



August

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First elderberry harvest off the second-year bush — worth the stained fingers.

HOWDY FROM THE HOMESTEAD

July came in hot and never let up. We ran four or five straight days over 100 and the rain gauge stayed empty most of the month, so the drip lines earned their keep and the tomatillos got watered by hand. The upside of a dry year is we barely fought bugs. The downside is everything wanted a drink at once. Now we're into August, the tomato jungle is finally turning red, and the sweet corn is about a week out.

— This Month in the Garden

HEAT & WATER

Three to five days over 100 and almost no measurable rain. The drip system carried most of the garden; the tomatillos got hand-watered every trip out.

COOP & FLOCK

Nothing fancy in this heat. We moved the waterer under the tree line and kept it in shade all day. The ladies are surviving just fine.

BEDS TURNED OVER

Onions came out of two beds — a fantastic harvest. Peanuts and the luffa went in behind them. Cucumbers still will not quit, so we're giving them away.

KITCHEN & PANTRY

Canned a batch of everything-but-the-kitchen-sink salsa from our own tomatoes, onions, garlic, jalapenos and cilantro. Froze celery for winter soups and put up blueberries for smoothies.



What We're Growing Now

The tomato jungle is the main event — heirlooms, Black Krim, Cherokee Purple, Romas, cherries and beefsteaks all starting to color up at once, which is exactly what we want for canning. Three sisters bed is doing its job: green beans trellising up the sweet corn, squash leaves woven through for shade. Peanuts are healthy under the luffa, sweet potatoes have spread over the whole bed for a Thanksgiving pull, and the carrots are showing their shoulders. Swiss chard is the only green tough enough for this heat. Watermelons are a little behind but catching up, and the first-year rhubarb is enormous.



PLANTED THIS MONTH

SWEET CORN (SECOND ROUND)

PUMPKINS

MINI PUMPKINS

CARROTS

TIP OF THE MONTH

Freeze Elderberries Before You Destem

Picking elderberries off the stem by hand will eat your whole afternoon. Freeze the clusters two to three hours first and the berries pop off like little marbles. Float what's left in a bowl of water — ripe berries sink, stems and green ones rise right to the top.



Coming Up Next Month

01

RECOOK THE ELDERBERRY JAM

More pectin, more sugar, on the stove this time.

02

SECOND CORN PUSH

The succession sweet corn goes in beside the watermelons.

03

GARLIC FROM SAVED SETS

Replanting this year's own garlic instead of buying seed.

Canning season is about to hit all at once — the Romas are our sauce and salsa tomatoes and they're ripening together on purpose. Carrots go in for a January pull, and the sweet potato bed rides until Thanksgiving.

Lessons Learned

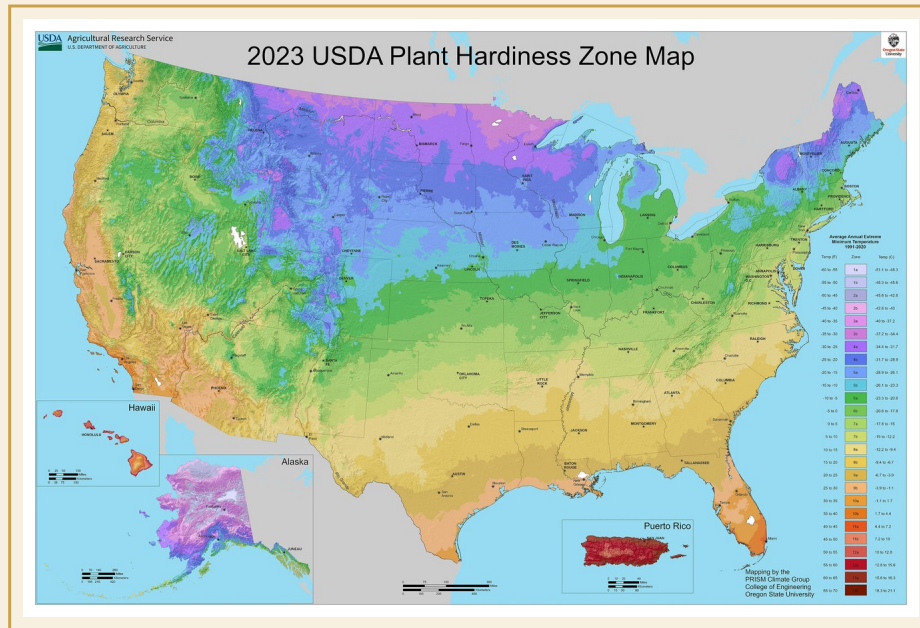
First elderberry harvest off our second-year bush, and the jam did not set. Fifteen hours in the jar and it was still syrup. It wasn't the bread maker — it was pectin, and not enough of it. We're recooking it on the stove with more pectin and more sugar. Worst case it's a fine pancake syrup. Same lesson as the asparagus we over-harvested our first two years: the plant will tell you what it needs if you slow down and read it.

FROM THE KITCHEN

Everything But the Kitchen Sink Salsa

Every bit of this came out of our own beds. Dice tomatoes, one red onion, garlic, two whole jalapenos with the seeds in, and a good handful of cilantro. Run the onion and garlic through the chopper twice so they come out finer than the tomatoes. Mix, then season to taste with salt, pepper, cumin, two tablespoons of sugar and a few squeezes of lime. Go easy on the salt — your chips are already salty. Can it or keep it in the fridge and eat it fast.

August Planting — by Zone



Source: USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map — planthardiness.ars.usda.gov

5 ZONE 5

INDOORS: Lettuce and spinach starts for a cold frame.

OUTSIDE: Radish, turnip, spinach, arugula and leaf lettuce. Order garlic now.

7 ZONE 7

OUTSIDE: Bush beans and cucumbers early in the month. Then carrots, beets, kale, collards and turnips. Broccoli and cabbage transplants late August.

6 ZONE 6

INDOORS: Lettuce and kale starts for early fall beds.

OUTSIDE: Beets, carrots, kale, collards, spinach. Set out broccoli and cabbage transplants.

8 ZONE 8

OUTSIDE: Second corn, bush beans, southern peas and squash early. Carrots, beets, kale and collards all month. Fall tomato transplants the first week.

Not sure of your zone?

Look it up by zip code at planthardiness.ars.usda.gov



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The Rambling Gardeners

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