



SOW & SO

WFB COMMUNITY GARDEN NEWSLETTER



Updates & Announcements

Welcome to the 2026 gardening season! Per the Wisconsin norm, we have had a variety of weather to welcome us to the community garden. I believe when we planted our first batch of Kale, it was almost sleeting! Thank you to the brave volunteers who stuck it out with me - I think we lasted 30 minutes!

We have seeded carrots, beets, radishes, Swiss chard, and have Kale in the ground. We will be adding spinach and lettuce varieties this week! Everything else will wait until Memorial Day weekend.

Remember to watch for the sign-up emails from Caitlin in the Recreation office. Please remember to sign up so that in case of cancellations, you receive the notification!! If you have gloves and small gardening tools, it would be great if you brought those along, as we do have limited tools available!!

Take a look at what we have blooming in the garden so far below! I'm excited to begin our gardening journey with you all - hoping it's a great growing season and lots of fun and friendships bloom!!

Miriam Gerriets

Miriam Gerriets
Community Garden Coordinator



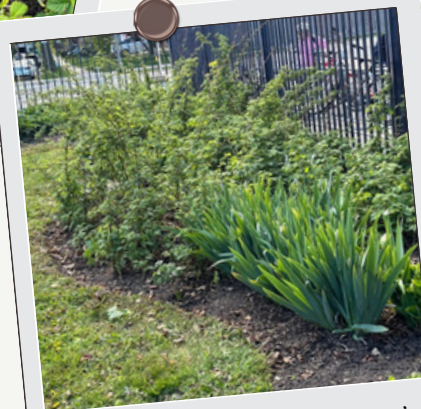
Iris Plant



Lylac



Rhubarb



Raspberries & Iris



Some Like it Cold: Vegetable Crops That Thrive in Cooler Weather

While spring is too early to plant crops like tomatoes and peppers, other plants such as lettuce, kale, spinach and broccoli thrive during the cooler months of April and May.

BY SHEILA JULSON

As we shake off another Wisconsin winter, most gardeners can't wait to start playing in the dirt. While spring is too early to plant crops like tomatoes and peppers, other plants such as lettuce, kale, spinach and broccoli thrive during the cooler months of April and May.

Mark Jorgensen, who co-owns Plant Land (6204 S. Howell Ave.) with his sister, Karen Matt, sells nine varieties of "cut and come again" leafy lettuce varieties such as romaine that can be harvested repeatedly before the summer heat sets in. He says lettuce can be planted during April and can handle a frost of 30 degrees.

Spinach can be direct seeded into the ground during April and grows according to the weather.

Peas, carrots, kale and chard varieties can also be planted by seed during mid-April.

Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, kohlrabi, cabbage and Brussel sprouts also do well during cooler weather. Jorgensen sells these plants already "hardened off" or transitioned from an indoor growing environment to the outdoors, by mid-April. He recommends a hardening off period of about four days outdoors for cruciferous plants started from seeds.

Unpredictable weather can still bring a late spring frost; if this occurs after planting, cruciferous crops can be covered with bed sheets or frost blankets.

When planting lettuce during early spring, full sun exposure is best. Most varieties Jorgensen sells are ready to cut for the first time 45 days after transplant, under optimal weather conditions. "But if you want to try to get a second cutting during mid to late May, lettuce does better in filtered light or partial shade." Cut the leaves from lettuce plants one to two inches from the



ground, rather than cutting the entire head or pulling the plant out of the ground, to yield three to four crops, or cuttings, from each plant.

“But after about a week of 80 degrees, they’re done. I try to get the lettuces outside by April,” Jorgensen advises.

Once the summer heat kicks in, lettuce, spinach and broccoli can bolt, or quickly go to seed, leading to a bitter flavor that makes the plant unpalatable. “Planting lettuce under a tree will still provide some light yet keep it cooler, offering more cuttings.”

Kale and Swiss chard need full sun. Once kale and chards are well established, they can be harvested until the first killing frost in fall. Remove only the desired number of leaves and leave the rest of the plant intact, rather than cutting the entire plant, to keep it growing through fall.

Building Plant Resiliency

Jorgensen observes that many home gardeners make the mistake of overwatering their plants and “killing them with kindness.”

“I tell people to put your finger into the ground down to your first knuckle. If it’s dry that far down, you need to water—especially lettuce. Lettuce doesn’t like it soaking wet all the time, but if you let it dry out, that will also cause bolting. Broccoli will also bolt if it’s not kept moist enough.”

While climate change has affected traditional growing and harvesting times, Wisconsin is still considered a Zone 5. Yet we have microclimates that can also affect garden plants during the wild weather swings of early spring.

“When you hear ‘it’s cooler near the lake,’ remember that it gets warmer a few miles west of the beach,” Jorgensen says. “When you get to 27th Street (from Lake Michigan), you’re not near the lake anymore; you’re in a different zone that’s warmer in summer and cooler in winter. Just those few miles make a big difference.”

It’s tempting to baby tender young transplants, but they’re more resilient than we think. “After the first 10 days the plants are in the ground, you want to let the plant take care of itself, to a point. If you water too often, the roots don’t have to search for moisture and will stay near the surface. Then if you’re away from the garden for a weekend, you might not have plants when you return because the root system won’t support the plant. You want the roots to grow down to search for moisture. Making them work for it helps them become well established.”

SHEILA JULSON

Sheila Julson is a freelance writer who enjoys capturing the stories behind Milwaukee’s happening food, beverage and urban farming scenes. She also pens articles about holistic health, green living, sustainability and human-interest features.



Flower of the Month:

SWISS CHARD

Chard, often called Swiss chard, is a leafy green vegetable with edible leaves and colorful stalks (white, yellow, red, etc.) that is related to beets but grown for its leaves, not its root.

Characteristics

- **Appearance:** Features large, crinkly leaves (savoy type) with prominent, succulent, and edible petioles (stalks).
- **Color Varieties:** Varieties can have white, red, pink, yellow, or orange stalks (e.g., 'Bright Lights' or 'Ruby Red').
- **Taste Profile:** Often described as a mix of mild spinach and celery or artichoke hearts, with bitterness that mellows when cooked.
- **Nutritional Value:** A nutritional powerhouse, high in vitamins K, A, and C, as well as magnesium, iron, and potassium, which provides over 300% of the daily value for vitamin K in a single cup.
- **Growth Habit:** It has a two-year life cycle, but is usually harvested in its first year. It does not produce a large, edible tuberous root like its relative, the beetroot.

Did you know? Despite its name, it has no connection to Switzerland, but is a Mediterranean native popular for its edible, colorful stems and ability to thrive in both cool and warm climates.

Gardening *Fun Fact*

Believe it or not, but apples, pears, plums, cherries, peaches, and apricots are all members of the rose family!



Garden to Table

Recipe inspiration from what we grow in our garden!

SWISS CHARD WITH GARBANZO BEANS

An Italian Take on Beans and Greens

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds Swiss chard, preferably rainbow chard
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 ounces pancetta, cut into 1/4-inch dice (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- 1 can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- Salt
- Freshly ground black pepper



Instructions:

1. Wash the chard leaves and stems well in a large sink of cold water. Lift the chard out of the water, leaving the grit at the bottom of the sink. Shake off the excess water, but do not dry the chard.
2. Tear the stems from the leaves and chop the stems crosswise into 1/2-inch pieces; set aside. Stack the leaves and coarsely chop them. Keep the stems and leaves separate.
3. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the pancetta and cook until crisp and browned, about 3 minutes. Stir in the shallot and red pepper flakes and cook, stirring often, until the shallot softens, about 2 minutes.
4. Add the chard stems and beans. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the stems soften, about 4 minutes. Stir in the leaves a handful at a time until wilted. Cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the chard is tender, about 5 minutes. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed. Serve hot.

RECIPE NOTES

Storage: Leftovers can be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Make ahead: The chard can be washed and cut up to 1 day ahead and stored in the refrigerator.

Bon Appetite!



We Need You

The garden is completely supported by community member donations. Donations will go towards plants, tools, maintenance, and coordination of the garden.

Donor Levels

Perennial \$35-\$99
Cultivating \$100-\$499
Heirloom \$500+



If you are interested in making a donation, please contact the WFB Recreation Department

2026 Donors

Janet Schirtzinger

Perennial Donation

Fox Karlene

Heirloom Donation

WFB Garden Club

Cultivating Donation

Kenwood Demaris

Cultivating Donation

Kim & Ethan Wong

Heirloom Donation

Ted Fleagle

Trellis Donation

Becoming a Sponsor

Thank you!!!

By becoming a business sponsor, your company will help the Community Garden by securing water, equipment, staff support and general garden expenses while your business grows through the publicity we can provide!

ANNUAL BUSINESS SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES

Harvest Level \$1000

Cornucopia Level \$2500

In-Kind Donations In the amount of your choosing

Donations made this way will earn sponsors a one-time public thank you for their donation.



2026 Business Sponsors

Growing Community one Seed at a Time

SARAH & CO.

Cornucopia Sponsor

Sarah & Co. have partnered with the Whitefish Bay Community Garden for six years now!

As Realtors, Sarah & Co. began with the desire to take a client-driven, collaborative approach to real estate. "Our client-first strategy allows us to draw on our years of market experience, tenacious negotiation skills and strong eye for staging in an atmosphere that is comfortable and confident. We rely on our track record of strong client-relationships and recognition for our hard work, including membership in Shorewest Realtors' Executive Club, to lead our path going forward."

With this approach, along with almost 20 years of combined experience and over \$65 million in sales and the support from Shorewest Realtors' award-winning team, Sarah & Co. is ready to welcome you home!



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EASTCASTLE PLACE

Harvest Sponsor

We are thrilled to welcome back Eastcastle Place as a business sponsor for a second year!

For over 140 years, Eastcastle Place's mission as a non-profit senior living community is to serve residents and their families by offering a full continuum of care and fostering active and fulfilling lifestyles of our residents. We offer senior living that includes independent living, assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing and rehabilitation all under one roof and right in the heart of Milwaukee's East Side. Eastcastle Place provides residents with maintenance-free living, an array of amenities and services to allow more time to pursue passions and interests, and a family-like atmosphere. We are always embracing new ideas that help residents keep exploring, learning and thriving every day. Visit us to learn more and experience Eastcastle Place for yourself!



[CLICK FOR WEBSITE](#)



Volunteers Welcome!

**If you know a friend or family member who would be interested in volunteering,
let them know it's never too late to join us!**

Here's what to expect as a garden volunteer:

- Miriam, the Garden Coordinator, will schedule a work time once or twice per week during the growing season, depending on the weather and what work needs to be done. Usually, the work sessions are one to two hours long.
- You will receive an email with the volunteer opportunities. The email will include a link to the SignUpGenius garden page.
- From there, you can choose which sessions you'll be able to volunteer for. If a session is cancelled due to weather, Miriam will notify you via SignUpGenius.
- Show up at the WFB Community Garden and meet Miriam and the other volunteers at your scheduled work time. The garden is located on the WFB High School lot off of Marlborough, between the Field House and Memorial Gym.
- Once you arrive, Miriam will let you know what work needs to be done.
- Please bring garden gloves and hand tools. A bottle of water is a great idea too.

**If you are a volunteer, be sure to check your email regularly for work dates & times,
events, monthly Sow & So's, and more!**



*We love our little
garden helpers!*

