

Planning and Planting Your Veggies for Meatless Mondays

By Robin Stanley

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Have you heard of Meatless Monday? Suddenly this campaign seems to be everywhere, from the “Washington Post” to the “Oprah” show. In fact, Meatless Mondays started during World War I “to reduce consumption of key staples to aid the war effort.” Meatless Monday was recreated in 2003 in association with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. To find out more about Meatless Monday, go to www.meatlessmonday.com. To learn more about growing delicious, nutritious fruits and veggies to serve on Monday, and the rest of the week, keep reading.

As the teacher of our popular “Spring and Summer Vegetables” class, scheduled for Saturday, February 26, 2011 (offered free of charge, the class is held at the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Dr. in Placerville, and starts at 9:00 AM), Zack Dowell never has a boring garden. He’s not interested in Bush Lake beans. Instead, he will be planting Scarlet Runner - which pairs lovely red blossoms with beans that can be harvested at all stages of growth throughout the season. Zack is also a fan of Chinese long beans, also known as yard long beans, for their superior flavor. They will produce a bumper crop and are easy to harvest as long as you provide them with a trellis or other support.

When it comes to tomatoes, Zack relies on heirlooms like Bull's Heart, Amish Paste, Ropreco, Yellow Perfection, and Arkansas Traveler. He says the taste of these tried and true varieties can’t be beat. He’s also experimented with ground cherries, which are related to tomatillos. These old-fashioned treats reseed prolifically, so learn more about them before you include them in your garden.

Zack encourages folks to consider perennials, including “...three harbingers of spring - rhubarb, asparagus, and especially sorrel, which also seeds very readily and which I’m growing to love sautéed with other greens or fresh in a salad.”

Lettuce is generally a cool season crop and here on the West Slope we can grow lettuce all winter, but why not try some that will produce all summer. For those gardeners looking to extend their season with lettuce that won’t bolt in our heat, there are an increasing number of varieties to consider, including Batavian lettuces, which were the most heat-resistant in Colorado State Extension trials (http://www.specialtycrops.colostate.edu/scp_exp_demo/lettuce_bolting.htm). Several Batavian varieties that have been particularly successful are Nevada and Sierra. Seeds are available from online retailers and it is easy to sow lettuce directly in the ground.

Whether Meatless Monday appeals to you or not, why not try growing some different veggies this year. They will be easy on your wallet, easy on your waistline, and good for your health.

Only eight weeks away, the Master Gardener 2nd Annual Spring Plant Sale promises a great selection of annuals, vegetables and perennials. The sale will be held on Saturday, April 16th in

the parking lot of the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Dr. in Placerville and benefits Master Gardener community outreach programs.

The Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. The office is located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Walk-ins are welcome. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener/.