How Does Your Garden Grow?

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ONE out of every three Americans puts in a garden each year," Prof. B. S. Pickett, head of the Department of Horticulture, calculated recently. Pickett assumes that at least two persons work on each of the more than 20,000,000 garden plots in the United States.

Since gardening has been increasing in popularity, the Department of Horticulture believed there should be some basic course of instruction for future homemakers to guide them in modern methods of cultivation and wise selection of varieties. The modern kitchen gardening course was begun during the war with the onset of victory gardens and rationing. But its popularity among the students has prompted the department to continue giving it.

Most of those who study kitchen gardening are home economics women who like to work with plants and want to be able to raise better gardens of their own. It is also a popular course for home economics journalism majors, who find the experience useful later on the job.

Students learn by actual practice the most approved methods of preparing the soil, the best kind of fertilizer and how to use it and how to raise the whole list of vegetables suitable to this region. Women actually plant tomatoes, peppers and cabbage from seeds, then transplant them to the gardens. The laboratory work is done both in greenhouse plots and in gardens outdoors. Planning their own gardens is part of the course.

Some vegetables started from seeds do not mature during a quarter, but they are harvested by the next quarter’s class. So the course is practically on a year-round basis, with each class helping the next one.

EMPHASIS is placed on the varieties of fruits and vegetables best for growing in a kitchen garden. Some varieties are good for eating while others may be better for canning or freezing.

The course is helpful in making wise market selections of fruits and vegetables. Pickett cites, for example, that while Blakemore strawberries may look the reddest and most desirable on the market, actually the Dunlap variety is best for home freezing since it has more sweetness and flavor. Students are able to recognize quality both on the market and in their own gardens.

And what quality in their own gardens! They are amazed at the noticeable difference in flavor and appearance between their own top quality products and those on the market that may have been shipped a long distance, picked before they were ready and of questionable variety.

The women are delighted to find the odd kinds of fruits, vegetables and herbs that will grow easily in this climate. They raise Kohlrabi, tampala and okra for chicken gumbo. They also grow herbs, which are expensive to buy and are useful for flavoring or perfumes. Chives, sage, dill and coriander are all easy to grow.

Small fruits are also studied in this elementary course. A grape trellis and a strawberry patch belong in nearly all back yards, Pickett said. Usually there is room for at least one or two small fruit trees such as pears and plums. Cherries and apples take more room.

Food conservation is being stressed in the kitchen gardening course. However Pickett feels that as the food shortage cases, decorative gardening will become more popular, and gardeners will combine floriculture with vegetable gardening.

—Irene Meyer

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