

# GARDEN TIMES

**GROW SOMETHING ON YOUR OWN. GET OUT AND GARDEN!**



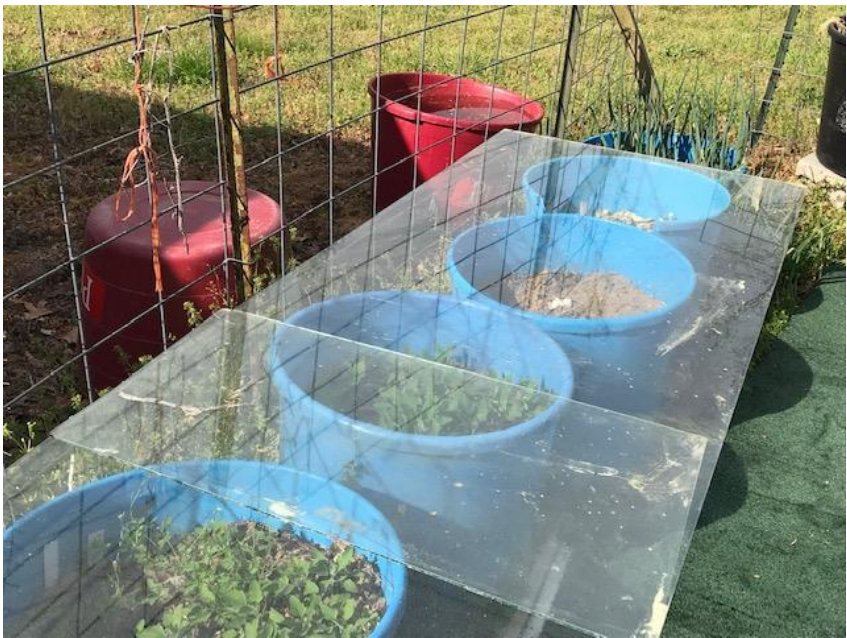
Gardens can be even more inviting with a beautiful pathway leading to raised beds. -Vicky Gray

## Garden in Any Space

**SUE SMITH**

A few years ago, due to back problems I decided not to raise a vegetable garden in the traditional way. At this point my children were grown and out of the house, leaving myself and my husband interested in having a vegetable garden. With my past gardens I came to realize I generally planted too much and ended up spending time trying to find someone to share the vegetables with. This is when I decided to try container gardening and have been very pleased with the results. My husband had some large containers from the farm that were just the right size. The containers are 21” in diameter and hold up to 30 gallons of soil. I drilled drainage holes, then filled the pots with compost from my compost pile. Although, I did some experimenting with various vegetables at first, I found I could raise all I needed for two with some left over to still share with family and friends.

To grow the right amount of food for my family, I plant one tomato in each, usually planting 3-4 varieties. I plant about 3 yellow squash and a couple zucchinis –one per pot. I plant spring onions, cucumbers, and carrots in pots. Another great vegetable choice for growing food in containers are leafy greens such as lettuce, spinach, kale, and kohlrabi.



Example of Container Gardening: Recycled glass to warm soil and used to protect seedlings during cold nights. -Sue Smith



I plant several pots of green beans and usually have plenty to eat and some to can. I started with ‘*Martha Washington*’ asparagus and more recently planted ‘*Purple Passion*’ asparagus. I keep the perennial onions growing and can usually harvest those year around.



Asparagus emerging and supported by fencing. -Sue Smith

Strawberries do well in pots which make them easy to protect from frost and birds.



Strawberries blooming in a container garden. – Sue Smith

A fence surrounds the “garden” which keeps deer out but not squirrels or groundhogs. It was originally put up as a precaution since one of our horses learned he could open his stable gate as well as gates of the rest of his family if an extra chain wasn’t on them. He could then proceed to eat lunch at my expense. The fence supports cucumber vines and occasionally melon vines.



Tomatoes resting against a wire trellis. – Sue Smith



Array of Lettuce growing happily in the sun. -Sue Smith

I tried Irish potatoes which works but production isn’t great. Sweet potatoes take up lots of space, so I only tried that one year. I sow lettuce, spinach and greens such as turnip, kale and mustard in late summer and eat from them until spring with!

Chimney bees have made homes in bare ground nearby and help with pollination. Since they are solitary ground dwellers and don’t have a hive to protect, they are not aggressive but fun to watch. They emerge in May and disappear below ground after about a month or so. I keep water barrels set under the roof collecting rain. The bees and I make use of the rainwater collected as well as nearby water sources.



Chimney bees. Female bees bring soil out of holes at entrance before laying eggs. -Sue Smith

For the last couple of years I have been experimenting with companion planting. Marigolds, radishes, parsley, and other plants can be interplanted in the pots to protect from some insects. I am going to try onions with tomatoes this year for a first time. There is some information online which cautions not to plant certain items together and I am trying to watch that. All in all, it isn’t the most beautiful garden, but it provides us with food, it’s fun to watch, and easier on my back than the older way.

*When selecting vegetables and varieties for planting a container garden it is important to note that all vegetable require 6-8 hours of sunlight a day and at least 1 to 1.5 inches of water per week (rain dependent). Selecting a proper site to grow your container garden will ensure you have the most success in growing food at home.*

*Written by Sue Smith, Davidson County Extension Master Gardener. Edited by Amy E. Ballard.*



GARDEN IN ANY SPACE: CONTAINER GARDENING

