



# CONSUMER \$ENSE

JULY 2009

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE TULSA COUNTY 4116 E 15TH STREET  
TULSA, OK 74112 (918) 746-3700 WWW.OCES.TULSACOUNTY.ORG

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 9

## Preserving Summer's Harvest

by Charlotte Richert, OSU Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Educator

Whether you grow your own, visit the Farmer's Market, or support other local commercial growers, food preservation can help extend summer's fresh produce. Home food preservation techniques include freezing, canning, and dehydration. Proper preservation techniques must be followed in order to enjoy peak flavor, as well as ensure food safety.

**Freezing:** Chemical changes take place when vegetables are frozen. The key is to slow down the enzymes in the food. Enzymes are proteins that are present in plants and animals and they help speed up the ripening and maturing processes. Enzyme reactions can continue even after plants are harvested. This can result in undesirable color, flavor and texture changes in the food. It is important to stop enzyme activity before freezing. Enzymes in vegetables are inactivated by blanching.

The blanching process includes placing the vegetables in boiling water or steam for a short period of time. Next, cool the vegetables rapidly in ice water. This prevents the vegetables from cooking further and will help them maintain color, flavor and texture. Blanching helps destroy microorganisms on the surface of vegetables. It makes vegetables such as broccoli and spinach more compact, and as a result, they take up less space in the freezer. Be sure to follow the recommended time for blanching each vegetable. Over-blanching will result in a cooked product and loss of flavor. Under blanching speeds up enzyme activity and is worse than not blanching vegetables at all according to Barbara Brown, OSU Extension Food Safety Specialist.

Blanching times for vegetables commonly grown in Oklahoma can be found at the Web site for the National Center for Home Food Preservation at <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/index.html>. Water blanching is the most common method for blanching home frozen vegetables. Tools needed include a wire blanching basket and a large kettle with a fitted lid.

**Canning:** According to the USDA, pressure canning and hot-water bath are the two recommended types of canning. Pressure canning is required for all low-acid foods that are not being pickled. Hot-water bath is an appropriate method for high-acid foods such as tomatoes, some fruits and pickled products.

Always follow directions from a reliable source dated 1988 or later. Be careful not to over pack jars as this can cause inadequate processing and result in unsafe food. Nearly all fresh vegetables must be processed in a pressure canner for the required USDA processing time. Pickled foods such as acidified tomatoes and cucumber pickles can be safely processed without pressure in a boiling water bath when directions are carefully followed.

It is critical to allow steam to escape for 10 minutes before closing the valve or putting the weight on the vent of the pressure cooker. This allows the inside temperature to correspond to that of the pressure gauge. If you discover an unsealed jar within 24 hours after canning, the food can safely be re-canned but the quality will be lowered. Remove the lid to check the rim of the jar for any nicks and change the jar if needed. Add a new, treated lid and reprocess using the original processing time. Properly canned food will retain optimum eating quality for at least a year when stored in a cool, dry place.

**Dehydration or Drying:** Dried foods are easy to use and convenient to store. Unlike the exact methods of canning and freezing, drying foods may require the trial and error approach. Various factors affect the drying project including the drying methods used, the quality of the produce, pre-treatment techniques, and even the climate. When food is dehydrated, 80 - 95% of the moisture is removed which inactivates the growth of bacteria and other spoilage microorganisms.

### Canning Refresher Class

Friday, July 24, 2009 at 1:30 pm  
Tulsa County Free Fair  
Central Park Hall  
Expo Square  
Cost: Free

#### FREE Pressure Gauge Check

Call to make an appointment for a FREE pressure gauge check, at the OSU Extension Center, Family & Consumer Sciences department.

Phone Number: 746-3703

Come to the OSU Extension Center, 4116 E. 15th Street, Tulsa.

# Watering Flower Gardens

by Bruce Peverley, OSU Extension Agriculture Educator

Vegetables should never be short of water. Water makes up 80 to 90 percent of a vegetables fresh weight. Water affects yield, size and quality of fruits and vegetables.

The rule-of-thumb for watering a vegetable garden is that it will require an inch of water per week during the summer, whether it is provided by the gardeners or by Mother Nature. An inch of water will wet the root zone to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. An inch of water converts to 6 gallons per square yard per week. Extremely sandy soils may require up to 2 inches of water per week to meet plant needs.

Keep track of weekly rainfall amounts and check the soil for moisture by digging to the 6 to 8 inch level and feeling the soil.

Water is critical the first few weeks after seed germination and immediately after plant transplanting. Shallow-rooted crops such as lettuce, radishes, corn and potatoes will have greater demands for water than deep rooted crops. To improve production, make sure beans are properly watered during their flowering stage. It is important corn have adequate water during silking, tasseling and ear development. Squash, tomatoes and peppers require water from flowering through harvest.

Watering once a week at the one inch rate (rain plus irrigation) is the ideal. Deep infrequent watering promotes deeper root growth which promotes healthier plants. Shallow, frequent watering , causes shallow root systems and high water loss due to evaporation. This type of watering doesn't meet plant needs.

The best time to water the garden is in the early morning before temperatures rise. If you cannot water in early morning, very late in the afternoon is acceptable. Water early enough so plants have time to dry before nightfall to avoid fungal diseases. If possible, don't water with a sprinkler system. Systems such as soaker hoses, flooding and drip irrigation systems that do not wet plant leaves will help prevent fungal and bacterial diseases. They also allow for late evening watering. Sprinkler systems tend to water unevenly, and have higher water loss to evaporation.

When possible, mulch your garden plants. Mulching will help prevent water evaporation loss and soil splatter. Mulching reduces the amount of water required, promotes healthier plants, and when tilled in after the harvest season provides organic matter for the soil.

## “Green Acres” to teach Basic Country Skills

by Sue Gray, OSU Extension Horticulture Educator

More and more people want to raise their own food. Many dream of a small place in the country where they can have a large garden, some chickens and maybe a few goats. Even one or two acres is enough to make that dream a reality. The yearning for self-sufficiency is a nationwide trend. The Green Acres class taught at the OSU Extension Center will help you determine if this is your dream.

Participants Will Learn:

- How to Buy Land and Basic Homesteading
- How to Decide What to Raise Yourself: Pastures, Gardens, Fruit, Small Grains, Honeybees
- Basic Animal Husbandry Skills: Chickens, Goats, Cows, Horses
- Raising and Preserving Your Own Food: Fruits, Vegetables, Dairy, Meat, Grains
- How to Market Small Farm Products

To accommodate teachers on summer break, folks who work the night shift, farmers market growers, and all others, Tulsa County OSU Extension will teach “Green Acres” this summer on Monday **mornings**, July 6, 13 and 20 at the OSU Extension Center, 4116 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street from 9 am to noon. The Class is \$30.00 per person or \$35.00 per couple sharing books. Two books and refreshments are provided: “Green Acres” guidebook and “Basic Country Skills” book. For more information, contact the Tulsa County OSU Extension Center, 746-3707 or log onto our website: [www.oces.tulsacounty.org](http://www.oces.tulsacounty.org)

<p><b>Who:</b> Tulsa County OSU Extension, <b>Contacts:</b> Sue Gray, Extension Horticulturist, 746-3717 <a href="mailto:sgray@tulsacounty.org">sgray@tulsacounty.org</a> Bruce Peverley, Agriculture Educator, <a href="mailto:bpeverley@tulsacounty.org">bpeverley@tulsacounty.org</a> 746-3725 <a href="mailto:bpeverley@tulsacounty.org">bpeverley@tulsacounty.org</a> <b>What:</b> “Green Acres” Rural Living Course <b>When:</b> Monday <b>mornings</b>, July 6, 13 &amp; 20, 9 am to noon <b>Where:</b> OSU Extension Center, 4116 E. 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Tulsa, OK 74112</p>
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