Miller County Master Gardener Basic Training Course Offered

Miller County Master Gardeners and the Miller County Cooperative Extension Service will be offering Master Gardner training sessions in October and November. The cost of the course will be $75 and is limited to 25 enrollees.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardner, contact the Miller County Extension Service, 400 Laurel, Suite 215, Texarkana, AR 71854 or phone them at (870) 779-3609 and request an application or contact Master Gardner Andrea Thomas at (903) 832-8111 or email 7550@yahoo.com, as soon as possible.

The class consists of 40 hours instruction (classroom and field trips), that include: lawn care; ornamental trees and shrubs; insect, disease and weed management; soils and plant nutrition; vegetable and flower gardening; home fruit production; irrigation and more.
Cooking With Herbs

The art of using herbs and spices is in learning how to add and how to mix flavors. It is best to start with a tested recipe. Then add more or less seasoning to suit your taste. Many cooks prefer fresh herbs, if available. The flavor of fresh herbs is not as strong as dried. Use two to three times as much fresh as dried herbs. As a general rule, 1/4 teaspoon powdered = 3/4 to 1 teaspoon crumbled = 2 to 3 teaspoons fresh.

When creating your own recipes, use about 1/4 teaspoon dried herbs or spices for each serving. Use less when using stronger seasonings. It is easier to add more than to try to make up for adding too much.

The flavor of herbs and spices become weaker if cooked for a long time. When a recipe will be cooked for an hour or more, add seasonings about 45 minutes before it is done cooking.

When using crushed or ground herbs and spices, add them 15 minutes before cooking is complete.

Storing Herbs and Spices

Whole dried herbs and spices last much longer than crushed or ground forms. For greater freshness, buy the whole form and crush or grind when ready to use.

The flavor of dried herbs and spices weakens over time. Check ground or crushed herbs and spices for freshness at least once a year. Crush a little bit in your hand and sniff. If the aroma is weak, throw away. Buying the smaller size instead of the economy size will save money in the long run if the larger package is not used while still fresh.

Store dried seasonings in a cool, dark, dry place. Heat, sunlight and dampness cause herbs and spices to lose their flavor and aroma quickly. Jars and bottles with tight-fitting lids are the best containers for storing. Keeping seasonings in the freezer will increase their shelf life.

Drying and Freezing Fresh Herbs

To dry fresh herbs: Hang in bunches or lay on screens in a warm, dark area (not over 90 degrees) or a warm oven (less than 110 degrees). When herbs are brittle when rubbed between the hands, crumble into powder and store.

To freeze fresh herbs: Rinse carefully and dry between paper towels. Place in freezer bag or container with tight-fitting lid and freeze.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seasoning</th>
<th>Storage Life</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole</td>
<td>2-3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground</td>
<td>6 months – 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leafy herbs</td>
<td>3 months – 2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehydrated vegetable</td>
<td>6 months</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Vegetable Medley**

1 TBLS low-fat margarine
2 medium yellow summer squash, sliced
1 medium zucchini, sliced
1 medium onion, diced
3 medium fresh tomatoes, diced
1/2 cup frozen corn
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 tsp oregano
1/2 tsp basil
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper

In a large pan over medium heat, melt margarine. Add squash, zucchini and onion. Saute 3 to 4 minutes. Add tomatoes, corn, garlic and seasoning and cook another 2 to 3 minutes. Serve immediately.

Calories: 92, Fat: 1 g, Carbohydrate: 15, Sodium: 15 mg, Protein: 4 g, Cholesterol: 0 mg

**Herbs and Spices in a Healthy Diet**

There is no question that what we eat affects our health. Many years of research has shown that:

A high-fat diet increases the risk for heart disease, stroke, certain types of cancer, diabetes and obesity.

Too much sodium (salt) can lead to high blood pressure in some people.

Most Americans should cut back on the amounts of fat and salt in their diets. An easy way to reduce fat and salt in the diet is to cook with herbs and spices. Herbs and spices add flavor to foods without adding fat and salt.

Healthy people over the age of two years should limit dietary fat to no more than 20-35% of total calories for adults (50-80 grams a day). Sodium should be limited to 2,300 milligrams per day—about as much as you would get in 1 tablespoon of salt.

**Watering Sandy Soil Gardens**

Question: When letting a soaker hose run on tomatoes, how many hours should you leave it on?

Answer: When watering with a soaker hose, you should leave it on long enough for the water to soak 6-8 inches into the soil. You can stick your finger in the ground to see. Usually, this is about an hour or so.

Question: When watering with a sprinkler like you would buy at your local retail store, how many minutes do you need to leave it on?

Answer: When using a sprinkler to water your plants, put an empty can (i.e. soup can) on the ground to catch the water and when you have ¾ to 1 inch of water in the can, you can turn it off. This usually takes 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Question: If you don’t get any rain, how many times a week should you water your garden?

Answer: Three (3) times per week is good.

If you are watering the leaves, as with a sprinkler, then it should be done in the morning so the sun can dry it out during the day, therefore reducing your risk of diseases.

Organic matter/compost will help your ground to hold water better.
Farmer’s Market

Remember...the Farmer’s Market is open every Wednesday and Saturday starting at 7:30 am until sold out. It is located in Herman Dierks Park at the pavilion in DeQueen. A Farmers’ Market Vendor Guide booklet for the State of Arkansas can be found at: http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programsServices/environmentalHealth/foodProtection/Documents/FarmersMarketGuidelines.pdf

Vegetable Gardening in Arkansas

The Cooperative Extension Service offers a book “Vegetable Gardening in Arkansas” for $7.00 on our website, www.uaex.edu in the publications section. If you are interested in ordering one, call Dana at the Extension office (870) 584-3013 and she will guide you through the ordering process. You will need a credit card to order.

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