

July 3, 2005

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

***DENNIS SMITH
COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT
GREGG COUNTY***

ACCENT THE FALL LANDSCAPE WITH VEGETABLES AND HERBS

Now is an excellent time to evaluate the home landscape and begin making preparations for fall plantings. Vegetables and herbs can be used in imaginative ways to add beauty, interest, and utility to our landscapes. Midsummer and early fall offer us a good 'second season' for growing these plants if gardeners can motivate themselves to provide a little extra care during the long, hot days of late summer. Hanging containers of parsley, mint, thyme, rosemary, and tomatoes can all be started now. These plants may be available at local nurseries, but with a little extra effort they can be grown from seed. Each has a drooping growth habit which makes it especially appropriate for hanging-container use. An even larger variety of herbs and vegetables may be grown in the more 'down-to-earth' containers, such as clay pots and wooden tubs. Tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, eggplants, carrots, and radishes are just a few of the many available. Even small porches and decks of apartments can be made more attractive and interesting with groupings of containers filled with herbs and vegetables. Two important points to consider in growing container plants are the media and the container selection. Most vegetables require excellent drainage, so select a container with a hole in the bottom. Plain clay pottery is attractive and versatile, as are many of the cedar and redwood tubs. Small containers dry out very quickly, and sometimes require daily or twice-daily irrigation. A minimum size for containers is 10 to 12 inches, with 16 or 18 inches being more appropriate for large plants such as tomatoes or eggplants. The media must also drain well for most plants to thrive and yet still hold an adequate amount of water. Some gardeners prefer soilless mixes, such as half peat moss and half vermiculite. Others like the added support of micronutrients found in mixes such as one-third garden loam, one-third peat moss, and one-third sharp sand. Many different media can be used successfully. The most important factor is for the gardener to learn how to manage the media selected, since water and fertilizer requirements vary

Dennis Smith can be contacted at the Gregg County Extension Office by e-mail at dq-smith@tamu.edu or telephone at: 903-236-8429.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.