celery, sliced
1 whole FLORIDA grapefruit, any color
1/2 cup green peas

Wash and tear lettuce into bite size pieces. Wash green onions and celery. Slice thinly. Peel and section grapefruit into sections if using fresh product. If using canned grapefruit, drain well. Thaw frozen green peas. Add all ingredients together and toss with dressing. Garnish with nuts if desired.

Dressing

1/2 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
1 tablespoon fresh parsley
Salt and pepper to taste

SPINACH & PINE NUTS SALAD

3 quarts torn greens – spinach **or** 1/2 spinach & 1/2 butter lettuce

Dressing:

3/4 cup toasted pine nuts, coarsely chopped
1/2 teaspoon tarragon
1/4 teaspoon grated lemon peel
1/2 cup olive oil
1/3 cup vinegar, balsamic*
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Mix all ingredients together. Allow 2 tablespoons dressing for each 1 cup of salad. Sprinkle each salad with nutmeg to serve. *Can use lemon juice instead of vinegar. Makes 8 servings, 2 tablespoons per salad (215 calories per serving).

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