



Kevin Milaeger

Milaeger's

Early May in the Vegetable Garden

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I've already planted many of the early, cold tolerant vegetable plants---lettuce, spinach, mustard, onions, leeks, Brussels sprouts, and more. Now it's time to do some chores while I wait until I can put in the plants that

need warmer temperatures, like tomatoes. Last weekend I thinned out my raspberry patch. My little patch is only about 75 square feet, but it provides enough for my morning breakfast concoction, with some to spare so I can give a pint or two to the occasional guest at my house. Thinning raspberries is a



raspberry patch thinned out

necessary chore if you want the garden to look fairly neat; if you have a small patch there's really no excuse for it looking unkempt. The thinning doesn't increase production, but it will improve airflow, and therefore



discarded raspberry canes

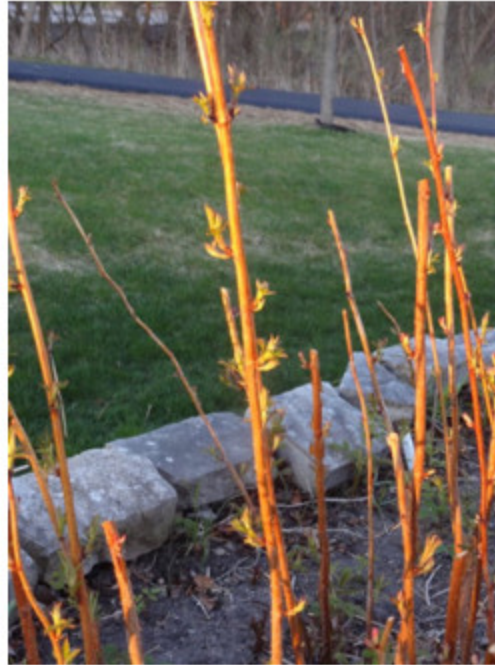
reduce the likelihood of disease. Another good reason to do it is to get in touch with the plants; working with them helps you understand how they grow. I cut out all of the canes (stalks) that bore fruit last year--they are finished, and will never have leaves or fruit again. The old canes have a grayish color, so they are easy to identify. Also, they don't have any new growth on them like the

newer canes that will bear fruit this year. The canes that will bear fruit this year are reddish brown, and have new sprouts up and down the canes.

[Here is a link](#) to a blog I wrote about raspberry culture. But if you read a lot about growing raspberries, they can seem very challenging. They are really pretty easy once you understand their "rhythm." Just find a sunny spot where they'll have room to spread, and plant them.

I planted my sugar snap peas on April 12th. I knew they would take at

least a week to germinate, but with the unseasonably cool weather the sprouting has been delayed. On the morning of April 27 I searched for new sprouts, but no. I decided to do some other planting, and when I watered in the new plants, I sprinkled the unsprouted peas too--- we haven't had rain in a while. When I left the garden in the evening of that same day, I saw the first pea sprouts. Sometimes little miracles make your day! Peas will happily sit underground for a while, until their time is right to sprout, but beans are another story. They require warmer temperatures so they must be planted later. But don't think you can put them in the ground early and have them sprout when their time is right. If they spend too much time in cool, wet soil, they can easily rot. Wait until the average daytime temperature is above 60 degrees, with a soil temperature around 80 degrees. That is reached sooner than you think. On Monday, April 27 (a sunny day) the late afternoon air temperature was 49 degrees, but the soil temp in our sunny garden (about 10' from a building) was 76 degrees! Time for beans soon.



raspberry cane closeup

A new novelty plant in our greenhouse has already caught the attention of many customers. It is a grafted vegetable named "Ketchup and Fries."

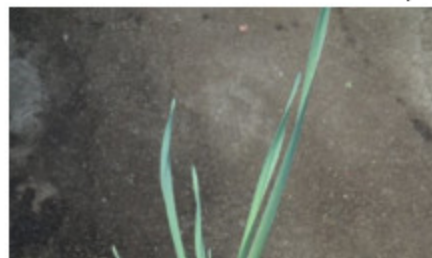


"Ketchup and Fries" plant

Above ground it is a tomato plant; below ground it is a potato plant. These two plants are botanically related, so the graft works fine. The company that came up with this idea claims the tomato can produce up to 500 cherry tomatoes, and the potato (harvested at season's end) can yield up to 4 1/2 pounds of potatoes. They recommend growing it in a 15 gallon pot, or you can grow it right in the ground. Make sure you follow the

instructions, particularly about planting depth. I saw a photo of someone growing one in a glass container, so you could watch the potatoes as they form. It sounds like a fun thing to grow---a perfect gift for some special child you probably know.

Many folks like to use lots of garlic in the kitchen. I don't use a whole lot, but I do like to grow the plants because they are so interesting. Elegant, too. Books will tell you to plant garlic in the fall, and I don't quarrel with them. But many gardeners don't do much fall gardening. I guess they are busy thinking about football or raking leaves, not planting. At Milaeger's we have come up

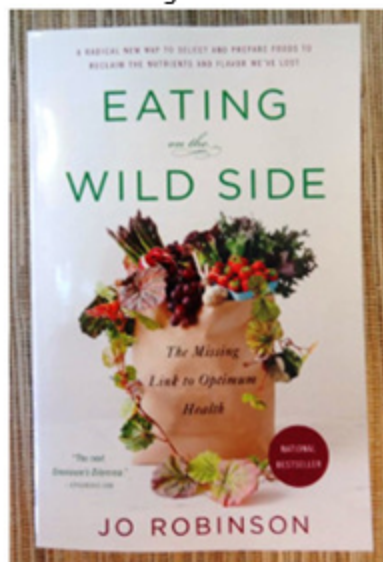


with a solution. We pot up many hundreds of garlic bulbs in fall, and we put them in our cooler for the winter---about six months. A week or so ago we took them out of the cooler and put them outdoors, unprotected. They green up quickly, and now they are ready for your garden. Because they have been in a cooler for six months, they have received the necessary "cold treatment" that they like. When you plant them in your garden, plant them a little deeper than they are in the pot. You should be able to harvest them in late July. If you forget to dig them up, just leave them in the ground---they are perennial, after all.



garlic plant

Most evenings at home I am reading something or other, often gardening books. The other night I was rereading one of my favorites---"Eating on the Wild Side" by Jo Robinson (available in our stores.) I never tire of it, and I always find something I didn't catch the first time through. A customer first told me about it a couple of years ago. I've mentioned the book in my blogs before, but I can't help talking about it. Now I am reading more about lettuce. By far, the most nutritious is red (or purple, or burgundy) leaf lettuce. Problem is, these cool loving plants tend to diminish when the weather warms, as do most all lettuces. Robinson suggests a few varieties that are "heat tolerant." Naturally, I am skeptical, but I have just ordered seed of six varieties that I will plant in mid-June. I'll let you know....



Please email me (kevin@milaegers.com) if you have any questions or comments.