



# GROWING GARDENERS

NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTH EASTERN ALBERTA



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Growing Gardeners +  
CFCA info

CFCA's Growing Gardeners Newsletter aims to support gardeners of all experience levels in Medicine Hat and area. To sign up for our mailing list, email [CFCAGarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAGarden@gmail.com).

# NATIVE PLANT OF THE MONTH

## PURPLE PRAIRIE CLOVER

*Dalea purpurea*

With bright purple cone-shaped clusters of flowers, Purple Prairie Clover is a great choice for the prairie garden. These plants tend to grow in clumps. Seeds are easy to collect for propagating this easy-to-grow native species.

**Type:** Perennial

**Family:** Pea (Fabaceae)

**Height:** 60 cm

**Flower:** Purple

**Bloom:** July, August

**Light:** Full sun

**Soil:** Dry

**Supports:**



**Start From:** Grow from seed scarified by rubbing with sandpaper.

**Benefits:**

- Roots fix nitrogen
- Edible blossoms
- Drought-resistant

**Note:** Does not tolerate root disturbance once established.



# LEAVING LETTUCE

*Lettuce is an easy edible annual. These plants will usually start bolting in the heat of summer, prompting gardeners to pull them. But there are a couple of reasons to keep them around for a little longer.*

## HEATED ISSUE

We love any plant that can go from seed to harvest in under two months. Unfortunately, once the average daytime temperature is above 25 degrees Celsius, lettuce shifts from making tasty leaves to producing flowers (known as bolting). Leaves of lettuce planted earlier in spring are no longer tender and mild, likely leaning to bitter and tough.



Photo credit: Genevieve Mathieu

## LOVELY FLOWERS

It may come as a surprise that lettuce has charming flowers in an assortment of colors including yellow, orange, blue and purple. Bees and other pollinators love visiting the blooms to collect nectar and pollen.

## SELF-SEED SIMPLICITY

Once pollinated, the lettuce plant will produce easy-to-save seeds. Wait until the seedhead is completely dry and brown before collecting and storing for next year's garden. Better yet, for the "lazy" gardener, let the lettuce do the work. Mature seeds will spread on their own (self-seed), falling to the soil and germinating when the right conditions arrive.

Reference: TWC Staff, MAC. (2016). *Dalea purpurea*. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.  
[https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id\\_plant=mofi](https://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=mofi)



# UNUSUAL EATS

Try harvesting some less common crops this summer to get the most from the garden.



## BEET GREENS + RADISH LEAVES

- When **thinning** beets and radishes, save greens from plants that were removed.
- **Swiss chard** and beets were developed from the **same species** (*Beta vulgaris*).
- **Beet leaves** make a great cooked green, high in **vitamin A**, **iron** and **magnesium**.
- Harvest young **radish leaves** and remove the stem to add **bright flavor** to dishes that call for spinach or mustard greens.
- Even leaves that have been **nibbled by insects** are edible, just make sure to **wash them** (unless extra insect-based protein is on the menu)!

## PEA SHOOTS

- Pea pod production is not the best in the **heat of summer**, but if the plants are still healthy and growing, gardeners can enjoy a **secondary harvest**: Pea shoots!
- Harvest the tips of pea vines by cutting the **top 2-3 inches** with kitchen shears, pruners or a paring knife. These should be tender and sweet.
- The **stem, leaves and tendrils** can be eaten **raw** or **cooked**. Try a stir-fry with pea shoots and garlic.
- Eat pea shoots for a higher dose of **vitamins C, E and A**, and **potassium** than other ready-to-eat leafy green vegetables.





# *A Recipe for Cheese-stuffed* **ZUCCHINI BLOSSOMS**

*Warm weather often causes zucchini plants to produce more male flowers than female flowers. While they won't turn into fruit, they, and their female companions, can be eaten raw or cooked. Blossoms do not store well, so harvest right before using and handle with care. These cheese-stuffed zucchini blossoms are great on their own, or dipped in a simple tomato sauce.*

**To harvest zucchini blossoms**, cut 1-2 cm below base of flower and rinse with cold water to remove any unwanted guests, like thrips. Dry gently but thoroughly with kitchen towel or paper towel. Cover and keep cool until ready to use.

## **Ingredients**

**12 - 15 zucchini blossoms**, cleaned + dried  
**Vegetable oil** (for shallow-frying)

### **FILLING**

**1/2 c. mild soft cheese** (ie. ricotta or queso fresco)  
**1/4 c. parmesan cheese**, finely grated  
**1 egg**, beaten  
**1 Tbs. fresh herbs**, minced (ie. parsley, dill, lovage)  
**1/2 tsp. lemon zest** (optional)  
**salt + black pepper**, to taste  
**pinch nutmeg**  
**Panko / Breadcrumbs** (optional)

### **BATTER**

**1 1/4 c. flour**  
**1/4 tsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**1 1/2 c. soda water**, chilled



## **Method**

1. Combine filling ingredients (except panko) in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Adjust salt and pepper to taste. If filling is too loose/wet, stir in breadcrumbs. 1 Tbs. at a time until it firms up.
2. Gently spoon or pipe filling into zucchini blossoms.
3. Heat 1" oil in a deep skillet or a wide saucepan to 360 degrees Fahrenheit.
4. Whisk together dry batter ingredients then slowly add chilled soda water, stirring until smooth.
5. Working in 2-3 batches, coat each blossom in batter then transfer to hot oil in a single layer.
6. Shallow-fry until golden brown, turning once, for approximately 3 minutes.
7. Transfer to paper towel-lined plate and continue cooking additional batches.
8. Serve immediately on their own or with warm tomato sauce.



# WATER-WISE GARDEN TIPS

## BEAT THE HEAT

PLANTS NEED HELP IN A HEAT WAVE! LEAVES LOSE MORE WATER IN WARM, WINDY WEATHER, SOMETIMES FASTER THAN ROOTS CAN ABSORB!

### MOVE

potted plants into shade



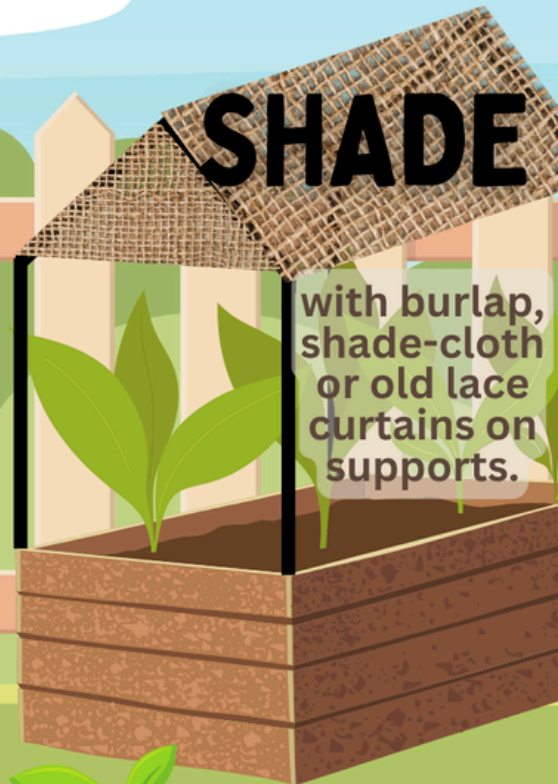
### BLOCK

drying winds with fencing, lattice, etc.



### SHADE

with burlap, shade-cloth or old lace curtains on supports.



### AVOID

### WATER

slowly and deeply in early morning, or late evening.



planting, pruning, and fertilizing to prevent added stress.

### MULCH

with as much as 15cm of organic matter.



Water-Wise Garden Tips is a series developed by Genevieve Mathieu, Garden Program Coordinator with Community Food Connections Association in partnership with the Medicine Hat & District Horticultural Association.



# GROWING GARDENERS EDUCATION PROGRAM

2024 will be our 3rd year offering Growing Gardeners Education Program, CFCA's free garden club. We are excited to continue to provide ecologically-responsible advice and hands-on learning to gardeners of all experience levels in Medicine Hat. We are grateful for our partnership with the Root Cellar Food and Wellness Hub and their lovely community access garden, which is the venue for Growing Gardeners Education Program. Follow us on social media to get up-to-date information about Garden Club, workshops and other local events. To get this newsletter sent directly to your inbox every month during the growing season, or to receive a copy of the 2024 Garden Planner, email [CFCAgarden@gmail.com](mailto:CFCAgarden@gmail.com).



**Growing Gardeners**  
Education Program



**WEEKLY WEDNESDAY Garden Club!**

Join us to learn garden skills while helping to grow food in the community access garden!  
Registration not required.  
Children are welcome if accompanied by an adult.

Location: In The Root Cellar Food & Wellness Hub garden, behind 440 Maple Ave. SE)



## ABOUT COMMUNITY FOOD CONNECTIONS ASSOCIATION (CFCA)

Community Food Connections Association is a non-profit organization based in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Launched in 2003, we have been working to support food security in the community through education, programming, partnerships and policy support for improvements in food, nutrition, health and local agriculture.

Our programs include the Good Food Club, Community Kitchens, the Local Food & Producers Directory, Medicine Hat Community Gardens, and Growing Gardeners Education Program. To find out more, head over to our website, [FoodConnections.ca](http://FoodConnections.ca), or social media accounts:

 [@COMMUNITYFOODCONNECTIONS](https://www.facebook.com/COMMUNITYFOODCONNECTIONS)



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