

Posted by:

Joe McMahon, member of Shade Tree Commission, Master Gardener

Victory Garden

With the nation's economy still in a weakened condition as well as a world-wide stress on other global economies, more and more people are looking for ways to save money. Neighbors growing their own food as a cost saving measure are gaining in popularity across the nation. One is reminded of the proliferation of "Victory Gardens" that sprung up during World War II. Not only does an old-fashioned "Victory Garden" save money but it also allows people to enjoy the outdoors.

Vitamin D and Other Benefits

Working in the garden provides an opportunity to actively participate and enjoy one of New Jersey's best leisure time activities, That's why we're called The Garden State. Nonetheless, while outdoors, damage to our skin, caused by the sun, is cause for concern. Although damage from ultraviolet rays from the sun is well documented, the introduction and use of sun block now provides improved protection, This caution notwithstanding, our bodies require vitamin D, Scientist recommend that about 20 minutes of exposure to sunlight is adequate for the body's vitamin D needs. What better way of obtaining this precious vitamin than to work in the garden.

Moreover, all the bending, standing, lifting and getting up and down frequently associated with gardening can, indeed, be beneficial. In fact, doctors now acknowledge that gardening is an effective way to lose weight and tone up our bodies.

Getting Started

To start your "victory garden" select a small plot of ground in your back yard. One that you can easily reach. Or, better yet, a garden area that you can observe from a window inside your house. Ideally, a vegetable garden should be located in a level area where there is about six to eight hours of sunlight. A water source should be located nearby. Avoid locating a garden near trees or shrubs as they compete for water and nutrients. Break up large clods of soil. Add and mix into the soil organic matter such as: compost, other nutrients, and fertilizer. Plant tall crops where they won't shade the shorter crops. Avoid planting a big garden that will be difficult to maintain and require more work than you can provide. Don't forget that good gardening skills require adequate time and attention to pulling out the weeds!

Next, choose your favorite vegetables from nurseries or from catalogues. What do you like? Tomatoes, carrots, celery, corn, cucumbers, radishes, spinach, peppers peppers. lettuce, eggplant, onions.....

The planting season has arrived. Happy Victory Gardening!