

## The Taste of Summer

If you are scurrying to keep the zucchini picked before it becomes big as a baseball bat, you realize how few plants are needed to provide a mountain of squash. Any variety of squash is wonderful, low-cal and good for you, but patti-pan and the small yellow ones seem to freeze and retain their original charm more readily than zucchini does, which may explain the loaves of zucchini bread, which does freeze well.

Recently I relished zucchini 'lasagna': actually the dish had no pasta since thin lateral slices of zucchini played the pasta role, layered with tomatoes, cheese and sundry other delights. It was delicious!

Seed-sowers are of two sorts. Some of us will plant every seed in the packet; other gardeners know that over-sowing requires a lot of thinning so will save part of their supply. If it is one of those vegetables that produces splendidly in a fall garden for late fall until spring harvesting, these wise gardeners will be sowing saved seeds right now, or even buying more. We are fortunate to live in a climate where fall and winter crops do not require cold frames or row covers to protect them, although those devices are helpful in discouraging insects and rabbits from feasting on them.

Fall grown beets are particularly sweet and tasty and you can begin harvesting them when they are an inch in diameter. Eaten with their greens, they are delectable. Beets, as well as other roots crops, such as turnips, parsnips, and carrots can be left in the ground and pulled as needed throughout winter and spring. Kohlrabi is grown as a substitute for turnips and is easier to harvest as the bulb sits on the surface of the soil. Cooler weather suits it better than summer when hot scorching days can make the flesh hot and fibrous.

Members of the allium family that includes onions, garlic, and shallots, are easily grown nearly all year round. If you want to store the harvested onions for weeks and weeks, check the seed packet. Not all varieties will last well enough to decorate your pantry in those charming braids. For inventive cooks, the choice of onion relatives available in stores is so limited, they are experimenting with enriched allium patches in their herb beds. An attractive addition as they have colorful pom-poms that announce their ripeness by toppling over.

Salad greens are universal favorites and by choosing those cultivars that are 'frost proof' you can enjoy salad greens continually. Lettuces have become so beautiful with leaves of many shades, they can join an ornamental planting in beds or containers. As greens go glamorous, so does magenta-stemmed Swiss chard. Favored over spinach because it does not bolt so quickly when hot weather comes, it is a prime spring crop. It can also be grown as a fall crop as it withstands temperatures down to 20 degrees. Chard seems to grow so fast, you have to remember to pick it. The leaves can be picked from around the edges of the plant as they continue to grow from the center.

Even diners who do not care for cabbage savor Brussels sprouts. These pretty minis can be harvested for months, surviving hard freezes. They need to be planted midsummer for picking from October through December. Traditionally green, they now come in burgundy. However, I don't know if the color stays to spice up a dinner plate.

**Growth: a mixed blessing**

It is not only we the people as individuals who area getting larger, our area too is bulging. No one is planning to hang out a sign on the roads that lead into Gloucester and Mathews Counties reading "Come visit, but don't stay!" When we became a country there were vast spaces to accommodate growth, a situation that imprinted on our national psyche "growth is good". Now we are realizing that there must be limits to expansion. According to expert analysis by the states surrounding Chesapeake Bay, there is little expectation that the Bay can recover while rampant growth continues.

Long time advocate for the Bay and author of books on its beauty, Tom Horton, is addressing the problem of continued growth. In the mid 1980s when there were 14 million of us living in the Bay watershed, environmentalists hoped that by educating the public about this national treasure its health could be restored. Today, with 17 million people living in the watershed, these hopes have faded.

Horton is asking for a public conversation about growth, not just about the effects of growth, but about growth itself. It is Horton's premise that stability, not growth, should shape the future. As commercial fishermen continue to struggle, there are new speeches, new efforts, new money, new deadlines. We do mean so well, but can things improve until we put the brakes on growth? Is it time for a new conversation?