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## Steve Stephens: Reprise of ‘victory gardens’ to help fight food insecurity



Mike Hogan and Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Dorothy Pelanda plant the first seeds in the demonstration fall victory garden at OSU. [OSU Extension]

By [Steve Stephens](#)

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Ticket to Write

Although 2020 is providing its share of tribulations, they pale in comparison to those of, say, 1917.

During World War I, as war raged across Europe and our doughboys were putting their lives on the line “over there,” our ancestors at home planted “victory gardens,” vegetable gardens that helped supplement families’ food supplies during a time of hardship and food shortage.

And although our trials might be less than those of a century or so ago, we can still learn from those ancestors, especially during this time of heightened food insecurity.

The Ohio State Extension and the Ohio Department of Agriculture are promoting the idea of fall “Victory over Virus” gardens, said Mike Hogan, extension educator and associate professor of agriculture and natural resources at Ohio State.

The idea comes at a time when more people are already spending additional time in their gardens while stuck at home, Hogan said.

“It’s estimated that the original victory gardens produced a quarter to a half of all vegetables and fruits consumed in the domestic market,” Hogan said. “They were everywhere.”

Although he doesn’t expect to see that kind of production, Hogan does think that home and community vegetable gardens can still be an important source of food.

“People sometimes underestimate how much food they can grow in a family-sized garden,” he said.

And fall is actually a great time to grow certain vegetables, Hogan said.

“Not a lot of vegetable gardeners plant a fall garden,” he said. “But I think it’s actually a better season to garden in. I’d rather be out there when it’s 75 degrees or even in a sweatshirt in October or November, than sweating in the heat of summer.”

But growing vegetables in the fall can require different gardening techniques than in spring and summer.

So the extension will hold a Fall Victory Garden webinar at 7 p.m. Tuesday to teach about the differences between cool-season and warm-season crops and how to extend the growing season with simple techniques such as row covers. The seminar will be offered via Zoom at [go.osu.edu/fallvictorygarden](https://go.osu.edu/fallvictorygarden), password 070229. The webinar is free and no registration is required.

In addition, the extension will be distributing free spinach, turnip, buckwheat and radish seeds from the Department of Agriculture. Drive-through pickup of the seeds is available from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Sunday and 4:30 to 6 p.m. Monday at the OSU Extension office, 2548 Carmack Road.

Gardeners who haven’t grown fall vegetables before might be surprised by the results, Hogan said.

“Some crops actually taste different if grown in the fall,” he said. “The poster child is the carrot. The low temperatures cause carrot plants to convert some of their starches into sugar. They taste amazingly different” from carrots grown and harvested earlier, he said.

“We can even leave carrots in the ground to pull for Thanksgiving, or even Christmas, dinner,” Hogan added.

Some of the fall garden techniques will be on display at pilot gardens in five different locations around the state, including in the Columbus area at Waterman Farm at Ohio State and at the Bexley Community Garden.

Food grown at the pilot gardens will go to community food pantries, as does all food grown at master gardener extension volunteer community gardens.

Last year, Hogan said, master gardener community gardens provided more than 21,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables to food pantries and food insecure families.

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