



## HOMEGROWN HERO: SHIMIRA WILLIAMS

For Shimira Williams, gardening has always been a part of life. As a child, her father had a garden that she would help maintain and harvest. She especially loved playing in the dirt and saw the garden as a place of exploration! She remembers her childhood home as being a hub for the community and the family garden being central in this experience.

When she first joined Homegrown, the pandemic was in full swing and Shimira saw gardening as a way to slow down. Her favorite plant to grow is thyme. She loves that gardening allows her to share food and care for people. Usually after a big harvest you can find her sitting on her porch giving away produce to those who pass by.

# The Homegrown Herald

The Official Newsletter of Homegrown, Phipps' Edible Garden Program

## Hi everyone!

We have been wrapping up our check-in visits for the season, and we have been delighted to spend time with so many amazing gardeners. It seems we have at last emerged from the extremely hot, dry part of the summer, and the cooler weather has brought with it some renewed spirit and energy! Hopefully now you are enjoying that produce you've worked on and nurtured for months! To celebrate this time of the year, included in this issue is some more information and a recipe about our warm-weather-loving okra, as well as some tips to dehydrate produce for longer storage and versatility.

As always, if you have 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](mailto:homegrown@phipps.conservatory.org).



Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens  
One Schenley Park, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3830

## FOR YOUR HEALTH: OKRA

Okra can be a divisive plant, but with its beautiful flowers and variety of uses for cooking, there's so much to love about it! It also has a range of health benefits in its favor. Okra contains a generous amount of insoluble fiber to help aid with digestion. The most available vitamin in okra is vitamin K, an important nutrient for blood clotting and preventing excessive bleeding. A cup of okra also contains 40% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin C, and has vitamins A and B, magnesium, potassium, and calcium. Try out our okra recipe in this issue, share recipes with others, and enjoy this nutritious plant!



## FOOD STORAGE: DRYING

With the amount of produce that comes with this time of the year, it can be tough to eat it all quickly, which is where food preserving can become extremely useful. One of the easiest and most effective ways to preserve food is through drying and dehydrating! Dehydrating food takes the moisture out, preventing bacteria, yeast and molds from spoiling produce. There are a few methods to dehydrate, all using a combination of low humidity, low heat and air circulation to achieve those perfectly dried foods.

### Dehydrators

Dehydrators result in the best dried products and are very efficient. They require an upfront investment, ranging from \$40 – \$100 for a new one, but you can snag one for \$20 or less second-hand (Facebook marketplace or thrift stores). Having to purchase the small appliance is the only real drawback, since the long-term storage and quality are hard to beat.

### Hanging

Items commonly dried this way are bundles of herbs and hot peppers. Make sure the room is well-ventilated, tie the produce to a string and suspend in the air for 2-3 weeks. To protect from dust and other air particulates, a paper bag can be placed over them.

### Oven

Although it produces less quality results and takes more time and energy, ovens can be used for drying. See if your oven has a setting as low as 140F or a keep warm setting. An oven thermometer is the best way to check. Leave the door propped 2 – 4 inches and run a fan near the door to improve circulation.

Note: Due to the high humidity we receive in Pittsburgh, sun drying is not recommended. The food will most often mold before it dries.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Homewood Farmer's Market

June 11 – October 29 | 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
Sankofa Village Farm

### Homegrown Garlic Class

Thurs., Oct. 8 | 6 – 7:30 p.m.  
Zoom

### Compost Mini Class

Tues., Oct. 18 |  
12 – 12:30 p.m. OR 6 – 6:30 p.m.  
Zoom

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH: SUCCOTASH

### Ingredients

3 strips bacon, chopped	1 small tomato, chopped
1 small onion, minced	1 teaspoon sugar
1 green pepper, minced	1 teaspoon salt
1 cup frozen lima beans	1 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 cups fresh or frozen corn niblets	
½ cup tomato sauce	
½ cup water or chicken stock	
3 – 5 young okra, stem ends trimmed and sliced ¼ inch thick to equal 1 cup	

### Directions

Heat medium saucepan over medium heat, add the bacon pieces, and cook until crisp (3 – 4 minutes), then remove them from the pan with a slotted spoon to a plate.

Add the onion and bell pepper to the fat in the pan and cook until vegetables begin to soften (1 – 2 minutes). Lower heat to medium low and stir in the lima beans, corn, tomato, sugar, salt and pepper.

Add the tomato sauce and water, bring to a simmer, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes. Add the okra and simmer for 10 minutes more or until the okra is fork tender but not mushy. Remove from the heat, cover and allow to sit for 10 minutes before serving.

