



## News Release

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**For Immediate Release**

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### **Helpline at Home Addressing Gardening Questions During Pandemic**

The current pandemic has many central Ohio families turning to their backyards for exercise, recreation, relaxation, and food. Interest in gardening, particularly vegetable gardening is on the upswing judging from sales of seeds and gardening supplies, and from requests for gardening information from local experts.

Mike Hogan, OSU Extension Educator and coordinator of the Franklin County Master Gardener Volunteer program has seen an uptick locally for requests for information about gardening. “Families are trapped at home right now and many of them are looking for healthy activities to engage in, and gardening seems to be the perfect fit for a lot of reasons,” says Hogan.

Interest in vegetable gardening in particular is on the upswing right now. The idea of planting a Victory Garden as a response to the pandemic seems to be resonating with experienced and novice gardeners right now. “Victory Gardens planted by our grandparents and great grandparents in response to rationing and resource scarcity during World War II are thought to have produced about a third of all vegetables and fruits consumed by Americans during that time period” says Hogan.

While local in-person gardening educational programs have been suspended during the current state of emergency, some experts are using technology to support local gardeners. The Franklin County Office of OSU Extension operates a Gardening Helpline for gardeners to get answers for their most perplexing gardening questions. In a typical gardening season Master Gardener Volunteers staff the

Helpline in person at the Franklin County Extension Office two days each week. Gardeners ask questions by telephone, through email, or by bringing samples into the Extension Office for diagnosis.

During the current state of emergency, OSU Extension has transitioned the Gardening Helpline to become a Helpline at Home, where Master Gardener Volunteers are responding to questions from gardeners by email from the comfort of their homes. “While we are not able to have gardeners bring insect, weed, or other plant samples to us for diagnosis right now, emails and digital photographs can be very useful in helping gardeners solve gardening problems” says Hogan.

Gardeners should send their gardening questions to [fcmg@osu.edu](mailto:fcmg@osu.edu) to get a response from Master Gardener Volunteers. Questions about any gardening topic can be submitted to the Helpline at Home. Typically the Helpline provides answers to questions related to vegetable gardening, lawns, fruit trees, ornamentals, soils and soil testing, plant health, and insects and diseases.

The Franklin County Office of OSU Extension also maintains a website and blog with many different gardening resources including instructional videos and fact sheets. Gardeners can subscribe to the Growing Franklin blog at: <https://u.osu.edu/growingfranklin/> and visit the Franklin County OSU Extension website at: [franklin.osu.edu](http://franklin.osu.edu).

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The Ohio State University, The United States Department of Agriculture, and Franklin County Commissioners Cooperating

Photo caption: OSU Master Gardener Volunteers diagnosing a plant health problem

