

GARDEN TIME - 1988

Nobody can promise you'll have a great garden!

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There's no guarantee that you'll break any giant vegetable growing records, such as the 671-pound pumpkin and 595.6-pound squash, but you can try.

Here are a few suggestions to help you on your way to fame, fun and not much fortune.

The record pumpkin, 12-foot-11-inches in circumference, was top prize at 1986 World Pumpkin Confederation Weigh-Offs for Robert Gancars, a Jacobstown, N.J., vegetable farmer. The squash was grown by his brother, Edward.

The previous record pumpkin, grown in 1984 at Chelan, Wash., weighed 612 pounds.

and the top squash had been 512 pounds.

A Michigan State University horticulturist, is to pick a giant variety in his garden. Major seed companies often offer a number of large varieties.

When it comes to big vegetables, the secret really is genetic. If you plant seeds of ordinary-size vegetables, no matter how much fertilizer, water, sunlight and care you provide, you still have ordinary-size vegetables. But if you plant seed for giants and provide all these growing aids, you'll better have a lot of growing and storage space.

For instance, Atlantic Giant pumpkin seed produces fruit big enough to hold a person and the variety has weighed in at 495.5 pounds. Big Max seed often produces 100-150 pounders.

For giant winter squash, try Hungarian Mammoth or Mammoth King, which may tip the scale at 250 pounds (not unusual at 350 pounds). An edible huge squash is Pink Banana, 3 feet long and 4 inches in diameter, weighing 50-60 pounds.

Give your plants a head start by planting the seeds very early indoors in large containers. You want six-week-old transplants to put into the garden after the soil warms in spring.

Prepare the garden area as soon as you can work the soil. A high spot has better drainage and a longer growing season than a low place where cold air collects and frost comes early.

Remember that a giant squash vine will be 30 to 40 feet long, so plant where it will be out of the way. Give plants about 10 square feet in

Begonia offers bright, happy color

For a shaded spot in the garden, on the patio, window box or hanging basket, the exquisite tuberous begonia will bring brightly colored flowers often 5 to 6 inches across.

Begonia tuberosa produces spectacular blooms, just right for terraces. Drooping or trailing varieties are excellent as hanging basket types but flowers are smaller and more numerous.

Getting a good head start indoors in spring is the secret of creating a season-long display outdoors.

The tubers generally are priced according to size but you don't have to have the biggest tubers to get the best results. Buy firm tubers. Soft ones are likely to rot.

Plant the tubers, inverted side up, in regular potting soil or a mix of equal parts perlite or a mix of equal parts perlite

September best for evergreens

In most parts of this country, September is a good time to plant evergreen trees to enhance the landscape... but which varieties best suit your purpose?

First, make up your mind what should be their ultimate height and general shape. Then study your catalog or visit your favorite nursery, eastern and western.

For trees of moderate size and less spreading there are red cedars (often called junipers) for dry places, evervies for wet areas, and plumbe cypress (retinospora) often used in or more in time.

Rarer varieties are the Japanese cypripedium and the umbrella pine or sciadopitys, both fairly narrow trees. The narrowest are the Irish,

Columnar Chinese, Italian or Arizonan.

For hedges, yews are excellent and for low, flat forms there are spreading junipers of a number of kinds.

Wait until growth starts in spring before adding a chemical fertilizer.

In all cases, water well, stake if support is necessary, and mulch with 2 inches of peat, leaves, shredded bark or any similar organic product.

Finally, at the onset of winter and again in February, spray trees with an antiripicant such as Foli-guard or Wilt-Proof to help in moisture.

Arboretum good to visit

The Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Garden provides special pathways and ramps for visitors in wheelchairs and has a special tram service for the disabled and elderly.

A truly great arboretum and botanical garden must be literally for everyone," says Robert Tener, president of the Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Society, which is developing and managing the six-year-old facility.

Guides at the gardens, on White Rock Lake east of downtown Dallas, are trained to help the sight-impaired enjoy a visit through all the other areas.

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giant vegetable, roll the fruit a quarter of a turn every week or 10 days. You can do this, however, only while the fruit is small and the stem is not yet woody. After this, rolling fruit is apt to break it from the vine.

For maximum size, let your pumpkin, squash, watermelon or other giant vegetable grow until the vine is dead or at least nearly dry.

Bob Tracioki, consumer information specialist for John Deere, manufacturer of lawn and garden equipment.

"Wear slacks and hard shoes with non-slip soles to protect your feet against hidden and avoid dangling jewelry and flouzing scarfs," says

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Dress carefully when mowing lawns

When mowing the lawn this season, dress for safety is the reminder from equipment manufacturers.

"Loose clothing can snag on controls or get caught in moving parts, so tuck in shirts and avoid dangling jewelry and flouzing scarfs," says

Coldframe can extend garden life

A coldframe can extend your gardening efforts, both in early spring and in fall. It is useful to condition young seedlings that were sown indoors for later planting outdoors.

Soils must supply plants

Soils do more than provide a home for plant roots. They must also supply nutrients for growth, such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, plus micronutrients including copper, zinc, manganese, iron and molybdenum.

Garden fertilizers thus are a fine investment when you know the correct elements and quantities to apply.

The best way to know what fertilizer is needed is a soil test. Your county Cooperative Extension Service can help you with this.

Prepare the garden area as soon as you can work the soil. A high spot has better drainage and a longer growing season than a low place where cold air collects and frost comes early.

Remember that a giant squash vine will be 30 to 40 feet long, so plant where it will be out of the way. Give plants about 10 square feet in

Eye care important outside

Gardeners who wear broad-brimmed hats, coveralls, and heavy-duty gloves while using an electric hedge clipper will find bushes as disfiguring as the common sense... but not enough of it, says the American Optometric Association.

The garb protects the face from the sun, and clothing and hands from the wear and tear of yard work, but the eyes are left exposed and vulnerable to flying twigs, leaves and other debris.

Nearly 3,400 Americans suffer eye injuries from lawn mowers and home gardening equipment each year, according to the industry trade group, which says most of the injuries could be prevented by the use of proper safety eye-glasses.

The optometrists warn that which regular eye-glasses or contact lenses do not provide enough protection.

By federal regulation, eye-glasses are impact-resistant but they still can be shattered by rocks or twigs thrown by power tools, and spray or dust from weed killers and fertilizers can get around them.

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