



COVID-19 Vinalhaven Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

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COVID-19 Daily Update 4-26-20

GARDENING!

With snow in the forecast and Covid-19 playing havoc with our lives, we are yearning for the arrival of May and weather that is truly and consistently warmer. We have time on our hands, and some of us are looking to get dirt on our hands as well.

If you're new to gardening, we offer a few questions to think about as you decide how to get started. All the items you need can be found right here on Vinalhaven.

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day.
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
a cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
And wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle of March.

—Robert Frost



Spring garlic coming up and seedlings growing in a greenhouse - signs of the 2020 growing season.

Here are some of the decisions you will have to make:

Vegetables or Flowers? There is nothing more satisfying than bringing a beautiful, sweet smelling bouquet into the house, or picking those first peas and eating as many raw as you save for the pot.

Raised bed or in the ground? Unless you have a spot that has been gardened before, the raised bed is a great, easy way to start a garden. If you are planting vegetables directly in the ground, it is a good idea to get the soil tested. Lead is often found in the ground of old houses from the days of lead paint days. The standard soil test, which costs \$18, will tell you if there are any toxins in the soil and if soil amendments are needed.

See umaine.edu/soiltestinglab

What to grow? Some plants and flowers are more challenging than others. For some, you can put the seeds right in the ground, but for others you need seedlings. There are several commercial seedling growers right here on the island. Some vegetables, like a row of garden peas, are beautiful to look at and wonderful to eat, but in the same space you could grow lots and lots of spinach, carrots, chard, and other salad greens. So many choices!

How much space do I need? Experienced gardener Carla Harris recommends starting small. In that way you pay good attention to every detail, learn as you go, and don't get overwhelmed when your plants are growing in leaps and bounds. A single raised bed will provide lots of vegetables or flowers.

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Where to grow it? Most vegetables require at least 8 hours of direct sunlight. Flowers have a variety of light requirements, but most want sunlight.

When to plant it? You guessed it – it's different for everything! The garlic shown here was planted last fall. Onions and many salad vegetables won't mind tonight's snow, but tomatoes and peppers are more fragile and want consistently warm weather.

As with so many things in life, it is better to learn and plan before diving in. There are many resources for learning online.

- **The University of Maine Cooperative Extension** does research for home and commercial gardeners, and is a great resource for all kinds of information. extension.umaine.edu/gardening
- **MOFGA (Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association)** also offers information for the home gardener. mofga.org/Resources-for-Gardeners/grow-your-own-organic-garden-2020-resources

Coming soon to your weekend update: how to build a raised bed, Vinalhaven gardeners who are happy to answer your questions, where to find seedlings, seeds, and supplies without leaving the island, and more!

As always, please contact the EOC with your questions and for assistance. Subscribe to "Town Alerts" on the Town's website to automatically receive Daily Updates in your inbox.