THE GARDEN BOX

The Gardener's Nest

The Nesting Box

A guide to enjoying your backyard

January - February 2011

Winter Thinking

RAISED BED *Gardening*

Is raised bed gardening for you? P. 6

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to The Gardener's Nest. To be quite frank this is the first editorial for this newsletter and I have no idea what I am going to write. First I would like to congratulate Patti Graeff for naming the newsletter. She is the winner of a $50.00 gift card to The Garden Box for coming up with the name. The newsletter will be published 6 times a year. Our goal is to provide information to help you enjoy the outdoors through gardening and attracting wild birds to your backyard.

From time to time last year we asked our customers what they would like to see in our stores. Each time we were given excellent feedback. One thing that tends to ring out in my mind is the neighborhood garden. I was first introduced to the idea by a customer visiting the Tidewater area from Minnesota. The thought is simple: neighbors get together and plan their gardens in the winter, this keeps each of them from over growing tomatoes, squashes, etc. in the spring. Each gardener grows something different in his or her garden providing a larger variety of vegetables for the gardeners in the group. This just makes sense to me.

One of our primary goals with this newsletter and our stores is to create this type of community among our customers. To provide a place where members of our little community can gather to share wisdom, experiences and friendship. Gardening and wild birding are fantastic hobbies but generally aren't regarded as social events. This strikes me as odd. In my and Linda's experiences, gardeners and bird watchers are kind, communal people, happy to express their love of nature.

We hope that as you page through our newsletter and browse through our shelves you enjoy the sense of community we strive to produce with our little enterprise.

Sincerely,

Fred A. Jordan, Jr.
Co-Owner

Preparing Soil for spring

Start by pulling up all dead and unproductive plants and place this residue on top of the soil to be tilled under, or in the compost pile. Remove any diseased or insect infested plant material. Leaving this plant material behind would allow for diseases and insects to become active in the spring and add to next years garden pest problems. The best practice is to remove infested plant material from the garden or burn it. Spread the ashes on the garden to gain the benefit of their mineral nutrients. If burning laws in your area prohibit you from burning anything, haul the diseased material to a landfill.

After clean-up add compost to the garden. Compost contains highly nutritious, decomposed plant material and beneficial organisms, and is an excellent soil-builder. By spreading compost and other wastes on the soil and tilling them in, you are adding nutrients to the soil for next year's crops.

Don't overlook other excellent sources of organic material available. Leaves are abundant, put some on the garden now and store some for next year's mulch. To help leaves decompose quickly, run a lawn mower back and forth over the pile. Put the shredded leaves directly onto the garden or compost them. Chop the mulch fine enough that it will break down over the winter. If you choose to use raw manure in your garden this is the right time to get the organic material in the garden and compost pile. If you wait until spring to add organic material to the garden, it may not have time to decompose and you may have to delay planting to a later date. Hot, or very fresh, manure can burn young seedlings and plants. By adding these materials early you give them plenty of time to decompose and blend into the soil before planting time.

Winter is the best time to prepare the soil for spring planting. The yield of crop will be much better come harvest time.

What you need to know about Bird Feeding

Wild bird feeding has grown in popularity over the past 20 years. The abundance and variety of bird feeders on the market has become overwhelming. Feeders are made of wood, plastic, metal, PVC, and other materials too hard to explain. Some feeders are designed to be pleasing to the eye while others designed to discourage scavengers, such as squirrels and raccoons.

Backyard birders should plan the area in which they intend to feed birds. Make sure the feeding area is setup in a reasonably safe environment. Consider the population of predators and scavengers in the area when selecting feeder locations. Provide refuge from predators such as raccoons, cats and hawks when setting up feeding stations.

Feeders located in wide open spaces, such as the middle of a yard or field, offer little to no protection from predatory birds such as Hawks. Feeders placed close to the ground ensure the local cat gets it's daily diet of poultry. A feeder placed in a tree is an invitation to raccoons and squirrels. So, what do you really need to know about bird feeding?

Most of the time nature is balanced. Occasionally there will be a dead bird or a collection of feathers around the feeder. This should not alarm you at all. Seed-eating birds have a high reproductive rate and their mortality rate is equally high. Most seed-eating birds serve as prey. Raccoons, snakes, fish, and other large birds are their natural predators.

Domesticated cats are not natural predators of birds, but they account for more than half of their deaths. While most bird predators hunt and kill for food, cats hunt out of pure instinct. Most cats don't eat their prey. They instinctively kill and immediately hunt again for the next victim. If at all possible keep cats inside or attach a small bell to their collar. The bell gives the bird a better chance of survival.

Keep feeding stations clean and be aware of bird mortality around the feeder. When there is no evidence of predator attack

Baffles are available at the Nesting Box. Baffles are an excellent way of protecting birdhouses and feeders from cats and raccoons.

there may be other problems such as disease from moldy or soiled seed. Wet seed should not be allowed to remain in the feeder. Cleaning the feeder regularly and removing wet seed will lesson the possibility of spreading disease.

Undesirable birds at the feeder has been and always will be a problem. Using feeders with wire mesh, small perches and without a tray can help prevent such birds as the Common Grackle, Pigeons, and Blackbirds, but will also reduce the amount of Cardinals at your feeder.

You may find the task of selecting the best seed to use a little difficult. All birds don't eat the same food. The key to attracting a diversity of bird species is to provide a variety of types of food. This does not mean you need to purchase one of every kind of food in the store. You can provide two or three different seeds and a small amount of fruit and the birds will come.

The seed that attracts the greatest number of species is black-oil sunflower. These seeds are full of meat and high in fat content. They are small in size and thin shelled which makes them easy for small birds to handle and crack (stripped sunflower seeds are larger and have a much thicker shell). Several studies on seed preference show the black-oil sunflower seed is the flock-pleasing favorite. Safflower seed is a favorite of Cardinals, Chickadees, and Titmice. Squirrels, Grackle and Starlings find safflower less appealing. Peanut Butter mixed with bits of fruit or suet will attract Woodpeckers and other insect-eating birds.

Winter is a difficult time for birds because finding food during this time of year is especially challenging. Don't forget they need your help more now than any other time of year.

Few things are as interesting, lively, and beautiful as birds. They brighten up the dark days of winter and fill our springtime woodlands and gardens with their music. How can we repay them for giving us such enjoyment? By providing some of the things they need to survive—food, water, shelter, nest sites, and natural habitats. Build a wild bird habitat in your backyard today.

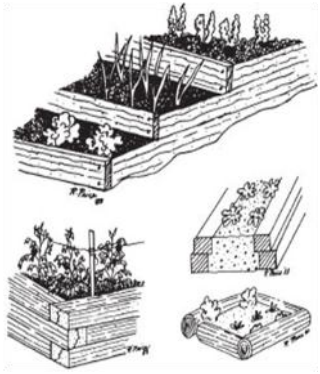
Raised Bed Intensive Gardening

The purpose of gardening intensively is to harvest the most produce possible from a given space. More traditional gardens consist of long, single rows of vegetables spaced widely apart. An intensive garden minimizes wasted space. Intensive gardening concentrates your work efforts to create an ideal plant environment, giving better yields. The practice of intensive gardening is great for those with limited space, or can be used to increase the productivity of large gardens as well. .

Though its benefits are many, the intensive garden may not be for everyone. Some people enjoy the sight of long, straight rows in their gardens. Others prefer machine cultivation, some like to plant their gardens in a very short period of time and have harvests come in all at once. Intensive gardening in a raised bed requires weeding by hand although fewer weeds are present due to the close plant spacing system of intensive gardening and the use of hand tools are required in intensive plantings. The raised bed intensive garden ideal is to have something growing in every part of the garden at all times during the growing season.

A good intensive garden requires early, thorough planning to make the best use of your time and space. Before planting, you must consider the interrelationships of plants, including their nutrient needs, shade tolerance, above- and below-ground growth patterns, and preferred growing seasons. Using the following techniques, you can develop a high-yielding raised bed intensive garden.

The Raised Bed: The raised bed or growing bed is the basic unit of an intensive garden. A system of beds allows you to concentrate soil preparation in small areas, resulting in the efficient use of soil amendments and an ideal environment for vegetable growth. Beds are generally 3 to 4 feet wide and as long as you desire. You work from either side of the bed, reducing the incidence of compaction caused by walking on the soil.



Soil preparation is the key to successful intensive gardening. Till the soil so that the top 10 to 12 inches has a loose tilth suitable for vegetable production. Plants compete for available water and nutrients, and an adequate supply must be provided. If possible have a soil test done so you know what amendments and/or additives are needed in your soil. If you suspect there is an inadequate amount of organic matter in the soil, you can add organic matter content. Soil test results will indicate if organic amendments are needed.

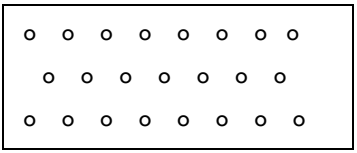
By their nature, raised beds are a form of wide-bed gardening, a technique by which seeds and transplants are planted in bands or several rows. The goal is to space plants at equal distances from each other on all sides, such that leaves will touch at maturity. This saves space, and the close plantings reduce moisture loss from surrounding soil.

Interplanting: Growing two or more types of vegetables in the same place at the same time. Proper planning is essential to obtain high yield and maintain the quality of the crops you planted. To successfully plan an interplanted garden you must take into account several factors for each plant: The length of its growth period, growth pattern (tall, short, below or above ground), possible negative effects on other plants, preferred season, light, nutrient, and moisture requirements. You can accomplish interplanting by alternating rows within a bed (plant a row of peppers next to a row of onions), by mixing plants within a row, or by distributing various species throughout the bed.

Long-season (slow-maturing) and short-season (quick maturing) plants like carrots and radishes, respectively, can be planted at the same time. The radishes are harvested before they begin to crowd the carrots. An example of combining growth patterns is planting smaller plants close to larger plants, (radishes at the base of beans or broccoli). Shade tolerant species like lettuce and spinach may be planted in the shadow of taller crops.

Interplanting can help keep insect and disease problems under control. Pests are fairly crop-specific; that is, they prefer vegetables of one type or family. Mixing families of plants avoids large expanses of the pest-preferred crop, helping to contain early pest damage within a small area, giving you a little more time to deal with the problem.

Spacing: Individual plants are more closely spaced in a raised bed intensive garden. The spacing plan should call for plants to be the same distance from each other within the bed. In beds of more than two rows this means that the rows should be staggered so that the plants in every other row are between the plants in the adjacent rows. The distance recommended for plants within the row on a seed packet is the distance from the center of one plant to the center of the next. This results in a more efficient use of space and leaves less area to weed and mulch. The close spacing of intensive gardens tends to create a nearly solid leaf canopy, acting as a living mulch, decreasing water loss, and keeping weed problems down. However, plants should not be crowded to the point at which disease problems arise or competition causes stunting. Plan for succession planting, this is an excellent way to make the most of an intensive garden. To obtain a succession of crops, plant something new in the spots vacated by spent plants.

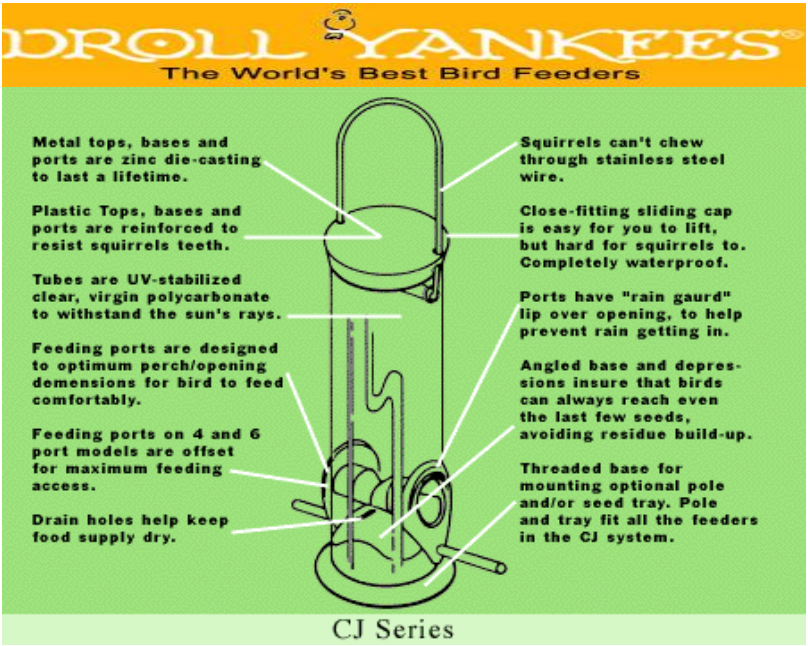


When to Start: Begin planning your garden early. In January or February when the cold days of winter seem never-ending, pull out last year's garden records and dig into your new seed catalogs. As with any garden, you must decide which crops you want to grow based on your own likes and dislikes, as well as how much of each you will need. At this time of year you may want to take soil samples to avoid waiting for results during the busy spring soil sampling time. An account of which amendments were most successful last year would be useful in making product choices this year. Use the charts below and your own experience to determine which crops are likely combinations. An intensive garden requires detailed planning, but the time saved in working the garden and the increased yields make it well worthwhile. Good gardening practices such as watering, fertilizing, crop rotation, composting, and sanitation are especially important in an intensive garden.

Intensive Spacing Guide:

Note: to determine spacing for interplanting, add the inches for the two crops to be planted together, and divide 2. For example, Radishes planted next to beans, add 2" + 4" = 6", then divided by 2 = 3". The radishes should be planted 3" from the beans.

Plant	Inches	Plant	Inches
Beans, lima	4-6	Lettuce, head	10-12
Beans, pole	6-12	Lettuce, leaf	4-6
Beans, bush	4-6	Mustard	6-9
Beets	2-4	Okra	12-18
Broccoli	12-18	Onion	2-4
Brussels sprouts	15-18	Peas	2-4
Cabbage	15-18	Peppers	12-15
Carrots	2-3	Radishes	2-3
Cauliflower	15-18	Southern pea	3-4
Cucumber	12-18	Spinach	4-6
Chard, Swiss	6-9	Squash, summer	18-24
Collards	12-15	Squash, winter	24-36
Eggplant	18-24	Sweet corn	15-18
Kale	15-18	Tomatoes	18-24
Leeks	3-6	Turnip	4-6



LIFETIME WARRANTY

Droll Yankees will replace any defective parts, free of charge, for as long as you own your Droll Yankees feeder. If your feeder is badly damaged by squirrels, to the extent that the effectiveness of the feeder is compromised, Droll Yankees will, at its option, either repair, replace, or send replacement parts, free of charge. This warranty does not extend to damage through neglect, accident or misuse. Droll Yankees is recognized by birding authorities as the makers of the World's Best Bird Feeders.

Yankee Flipper Lifetime Warranty Coverage:

The YF feeder body: comprised of the tube, bail wire, bail rod, cap, feed port, cone and silo assembly, and the base are covered by Droll Yankees Lifetime Warranty. The Droll Yankees Lifetime Warranty does not extend to damage through neglect, accident, misuse or disassembly.

Yankee Flipper Limited Warranty Coverage:

The Yankee Flipper (YF) power-stick and battery charger are warranted to be free from defects in materials and workmanship for a period of one year from date of purchase. In the event of a manufacturing defect, Droll Yankees will repair or replace, at the company's option, the power-stick and/or battery charger free of charge. This limited warranty does not cover the following: failure due to improper use, cleaning, neglect, abuse, modification, disassembly, or falls. This limited warranty applies only to the original purchaser possessing a valid sales receipt.

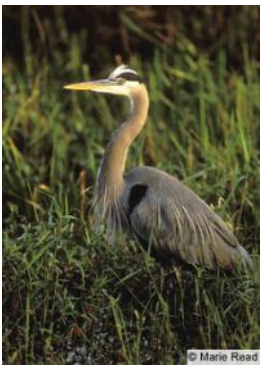
Except as set forth above, no other express or implied warranty of any kind or nature is given by Droll Yankees in connection with the purchase or use of the Yankee Flipper. In no event shall Droll Yankees be liable for special, incidental or consequential damages arising from the ownership or use of the Yankee Flipper.

Who is Who in the Sky:

Great Blue Heron

The largest and most widespread Heron in North America, the Great Blue Heron, can be found along the ocean shore or the edge of a small inland pond. An all white form is found from southern Florida into the Caribbean, and was considered to be a separate species, the "Great White Heron."

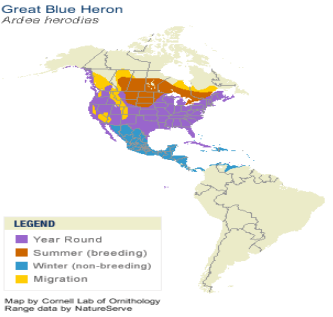
The white form of the Great Blue Heron, known as the "Great White Heron," is found nearly exclusively in shallow marine waters along the coast of very southern Florida, the Yucatan Peninsula, and in the Caribbean. Where the dark and white forms overlap in Florida, intermediate birds known as "Wurdemann's Herons" can be found. They have the bodies of a Great Blue Heron, but the white head and neck of the Great White Heron.



Description: Large gray bird with long legs, an “S” shaped neck, and a long thick bill. The Great Blue Heron has a white crown stripe and black plume extending from behind the eye and off the back of the neck. The feathers on the neck and back are shaggy. The back, wings and belly are bluish gray. The bill is yellow, the legs brownish or greenish, the thighs rust colored, and the eyes yellow. The juvenile is similar to adult, but has a gray crown, a dark upper bill, rusty brown edging to back feathers, and lacks body plumes.

Size: 38-54 in, Wingspan: 66-79 in, Weight: 74 - 88 ounces

Range: An adaptable bird whose large size enables it to feed on a variety of prey—from large fish and frogs to mice, small birds, and insects. The Great Blue has one of the widest ranges of any North American Heron. Its wide choice of food enables it to remain farther north during the winter than other species, although such lingering birds may fall victim to severe weather.



Great Blues breed from southern Alaska and central Canada southward to Central America and the Caribbean. They winter from southern Canada southward to northern South America, and along the coasts as far north as Alaska and Nova Scotia.

Habitat: Found along calm freshwater and seacoasts. Most Great Blues nest in colonies in tall trees; their presence is often unsuspected until the leaves fall and the groups of saucer-shaped nests are exposed to view. Usually nests are near water, but colonies can be found away from water. The female Great Blue Heron lays three to seven eggs on a shallow platform made of sticks and twigs and lined with soft material. The eggs hatch in about a month and the chicks will fledge when they are about two months old. Great blue herons usually nest in the same spot from year-to-year. They may even use the same nest.

In late summer young Heron disperse widely and may be encountered at small ponds, in mountain waters, or even in backyard garden ponds -wherever fish are plentiful. Sixty-nine percent of new born Great Blue Heron die in their first year. The oldest known Great Blue Heron lived 23 years.

http://www.birds.cornell.edu/programs/AllAboutBirds/BirdGuide/.

2011 GARDENING CLASSES

DATE	TIME	CLASS	DESCRIPTION
Jan 29	9:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Let's Talk	Let's Talk is a forum the customer can provide input on the upcoming planting season. What can we do for you?
Feb 12	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Gardening 101	Preparing the seed, plants and soil, Discuss fertilizers and the meaning of the numbers. Planning your upcoming garden.
Feb 19	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Choosing Bird Houses	Discuss the right house for the right bird. Talk about the location of your bird house and bird feeder. Discuss predators and competitors.
Feb 26	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Building The Bed	Discuss size and space requirements, material required and location. Discuss ready made kits and the advantages and disadvantages of both. Soil amendments and proper drainage.
Mar 5	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Bird Feeding	Preparing your feeders for the returning birds. Where to locate the feeders, food mixture, and types of feeders. Planting to attract birds.
Mar 12	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Container Gardening	Discuss container size, soil content and how to prepare container for drainage. Discuss design and development of planting and changing out plants the seasons.
Mar 19	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Container Vegetable Garden	Planting a vegetable garden in a large container or raised bed. Discuss square foot gardening, location, soil and amendments. This is a hands on class.
Mar 26	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Herb Gardening	Companion planting. Discuss what herbs work well together, location, container size, soil, fertilizer and care requirement. Discuss the types of herb gardens that can be planted.
Apr 2	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Backyard Vegetable Gardening	The ins and outs of gardening in the backyard. Where, what and when to plant. Building the bed for the best results. Keeping critters out of the garden. Planning friendship gardens with others (Sharing the harvest)
Apr 9	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Perennial Gardening	Perennials are the focal point of the garden. Learn to highlight them during the growing season and care for them during the off season.
Apr 30	9:00 AM - 10:30AM	Container Vegetable Gardening	Planting a vegetable garden in a large container or raised bed. Discuss square foot gardening, location, soil and amendments. This is a hands on class.
May 14	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Shade Gardening	Learn the difference between full sun, part sun, part shade and shade plants. Learn to plant a garden or container that will thrive in the shady areas.
May 21	9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Gardening for Wildlife	Attracting wildlife to your back yard.