

## Vegetable Gardens – May 1, 2013

Amber Payne is an organic grower who spoke with the members about her experiences growing vegetables. She delighted everyone with details of her cultivation techniques and used a white board to draw certain examples of planting and pruning vegetables. For example, she plants her tomatoes by laying much of the stem on the ground to ensure that there will be many strong roots. She pinches off any new growth that is at 45degrees from the main stem and only allows the plant to produce a certain number of sets of leaves. In that way the tomatoes grow along one single stem and the energy is focused on a limited number of fruit.

She discussed companion planting as a good strategy; for example, French marigolds around tomatoes bed help to repel aphids. Grow sage with carrots or plants in the cabbage family (brassicas) to help ward off pests. The book “Carrots Love Tomatoes” by Louis Riotte provides many good examples of companion planting (see below).

She uses eggs shells around plants to deter slugs and snails. She talked about various natural fertilizers, compost tea, chamomile tea, nettle tea (high in nitrogen), Epsom salts. Rhubarb leaf tea is a good fungicides and raw milk is good for eliminating mildew. She uses biodegradable black plastic mulch around many of her crops to deter weeds.

Amber also noted that many plants can be harvested in the winter and noted the work done by Eliot Coleman in this practice. She provided a reference that gives details of crops that can be harvested in unheated greenhouses during the winter (see below).

In addition, she firmly believes that there is a good time in the month and a bad time to sow and harvest. Her reference book for dates is listed below under Maria and Matthius Thun. The 2013 calendar is adapted for North American (EST) dates and times, showing optimum days for sowing, pruning and harvesting.

### References:

Alison Beck, “The Canadian Edible Garden: Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits and Seeds”, Lone Pine Publishing, 2008.

Eliot Coleman, “The Winter Harvest Handbook: Year-Round Vegetable Production Using Deep Organic Techniques and Unheated Greenhouses”, Chelsea Green Publishing, 2009.

Louis Riotte, “Carrots Love Tomatoes: Secrets of companion planting for successful gardening”, Storey Publishing, 1998.

Edward C. Smith, “The Vegetable Gardener’s Bible”, Storey Publishing, 2009.

Maria Thun, “Gardening for Life - The Biodynamic Way: A Practical Introduction to a New Art of Gardening, Sowing, Planting, Harvesting”, Hawthorn Press, 2000.

Maria and Matthius Thun, “The North American Biodynamic Sowing and Planting Calendar”, McNally Robinson, 2013.

