KITCHEN GARDENERS INTERNATIONAL

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Container collecting time of year

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Somewhere between the market gardener with soil blocks and seedling heating pads and the accidental gardener that purchases a garden-full of plants at the local greenhouse, there is the crazy home gardener. Not only able to grow tall vegetables with a single seed, the crazy gardener has to recycle, upcycle and recreate everything that holds soil into a container to be filled with a mix of peat and earth providing a home for a future vegetable plant. Constantly digging milk cartons and yogurt containers out of the trash behind an unsuspecting spouses back, the crazy gardener washes and stores everything that potentially works for seed starting. This includes the occasional soda or water bottle and juice jugs. Toilet paper rolls make great seed starting tubes. Just group together in a deep tray or tape a six-pack together with duct tape and place on a Styrofoam meat tray (that?s right, please don?t add Styrofoam to the trash ? it never goes away); fill with soil mix and drop one or two seeds in each and watch them go. When it comes time for planting you can drop the whole thing in the earth and watch those cardboard rolls go back to Mother Nature where they belong. If you ever do purchase six-packs of vegetable or flowers, do not throw those plastic containers away ? give them to a gardener or use them yourself. Wash thoroughly in water with a couple tablespoons of bleach, dry and stack. They don?t take up much space and the work wonderfully for seed starting. If you are considering growing your own seedlings this year ? make it a family affair. Hold a pot party. Sometime in the middle of March, make a few homemade pizzas or a big dish of lasagna and invite your children, your grandchildren, your siblings, your sister-in-law or anyone that enjoys your cooking to a pot party. Have them tote a 10 or 20-pound bag of soil and some old newspapers out to your house in return for some biodegradable paper pots, they can have home-grown healthy heirloom variety vegetable plants or flowers to put in their own gardens. Here?s a great video to watch demonstrating just how easy it is to roll your own pots. It?s fun, you are recycling newspapers and adding nutrients to your soil for your earth worms to nibble on. Point your browsers to this YouTube URL: http://youtu.be/hZ5O_HAkyhQ [1]. This short video will inspire you to get those pots rolled and then grab a pencil and make a list of things you would like to grow in your garden. If you don?t have a garden journal, now would be a good time to start one. On the first page, make that list of vegetables ? squash, tomatoes, peppers, edamame, lettuce or spinach ? any varieties that take 90 days or less to mature. Next week, I?ll give you some companies that sell great seeds including one that is located right here in North Dakota. So until next time ? get those newspapers recycled and find a patch of dirt to create your own ?subversive plot.? We will learn about how to purchase seed and nurture your own seedlings in future columns. PS: I will be presenting on organic gardening in Fargo at the Garden Expo on Feb. 18 and then in Valley City at the Local Foods fair Monday, Feb. 27, so bring your gardening questions and your open mind and let?s go local together.

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[1] http://youtu.be/hZ5O_HAkyhQ