

THE WISCONSIN VEGETABLE GARDENER

QUARTERLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE WINTER 2015

Sunchokes

A Perennial Vegetable
for Your Garden

Growing Peppers

Importance of Crop Rotation

Understanding Onions

Growing Herbs Indoors

Interview:
Amy Jeanroy
of Fermenting for Dummies

about us



Joey & Holly Baird are the founders of The Wisconsin Vegetable Gardener. They are a married couple living in southeastern Wisconsin (just outside of Milwaukee). Joey & Holly make videos on youtube about how to grow your own food organically,

reusing found items (or items you may just throw away), what to do with the food you grow, home canning and simple home living.

Along with traditional ground gardening they also grow indoors year-round using up and coming methods along with winter growing in cold frames and low tunnels.

Their goal through their videos and social media pages is to show the average person how easy it is to grow food, store food, and reuse everyday items. Their motto is "for the average gardener, simple home living, and using what you already have".

Joey and Holly enjoy speaking at garden expo's throughout the midwest. Holly is also an award winning home canner with a handful of ribbons from the Wisconsin State Fair including a Best of Show award for her home canning talents.

Joey and Holly are also hosting an exclusive gardening segment for their local ABC affiliate, WISN 12. This is ran every three weeks during the weekend news.

As well as their Gardening in 2 Minutes segment which can be heard on a number of podcasts and radio stations throughout the US.

If you find this interesting and have any questions or would like to talk further we can be emailed at thewiveggardener@gmail.com.



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Successful Onion Growing

By Joey & Holly Baird

Onions are a staple of many backyard gardens but many gardeners have problems with onions and there can be several reasons for this. The main problem that gardeners face with onions is that they will not bulb up and that is the whole reason of growing onions. Some of the reasons can be bad soil. Bad soil can be a lack of nutrients if you don't replace what you use with organic material such as leaves, compost, or organic fertilizer then your soil can suffer. The type of soil you grow in can be a contributing factor to poor onion production. If your soil has a lot of clay or is very sandy this can be a problem. Onions are shallow root drops that need a regular supply of water. Also planting onions in the wrong area in your garden can be bad too. Onions are a unique vegetable. Onions come in three different categories; long day, short day and mid-day/neutral day. No matter what type of onion you buy to grow either from seed or start they will grow anywhere but if you



want bulbs on your onion then you need to buy the correct type of onion for the area you live in. Long day onions are for northern climates roughly from the California and Oregon state line across the county to Baltimore and north. This is where long day onions should be grown during the summer months. Mid-day can be grown from about Fresno California to Dallas Texas, Goose creek South Carolina and north to that northern line. The southern part of the United States should grow short day onions and these are grown sometimes in the winter months and very early in the year. You can plant long day onions if you in the south and short day in the north and many gardeners do this for the green tops the onion provides but they will not bulb. Before buying or starting your onion seeds you can search for maps on the internet that will show the growing areas for these types of onions very clear and offer you some onion varieties that will grow best in your area. Stores do sell all 3 types of onions as was for the reason mentioned about for the greens.

For more information on onions
you can visit our website
TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com

You want to start your seeds 10 to 12 weeks before your last frost in your area. You can start them in trays or cups. Be sure they have proper sunlight, spacing and drainage. Loose compost is best for starting your onions.

You can also buy your starts. There are two types available - bulbs or sets. Sets are the green plants which are the best to buy. They look like little green onions. These are yearlings and will grow best in your garden. The bulbs have been grown to that size and pulled from the ground to be sold. Onions are bi annual which means that the second year they will produce seed and when you plant the bulbs. Those onions tend to go to seed because they think after they have been allowed to bulb slightly and then pulled for sale then planted that it is there second year.

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Sunchokes

A Perennial Vegetable for Your Garden

Jerusalem artichokes are an amazing perennial vegetable. A potato like tuber that you don't have to cook to eat, less starchy than a potato and is good for diabetics. Top growth that can get to 20ft tall that has a small yellow daisy like flower all over it put it all together and you have Jerusalem artichokes or as they are better known as sunchokes. Sunchokes have no relation to the globed artichokes but sunchokes can be grown virtually anywhere as long as you have full sun and 130 to 150 warm days. Sunchokes grow in the wild and are a perennial edible plant in the wild as are the ones in your garden. One thing to keep in mind they can spread in your garden once you have picked an area to plant you will not want to plant anything else in that area ever again. No matter how well you clean the tubers out in the fall the smallest piece will cause a plant to grow again. You also don't want to harvest all of them either. You want to leave some in the ground to regrow new plants the following year. Sunchokes can also be grown in container as well and we have grown them both ways with good success. You can plant sunchokes as soon as the soil can be worked in the spring. They can

be planted much like potatoes meaning you can cut the tuber in chunks where eyes are forming on them and plant every 18 inches, not much closer as they will need that space. You can also plant them in late fall right before the ground freezes if you want to get them in the ground but no top growth will occur until spring. Mulching is not needed as sunchokes are hardy and can withstand the toughest of winters in the soil. Many online seed providers offer sunchokes and once you buy them you will not need to buy them again. You can also find them at some organic grocery stores and you can plant those as well.

Harvesting of the sunchokes occurs in late fall after a frost but before soil freezes. They can be harvested at any point after the flowers bloom. You don't see sunchokes in the conventional grocery store typically due to their short shelf-life. It is best to harvest just what you are going to eat within a week. Store your sunchokes in an air tight container in the fridge. They can also be stored for longer by placing them in a 5 gallon bucket or dark container by putting soil in the bottom and layering tubers on top, and continuing this process until you reach the top, then keep in a cool dark place and dig them up as you need them. You can eat them raw you can also cook them by roasting, steaming or boiling them.



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Interview Amy Jeanroy

What are some key rules to follow when fermenting? As with any food preservation, fermenting relies on proper sanitation, starting with healthy ingredients, and proper care of the fermented food itself. If you don't follow any one of these steps, you can end up with an unappetizing mess, and wasted food. Is there a high startup cost to begin fermenting? Fermenting is one of my favorite ways to preserve food because it IS so inexpensive. You need a container (glass is my favorite, recycled glass jars even more so), salt, and water. For some things like Kombucha and Kefir, you do need a mother or starter bacteria, but these are often shared between enthusiasts, so are free or the price of shipping.

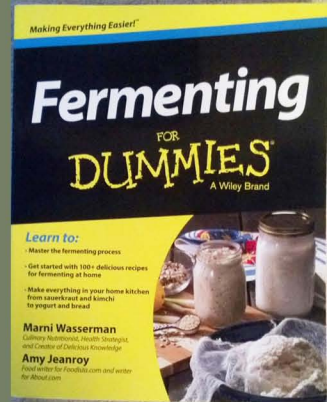
When people hear the word 'ferment' they think of alcoholic beverages, but it's actually the fermentation of food that has been done for 1000s of years, what are the benefits of eating home fermented foods?

Fermented foods actually changed on a molecular level. They become something more than the raw product. It's much healthier from the probiotic bacteria that results from proper fermentation, and the food's nutrients are available for digestion in a way that they are not able to be when the same food is raw.

Amy Jeanroy is an author, blogger and a writer for about.com. She lives in Maine on a 130 acre homestead with her husband and 5 children. She writes about home food preservation, gardening, herbs, cooking and sustainable farming/lifestyle. On her blog, thefarmingwife.com, she shares her many experiences as a farm wife and mom along with recipes. You can also pick up copies of her books – Canning & Preserving for Dummies and Fermenting for Dummies for your learning and reading enjoyment.



Everyone feels they could easily write a book, with your experience, what was your biggest challenge in the books you've written? The recipes! All home cooks have those recipes that were written down on scraps of paper and that evolve over the years to become personal. It's very difficult to have someone ask you about all the little pinches and bits that are added which may not be written down and now have to be measured and accounted for. I have done hundreds of recipes and it never gets easier.



When it comes to canning, many people want to can anything and everything, with a disregard for safety, where do you feel that perception comes from? I believe it's actually from two places. First off, many people who learn about canning often have some sort of personal history with it. Their grandparents did it, or an elderly neighbor shared something delicious that was canned. Methods used for food preservation back in those times, was much more lax with regards to food poisoning and contamination. It can be difficult to wrap your mind around the sheer luck that someone wasn't poisoned, rather than those old methods being safe.



Second, there is a sense of urgency for many people to begin preserving food. They tend to jump in without any experience, then try to do everything "the old fashioned way." Following exact guidelines and being fussy about quality is not always promoted in some of these back-to-earth type conversations. It's too bad, because food preservation is such a wonderful way to save money and get some control over your family's health. Financially it just makes sense. The answer is to teach proper, frugal food preservation, but teach it responsibly.

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What are some basic tools that are required for fermenting?

No matter what type of fermenting you are going to do, there are some basic supplies that will make the entire process successful. They are glass jars with lids, wooden spoons (never use metal in a glass jar) clean water, and salt. You could ferment for the rest of your life with just these few items.

What are some commonly consumed foods that are fermented that are easy to make on your own?

Sauerkraut is a universal favorite, and many people don't even know it is a fermented food! Kimchi is easy and fabulous, Yogurt is fermented and you only need milk and a spoonful of plain, cultured yogurt to start it. Then, try fermented vegetables, kombucha, kefir, fermented salsas, relishes, fermented fruits, fermented meats and so much more.



What is the best advice you can give to someone who is new to fermenting? Fermenting is so fun! I do recommend that someone starts slowly. Learn the process of fermenting a single food, and allow yourself time to make mistakes. Don't try too many different types of recipes at once, and do start out with small batches until you get the feel for how it all works.

If someone has a recipe that they want to can, say their grandma's pasta sauce, how they determine if it is safe for canning? There is virtually no recipe that has been canned back in our grandmother's time, that doesn't have an updated recipe for today's cook. It is probably going to be a more exact processing time, rather than any big changes in ingredients.

In canning there is the traditional disposable lid, and the reusable lid, in your experience, which have you found is most valuable and the best? Like any canner, I have my favorite supplies. Right now, my experience is with the traditional disposable lid (which I actually reuse for dry storage using my nicked jars that won't seal any longer). I have heard that canners like the reusable lids, and think they are a great idea. I would be more apt to use the reusable lids for foods that have a high turnover in my pantry-applesauce, relish, jams and jellies, instead of my canned meats and soups



For more from Amy Jeanroy visit TheFarmingWife.com


2015 Wisconsin Garden Expo Highlights



Unsatisfactory Onions?

Onions come in 3 categories – long day, short day and neutral (mid) day

- Northern parts of country grow long day onions which need 14-15 hours of daylight
- Can purchase other varieties, and are grown for the greens
- Sets vs Bulbs
- Loose soil
- Consistent watering



This year's Wisconsin Garden Expo, held in Madison, WI, was a great success. Holly and Joey's presentation on "10 Common Gardening Problems" saw a packed house of 350 plus guests. To see more photos and interviews visit, TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com



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New episodes every Tuesday at 7pm

Straight to the Point

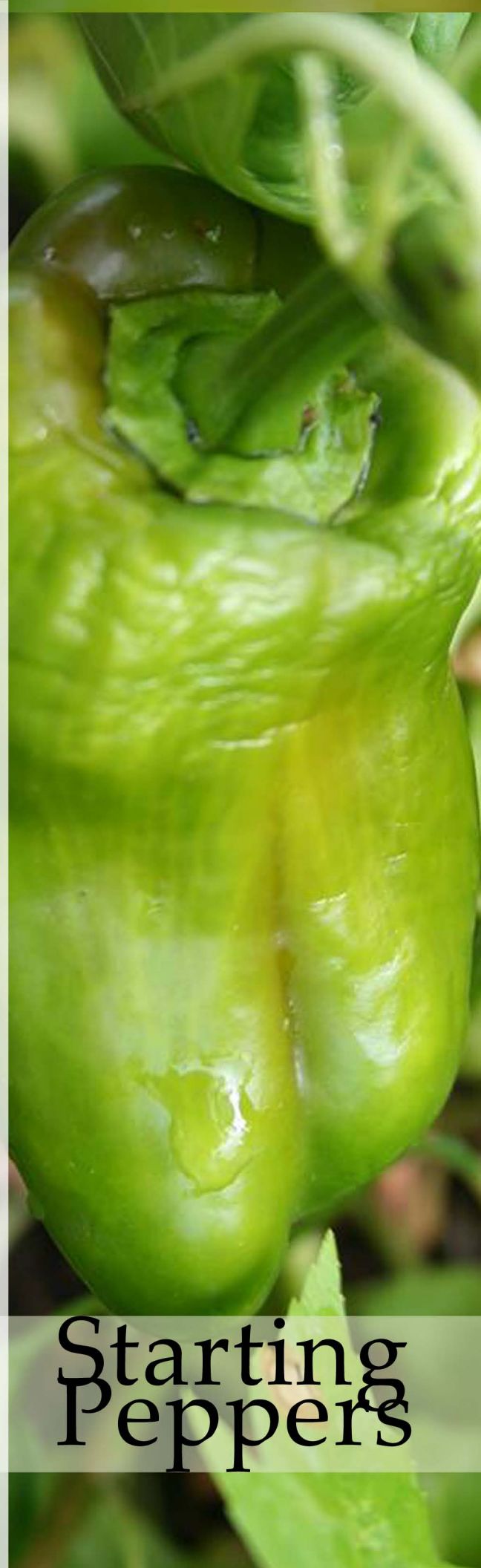
This series is for the home gardener on the go. Joey and Holly share quick tips, and cover a wide range of topics. Recommended for every gardener interested in growing organic and using what they already have.

New episodes every Sundays at 12pm

available free at

TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com

Peppers are a staple of nearly every backyard garden they can be grown in containers, in the ground and in raised beds. There are some helpful tricks to help you have the best pepper plants possible. First there are two types of peppers hot and mild (or sweet). You can break it down even more by categorizing them to mild, somewhat hot, and fire hot. If you don't think you know what level of heat you can handle when wanting to plant hot peppers, find some hot peppers at the store and see what you like or can handle before going forward and growing hot peppers that you can't handle eating. There are an endless variety of peppers in the world and picking one can be hard to do but once you do decide what you want to grow, you need to decide if you want to start seeds or purchase plants already started. Starting seeds 8 to 10 weeks before your last frost date and only planting them when it is warm and all chance of frost is over is best. Starting peppers can be very difficult. The key is good light, whether that is by a window or under a grow light. The other key to successful pepper growing or seed starting is bottom heat. Peppers are a tropical plant so we must mimic those growing conditions as if they were in the tropic. Bottom heat can be as simple as using a heat pad from your medicine cabinet and keeping it on low until your pepper seedlings germinate. You can also set your seed tray on a radiator but be sure you use a towel and put it under the tray as a diffuser to keep from burning the seedlings. You also can buy a seed starting heat pad that has temperature controls on it. If you want ordinary bell peppers or jalapenos or a pepper that is not very rare to find and you find that trying to start peppers may be more then you are wanting to do the, your best bet is to start your other vegetables indoors and buy you pepper starts from your local supplier.



Starting Peppers

Growing Herbs Indoors



Winter can seem drawn out and, at times, depressing for a gardener. There really isn't much you can do in the dead of winter in the garden. But if you have a south facing window a warm 3 season porch you can grow over the winter. You can invest in grow lights and coco coir and grow hydroponically but you may not want to invest money or time in that. Herbs can be very inexpensive to grow in your kitchen or by a south facing window indoors. There are some guide lines you want to follow to give you the best opportunity to have nice herbs indoors. Grow herbs you know you are going to use. You also want to grow in a good, organic potting soil. You may have some left over from your spring starts. You might also be able to get some from your home and garden or you might have you own compost you have made which will work also. We use a professional potting mix as a well as a rice hull potting mix that is available year round from www.HSUcompost.com, a company out of central WI. They will ship potting soil to you as well. You don't want to use just dirt you have dug up out of the garden as it does not have nutrients for plants that is needed. You are going to grow indoors and using dirt from your garden is not recommended. We enjoy growing a few different varieties of basil, parsley, rosemary, sage, lavender, thyme, marjoram and others. You want to plant in a large container. The largest one for the space you will be growing in. We use 8 and 10 inch hanging pots we have found that others have thrown away. You use and kind of a container though. When planting, don't pack the seeds too tight in the container. Remember you are not transplanting these, this will be there home. Space them accordingly. Herbs grown indoors may grow slightly slower than those you would plant outdoor in the summer. It is best to have them by a window that gets a minimum of 4 hours of sun for best results. It may be hard to find herb seeds in late fall or early winter from the store or online. We use a trusted company that carries flower, vegetable and herbs seeds year round. You can find them at www.dollarseed.com Growing herbs indoor is very similar to growing them outdoors in the summer. Having good potting soil or compost and good seeds is crucial. You cannot only grow herbs in the winter but all year round and saving you lots of money from having to by expensive fresh cut herbs from the store.

For more information
on growing herbs
you can visit our website

TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com



Crop Rotation

As you reflect back on last year's garden, we want to remember what was planted and where. This may be easier for those who have smaller gardens than those who have large gardens. Crop rotation is important on large and small scale, even if that means moving the plants a few feet from where they just were. It is important to rotate your crops for a variety of reasons. The most important is insects. The bad bugs, which are the ones that eat your plants, can live in the soil of your garden. Moving your crops around can confuse the bugs because those plants that were there last year are not there the next. The bugs from last year laid their larva in the soil and in some cases in the spots that the plants they are eating are located this year.

For example; the tomato horn worm. The tomato hornworm turns into the five spotted hawk moth and it lays its larvae in the soil in the fall near where you have tomatoes planted so in the spring the larvae can attack and live off your tomatoes. By moving your tomatoes around to a different area, or several different areas based on the size of your garden, you can reduce the chances of this problem also by loosening the soil (tilling works, if you have to we don't recommend tilling it kills a lot of the life in the soil) this will kill off 90% of the larvae in the soil. Doing this in the place where tomatoes use to be and where you are going to plant them this can be done in the fall or spring or both. Other reasons you want to rotate the crops in your garden is different vegetables add and takes different minerals and nutrients from the soil. Corn takes nitrogen from the soil yet on the other hand beans and peas add nitrogen to the soil. It is worth noting that even if you don't have a bug problem yet or that you know of it is still a good



preventative measure to lessen your chances of it in the future. When looking at how to move your crops around next year don't forget that if you have partial shaded areas in your growing space not all plants can live on that and require full sun. There are a few varieties that are shade tolerant (meaning 4 to 6 hours of sun). Some examples of these plants are leaf lettuce, beans, and beets. These plants will grow just fine in full sun as well.



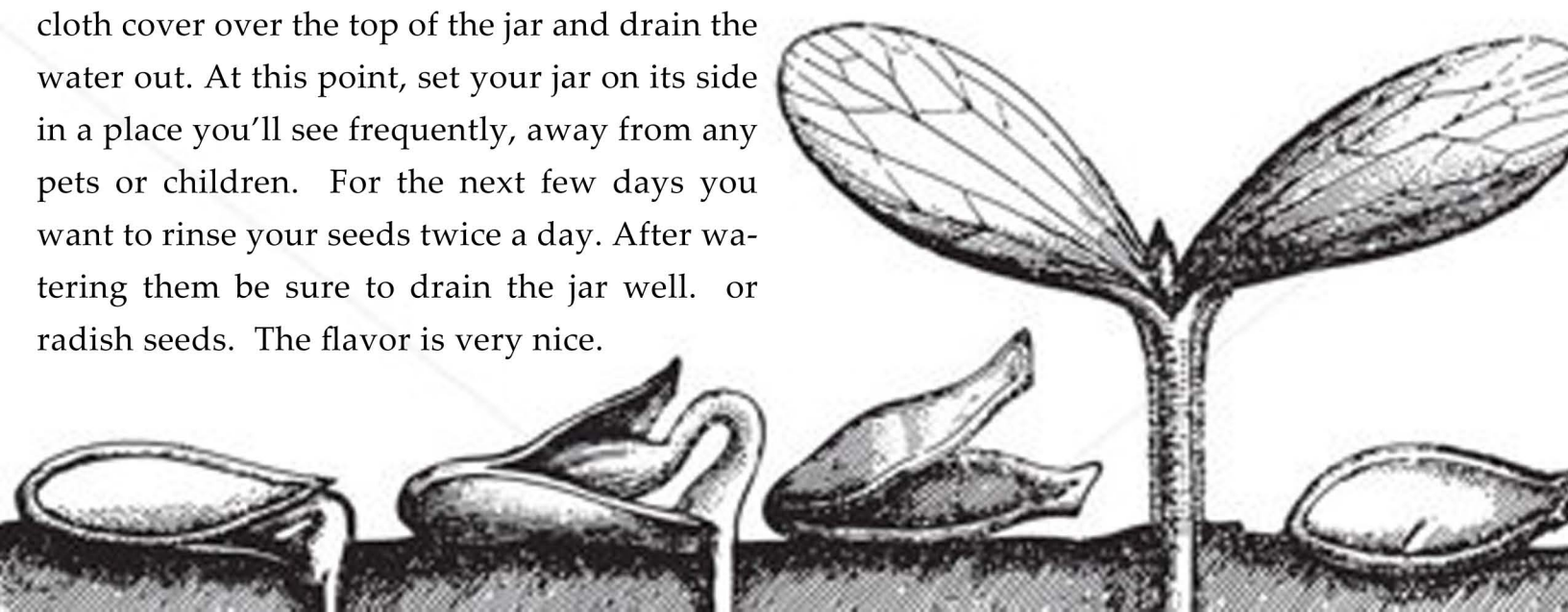
Growing Sprouts Easily

By Holly and Joey Baird

The best part about growing sprouts indoors is anyone can do it. Whether you live in a studio apartment or on a 1000 acre farm, you can sprout seeds . You don't need much to grow sprouts, you don't even need sunlight. Fresh sprouted seeds are nutrient dense and pack a punch of flavor that you can add to salads, sandwiches and stir fry. All you need is a quart size glass jar, a rubber band or canning ring, and enough window screen or other material like cheesecloth or an old piece of pantyhose to cover the top of your mason jar. You also need seeds to sprout. You can buy sprout seeds specifically, from websites like dollarseed.com, or you can sprout seeds you have on hand. The bigger the seed, the longer it will take to sprout. We do not recommend sprouting squash or pumpkin seeds as they do have an extremely bitter taste once sprouted. We prefer to sprout broccoli To sprout your seeds, drop about 1 tablespoon of seeds in your jar. Then fill the jar halfway with water. You can let the seeds soak in the water for a few minutes. Then you want to put your screen of draining cloth cover over the top of the jar and drain the water out. At this point, set your jar on its side in a place you'll see frequently, away from any pets or children. For the next few days you want to rinse your seeds twice a day. After watering them be sure to drain the jar well. or radish seeds. The flavor is very nice.

If sprout seeds are left too wet they are susceptible to molding. You will start to see your seeds sprout. You can tell the sprouts are ready when they are around 3 inches long. Many people who really enjoy sprouts will start jars every few days so they continuously have sprouts growing. Once your sprouts are ready it is best to consume them within a few days. If they grow too big they can become unappetizing. Sprouts are one of the most significant dietary sources of phytoestrogens, which are beneficial compounds in plant foods that can help reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis. Because they are so small, the sprouts contain a concentrated amount of certain vitamins and minerals such as calcium, vitamin K and vitamin C. Sprouts contain just 8 calories and 0 grams of fat per cup.

Growing sprouts is easy, economical, and fun. We recommend giving it a try, and bring some freshness and crunch into your home this winter.



History of Blue Mason Jars

The blue canning jar a symbol of canning of years gone by, not the new blue jars. We are referring to the ones our grandparents used to “put food up” for the winter with the old zinc lids and rubber gaskets, which are much different than today’s 2 pieces tops. Those old bluish green pints, quarts, and half gallon jars were during a time when the convenience of running to the store to pick up fresh produce simply did not exist. The Ball Canning company started making jars back in 1858 and the colors have changed over the years from brown to green and even purple. The most familiar is the blue that was manufactured from 1896 to 1936. The style of the lettering on the jar the ball can better help identify the time that it was made. All these jars were made by hand one by one without an automated system which is why they have a number on the bottom of the jar. The number indicates the number of jars that the jar maker made during his shift and that is how he got paid. The rumor of the jars with the number 13 on them being rare is not as true as some may think. There’s an urban legend that moonshiners felt having a jar with 13 on it was back luck so they would break all the 13 jars they would get when running moonshine. The blue color of the jar comes from the amount of oxygen the glass maker introduced into the furnace during the making of the jars. The sand that was use and melted down was from the shores of Lake Michigan. There are other companies that made blue canning jars but Ball is one of the biggest names. Many people ask are they valuable? They are as valuable as the amount someone is willing to pay for them or the amount you willing to pay for them. The older purple, green or brown jars are far more valuable and rare than the blue jars. For most they are an heirloom passed down from generations as they have with our family from my great grandfather. The stories those jars could tell. Could you use the old blue jars to can in? Yes and no you could but the problem is they are very old they can have hair line cracks that cause the jars to break under little stress the best thing to do is to put them on a shelf. Try to learn the stories about them from older family members and when you have the opportunity pass them down to the next generation.



For more information
on organic gardening and
canning as well as blue jars
you can visit



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