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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1944.

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QUESTION BOX

Which vegetables for food value?
When plant berries?
Plant herbs in victory garden?

ANSWERS FROM garden specialists of U. S.
Department of Agriculture.

One look at our mailbag today, with the gardening questions beginning to pile up, and it's easy to see that spring isn't far away. Let's get the garden specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture to answer some of our letter-writing questioners today. We'll take the first three letters here-- one about the food value of vegetables...one asking when to plant berries...and the third asking about herbs in the victory garden.

The first writer today says, "I'm planning my first victory garden, and I'd like to know if an amateur gardener like myself would find it difficult to grow some of the vegetables that rank high in mineral and vitamin content."

The garden experts say that some of the most valuable vegetables, from a nutritional point of view, fortunately are among the most common and easily grown. Most vegetables give us vitamin A and vitamin C--ascorbic acid--and we also get good amounts of riboflavin, thiamine, calcium, iron, and food energy from many vegetables. And perhaps you noticed that just recently Dr. Hazel Stiebeling, assistant chief of the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, reported that as a nation we need to double our supplies of the green and yellow vegetables.

High on the list, for food value, are tomatoes, cabbage, chard, kale, and beet greens. All these are easy to grow. Other good vegetables for nutrition are limas, snap beans, carrots, green lettuce, spinach, and turnips. Potatoes, sweetpotatoes, and sweet corn are excellent for energy, and have other values,

but they take a great deal of growing space, so an experienced gardener doesn't plant them unless he has a large garden. Onions and beets aren't important nutritionally, but they contribute good flavor and color to the diet. Of course any selection of vegetables depends on which ones your family likes.

Plan your garden so you'll have a continuous supply of a few vegetables all through the growing season. The green leafy vegetables are especially important, and it's wise to have one or another of them from earliest spring up until freezing time.

That should answer our letter about the vegetables. Now our next question: "I'm planning to add strawberries and raspberries to my garden this spring. When is the best time to plant them? And how should they be planted?"

Set out your strawberry and raspberry plants as soon as you can prepare the soil. As a rule, the earlier you get your plants out, the better they'll do.

Prepare the ground as you would if you were planting vegetables. It's important for the plants to be entirely dormant, with no buds starting, when you put them in. And if you don't get around to putting in your plants as soon as you buy them, take care the roots don't dry out. Watch the wrapping around the roots; if it appears dry, immerse the roots briefly in water.

Set your plants at the depth they grew in the nursery. Pick off all the fully developed leaves on the strawberries before you plant them, and cut back the canes of the raspberry bushes to about six inches.

When you dig the holes for the plants, separate the topsoil and the subsoil. Put the plants in carefully, with the roots spread out, then fill around the roots with the topsoil you took out of the hole, and use the subsoil to fill up the rest of the hole. Firm the soil around the roots to keep them from drying out, and also to hold the plant in position.



And now for our last question of the day. This homemaker writes, "I can't decide whether it's worthwhile to take up space in a victory garden to grow herbs. What would you advise?"

The answer to this depends pretty much on yourself. If you make good use of the herbs you grow--add interest to your meals with them--then you can well afford to devote a small space in your garden to a herb border. Herbs don't take much growing space, you know. One or two plants of each variety you like will give you enough herbs for use all summer and also to dry for the winter. And with our food choice comparatively limited now, herbs can be the makings of many an otherwise dull dish.

Select the herbs you'll enjoy most. You'll probably want to include parsley--it's rich in vitamin A and vitamin C, so put it right into foods, where it'll be eaten, instead of using it as a garnish to be left on the plate. Chives give a delicate onion flavor and attractive touch of color to many foods. For summer drinks, and sauces and jellies, you'll want to plant mint. And for flavoring meats, soups, and salads, you can take your pick of thyme, sage, rosemary, marjoram, rue, dill, savory, and caraway.

For convenience, plant your herb border near the kitchen. And be sure it is located where it will get plenty of sunshine.

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