

# CHINQUAPIN GARDENS NEWS

Official newsletter of the Chinquapin Gardens Advisory Board • Chinquapin Park, Alexandria, Va. • Fall '06

Nov. 30 is the end of the gardening season

It's the end of another great gardening season at Chinquapin Park. As we gear up for cooler weather, don't forget to prepare your garden for winter as well. All gardeners are required to clean up their plots by Nov. 30, the official end of the gardening season at Chinquapin.

As noted in the Chinquapin Garden Plot Regulations, all dead plants and debris must be removed.

Gardeners who have not tidied up their plots will be notified and may be ineligible to register for a garden plot at Chinquapin next season. (The next monitoring team will visit the gardens in early December, so there is still time for you to do last-minute clean-up!)

All stakes, tomato cages, fences and other supports must be taken down, and gardeners are encouraged to take them home. Any cages that are left must be neatly stacked and secured. Be sure to store materials away from the edges of your plot to ensure the safety of path users.

Please be sure to dispose of all spent plants and produce, as brush and rotting vegetation can attract rodents.

Registration for the 2007 gardening season will begin in a few weeks, so be on the lookout for your renewal letter in the mail.

With your help, we'll be ready to start another gardening season next year!



## Alexandria seeking your input on improvements to Chinquapin Gardens Fences, restrooms, more plots among suggestions

Do you have an idea on ways to make Chinquapin Gardens better? Now is the time to let the City of Alexandria know!

In September, John Walsh of the Alexandria Parks and Recreation Department attended the monthly meeting of the Chinquapin Gardens Advisory Board and discussed ideas for the gardens. Among the possibilities John mentioned are putting a fence around the gardens to deter dogs, theft and pests; eliminating the paths between gardens; creating more plots for disabled gardeners; building restrooms in the vicinity of the gardens; setting aside demonstration garden plots; or building a community garden cold frame.

John also suggested making some or all of the plots smaller so that they are easier to manage and the space can accommodate more gardeners. To ease the monitoring process, John also proposed cutting back on the number of times garden monitoring teams visit the gardens each year.

Advisory Board members have come up with some of their own ideas, such as building a community toolshed where gardeners can share

gardening tools with one another and lock them up as well as creating more plots at the top of the gardens, where there is better sun and drainage.

"We need to know what gardeners think of these ideas, and want to hear their suggestions," said Advisory Board Chair Marlin Lord. "Love or hate the idea of fences? Now is the time to tell us what you think."

Send your feedback or ideas on improving the gardens to Marlin Lord at [mglaiia@aol.com](mailto:mglaiia@aol.com) or call him at (703) 838-4340. (Marlin will coordinate all of the feedback from gardeners and submit it to City of Alexandria staff.)

You can also bring your ideas to a meeting of the Chinquapin Gardens Advisory Board. The board will meet Monday, Nov 20, and Tuesday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. at the Chinquapin Park Recreation Center office.



*A group of plots readied for the 2006 garden season*

## Basil: One of Chinquapin Gardens' tastiest and most prolific crops

An October stroll through the Chinquapin gardens confirmed my suspicion: basil is turning into the new zucchini.

Zucchini used to be the garden item that always over-produced, leaving owners with the chore of giving away baseball bat-sized squashes and baking a whole lot of zucchini bread.

Now, it seems that everyone has cut back on zucchini planting, and bugs and other maladies often cripple the production of the plants that remain.

Instead, it seems that almost every Chinquapin plot now has one or more very healthy basil plant standing full and bounteous, even as other vegetables, herbs and flowers poop out. And the basil plants are full not only because they are hardy plants that seem to thrive no matter how much we neglect them. They are also full, it seems, because the leaves just are not being picked. We can't seem to keep up with the basil juggernaut.

If you are like me, you probably bought a flat of basil plants at Apple House or elsewhere in late spring, plunked them in the ground and let them flourish. You made a batch or two of pesto, that quintessential summer flavor combination of basil, garlic, olive oil, pine nuts and cheese — and then moved on. Now, fall approaches,

and the basil is still producing while you are thinking of hearty fall soups.

But all that basil need not go to waste. There are many ways to extend the pleasure of basil well into the winter and into next spring.

My main remedy for the basil glut is to keep making fresh pesto as long as possible. (My recipe is at the end.) There's no law against eating pesto on pasta after Labor Day, and it's a great way to bring back summer memories. But pesto is not just for pasta. If you keep a batch of pesto prominently displayed in your refrigerator (where it lasts a very long time,) you'll easily find other uses for it besides pasta.

You can use it as a marinade (thinned with oil, perhaps) on chicken, or simply as a topping for chicken. Ditto for salmon, and scallops, or any other fish that needs a flavor boost. Pesto makes a good bruschetta or pizza topping, a complement to a salad dressing, and a dip ingredient as well. When



I add spoonfuls of pesto to lasagna, it makes for a surprise flavor jolt when eaten. And if you must use tomato sauce from a jar, add some pesto to bring it to life. It even has a role to play in classic fall dishes. The French will often add a big spoonful of pesto (or pistou as they call it) at the last minute to a vegetable soup. Very satisfying.

You can also use pesto in all of these ways well after the fresh batch runs out. Pesto freezes very well, and people do it in a variety of ways. I used to devote an ice cube tray or two to pesto, which allowed me to pop a cube into a sauce any time during the winter. Now, I usually freeze it in larger quantities for a batch of pasta on a foul February day. I used to freeze only a paste of basil and olive oil, adding the cheese when it defrosts, on the theory that cheese does not freeze well. But lately, I freeze the fully made pesto, with the cheese, and it really tastes fine.

And if you want to preserve the basil flavor without going all the way to pesto, I'll give you a tip from my mother. She freezes some fresh basil leaves as leaves, unprocessed, just the way they are, and they still add a nearly fresh flavor when added to a sauce. Others preserve basil leaves by drying them in a microwave.

But pesto is the best way to enjoy basil, and here's my recipe. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

— Tony Mauro

### Tony's Homemade Pesto Sauce

- 2 cups fresh, cleaned basil leaves (no stems), packed firmly but not tightly
- 2 or 3 garlic cloves
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher or sea salt
- 1/4 cup pine nuts (optional)
- 2/3 cup or so extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 to 3/4 cup grated romano cheese



Blend ingredients in a food processor or a blender (you'll need to add more oil if using a blender.) Adjust the amount of oil as you run the machine, so that you end up with a medium-thick paste that is still somewhat coarse (bits of basil still visible.)

If using with pasta, cook a pound of pasta until al dente. Do not rinse or cool the pasta. Instead, drain it and transfer it immediately, piping hot, into a bowl with the pesto and mix quickly, so that the heat of the pasta slightly cooks the sauce. Add a bit of salt if needed, and serve with additional grated cheese available. Serves 4 or more people.

## Gardening: A sure cure for the winter blues

Although autumn is in the air, it is still not too late to start some plants for the winter and to keep some existing plants alive and well in your garden. There are many methods and materials gardeners use to their advantage to keep plants growing through colder days and frosty nights. A few of them are described below:

### Soil-warming techniques

These techniques are helpful for keeping cold-tolerant plants doing well through the fall and winter in your garden. Keep in mind that, even with cold-tolerant crops, young plants are tender and may need a bit more support before they are old enough to be able to withstand winter temperatures. Cloches and cold frames (described below) are helpful for starting new plants in cold weather. For existing plants, the following techniques help minimize cold damage and take advantage of sunlight still available to the garden.

Start with traditional techniques to help warm soil. Well before you plant, remove any sod or organic mulches, rough the soil surface, and construct hills, mounds, or freestanding raised rows and beds, which expose more soil to the sun. You can also create a greenhouse effect by laying down plastic mulch several weeks before you sow seed or set out transplants. Black plastic mulch helps retain moisture and smother weeds but compared with clear plastic, is second-rate at raising soil temperature. Clear plastic, which permits light to be transmitted directly the ground, has raised soil temperatures 40 degrees in experiments in southern gardens. Keep in mind that this can have a detrimental effect in the summertime, however, as plants can get overheated easily if clear plastic is used. Some plants, like squashes, melons and tomatoes, will appreciate the extra heat, but colder weather plants like lettuce, collards and mustard greens can get too hot and wilt. Clear plastic also lets weed seeds grow

as well, which can be problematic. Halfway between black and clear plastics are the relatively new infrared transmitting (IRT) mulches. Colored dark green, they're better than clear plastic at controlling weeds while allowing more heat to reach the soil than black plastic does.

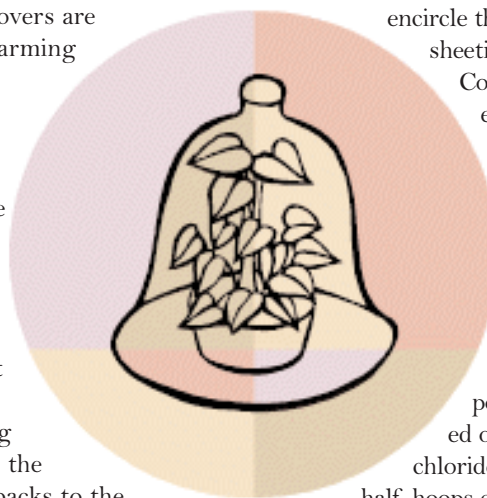
### Plant covers for warming air

Temporary covers are the answer to warming the air around plants, although few covers provide much protection when the thermometer falls below 20 degrees F. Gardeners have been using plant covers for centuries, employing everything from the shirts off their backs to the elegant 17<sup>th</sup> century French market growers' straw, and glass bells, which have now become collector's items (and are still available through heritage garden companies and historic sites like Colonial Williamsburg). Today, glass, straw, and except in emergencies, shirts, have pretty much been abandoned for plastic.

### Cloches

Called "cloches" (*cloche* is the French word for "bell"), these covers are usually set in place in the evening and removed in the morning in fall and spring; well-ventilated models can be left in place in the springtime until the danger of frost is past. Mail order catalogs and garden centers sell many sizes and shapes of polyethylene and polypropylene caps and domes. The most popular and effective commercial model is the Wall O' Water, a ring of connected vertical plastic tubes set over a plant and then filled with water; the water stores heat during the day and radiates it during the night.

pot, paper bag, or newspaper (folded into a hat) can serve as a nighttime cover, but must be removed during the day so the plant has adequate exposure to sun and rain. You can turn a 1-gallon plastic milk jug into a mini greenhouse by removing its bottom. If the weather warms during the day, be sure to remove the screw cap for ventilation. Or surround stakes or wire cages with plastic sheeting for protection against the cold. To create your own wall of water, ring a plant with 2-liter plastic soda bottles filled with water, then encircle them with plastic sheeting.



Continuous cloches are easier and quicker to install than individual covers are. You can size them to protect three or four plants, a row, or an entire bed.

Tunnels made from sheets of 4 to 6-mil polyethylene suspended on PVC (polyvinyl chloride) piping or metal half hoops can become temporary greenhouses. They give a few degrees of protection at night but can raise the mercury 10 degrees or more during the day. To improve nighttime performance, set 1-gallon plastic jugs filled with water under the tunnel; the water heats up during the day, then radiates its warmth when darkness falls. Bricks or bags of sand placed inside the cloche work in a similar way. Another option is to create a tunnel out of semi-rigid fiberglass, available at home improvement stores in either smooth sheets or translucent corrugated roofing.

### Horticultural plastics

The complicated chemical world of plastics is based on large molecules called polymers (Greek for "many units"), which are made up of smaller units, or monomers, such as ethylene or propylene. Combine several monomers and you get polyethylene or polypropylene, two of the most important horticultural plastics. Most plastics are available in several different

See *WINTER TIPS*, Page 4

WINTER TIPS, continued from Page 3

weights. For winter use the heavier grade plastics will protect plants better. Keep in mind that you have to punch holes in them in order to be sure your growing plants get enough water.

**Polyethylene** – The stuff of clear and colored mulches, as well as slitted and knitted row covers like VisPore, polyethylene is the most widely used horticultural plastic. Sold under names like Agplast, it's tough, weather-resistant, and waterproof.

**Polyester** – this is the plastic used to make Reemay, the original spun bonded floating row cover. Spun polyester is permeable to water and air, making it an excellent choice to keep pests off young plants in the spring and summer but not particularly weather-resistant enough for use in the wintertime.

**Polypropylene** – Also used to make row covers (sold under names such as Agronet and YardTek), polypropylene is more opaque and durable than spun polyester, yet it is also permeable to water and air.

**Polyvinyl alcohol** – Used to make plant covers, such as Tuffbell, polyvinyl alcohol is permeable to air and actually absorbs water. It is stronger and longer lasting than other horticultural plastics. It is also more expensive.

— Lisa Mehlin

Following is a list of cold-tolerant crops (those marked with an asterisk will tolerate some frost):

<i>Artichoke, globe</i>	<i>Garlic*</i>
<i>Scallion*</i>	<i>Salsify*</i>
<i>Asparagus*</i>	<i>Horseradish*</i>
<i>Spinach*</i>	<i>Beet</i>
<i>Kale*</i>	<i>Swiss chard</i>
<i>Broccoli*</i>	<i>Kohlrabi*</i>
<i>Turnip</i>	<i>Brussels sprout*</i>
<i>Leek*</i>	<i>Cabbage*</i>
<i>Lettuce</i>	<i>Cabbage, Chinese</i>
<i>Mustard</i>	<i>Carrot</i>
<i>Onion*</i>	<i>Cauliflower</i>
<i>Parsley</i>	<i>Celery*</i>
<i>Parsnip</i>	<i>Chicory</i>
<i>Pea*</i>	<i>Chive*</i>
<i>Potato</i>	<i>Collard greens*</i>
<i>Radish</i>	<i>Cress</i>
<i>Rhubarb*</i>	<i>Endive</i>

## Cold frames can warm your tender plants

**B**ack in the seventies (I think it was) during my U.S. Department of Agriculture career, I came across a list of most-requested USDA publications that had some surprises. Two publications, with subject-matter that you wouldn't expect to see wide interest in, made the "best seller" list. One was *Controlling Wild Hemp*. Turns out it wasn't only farmers interested in controlling the "pesky weed" who asked for it; it was also apparently a number of people who wanted to learn where they could likely find the plant growing out in the wild. As they found out, wild hemp — otherwise known as marijuana — is prevalent in farmers' fields especially next to fence posts. And off they went looking!

Another publication also pulled in an astounding number of requests. I'm sure even the author couldn't believe such a large part of the U.S. population was interested in learning how to extend the growing season for crops. It was most likely the title — *Hot Beds and Cold Frames* — that piqued the interest of many requestors.

Whatever your interest, if you'd like to extend the growing season for your Chinquapin vegetables as I've been doing for several years, consider using a cold frame. A hot bed, which looks just like a cold frame, isn't as practical in our garden plot area, since it usually requires an artificial source of heat — usually electric cable. But you can use manure beneath the soil to generate some heat in a hot bed, and you can do the same in a cold frame, which uses sunlight as the main heat source.

A cold frame is basically a miniature green house. Use it to get an early start on your vegetables or even flowering

plants, or to harden off your plants so they can withstand cold snaps when you set them out in your garden. Build it fancy, or simply like mine in plot GH4 — just a rectangular wooden box with transparent lids. I use two side-by-side lids of plexiglas, so one can be kept closed during colder weather and one opened to varying degrees. During winter and on very cold nights anytime, I keep the lids closed, but as the weather warms in spring, I begin raising them.

Once spring arrives, I never close them completely because of the hazard of cooking the plants on days when the temperature rises into the 70s. You can mount a thermometer inside to give you an idea of how warm it gets.

An old window with glass panes can be used for the lid, and that will govern the dimensions of your box. But I've found that glass eventually breaks — sometimes a stiff wind blowing the lid down or a misguided garden tool hitting it. If you use glass, make sure the props along the sides are substantial or that you provide some cushioning material. The best way to avoid breakage, I've found, is to use clear plexiglas for the lids. You can drill a couple holes in each lid that correspond with holes in the back board, and tie the lids on. If your box is angled — with the front board 6 inches or so shorter than the

See COLD FRAME Page 5



A cold frame at a Chinquapin garden protects tender plants.

*COLD FRAME continued from Page 4*

back board to catch the most light and to allow water to run off — it's good to face it toward the south. At Chinquapin, that would be toward the service road that runs along the fence.

I use plain untreated pine wood and place the bottoms of the boards on a row of bricks so it lasts longer. Make sure the soil inside drains well and amend it with manure or compost to make it fertile. You can apply straw around the outside during colder weather — anything to retain the heat.

In spring I use my cold frame to harden off tomato, eggplant, and pepper plants I raise indoors or buy. Several days in the cold frame makes them more vigorous and stocky, so they're better adapted to cold when planted out in the plot. I often leave them in pots inside the cold frame, but sometimes I heal the plants in there so they don't dry out as fast as they do in pots.

During summer, I take the plexiglas lids home, and grow pepper plants in the box so the space isn't wasted. As the peppers begin to wane, I sprinkle parsley seeds and sometimes feldsalat (corn salad) or even lettuce to grow during winter. If seeded in late summer, it gets a good start by the time I remove the peppers and put the lids back on for late fall and winter.

Then I plant lettuce seeds in the frame in February, so the small plants can be separated and transplanted out into the plot during March. Once the frame is cleared out, it's tomato plant hardening time again.

Use your imagination in how you use your cold frame. If you don't want to go to the trouble building one, consider using just an empty plastic gallon milk jug, or more than one. Cut the bottom almost all the way off, but leave it hinged on one side so you can bend it outward with a brick on it to hold it in place. I find it makes a nice mini form of greenhouse for your lettuce seed planted in February or March. Then you can separate the seedlings and plant them in rows when the weather warms up enough, giving you earlier lettuce to pick and eat.

— Dale May

## A good time had by all at this year's picnic!

**T**he annual Chinquapin Gardens Picnic, held Aug. 12 at the Chinquapin Park pavilion, was a tremendous success. The picnic, sponsored by the Chinquapin Gardens Advisory Board, included a potluck lunch, cookout, tomato taste-off and recognition of some of Chinquapin's best gardens.

Special guests at the picnic included Alexandria Mayor Bill Euille.

The picnic's annual Tomato Taste-Off attracted 15 entries from Chinquapin's gardeners. Volunteer judges tasted each tomato, awarding honors for best tasting, biggest, overall and weirdest.

The taste-off contest winners, as chosen by judges Martha Brown, Greg Daylor and Travis Hamilton were:

### **Biggest Tomato**

Charlie Kellett

### **Best Tasting**

Michele Late

### **Most Appealing**

Trish Lese & Anne Saul

### **Weirdest Tomato**

Darcy Martinez

Recognition was also given to the Chinquapin Gardens Advisory Board and to the Picnic Committee for organizing the event and to all the gardeners who attended. Special thanks go to gardener Bill Hohe, who made a donation to help defray the costs of the picnic. Without his help, we wouldn't have had all those great hot dogs!

For some of the yummy recipes



from this year's picnic, see Pages 7–8 of this newsletter.

Awards were also given out during the picnic in recognition of this year's outstanding gardens. The winning gardens were chosen by a group of Chinquapin gardeners for their exemplary appearance and maintenance. Thanks go to Advisory Board member Lisa Mehlin and her team for picking the winning plots.

The winners of this year's outstanding and best garden awards were:

### **Outstanding Gardens**

<b>DE3</b>	Mildred Fajna & Glenn Hartley
<b>DE4</b>	Tom & Laretta Hanlin
<b>FG1</b>	James & Jim Kunder
<b>FG4</b>	Tiffany D. Farrell
<b>HI1</b>	Darcy Martinez
<b>JK5</b>	Elizabeth Good
<b>JK6</b>	Tricia Rodgers
<b>JK7</b>	Sue Noisaguan
<b>LM7</b>	Donna & Alex Lathers
<b>OP1</b>	Jenna & Herbert Riggs
<b>OP7</b>	Maxine Sorenson
<b>QR8</b>	Jeff Cukr
<b>RS9</b>	Jeanne DeJarnette
<b>ST9</b>	Charles Cisney
<b>TU4</b>	Nathan Imm

### **Best Gardens**

<b>AB1</b>	Grace Owusu
<b>CD2</b>	Eric Schmidt
<b>EF4</b>	Thom Rourke
<b>GH1</b>	Helen M. McMaster
<b>GH4</b>	Dale May
<b>HI3</b>	Margaret Slipek
<b>HI4</b>	George W. Robertson
<b>NO1</b>	Neal Fine
<b>OP3</b>	Sally Evans
<b>OP4</b>	Christine Prosch
<b>QR2</b>	David Mercer
<b>ST1</b>	Carol Hergen
<b>ST7</b>	Susan Miller
<b>TU1</b>	Lori Hartman
<b>UV1</b>	Antionette Klotz Kropf

*For photos from the picnic, see Page 6.*

Photos from this year's Chinquapin Gardens Picnic



## Recipes from this year's potluck picnic at Chinquapin Gardens

Each year, gardeners use produce grown in their plots to whip up a batch of yummy recipes and share them with their neighbors at the annual Chinquapin Gardens Potluck Picnic. This year's event was no exception. Among the highlights were several delicious versions of zucchini bread, owing to the success of this year's growing season.

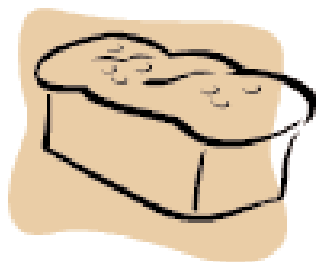
While we don't have room to run all the recipes from the picnic, here are some of the favorites. Enjoy!

### Chocolate Zucchini Bread

Prepared by Maxine Sorenson

2 cups flour  
1 tsp flour  
1/2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp salt  
3/4 cup cocoa powder  
3 eggs  
2 cups sugar  
3/4 cup oil  
2 cups grated zucchini  
2 tsps vanilla  
1 cup chocolate chips  
1 cup chopped walnuts

- 1) Mix first five ingredients together, Set aside.
- 2) In large bowl, beat eggs, sugar and vanilla together. Add zucchini, mix well. Add flour mixture and mix well. Add oil and beat until smooth.
- 4) Stir in chocolate chips and nuts.
- 5) Pour into two greased 8x4x3 loaf pans. Bake at 350 for one hour.



### Dried Cherry, Fennel and Green Bean Salad

Prepared by Karen Late

1 small fennel bulb  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
6 ounces green beans,  
trimmed and cut in half  
2 tablespoons spicy mustard  
2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses\*  
1 tablespoon honey  
Dash of salt  
Dash of pepper  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1 bunch watercress or arugula, rinsed  
2 ounces crumbled feta  
1 cup dried cherries or cranberries

1) Cut the fennel into thin slices. Place in a small bowl and toss with lemon juice.

2) Bring a small pan of water to boil. Drop in green beans and cook for 1 minute, just until bright green. Remove and rinse with cold water. Drain and set aside.

3) In a small bowl, whisk together mustard, molasses and honey. Stir in a few pinches of salt and pepper. Whisk in oil until combined.

4) Put watercress or arugula into large serving bowl. Add fennel and green beans on top. Sprinkle with cheese. Drizzle with dressing and stir to combine. Serve.

Recipe adapted from *Martha Stewart Living Magazine*

*\*This ingredient is essential. It can be purchased at the Mediterranean Bakery in Alexandria near Home Depot or in the international aisle at the Potomac Yard Shopper's Food Warehouse.*

*You can also pour some of it in a pool of olive oil for a tasty bread dip, which is how it is served at Zaytinya restaurant in downtown D.C.*



### Mexican Fiesta Bean Salad

Prepared by Lisa Mehlin

#### Dressing:

3 tbsp fresh lime juice  
1 1/2 tbsp fresh lemon juice  
3/4 tsp cumin  
3/4 tsp chili powder  
3/4 tsp salt  
1/2 cup vegetable oil

In a bowl, whisk together the lime, lemon, cumin, chili powder and salt. Add the oil in a stream, whisking and whisk until emulsified.

#### Salad:

1/2 lb. cooked black beans  
1/2 lb. cooked small red beans  
1 1/2 cup chopped, seeded tomato – heirloom varieties with different colors work well  
1/2 cup to 1 cup chopped peppers – red, orange, yellow or heirloom  
1/3 cup minced fresh coriander plus coriander sprigs for garnish  
1 can (or 1 1/2 cup thawed frozen) corn kernels  
3/4 cup thinly sliced scallion  
1/2 cup chopped red onion

Combine all of the ingredients in a large bowl and toss with the dressing. May be made one day in advance. Garnish with fresh coriander just before serving. Serve slightly chilled or at room temperature.

*Based on a recipe for Black Bean, Corn and Tomato Salad from Cooks.com*

## Sorrel, Mushroom and Onion Tart

Prepared by Michele Late

*This recipe makes two tarts, enough for a crowd. It is always a hit at potlucks, and no one can ever quite place what the greens are! You may want to read through the recipe and ingredients before starting, as there are quite a few steps.*

4 tablespoons butter  
5 onions, thinly sliced  
1 1/2 pounds sorrel, washed  
8 ounces fresh sliced mushrooms  
Salt and pepper  
Flour for dusting  
2 8-ounce sheets puff pastry, defrosted at room temperature for about 40 minutes  
2 egg yolks  
1/4 cup heavy cream  
Parchment paper

1) Melt the butter in a large, deep sauce pan or pot. Add the onions and mushrooms and cook while stirring over medium heat about 15 minutes, until onions turn translucent.

2) Strip sorrel leaves from center spines and discard spines. (This will take awhile!) Bring a large stockpot of water to boil. Add stripped sorrel leaves and boil until the leaves wilt, about 2 minutes. Drain the leaves and set aside.

3) Add the sorrel to the onions. Cook

over low heat until the mixture breaks down and becomes soupy, about 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and remove from the heat.

4) Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

5) Roll out one sheet of puff pastry on each baking sheet. Using a knife, score a 1/2 inch border around the edges of both sheets, creating a frame. In the inner part of the pastry frames, prick them all over with a fork.

6) Combine 1 egg yolk and 2 tablespoons cream to make a wash. Use a pastry brush to wet framed edge of pastry with egg wash.

7) Put both baking sheets in the oven and bake until pastry puffs and browns slightly, about 15 minutes.

8) Add the remaining egg yolk and cream to the to the sorrel mixture and stir. Divide the sorrel mixture in half, and spoon each half in the center frame of each pastry.

9) Return the pastries to the oven and bake 20 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool for 10 minutes. Best when served warm.

Recipe adapted from *The Martha Stewart Living Cookbook, 2000, Clarkson Potter Publishers.*



*A photo of sorrel growing in a plot at Chinquapin Gardens. This type of sorrel, which is a herb known as Rumex acetosa, grows well in Alexandria and comes back year after year with minimal work. In fact, this sorrel was planted more than five years ago. Just cut it back and mulch it loosely over the winter. It doesn't have a problem with pests.*

*You can expect three or four harvests a year. The spines become tough and stringy when cooked, so be sure to remove them all. The leaves have an unusual tangy, sour taste that is worth the work. Sorrel plants or seeds can be bought online or at local nurseries.*

**Note:** Do not use red sorrel for this recipe. It is a different plant entirely and will not work well in this dish.



## Quick Cucumber Salad

*This recipe comes from gardener Don Stokes, who brought it to one of the first Chinquapin potluck picnics. Although Don has since passed away, I still enjoy his recipe, and I think you will too. — ML*

1 cucumber  
2 tablespoons cider vinegar  
2 teaspoons sugar  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
Dash pepper  
1/2 teaspoon dill



Peel cucumber and slice as thinly as possible. Combine with remaining ingredients and refrigerate at least two hours. Makes two servings. Recipe can be doubled or tripled as needed.