

Never too old to Learn Something New

I have enjoyed the recent warm weather and took the opportunity to cut down ornamental grasses and cut off and treat some Honeysuckle. The deer have wreaked havoc in my 2nd year tree area. I had tree guards around each sapling, and it seems that they just headed into the area getting ready to cross the creek and just stopped to do a little “spring jig”! Bamboo stakes were broken, and tree guards were tossed about. I wish I had put the game camera up before the incident. I will have to pull the “tree map” out of my notebook and spend a day righting their wrong.

Last year my raised beds were brand new and I must admit that I planted them like I would have sown seeds in the ground! Nice little rows of radishes, lettuce and beets. The beans were planted the usual way, 2 rows close together. I did think outside the box when I planted my onion plants and sets.

After having the winter to do some research I am embarking on a new way of planting. Planting by area, not by row. Another great fact sheet from K-State calls it Intensive Planting. Since you don't need to walk in your garden (in your raised beds), your soil never gets compressed, your plants don't get squished, and your favorite gardening shoes stay nice and clean!

Planting by area means taking a square section of garden and dividing the length and width of that section by the plant spacing needs. If you look on the back of a seed packet, you'll see two types of measurement. 1) Seed/Plant spacing; 2) Row Spacing. The only information you will need is the see/plant spacing number. You will use that number to divide up planting sections to know how many seeds to sow. If you have read about Square Foot Gardening, then you will have an idea as to how this works!

Step 1: Locate the seed spacing number from the back of the seed packet – let's use 3 inches as an example

Step 2: Divide the width of your planting section (about 12 inches) by the 3-inch seed spacing

Answer: 12 inches across/3-inch seed spacing = 4 plants across

Step 4: Multiply your two answers together

Answer: 4 plants across x 4 plants across = 16 plants

Step 5: Start planting! With 3-inch seed/plant spacing needs, you can grow 16 plants in a 1 square foot area.

Intensive planting reduces empty space in the garden where weeds can find a space to grow. Planting seedlings closer together means the plants themselves act as a living mulch over the soil, keeping it cool and reducing evaporation. I am all about fewer weeds in the garden, how about you?

April is **Ohio Native Plant Month** and a favorite spring ephemeral is **Virginia Bluebells** (*Mertensia virginica*).

Height: 10 to 24 inches; **Habitat:** Wet, shade, in clearings and at edges of deciduous woods; **Flower:** groups of elongated, light blue bell-shaped flowers. Its flower buds begin pink but turn light blue as the flower blooms. They are nearly always pollinated by bumblebees.

Many of you have discovered Zoom on your computers and have utilized this program to visit with family and conduct business from home. We will have our **May 21st garden seminar** as a Zoom meeting at **3:00 p.m.** James Morris, OSUE Brown County Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator, will talk about **Integrated Pest Management**. I will be sharing more information on how to join this Zoom seminar in May, so stay tuned!

Don't forget that if you have a gardening question you can **Ask a Master Gardener** at the website mastergardener.osu.edu/ask.

As we continue this new “normal” thanks to the Coronavirus, never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden.

