



Grow Your Veggies

Popeye would approve. // BY TOVAH MARTIN

» NOBODY needs to urge the Litchfield region to eat greens. We've been vegging out for decades. Ask any restaurant, and they will assure you that the salad course gets the glad hand on their menus with side vegetables not far behind. Vegetable gardens were already seeing an uptick in popularity before the global pandemic hit the region and rendered grocery shopping considerably less calm and therapeutic than normal. So has demand shot further up? Nobody has their finger on the pulse of vegetable gardens like Darrell Cherniske, a garden designer with Kent Greenhouses.

Cherniske specializes in gardens of all flavors, but he finds veg gardens particularly juicy.

Has interest in vegetable gardening peaked lately? Absolutely. "People want to produce their own food in a safe space," Cherniske is finding. "My clients already voiced interest in eating healthy food with less reliance on store bought produce. However, we have an agricultural heritage in this region and there's excellent access to locally grown food. So eating well didn't always translate to growing dinner in your own garden." Hopefully, local farmers will continue to see a vigorous market for their crops, but

with the pandemic came a realization that getting to the store for a sprig of basil might not always be convenient or even possible. If fresh basil is a must (and for many of us, it is essential to our quality of life), then growing it close by is a sound investment.

Basil is a good example of a crop that Cherniske encourages his clients to consider. Herbs and similar low maintenance crops make great additions to the vegetable garden. "Herbs in general are very forgiving," Cherniske finds. Plus, nibbling deer rarely pester leafy plants that emit highly aromatic essential oils. But before you start getting

out the pesto recipes, a lot of careful planning is involved. Vegetable gardens require more maintenance than your typical perennial beds. If you are a weekender or prone to taking long summer vacations, frequent visits to farmer's markets might be a better option. But many people are now spending more time in Litchfield County. Generally speaking, Cherniske is seeing a more dedicated group of customers, "Now, people are talking about true production. They are being more practical about their vegetable gardens." And that's where he comes in. When he's hired to design a vegetable garden, he



wants to deliver on the request. The first thing that Cherniske wants to know is the client's intent, "Will the garden be productive, aesthetically pleasing, or both?" The answer will drive the design. He needs to explore if his client has the right place to nurture veggies. Although a little garden tucked beside the grill or near the kitchen door might sound ideal, you need sun and access to water in order to make this happen.

Given the ideal space, Cherniske is apt to suggest raised beds and drip irrigation for starters. Whether you go with cedar, black locust, or granite curbing for the raised beds and if you prefer peastone or mulched paths between those beds is all part of the decision process. Then you might want a garden shed, birdhouse, sink, or statuary to jazz up the presentation. Cherniske is also a proponent for mixing flowering plants that attract pollinators to rev up veg production. And perennial crops such as rhubarb and asparagus promise an early harvest of low maintenance goodies. Accommodating all those factors will be part of the process.

Cherniske has seen many vegetable gardens come to fruition. He's found that the learning curve can be steep for clients, and he has a few words of advice that might help, "You don't have to grow every vegetable imaginable, and your produce doesn't have to be perfect," he assures clients. And that begs the question: Does Darrell Cherniske grow vegetables at home? "Yes! A few slicing tomatoes, some cherry tomatoes, cukes, and basil, and I'm a happy man," he smiles.

to recipes, a lot of
ning is involved.
gardens require
tenance than your
ennial beds. If you
ender or prone to
summer vaca-
ent visits to farm-
s might be a better
many people are
ng more time in
County. Generally
Cherniske is seeing
cated group of
"Now, people are
ut true production.
ng more practi-
their vegetable
and that's where he
When he's hired to
vegetable garden, he

The Oxford Academy



REVOLUTIONIZING INDIVIDUALIZED
EDUCATION SINCE 1906

www.oxfordacademy.net



HONEYCHURCH
HOME

Home Decor | Tabletop | Flowers

10 Academ
Salisb
T: 860.5
honeychurchho