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A Note from Glen

Your shoelaces are untied. Have you heard that already? After all it is the oldest April Fool's gag of all time, but it's amazing how often it still works.

There's something on your shirt. You dropped something. I'm sure you'll hear these and more on April 1.

Spring is here and it's time to get outside and get that garden growing. Enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. Get that needed exercise! What a beautiful time of year!

Fun Facts and Trivia

Oak trees don't start producing acorns until they are about 20 years old, but sometimes it can take as many as 50 years for the first production.

Brain Teaser

What three letter word has 1 syllable, but when you add 1 letter to the end, it becomes 3 syllables?

See page 3 for the answer.

Gardening in Large Containers

If you're looking to make a really big statement with your next container garden, super-size it! Although most containers are 12"-24" wide, you can move up a couple of sizes and add some drama to your landscape.

There was a time when you would need a bunch of really strong friends to help move a huge container, but technology has made things a lot easier. Newer lightweight fiberglass and durable polymers are used to create extra-large containers designed to look like terra cotta. This has helped gardeners to create bigger, bolder displays.

To get started, first make sure there is good drainage. If the pot doesn't already have them, you'll need to drill drainage holes spaced equally from the center of the container. Use metal mesh to cover the drainage holes to hold back the soil from leaking out.

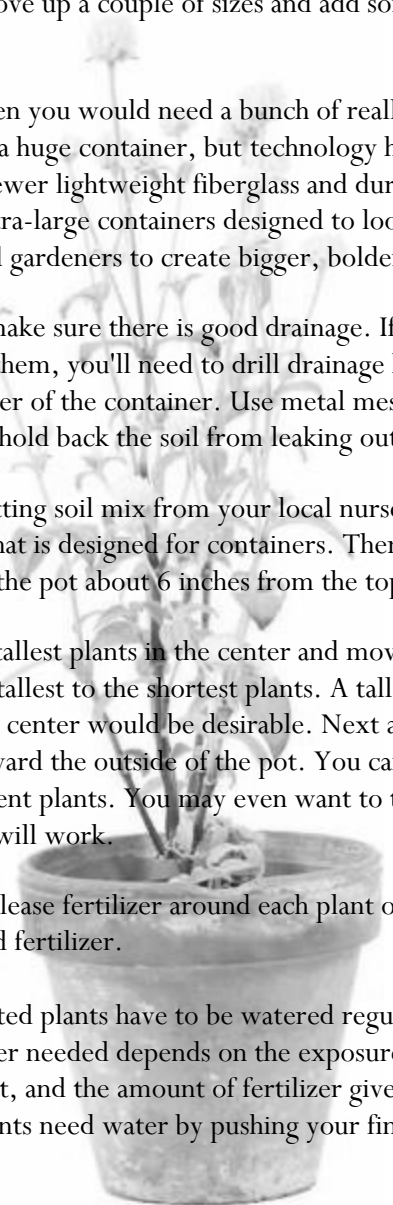
For the soil, use a potting soil mix from your local nursery or home improvement store that is designed for containers. There are many brands available. Fill the pot about 6 inches from the top.

Start by planting the tallest plants in the center and moving out from side to side from the tallest to the shortest plants. A tall plant with colorful foliage in the center would be desirable. Next add some color and texture toward the outside of the pot. You can change colors by using different plants. You may even want to try grasses. There are many that will work.

Finally, add a time-release fertilizer around each plant or fertilize regularly with a liquid fertilizer.

Don't forget that potted plants have to be watered regularly. The actual amount of water needed depends on the exposure, how much is growing in your pot, and the amount of fertilizer given the plants. You can tell if the plants need water by pushing your finger into the soil to see if it is dry.

Gardening in containers is fun and the results can be gratifying. Just remember the basics: proper soil, good drainage, regular water, and fertilizer.



Tips and Techniques

Make freezing ground beef easier by following these simple tips:

First, purchase good quality quart-sized plastic freezer bags. Place only one pound in each bag. Flatten the meat to a thin layer in the bag. Press to remove as much air as possible. Seal and freeze. This method allows the meat to be thoroughly defrosted in the microwave oven without the usual browning around the edges.

Make cleaning cooked-on splatters from the inside of the microwave easier by first boiling a cup of water in the microwave for a couple of minutes. Then let it set for a couple of more minutes to allow condensation to form. The condensation will help loosen the cooked on splatters and make clean up much easier.

Food Fact

Dr. Peppers? Hot chili peppers contain capsaicin, a compound that acts as an anticoagulant and may help prevent heart attacks and strokes caused by blood clots. Did you realize that a half-cup of chopped red bell pepper provides more than an adult's daily needs for Vitamin A and Vitamin C? Bell peppers also provide fiber that can help lower high cholesterol levels, another risk factor for heart attack and stroke. Whether they're mellow and sweet or fiery hot, all peppers are good sources of potentially cancer-fighting antioxidants, especially vitamin C.

Quotable Quote

Close friends contribute to our personal growth. They also contribute to our personal pleasure, making the music sound sweeter, the wine taste richer, the laughter ring louder because they are there. ~ Judith Viorst

Almonds: For Your Health

Did you know that the almond that we think of as a nut is technically the seed of the fruit of the almond tree? Almond trees are cousins of the peach, cherry, and apricot trees. Almond trees bear fruits with stone-like seeds, or pits, within.



The seed of the almond fruit is what we refer to as the almond nut.

You may wonder if it is possible that a high-fat food is good for your health. The surprising answer is yes. Almonds are high in monounsaturated fats, the same type of health-promoting fats as are found in olive oil, which have been associated with reduced risk of heart disease. Studies also show that almonds help to lower LDL which is the form of cholesterol that has been linked to atherosclerosis and heart disease. In addition to healthy fats and vitamin E, a quarter-cup of almonds contains almost 99 mg of magnesium. That's about 25% of the daily value for this important mineral! Studies show that a deficiency of magnesium is associated with heart attacks.

When you get right down to the details, it's no wonder so many people go nuts for almonds! Here are a few quick serving ideas:

- Add a punch to plain yogurt by mixing in some chopped almonds and dried fruit.
- Enhance a healthy sauté of curried vegetables with sliced almonds.
- Almonds and apple slices make a simple on-the-go power snack.
- Add sliced almonds to chicken salad.
- Try tossing finely diced toasted almonds into a ginger-shrimp sauté or adding toasted whole natural almonds to Chinese vegetable stir-fry dishes.
- Almond butter is a nutritious and hearty topping for bagels or muffins.
- Mix in dried cranberries or cherries and a generous amount of chopped toasted almonds just before serving to give hot cereal just a little more panache.
- Use a generous amount of sliced almonds along with oats, dried cranberries, brown sugar, and honey to make a delicious homemade granola..

Quick Facts: California is the only state in the U.S. that grows almonds. It ships 70% of its almonds to more than 80 countries around the world. The U.S. represents the largest single market for California almonds, 30%.

The Wine Corner



How long can you keep wine once the bottle has been opened? How soon does wine in an open bottle go bad? Do I need to finish a bottle of wine in one sitting after opening it? These are questions that are always asked because it is one of the harder things to figure out about wine.

There are many considerations and exceptions like method of production, age of bottle and so on, but for 95% of the wine that most people drink, a good rule of thumb is 3 days. Once a bottle of wine is opened, the oxygen in the air starts a process that initially softens the flavors and opens up the aromas of the wine. As this oxidation continues over many hours and days, the wine is ultimately made undrinkable. The trick is to use the wine before it becomes unpalatable.

Uncorked bottles should be refrigerated. You can buy stoppers and gadgets aimed at slowing the oxidation that will eventually destroy the wine. What makes the whole thing tricky is that the wine will not go immediately from good to bad. The wine will, at a point, begin to progressively develop tastes that are unpleasant. Just like milk that is going bad, each person has a different point at which they identify the beverage as having gone bad. If you keep a table wine for more than 3 days, you will be serving a wine that has lost most of its prized characteristics. The aroma will start to change and much of the fresh fruit smells and tastes will subside.

Some dessert wines can last much longer but those are special cases. Just play it safe with the 3 day rule. If there is a chance of confusion, write the date the bottle was opened on the label before placing it in the refrigerator.

Recipe of the Month

Are you looking for a pasta recipe that is a little bit different from the usual? These “bow ties” will brighten any meal with their interesting shape. Here is an easy farfalle recipe that is delicious, and it also adds a little spice. Why not give it a try!

Farfalle with Chicken and Asparagus

1 16 ounce package Barilla Farfalle pasta, dry
2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
3/4 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, cut into bite sized pieces
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper
4 cloves garlic, minced
12 ounces asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1 inch pieces
1/2 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook according to the package directions (11 minutes) or until al dente; drain.

Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet over medium heat and cook chicken. When chicken is slightly browned and cooked all the way through, remove from pan. Add the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, crushed red pepper, garlic, and asparagus. Cook until asparagus is tender.

Mix in chicken with asparagus mixture and cook together for 2 minutes. Add this mixture to the cooked farfalle and toss with Parmesan cheese. Salt and pepper to taste. Makes 8 servings.

Did you realize there are over 50 shapes of pasta? Check out the [National Pasta Association](http://NationalPastaAssociation.com) website for a description (with pictures) and uses for each.

A Final Word

Thanks again for reading the newsletter. Feel free to print it and pass it on to others you think would enjoy it. If someone you know wants to be on the mailing list, direct them to newsletter.glensplace.com. If you have comments, questions, or ideas, send them along to glendal@glensplace.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Until next time remember: Only a real friend will tell you when your face is dirty.

Answer to Brain Teaser: The first word is **are**. When you add an **a** to the end it becomes **area**.