

# Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

## FACT SHEET



**Have Gardening Questions?** The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).  
Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: [mghelpline@masshort.org](mailto:mghelpline@masshort.org).

### The Not-So-Ordinary Vegetable Garden

Whether you're a first time gardener or old time gardener, when you think of vegetable gardens, the mind says tomatoes and lettuce, peas and beans, onions and carrots, squash and corn. These are all worthy and wonderful vegetables that belong in the home vegetable garden, but there are others, less familiar, but easy to grow and able to add some variety to your garden and your meals.

Are you a fan of oriental cooking, but don't live near an oriental market? Chinese cabbage is as easy to grow as lettuce. Sugar snap peas a tasty change of pace from shelling peas but no different to grow. Japanese spinach Sharaku can be eaten from its baby stage until it is full grown. Tatsoi makes a great fall crop surviving temperatures down to 15 degrees. And rose heart radishes reveal a red center when cut open, but also keep well so you can enjoy them after other radishes are gone.

Prefer authentic Italian cooking? Add a row of arugula and another of radicchio to your garden bed. Chioggi beets are lovely to look at and wonderful tasting. Do you enjoy Rapini, also known as Broccoli di Rapa? This non-heading plant can be grown as a fall crop guaranteed to excite your taste buds with its pungent flavor. Fava beans have a variety of uses in Italian cuisine. Planted early, you can start picking beans for fresh eating in July and continue enjoying the beans until frost.

For French cooks, plant the tiny haricot vert, a highly prized variety of green beans. Have rocky soil? Parisian carrots, small and round, offer sweet flavor and the ability to grow well where other carrots will be mis-

shapen. Mache is a salad green with a fine nutty taste. Highly cold tolerant, it can be planted in early spring and again in the fall. Bleu de Solaise leeks feature truly blue leaves and a cold hardiness that ensures stalks reaches full size, up to 20 inches long, even in New England gardens. The herb sorrel is used in salads, soups and sauces; it's nutritious and easy to grow.

A fan of Latin American cuisine might grow a variety of peppers. Whether they are mouth-burning Serrano or Habanero or the mild stuffable chili relleno types such as Ancho or Anaheim, add a new pepper to your garden and your kitchen repertoire. Have you ever tried tomatillos? They are grown like tomatoes, but the vines produce small fruits inside a papery husk. With these, you can make authentic salsas and other Mexican sauces. Plant a row of large leaf cilantro which is slow to go to seed so it produces the signature herb for salsas and other dishes for several months.

Imagine how much easier it will be to get your children to help with the weeding if your garden is a child's dream. A pizza garden offers the promise of a favorite meal with most of the ingredients coming from your own garden. Or plant popcorn and peanuts—yes you can grow them here. Watermelon varieties like Sugar Baby need little more space than a zucchini plant, but produce wonderfully sweet refrigerator-sized watermelons. These plants will need lots of sunlight and produce lots of smiles from the whole family.

Check out this year's Chef's Garden beds in the Massachusetts Horticultural Society's Garden to Table vegetable garden at our home at Elm Bank, 900 Washington Street, Wellesley.

*The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>*