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The City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department's

# The Green Thumb

An occasional publication to update Community Gardens Program participants about the current happenings in the San Luis Obispo gardening community.

## Growing Tomatoes

In my afternoon wanderings through the community gardens I have noticed that many gardeners toil year after year for the bragging rights of growing the most amazing tomato plants in the garden. I am here to help with suggestions for tomato selection, planting and care.

Varieties of tomatoes should be explored when purchasing and planting. To ensure a tomato or two each season try selecting a variety of plants that grow in different conditions: a few cold climate varieties, as well as some that enjoy a healthy dose of San Luis Obispo sunshine. Besides the tasty heirloom tomatoes, mix it up with yellow varieties, cherry tomatoes or smaller growing plants.

All tomatoes savor at least six hours of sun per day, any less leads to fewer blooms and therefore a smaller production. Tomatoes like to breathe in the soil. Do not plant straight into clay or sandy soil without amending the soil to aid in water drainage or retention respectively. A good layer of mulch around the plant will also help the soil from drying out in the warm and windy afternoons. Tomato plants like consistent moisture. Do not soak the roots then allow them to dry out.



To increase your tomato production clip off suckers growing between the stem and other shoots.

Avoid fertilizers with high nitrogen content since it encourages leaf growth and inhibits blossoms from setting.

Stake tomato plants while young to avoid disruption to the roots. Upright growth is brilliant in small space gardens and can keep make harvesting easier.

Don't forget to save a few tomatoes from the table this season to use as seeds for next year. Enjoy your sweet success in tomatoes!

*Hints from Pacific Coast Home and Garden online at [www.pchgarden.com](http://www.pchgarden.com)*

## Organic Materials Seminar May 28

Cindy Douglas, Cal Poly Organic Farm manager, is scheduled to share her knowledge of organic farming for a 2008 Community Gardens Program spring seminar

**Tuesday, May 28, 1 p.m. - 2 p.m.** at the Parks and Recreation Department located in front of Emerson Park, 1341 Nipomo Street. The community garden members from each corner of San

Luis Obispo are welcome to attend with any interested gardeners from the local community. Learn organic pest control methods, as well as ways to fertilize organically.

### Quick Tips

#### Spinach Equivalents

4 cups of leaves = 6 ounces  
1 pound fresh = 1 cup cooked  
15 - 16 ounce can = 1.5 - 2 cups  
10 ounces frozen = 1.5 cups cooked

#### Propagate Succulents

Step 1: Snip a rosette from the main plant, leaving a couple inches of stem at the base of the cutting.

Step 2: Store the cutting in a dry place out of direct sun, until the end dries and seals (3-7 days).

Step 3: Plant the healed cutting in potting soil or succulent mix.

Step 4: Water regularly, allowing soil to dry out between waterings.

*From Sunset magazine online: [www.sunset.com](http://www.sunset.com)*



#### Idea from Other Community Gardeners

*Reuse plastic containers as mini greenhouses for starting seeds and seedlings.*



For more information on activities through the City of San Luis Obispo Parks and Recreation Department, call (805) 781-7300 or stop by 1341 Nipomo Street in SLO.



## Spring Events Not to Miss!

### Earth Day SLO 2008

April 26: Arbor Day Celebration; Laguna Lake, 9 a.m. to noon and Green Living Expo; Mission Plaza, noon to 5 p.m.  
For more information contact the Earth Day Alliance at 544-8529

### Cambria Pines Lodge

May 3 and May 4: Gathering of Gardeners in Cambria, workshops range from free to \$189, please view the schedule of events online.  
For more information on Cambria Pines Lodge Nursery events, call 927-4747 or visit [www.gardenerevents.com](http://www.gardenerevents.com)

### The Home Depot, San Luis Obispo: In Store Clinics

May 3, May 10, May 17, May 24, May 31: Container Gardening and Hanging Basket Arrangement, 10 a.m.-11 a.m.

May 4, May 11, May 18, May 25: Combining Annuals and Perennials in your Garden, 1 p.m.-2 p.m.

For more information on local In Store Clinics, please call the San Luis Obispo store 596-0857 or visit [www.HomeDepotClinics.com](http://www.HomeDepotClinics.com)

### SLO Parks and Recreation Spring Seminar

May 28: Organic Materials Seminar with Cindy Douglas, 1 p.m.-2 p.m., SLO Parks and Recreation Offices, 1341 Nipomo Street  
For more information on Parks and Recreation Community Garden events, call 781-7300

## Spring/Summer Gardeners' Monthly Checklist

### May

- Plant thyme, sage, parsley and basil.
- Plant seeds of warm season crops: corn, tomatoes, peas, melons and squash.
- Plant summer annuals: geraniums, marigolds, lobelia, impatiens, zinnias, sunflowers, cosmos, alyssum, and phlox.
- Prune spring flowering plants after blooms subside.
- Fertilize everything now with a granular or soluble balanced 10•10•10 fertilizer.
- Feed roses after the first bloom and continue every 4-6 weeks.
- Continue to weed around plants and the perimeter of the plot.
- Keep a look out for snails, slugs, aphids and earwigs and dispose of organically.

### June

- It's not too late to sow warm season crops: corn, beans, squash, pappers and eggplant.
- Promote another round of blooms by trimming back all spent flowers.
- Stake tall, floppy flowers: hollyhock, foxglove, bachelor's buttons and yarrow.
- Cut back perennials: lavender, Shasta daisy, cone flower, and black-eyed Susan to encourage another round in the fall.
- Water established trees and shrubs deeply and infrequently to prepare to get them through the summer heat.
- Use a controlled-release fertilizer or hydrolyzed fish with sea kelp to feed summer flowers and vegetables.

### July

- Keep feeding blooming annuals monthly to continue the colorful show.
- When perrenails brown and die back, dig up bulbs and tubers to divide and replant for next year.
- Water roses deeply and regularly as well as trimming spent flowers.
- To encourage more flowers, cut off developing seed heads on coreopsis, cosmos, dahlias, marigolds and zinnias.
- Control hornworms by hand picking them off tomato plants, find them among the nibbled leaves.
- Replant seeds for a second harvest of beans, beets, squash, corn, carrots and cucumber.

from *Monthly Gardener Web Magazine*  
[www.weekendgardener.net/do-list.htm](http://www.weekendgardener.net/do-list.htm)

