New Year – New Garden

January 8, 2003

Hope springs eternal for gardeners. When gardeners cannot garden, they look at garden catalogs, plan, shop and dream. Though spring seems a long way off, buds are already swelling-ready to burst open. Though leaves have just fallen, we can plant some vegetables soon in the New Year’s garden.

**As most gardeners know, we expect much of our severe winter weather in January and February. We can plant early – but severe weather may kill or stunt some vegetables. Early planting involves some risk, but you may also harvest before other gardeners.**

**English peas are cold hardy vegetables that we can plant now. Plant in well-drained areas that get at least six to eight hours of sun a day. Till in one-half lb. Of 10-10-10 or similar fertilizer per 100 square foot of garden. Seed the peas according to the seed label or one inch apart and one and a half to two inches deep. Apply the same amount of fertilizer again when plants are three to four inches tall. Some English peas need a trellis or string to climb on.**

**English peas are a hardy vegetable and can take some frost. They may be damaged by a freeze, but usually recover. Plant them early, before the weather gets too hot. You can also plant some of their close relatives – snow peas and snap peas.**

**Snow peas are the flat pea pods you see in Chinese food. Grow them like English peas, but pick them before the peas develop.**

**Snap peas are prepared like snap beans. Harvest them when peas are developed but before the peas get too large. Do not let peas get so large that the pods are knobby. Snap them and add them to foods or cook by themselves.**

**Fall is probably the best time to plant onions. Onion seed planted now would probably not survive and may produce small bulbs if they live. Plant onion sets or transplants for the best results.**

**Fertilize onions at planting and every four to five weeks. Stop fertilizing 45 days before harvest. Harvest onions as the tops yellow, the necks get soft and the tops fall over.**

**Would you like to grow some sweet onions, like the Vidalia onion? To do so requires a special program of variety and fertilizer selection. Call for details.**

**Elephant garlic, like onions, are best planted in the fall. You can plant now, but expect smaller bulbs than if you planted last fall.**

**Till the soil well, fertilizing as mentioned above. Plant elephant garlic cloves four inches deep and about twelve inches apart. They grow tall and send up a large seed head as they mature. Break off this seed head as it appears. This should help produce a larger bulb.**

**Fertilize elephant garlic like you would onions, but stop fertilizing a little earlier. Late fertilization may lower bulb quality.**

**We often think about planting Irish potatoes around Valentine’s Day. I think this is probably a little early. Irish potatoes require well-drained soils so they will not rot. The foliage cannot stand much frost either. Since our last expected frost is March 15, I would wait a little closer to mid-March to plant. Contact us for more details.**

**Some practices will help any garden. Mulch around plants to prevent weeds. Fertilize winter vegetables lightly about once every four weeks or so. Do not over-fertilize or the plants may get burned by the frost.**

**Gently plow weeds as soon as they appear. There is no need to plow deeply. This just uncovers more weed seed. Slide the hoe or plow just under the surface to cut off the weeds without exposing more weed seeds.**

**You can start your vegetable garden now. Just do not get in too much of a hurry. Plan, prepare and plant now so you can really enjoy the 2003 vegetable garden.**