



Urban Harvest

Are You Prepared for some Spring Planting?

By Ray Sher

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With the exception of a day here and there, it has seemed like spring for weeks and I have been itching to plant spring vegetables. Oh wait, I have been planting very early spring vegetables. Fennel seed filled its 4-inch squares a little more than two weeks ago, along with lettuces, arugula and beets.



Fennel, along with lettuces, arugula and beets, can be planted as very early spring vegetables

Tomato plants, which I started inside under grow lights on Jan. 6, long ago outgrew their 4-inch pots, and are waiting to be planted; but looking at the weather forecast, I need to wait a few more days until we have consistent temperatures above 45 degrees. If I had only a few tomato plants, I would have planted them a week ago and protected them from the cold, but I have hundreds to plant. And where am I going to get large tomato cages for all those plants?

What is your favorite spring vegetable? Okra, peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, green beans, squash, cucumbers, amaranth, corn, sweet potatoes, sweet potato leaves, Malabar spinach, bitter melon, cantaloupe, watermelon or winter melon?

Cucumbers are my favorite, and the variety I like best is Suyo Long. It is indeed long, crisp, sweet, almost seedless, burpless, and if that isn't enough, you don't have to peel it, for the skin is tender and sweet as well. All you need are a few seeds planted in fertilized soil 12 inches apart on a trellis that is about 6 feet tall, in plenty of sun. You will be in cucumber heaven for about an eight-week harvest. Better, plant a few more seeds every four weeks through the spring and summer to have a continuous harvest.

The span of time that cucumbers are a half-inch long to the time they are dark green and more than a foot long will be only a few days. Before you know it, you will be searching the web for as many cucumber recipes you can find, and knocking on neighbor's door with an armful of delights for which your neighbors anxiously await.



Plant a few more seeds every four weeks through the spring and summer, to have a continuous harvest of Suyo Long cucumbers to share with neighbors.

I could be satisfied with spring harvests of cucumbers and tomatoes, and easily forget the rest of spring vegetables. But alas, I love eating freshly picked vegetables, even if it is hot outside and I have to harvest and water early morning. So you will continue to find me in the garden almost every day.

Here's a tip: Purchase seeds from a source that has this year's seed packets in a cool (air-conditioned) space. If the seed rack is in a non-air-conditioned space, the viability of the seeds has likely been damaged.

Once you have your seeds, store them in a container (box or jar) in your refrigerator. Place a drying agent (powdered milk or silica packet) inside the container. This will preserve seed germination viability for years. Never leave seeds in a car on a warm or hot day. It will likely kill all the seeds.

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