



Homegrown Hero: Valerie Testa

One of the first residents in Hazelwood to participate in the Homegrown program, Valerie Testa, is continuing her adventures with gardening. Valerie is a Pittsburgh native and has been a resident of Hazelwood for seven years. Although she remembers catching cabbage moths with nets for her mom growing up, her passion for gardening really kicked in during her adult years. "I found out what knotweed was and the rest was history," Valerie says. Since then, she has been involved with ecological restoration projects and multiple community gardens across Pittsburgh. Hoping to keep the progress moving with community gardening initiatives in Hazelwood, Valerie is very excited about the future. "Learning is the most satisfying thing," she says. For her, whether it's succession planting, seed saving or the passing along of knowledge, the learning never stops.

The Homegrown Herald

The Official Newsletter of Homegrown, Phipps' Edible Garden Program

Hi everyone!

We are now well into the growing season and things are getting exciting! As we have been doing our check-ins, we've seen some truly gorgeous gardens this summer! With some crops ready to harvest and others on the way, a lot of care and attention go into this part of the season. Make sure to keep those plants watered through our wicked hot days (they seem to be unending lately!), and keep an eye on the insect pests that might be trying to eat your yummy food. If you missed our pest and weed identification class last month, make sure to look back at the handbook to deal with pests through row cover, neem oil, BT and ways to invite helpful insects into your garden.

As always, if you have any questions about anything, feel free to reach out! You can chat on the phone with Jazz at **412-441-4442, ext. 6627**, send us a text at **412-385-7282** or email homegrown@phipps.conservatory.org.



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FOR YOUR HEALTH: BELL PEPPERS

Bell peppers are everywhere and come in those beautiful shades of green, orange, red and yellow. Even though they are commonplace, they are packed with wonderful health benefits. Bell peppers provide provitamin A, E and C. The high levels of vitamin C contribute to the antioxidant properties of bell peppers. Studies have also shown that some of the compounds in bell peppers have anti-inflammatory and anticoagulant properties that help prevent blood clots. These properties can be taken advantage of through a variety of preparation methods, whether you eat fresh, dried, fermented, pickled or cooked your way!



GARDEN TIPS: HARVESTING TO INCREASE PLANT HEALTH

Now is the time of season to jump for joy and harvest those delectable foods you have worked so hard to grow. Not only is harvesting a wonderful treat for you, but when done properly it also can increase your plant's health and ensure more productivity throughout the season. Bigger is not always better when it comes to harvesting your vegetables. Every vegetable has slightly different days to maturity, but regularly harvesting at the right time will send a message to the plant that it needs to continue fruiting. Check the harvest and storage chart in your handbook for tips to know when it is time to harvest and how to store for the best results! It is ideal to harvest earlier in the morning because the vegetables regain their moisture overnight and are better suited to being handled. Make sure to be gentle when harvesting because bruising and tears will lead to a shorter shelf life. Also, creating larger tears or snapping stems can lead to disease and weaken the strength of the plant for future harvests. If they are not easily removed by pulling or twisting, remove the vegetables using pruners, scissors or a knife.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Homewood Farmers Market

Every Saturday June 11 through Oct.
29 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Sankofa Village Farm

Harvesting Techniques and Seed Saving Class

Thurs., Aug. 11 | 6 – 7:30 p.m.
Homewood YMCA

Homewood YMCA Garden Party

Thurs., Sept. 8 | 5 – 8 p.m.
Homewood YMCA

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: QUINOA STUFFED BELL PEPPERS BY SPRUCEATS

Ingredients

4 bell peppers
1 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 medium onion, diced
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper; chili powder;
garlic powder; onion powder; cumin, red pepper
flakes and oregano
1 teaspoon paprika
2 garlic cloves, minced

1 1/2 cups tomato sauce
3 cups cooked quinoa
1 (14-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
2 cups Monterey jack cheese, shredded, divided
Garnish: cilantro, chopped

Directions

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Cut the bell pepper in half, remove seeds and ribs from each half. Place the halves in a baking dish, cut side up. Heat the olive oil in a pan on medium high heat. Add the onions, salt and sauté for 1-2 minutes until just barely softened. Add and stir all spices with the onions in the pan. Cook for another minute to help deepen the flavor. Stir in the minced garlic and tomato sauce then fold in the quinoa, black beans, and 1 cup of Monterey jack cheese. Fill each pepper half with an even amount of the filling. Top each pepper with remaining cheese. Bake, covered for 30 minutes, or until the peppers have softened. Remove the foil and cook for another 10 minutes or until the cheese is browned and the pepper is hot. Garnish with chopped cilantro if desired.

