

ST. TAMMANY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

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In beauty all day long may I walk.
 Through the returning seasons, may I walk.
 On the trail marked with pollen, may I walk.
 With dew about my feet, may I walk.
 With beauty before me, I walk.
 With beauty behind me, I walk.
 With beauty above me, I walk.
 With beauty around me, I walk.

Walk in Beauty ... Prayer of the Navajo People



Photo by J Blazek

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www.lsuagcenter.com

A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee

We are approaching the end of summer. Although the weather is much more conducive to sitting inside in the air-conditioning than working outside in the heat, I still have a thriving garden. I thought I would share some photos.

I try to go out for an hour or two in the morning before it gets terribly hot. Most of the plants growing now only need a bit of inspecting, and occasionally a treatment for bugs or disease. Despite all the rain, everything is healthy. Since I have not had to water my garden in ages, I spend all that extra time pulling chamberbitters. Enjoy this virtual tour of my garden in the comfort of your air-conditioning.

The main entrance to my garden is always shady and inviting which really encourages me get out there on the hot days.



I grow almost everything in raised beds with good drainage and lots of mulch. Most of what is in my garden has not minded the daily dousing from the skies. Except ... my tomato plants called it quits about mid-July. I am harvesting lots of herbs: rosemary, thyme, several types of basil, oregano, parsley, and chives.



A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued



My garden is circular and at three of the entrances I have a wire arch covered by mirliton vines. The mirliton started flowering in July. The flowers are tiny, but the bees had no trouble finding them. I have a volunteer butterfly weed that grew up in the path under the mirliton archway (photos below).



Last year I harvested over 50 mirlitons from one plant. This was a little scary as I have never tasted any mirliton dish that I liked. Fortunately, I discovered that I (and my horses) like it raw. Its mild taste is a cross between a cucumber and an apple. It is great chopped up in salads.

A momma bird found safe haven in one of the mirliton-covered arches.



A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued

I am growing both red and green yard long beans. I planted six of each and they are producing so many beans that I have to pick them every day. I have them growing on vertical netting in a raised bed next to a mirliton arch. A few of the bean plants have invaded the archway which makes for easy pickings.



A mix of the red and green beans makes for a really attractive dish. They keep their color somewhat better than many purple vegetables when cooked.



The garden has eight different varieties of peppers.



I harvested beets and leaks. I will pull these out and weed the beds soon to prepare for new plantings in August.



The onions and carrots are actively growing. I plan to harvest these carrots when they get larger and will continue seeding more through the fall.



A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued



Eggplant is another vegetable ideally suited for our area. It does not mind the heat and humidity. Eggplants produce all summer. They are best grown in raised beds or containers because they are susceptible to bacterial wilt. This is the first time I tried growing eggplant and I am very happy with the results.

Butternut squash is a great summer garden plant. It is relatively immune to damage from vine borers and squash bugs. The plants will continue to produce all summer long

and through the fall until the first frost. Butternut needs to be irrigated during dry spells. I have directed this butternut vine around the base of a pollinator bed containing Butterfly Weed and Turk's Cap. More about my butternut squash later.



I have cucumbers growing in a raised bed with horizontal netting for support on both long sides. I planted 30 cucumber seeds in this bed, six each of five different varieties. Some did not germinate. Some seedlings were eaten by cucumber beetles before I noticed and got the insects under control. Some were eaten by squash bugs. Some succumbed to disease/stress courtesy of six weeks of non-stop rain and heat. That was all to be expected, though. I still have plenty of plants producing more than I need. Hopefully, they will continue to produce throughout the summer and increase production once the weather cools off. I am going to plant

more cucumber seeds mid-August to boost my chances for a good fall crop.

The asparagus spear in the center of the photo looks tasty but do not pick it this time of the year! Stop harvesting asparagus on the first of July. The plants need those spears to develop into fronds to support the root system. I am looking forward to picking more again in the spring when the spears reach six to ten inches tall.



A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued



Edamame is my favorite summertime vegetable plant. It is attractive and tough. The plants are unfazed by our heat, humidity, and non-stop rain. These plants are growing in a slightly mounded bed not much higher than the surrounding pathways. Edamame plants are extremely prolific yet undemanding. Unlike my yard long beans (which absolutely insist on being picked every day), I can pick edamame every day or I



can forget for a week and the beans are still there and haven't gotten too big or too tough.



This is the first fruiting of mushrooms from logs that I inoculated with purchased plugs 13 months ago. I kept the logs in the shade and faithfully sprinkled them with water for two to three hours twice a week whenever we did not have sufficient rainfall. This is another long-term project but once they start fruiting each log should continue to produce several crops per year for the next three or four years.

Unfortunately, these mushrooms are not what I purchased. They were volunteers, courtesy of months of daily rain. I do not know enough about mushrooms to ever eat one without having it identified by an expert. I sent this photo to the mushroom company. They identified these as false turkey tails. They grow wild on decomposing logs. While they are not poisonous mushrooms, neither are they considered to be edible.

I am getting expert directions to correct the situation which, as I understand, includes scrubbing the mushrooms off the logs, disinfecting the outside of the logs, and then continuing to water them twice a week until edible mushrooms start to fruit. I was told when I got into this that it could take 18 months before the first fruiting. I potentially have about more five months to go. Fingers crossed.

A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued

I am trying to grow my own turmeric root. There are many different looking turmeric plants in my garden ... all of which were sold as *Curcuma longa*, the species of ginger that produces the rhizome herb, turmeric. I plan to dig up and examine the rhizomes from my various plants to see if I can determine which is the REAL *Curcuma longa*. But in the meantime, the plants and flowers are beautiful (photo to the right).



To the left (at the bottom of the photo) are six-week-old sweet potato plants. By midsummer the leaves are almost always full of holes. The bugs do not eat enough to affect the crop of tubers, so I tolerate the unsightly leaves.

African Blue Basil plants (upper left) never set seed. They are propagated by cuttings. They bloom profusely until first frost. I plant these for the bees and butterflies. The leaves have a camphor taste so are not used in cooking. There are many other types of basil with much tastier leaves.

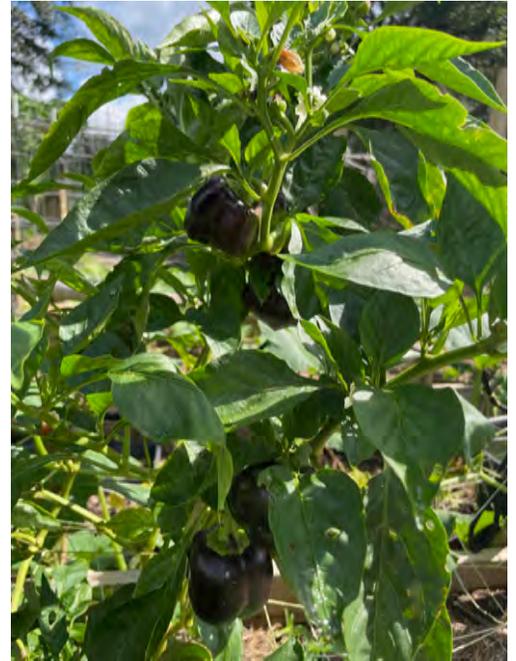
The irises (above photo, upper right) are happily growing in a low spot along a path between planting beds. Water accumulates there from both rain and garden irrigation. Oops ... not thinking, I blocked the drainage when I installed yet another raised bed on the south (lower) side of the garden. The irises are the perfect solution ... my own self-made mini-wetlands.

My first crop of figs is finished. However, I expect to get another crop in early fall. Figs are easy to grow. They are susceptible to frosts and freezes. They will die back and be killed in cold winters. I address this by mulching heavily before the first hard freeze. Then I pull the mulch away in early spring to prevent the trunk from getting too much moisture. The difficult part of growing figs for me is harvesting. The bird net (visible in the photo) makes it hard for me to get to the figs but doesn't impede the birds in the slightest. I never did get to eat the fig shown in the photo. I checked the next morning to see if it was ripe and there was nothing left but a stem. My birds really enjoyed them!



A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued

I find the “Purple Beauty” sweet bell pepper plants (photo on the right) to be the most productive and disease resistant of all the sweet peppers, especially during July and August. These plants give me a continuous supply of peppers throughout the summer.



I created a new planting bed in June (photo below) for three citrus trees, two satsumas and one sweet orange. I planted the trees 12 feet apart. Because they are only three feet tall now, I had lots of extra space in my new bed. I planted some African blue basil for the pollinators and some red dragon Celosia for me because I think it is pretty. In mid-June I added three watermelon seedlings. They have filled in the space in the bed nicely but are now keeping me busy placing cardboard and mulch to keep up with the expanding vines. The mulch and cardboard will keep the grass and weeds from growing up between the vines from now until harvest. This will keep the plants healthy. And ... I will be happy not looking at tall grass and weeds.



Butternut squash is called a winter squash because, although it grows during the summer, it will keep through the winter if left on the vine until fully mature. The squash will turn from green to a gold/tan color as it ripens. When it is a uniform dark tan/orange/gold with no green stripes it is ready to be picked. Other indicators of maturity are a hard rind and a brown stem.



However, given our long growing season, once a squash is completely tan/gold I find it needs to be harvested even if the stem is still green. If it is left in the garden too long, especially with all the rain this summer, the side underneath is going to be attacked by bugs or disease.

A Garden Tour With Laura Steffee, continued

Our environment is not conducive to storing produce all winter. So, there is no reason to give disease and insects a chance to eat your squash. I harvest mine as soon as the rind is firm and there is no green showing in the skin color.

This squash looked great from the top and the stem was still green but it should have been picked it as soon as the green stripes disappeared.

I start harvesting and eating squash in early July. The harvest continues until the first frost. After that, the plants will shrivel up and turn brown. Then it is time to harvest any squash still on the vine.



Quick tip:

To extend the storage life of your butternut squash harvest, leave a two to three-inch piece of stem on the squash. Most will keep three months or more when stored in a cool dry space with good airflow. I store my squash in a mesh shoe organizer hung on the wall of my air-conditioned utility room.

All photos in this article by L Steffee

Laura Steffee
Master Gardener
Vegucator

Elderberry

(*Sambucus nigra* L. subsp. *canadensis* [L.] Bolli)

Elderberry, *Sambucus nigra* (subsp. *canadensis*), is native to Eastern North America from Florida to Quebec and west to Manitoba and New Mexico. It is commonly known as American elder or wild elder. It has a European cousin, *Sambucus nigra* (subsp. *nigra*), commonly known as Black elder.

Confusingly, in some literature, the American native elder is also referred to as American black elder. There are two other American native elders: *Sambucus racemosa* (commonly called red elder) and *Sambucus cerulea*, (blue elder) because of the color of their berries. The "red" and "blue" natives will not be discussed in this article. The references that are cited specify the black varieties only.



In 2013, the USDA National Plant Germplasm System officially changed the name of the American black elderberry to *Sambucus nigra* L. subsp. *canadensis* (L.) Bolli. Both this American elder native and the European variety have been widely used for food and in folk medicine for centuries. More about that later.



The American elder, *Sambucus nigra* (subsp. *canadensis*), is a woody shrub that can be found in weedy, open areas, at forest edges, as well as in shady under story areas. The American elder tends to be multi-stemmed and will grow to heights of up to 15 feet in one growing season. In full sunlight it will produce flowers and berries more prolifically than in shadier areas. It is commonly found on the banks of bayous, lakes, and canals where water drains quickly. It does not thrive in marshy, constantly wet areas. Once established, it will re-grow from ground level to produce flowers and fruit in one season. It is frequently seen along roadsides that have been mowed. Elder does not like competition from taller trees and shrubs.



Elder leaves are deciduous, pinnate compounds of five to eleven opposite leaflets. Each leaflet is oval-shaped, two to five inches long and about 0.75 to 2 inches wide with rounded bases, pointed tips, and serrated edges.

Elderberry

(*Sambucus nigra* L. subsp. *canadensis* [L.] Bolli), continued



The newer stems are reddish green especially near new leaves and berries. The American elder's bark is light grayish brown with raised lenticels in younger trees, and gray with furrows in older ones.



The white elderflowers, which first appear in the spring, are about 0.1 to 0.2 inches across and form a large corymb at the ends of branches. The flower groupings can be eight to twelve inches across. Pollination of the flowers is thought to be a combination of wind and insects.



The elderberries mature in late July and continue through September. They go from green to red, and eventually mature to a purplish black. The mature elderberry drupes are an important food source for birds, small mammals, and other wildlife, including bears and deer.



Elderberry

(*Sambucus nigra* L. subsp. *canadensis* [L.] Bolli), continued

Both the flowers and the berries have been used for centuries by humans as food, in beverages, and as a medicinal dietary supplement. Indigenous Americans have long used elderberry for these purposes and also in ceremonies. There has been a resurgence of interest in elderberry. So popular now, that the production and cultivation of elderberry is becoming a thriving commercial crop.

Elderberries can be made into juices, teas, wine, dried fruit, pies, bread, cake, jam, jelly, sauce, relish, and syrup. Elder flowers are dried and used in teas. Fresh elder flowers can be battered, fried, and eaten as fritters. The flowers can also be used to flavor alcoholic drinks and as a scent in soap making. Elderberries and flowers are also used as natural food colorants.



Image from eatsmart.com

Elderberry has a long track record of being safe for human consumption. Most commercial elderberry dietary supplements available today are made in Europe. Although there are more American commercial and homegrown elixirs being made available. There are no standards for preparation, concentration, and dosing of elderberry medicinal products. So, buyer beware! Classified as dietary supplements, these are not federally regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. What is regulated is the labeling and advertising of health claims that dietary supplements **cure** disease ... that is not allowed by law.

Elderberry has a long history of use in native, folk, and alternative medicine practices as an immune system stimulant, especially for colds and flu. It has also been used as a diuretic, laxative, purgative, and a diaphoretic. Benefits of elderberry consumption are believed to be more preventative than curative. Scientific studies for prevention of disease are difficult to design and carry out, especially in regards to financial funding. So, when it comes to western medicine standards, proof of efficacy of treatment with elderberry is scant. Most of the published scientific research has been done in Europe on preparations made from the European Black elder and also include other species of botanicals. So, it is difficult to extract the specific effect of elderberry alone on a disease state.

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L. subsp. *canadensis* [L.] Bolli), continued



Elderberry is possibly effective in reducing symptoms of influenza, although it has not been shown to reduce the duration of the disease. Elderberry preparations have also been touted for use in preventing or treating the common cold, COVID-19, seasonal allergies, weight loss, high cholesterol, dementia, cardiovascular and chronic pulmonary diseases, and many other health problems. There is insufficient evidence to prove the effectiveness of elderberry alone on any of these diseases or medical conditions since many commercial products also contain other botanicals. Specific to COVID-19, it is recommended to immediately stop taking Elderberry if you are diagnosed positive. Elderberry stimulates the immune system to make certain cytokines (specialized immune cells). Over-production of these cells can

cause a severe reaction (known as a cytokine storm). In COVID-19 positive patients this reaction has resulted in death.

Other issues concerning the ingestion of any form of elderberry

- When used in amounts typically found in foods (i.e., unconcentrated), elderberries and elderflowers that have been cooked are considered safe for most people.
- Elderberry products stimulate the immune system and should not be consumed by individuals with autoimmune conditions.
- Unripe, green elderberries, stems, and leaves naturally contain a cyanide-producing chemical that may cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. It has been long thought that cooking elderberries and elderflowers inactivates this toxic chemical.
- Ingestion of large quantities of elderberry elixirs can potentially cause some toxicity in certain individuals. Keep it out of the reach of children.
- It is recommended to use elderberry preparations only for short periods of time. When used short term, commercial oral preparations are probably safe for most people. The length of time that it is considered safe varies according to the specific commercial preparation. If you plan to use an elderberry product, read the label and follow the directions.
- Concentrations and dosages will differ among commercial elderberry products which may also contain other botanicals. Refer to label for instructions and ingredients.
- There may be drug interactions between elderberry products and other medications. Prior to starting, consult your health care provider or a licensed pharmacist who knows your medical condition and is familiar with all the medications you are taking.

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra* L. subsp. *canadensis* [L.] Bolli), continued

A few more notes of caution: there are other similar looking white flowers and black berries in the woods that are toxic when ingested by humans, such as, the white flowers of water hemlock, the black berries of Virginia creeper, certain varieties of nightshades, and pokeweed, to name a few. Observing wildlife eating berries **does not** translate to those same berries being safe for human consumption. Birds love to eat poison ivy and mistletoe berries. Neither of these white berries are safe for human consumption. So, when you are foraging in the woods for edibles be sure you can differentiate the friendlies from the toxic. Be 100% positive of the identification. Or ... leave them all for the wildlife. After all, they cannot drive to the grocery store when hunger strikes.

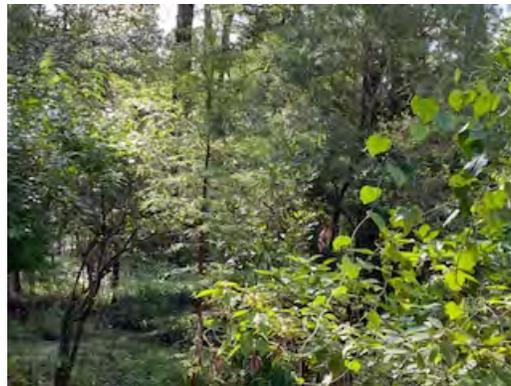
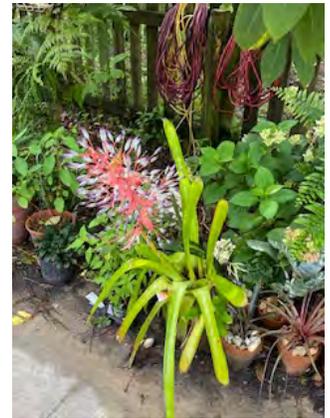
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Jamie Blazek
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Editor, The Gardengoer

STMGA Field Trip To A Local Native Garden

On July 13, 2021 the St. Tammany Master Gardener Association went on a field trip to a native garden in Mandeville, LA. Many thanks to Jim Russell, Master Gardener, for sharing his incredible garden. We got to experience a native habitat like no other ... and took a few baby native plants home to enhance our own gardens. How fortunate STMGA is to have Jim's knowledge and experience in native gardening available to our members!



STMGA Field Trip To A Local Native Garden, continued



All photos by MK Villere

Mary Kathryn Villere
Master Gardener
STMGA Vice- President

Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*)

Ornamental grasses are a division of perennial landscape plants commonly overlooked by the casual gardener. They add a wonderful contrast of texture to the landscape when used near plants with large, coarse leaves. The grasses move easily with the breeze, creating motion in the landscape. The sheer diversity in color, size, and shape provides the industry with many exciting selections. The ease of care and maintenance of ornamental grass is one of its best attributes for use in home landscaping. Relatively pest free, there is not much that will attack these ornamental grass plants. They develop extensive fibrous root systems that can support the plant during times of environmental stress. All of this added together makes for quite an impressive plant!



One of these ornamental grass plants that can be seen all over St. Tammany parish and throughout South Louisiana is pink muhly grass, *Muhlenbergia capillaris*. Sometimes referred to as gulf muhly, pink muhly grass is native to North America from the United States down to Guatemala and the Caribbean. It occurs in prairies, pine barrens, and open woodlands from Massachusetts to Kansas and south to Texas and Florida. The genus is named after Gotthilf Muhlenberg, an American botanist from Pennsylvania. The species name, *capillaris*, is Latin meaning “of or resembling hair.” That name is vindicated when seeing the plant for the first time.

Pink muhly grass is a member of Poaceae, the main grass family in plant taxonomy. It shares many of the same characteristics of other grasses. It is considered a warm-season grass, like our common lawn grasses, due to its growth output during the summer months. Being perennial, it lives year after year going through dormant periods during the winter months. The attractive foliage and smoke-like flowers bloom in late summer and fall months. The leaves are dark green in color, glossy, wiry, and thread-like. The panicles, loose multi-branched flowers, are pink in color and develop late summer through the fall. Muhly grass is great as an individual specimen, but really shines when used in mass plantings seen in the distance. The plants themselves can get up to four feet tall with a width of about three feet.



Pink Muhly Grass (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*), continued



There are a few cultural recommendations to follow to have a successful planting of pink muhly grass in the landscape. Like other grasses, pink muhly grass requires a location that receives at least six hours of direct sunlight throughout the day. The area should have decent drainage. Pink muhly grass can tolerate a moist soil. However, if water collects regularly after rain events, consider planting in a drier spot. Lastly, take soil samples to determine soil fertility and adjust when plant nutrients are showing “very low” and “low” levels. Comply with these conditions and pink muhly grass will thrive in your landscape.

Whether in the ground or in a mixed container with other plants, pink muhly grass is an excellent choice for Louisiana gardeners. It is such a good choice that the LSU AgCenter has selected pink muhly grass to be a finalist in the Louisiana Super Plant Program. Look for marketing campaigns that feature pink muhly grass later this fall. The Louisiana Super Plant Program highlights exceptional plants that perform well throughout our beautiful state. For up-to-date information on the Louisiana Super Plant Program visit www.lsuagcenter.com. You can also follow the program on Facebook by visiting www.facebook.com/louisianasuperplants and selecting the “Like” button.

Will Afton
County Agent
LSU AgCenter

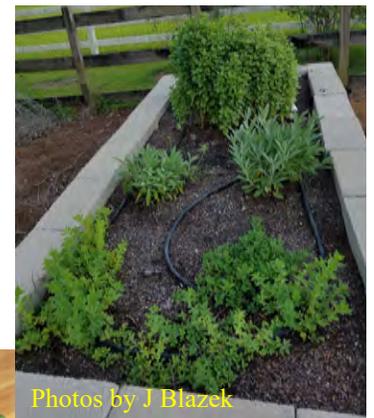


Thyme To Plant Fall Herbs

Now is the “thyme” to plant fresh herbs. Our fall and winter seasons are fantastic conditions for herb growing. You can plant some basil now and it will bloom and flush for a new batch of pesto before the first frost. Fall and winter herb gardens do not require a lot of water, fertilizers, or insecticides, and only need a half day of sun. Cut your herbs back each week to get them fuller and encourage new growth. Basil is the only herb that will freeze in our cold months. Plant your herbs now to flavor all your holiday cooking.



I thought it would be fun to focus on some French herb combinations. Cut those Mediterranean herbs to make an *Herbes de Provence* blend: rosemary, sage, thyme, oregano, marjoram, savory, lavender, with the addition of a little fennel and basil. Place the herbs on a pan to air dry under a fan. It only takes a few days. Then crunch them into a jar. Another French herb mix is *Fines Herbes*: parsley, tarragon, chives, and chervil. I like to substitute basil if I can not find chervil.



The French use a *bouquet garni* for hearty soups, stews, and poaching. They will tie up a little bundle with string, usually, bay leaves, stalks of parsley, and sprigs of thyme. Then float the herb packet in the simmering stock. Wrapped as a bundle, the herbs can be plucked out before serving the dish. Fall concerts will be coming soon. Spring and fall have the perfect weather for concert picnics. Why not use all your herbs to pack a delicious fall French picnic. Remember to float some lemon balm, mint, or lemon verbena in your tea or cocktail.



I was inspired by a French blog that talked about the Long French Lunch. The French do not just eat to survive. They celebrate the food and friendships. They can linger over a meal for hours. Every August 15th I like to celebrate Julia Child’s birthday. I wear my pearls and cook a fabulous French menu. Her TV show taught Americans how to use herbs in French cooking. We started to not only cook foreign food but to also grow herbs to flavor those recipes. *Bouquet garni*, *Herbes de Provence* and *Fines Herbes* became familiar cooking terms in our kitchens. I have included a few recipes using fresh herbs from the garden. Pack all this fabulous French food and bring it outdoors. Do not forget the Champagne!

Thyme To Plant Fall Herbs, continued

Recipes for the Long French Picnic:

Poaching food seemed to disappear in the 1980's, but it is a perfect way to flavor food. You can serve a poached dish hot. Or let it cool and serve it as a light fresh meal. Add a little aioli and you can munch away for hours. This is perfect for a picnic served with a crusty baguette, cherry tomatoes, lettuce leaves and chilled wine. Pack this in small mason jars and serve it during fall concerts in the park.

Poulet Nomade: Herb poached chicken in a jar

4 chicken breasts or 8 chicken tenders, about 2 pounds

Poaching liquid: 3 cups chicken or vegetable stock and 1 cup white wine

Make a *bouquet garni* and place into the stock:

2 sprigs fresh thyme

A handful of fresh parsley sprigs

2 bay leaves

2 cloves garlic, crushed

6 oz. fresh goat cheese

2 fresh sprigs thyme, not cooked

Fresh ground pepper

Salt to taste

Canned artichoke hearts, drained and diced

¼ cup slivered almonds

Olive oil

Gently poach the chicken in the stock and wine with the *bouquet garni* for 12-15 minutes or to 140 degrees Fahrenheit (use an instant read thermometer).

Turn off heat and allow to cool for 30-40 minutes.

Drain the chicken and cut into bite size pieces.

In a bowl, combine the goat cheese with the thyme. Add garlic to taste.

Add black pepper and salt to taste.

Mix cheese together with the chicken. Then mix in chopped artichoke hearts and almonds.

Fill small mason jars with the chicken salad and add 2 Tbsp. of olive oil to each jar. Cap the jars and turn upside down a few times to coat all ingredients. Store in the fridge for up to 2-3 days. To get ready for your picnic: pack the jars, cherry tomatoes, radishes, lettuce leaves, grapes or cherries, French bread, wine, and water.

For variety, poach seafood with lemons and herb aioli. You will be nibbling and lingering for hours!



Photo by L Franzo



Photo by J Blazek

Thyme To Plant Fall Herbs, continued

French Couscous Salad (Taboule)

Couscous came into France from North Africa. Mixed with other Moroccan flavors, such as, curry, ginger, and saffron. Served with chicken, sausage, or lamb, it is known as Couscous Royale. The French couscous salad, Taboule, is a version of the Levantine Tabbouleh made with bulgur wheat and a bounty of herbs. The French cook couscous in stock for extra flavor. It is then studded with crunchy vegetables. Raisins are optional. Fresh parsley, basil and oregano are used in generous amounts. The French use a little less mint than the traditional Israeli couscous. This tomato and cucumber couscous is the spring, summer, fall version using fresh produce and herbs. Add some crumbled chevre and chickpeas to make this a perfect Mediterranean spoon salad. Place portions into mason jars and refrigerate. This is perfect to take to work or a picnic. The recipe begins with soaking raisins in a bowl of water to rehydrate to get them plump and juicy. The raisins will add a sweetness to the pasta, contrasting with the vinegar dressing.

Couscous:

2 Tbsp. olive oil in a six-quart stock pot

1 ½ cups large Israeli couscous

1 ¾ cup water or chicken stock with 1 tsp. salt

Sauté couscous in olive oil a few minutes to get the pasta a little toasty. Add the stock and bring to a boil. Shut the heat off and keep the couscous covered. Let it sit for 6 minutes.

Fluff the couscous and transfer it to a salad bowl to cool to room temperature.

Add to the cooled, cooked couscous:

⅓ cup plumped raisins

2 cups cherry tomatoes, sliced

2 cups Persian cucumbers or hot house cucumbers, sliced and quartered

½ cup finely chopped shallots or red onion

¼ cup flat leaf parsley, chopped

¼ cup basil, chopped

2 Tbsp. fresh mint, chopped

Salt and pepper to taste

Mix the dressing ingredients together in a jar:

Juice of 1 lemon

1 Tbsp. dried oregano

½ cup olive oil

½ tsp. Kosher salt and fresh cracked pepper

¼ tsp. cayenne pepper



Add raisins, tomatoes, cucumbers, onion, and herbs to cooked couscous. Add dressing to the couscous. Toss and taste. Adjust salt & pepper. Serves 6. Recipe is continued on next page.

Thyme To Plant Fall Herbs, continued

Couscous recipe optional additions:

- 1 can drained garbanzo beans,
- ½ cup crumbled chevre
- 2 cups Arugula
- Balsamic glaze

Prepare recipe as above. Toss arugula with olive oil, salt & pepper. Spread out on a platter. Top arugula with the couscous salad. Add garbanzo beans and sprinkle chevre atop. Drizzle balsamic glaze over the top as a pretty garnish.

Tomate Tarte Aux Moutarde: Tomato and mustard tart

- 1 Tbsp. grainy mustard
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 3 large tomatoes, thinly sliced, salted, drained for 20 minutes in a colander, and patted dry
- 6 slices Swiss cheese, ¼ inch thick, (Havarti, Brie, goat cheese, or mozzarella can be substituted)
- 2 Tbsp. Olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. *Herbes de Provence* or 2 Tbsp. of fresh thyme, chives, parsley, tarragon, and basil.
- 1 tart dough recipe (found on next page)



Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Fit the pie crust into a nine-inch pie dish. Using a fork, poke holes in the crust bottom. Bake the crust for about 10 minutes to brown slightly, let cool. Spread the mustard evenly over the bottom of the crust. Cover the mustard with the cheese. Arrange slices of tomatoes, overlapping in a spiral from the edge to the center, covering the cheese. Drizzle olive oil over the tomatoes. Sprinkle *Herbes de Provence* or fresh herbs over the tomatoes. Bake in the oven until the crust has browned, the cheese melted, and the tomatoes are curled at the edges, about 30-40 minutes. Cool and wrap in parchment. Tie with a string. Pack into a picnic basket.

If you are making a free style tart, roll the dough into a 14-inch circle and place on a parchment lined pan. Prick the pastry with a fork. Do not pre-cook. Spread mustard and other ingredients over crust leaving a two-inch edge all around. Fold dough edge over the tart ingredients. Cook 30-40 minutes.

Mini-tarts: divide a pie crust into three balls. Roll out. Fill the same way you filled the large tart leaving the edges bare. Fold over the dough edges. Bake 20-25 minutes.

Thyme To Plant Fall Herbs, continued

Galettes are easy as pie! So, whether you call it a tart, pie, or galette, it is same delicious result, a dough topped with a sweet or savory filling.

Tart (or galette) Dough Recipe

1 ½ cups flour
4 ½ ounces unsalted butter, chilled and cut into cubes
½ tsp. salt
1 large egg
2-3 Tbsp. cold water

Make the dough by mixing the flour and salt. Grate in the butter and mix with a pastry blender to get a cornmeal texture. Add egg and 2 Tbsp. of water. Gather the dough into a ball. Add more water if it does not come together into a ball. Add additional flour to the counter to keep dough from sticking. Roll out.

Mixed Berry Galette

3 cups berries, any combination of blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
1 Tbsp. cornstarch
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tart dough recipe or 1 ready-made pie crust
1 large egg and 1 Tbsp. water or milk
1 Tbsp. turbinado sugar for sprinkling over the crust.



In a large bowl, mix berries, cornstarch, sugar, and lemon juice. Let sit 10-15 minutes. Preheat oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Roll out pie crust. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the berries onto the pie crust, leaving the juices behind. Leave a two-inch border. Gently fold over the border, overlapping the edges into sort of a pleat. Make the egg wash with the egg and water. Paint dough edges. Sprinkle with the turbinado sugar. Bake until golden brown about 30-40 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before slicing.

Mini galettes: Make 3 tarts out of 1 pie crust. Divide the large circle into 3 wedges. With scissors, trim the points and pinch dough to make the edges form a rustic circle. Fill each tart with a spoonful of the berries. Fold in the edges. Finish just like the large galette and bake 20-25 minutes until golden. Let cool. Wrap each tart in parchment paper. Pack in a picnic basket.

Bon Appetit!

Linda Franzo
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Stokes Astor and A Skipper



Photo by J Blazek

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