

Weekly Article

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Are you Ready to Garden this Spring?

Hello, my name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator, and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. Back to reality this week, more winter-like weather rather than spring-like weather that we have experienced the past few weeks. March is trending more normal than February with cool damp conditions reaching the region for the week of March 13th -19th. If the wet cool conditions aren't rough enough for you then the time change should be the cherry on top! I have to admit Sunday morning was a rough morning for me as I rolled out of bed (more like fell) at about 5:30 am and headed out the door to start my chores. I was greeted with not only pitch-black darkness but freezing cold air and blowing snow to boot! As I made my way to the barn and flipped on the lights my Holstein Steers gave me a look that reminded me of the look mom and dad gave me during my early childhood Christmas mornings waking up mom and dad at 5 am to open presents. This was a good reminder to me that the time change can be very stressful for not just humans but livestock and pets as well. Adjusting feeding schedules in short time intervals to allow animals to adjust can go a long way in keeping livestock and pets healthy and preventing digestive upset. On a more positive note, the time change can allow for the late-night owls to enjoy lighter later in the day, and farmers can now take advantage of the later days to accomplish more cleanup efforts from last week's windstorm. Some oats and alfalfa hay were sowed this past week and more fence was being built as well. The cold snap has put a pause on grass growth and flower blooming, but it won't be long until crops are planted, and gardens will be growing as well.

Many greenhouses are full of young veggies and perennial flowers just waiting for the day to be transplanted in the garden. So, are you ready to garden this year? There are countless benefits to raising your own food and with the extreme rise in food prices, many might be bouncing around the idea of raising a home garden this year. Here are a few tips before jumping into the garden frying pan head first!

1. Planning and Research first- Before calling your farmer neighbor and asking him to plow up your whole backyard, take some time to research the different ways to garden. There are many different ways to raise vegetables other than a traditional garden. Container, raised beds, hanging baskets, bags, and even vertical gardens are great options for those with little space. Gardens can be economical and environmental using reused

pots, pans, cups, bags, boxes, tires, and egg cartons to make great seed starter kits.

2. Plant what you like- I talk to many people about what to raise in the garden and they will be a list of vegetables, herbs, and fruits as long as my arm and then I will ask them what they like to eat and the list is cut down to the size of my index finger. The more types of produce you grow will equate to more management time and expense so make sure to plant what you like unless you have a marketing plan in place to sell excess products.
3. Strategically plant- Once you have decided what you would like to grow make sure to plant when the time is right. For some crops such as Cole crops like spinach, lettuce, and cabbage early planting works out great because those plant species enjoy cool wet environments, for summer annuals such as tomatoes and peppers, planting later when temperatures of the air and soil get warmer will tend to produce healthier and faster plant growth. Avoid planting all your produce at once, stagger out planting windows so that way harvest doesn't happen all at once.
4. Read your seed tag- for direct seeding crops such as peas, beans, and corn reading the seed tag is important. Relative maturity, growth zone, disease resistance, seed depth, and seed spacing are examples of information that can be found on the back of your seed packages. RM Stands for relative maturity, this will give you a good understanding of when you might expect to harvest the crop. For example, If my incredible sweet corn says it is 75-day maturity you can expect that that sweet corn will reach maturity 75 days after planting depending on crop growth and season.
5. Have a plan for preservation- This is by far the most challenging aspect of gardening and unfortunately where most of the waste is experienced. Different types of produce have to be preserved in different ways, tubers such as beets, onions, and potatoes can be cold stored in a dark, dry, and cool area. Green beans are best blanched, water bathed and then canned to store for long periods at a time, and corn can be cleaned and frozen, and stored for long periods at a time. If you are hesitant about preservation, I recommend growing just enough to consume the year grown.

Other information:

- CAUV renewal applications are due to the Adams County Auditor by April 1, 2023.

Ag Educator Words of encouragement – Farmers who wait for perfect weather never plant. If they watch every cloud, they never harvest. – Ecclesiastes 11:4