



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article December 29, 2015

Something New

by Lydia Holley

Do you like growing something new in your garden? I do. Every year I try a new vegetable that I have never grown before. There are several vegetables I now regularly grow just because I took a chance on something uncommon and unexpected.

I started this tradition years ago when I decided to grow purple tomatoes. I loved the taste of them so much that the next year I decided to grow yellow tomatoes. The year after that, I grew orange tomatoes.



Growing purple, yellow and orange tomatoes made me realize that there are many vegetables that can be grown in unusual colors. My husband introduced me to white cucumbers. I thought something was wrong with the cucumbers when I first saw them. He had to explain that they were supposed to be white. Their taste was so delicate that white cucumbers are now a yearly repeat in my garden.

Red lettuce is another colorful vegetable that I regularly grow. When the low winter sun shines through these leaves, they are as beautiful and enchanting as rubies. It is fun to plant these jewels among green lettuce to make custom designs.

Another beautiful vegetable is the Romanesco broccoli. It grows in a pattern usually described as a fractal, a symmetrically expanding spiral. I grew Romanesco broccoli several years ago, and I was captivated with its architectural structure.

This fall, I planted extra dwarf bok choy. Not the regular bok choy. Not the baby bok choy, either, that you can sometimes get in the produce aisle of your favorite grocery store. And not just regular dwarf. Extra dwarf. This miniature bok choy is only two inches tall when harvested. It is quite cute, and a great way to introduce a little bok choy at the table without overwhelming those that are not used to its taste. It was easy to grow, and because of its miniature size, it does not take long to cook. Unfortunately, it has tended to bolt early in our warm autumn weather.

Most years, my new vegetable plantings are successful. Some years, however, the success is limited. The year I grew kale for the first time, it became evident that I had planted most of the seeds too shallowly. The few plants that sprouted lasted a long time before bolting and were a great addition to our meals. Still, I now read the seed directions a little more carefully.

Bored with your garden? This year, make a resolution to try something new.

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