

High Altitude Nature and Gardening (HANG)

Victory Gardens today offer hope, boost morale

By Janet Sellers

Many might remember family stories about gardens of hope from the Depression era of the 1930s and the Victory Gardens of the 1940s war era. As a kid at age 10, my father raised chickens for eggs to sell to neighbors and rabbits to sell to the butcher for meat during the Depression era, helping his own family with food and income. Legally blind with very limited vision, he was unable to go into World War II as a soldier, but he did his part and was a block captain, and helped his community grow its food at that time. It is estimated that American Victory Gardens made up more than 40% of the local food supply.

Block captains were elected for the unofficial job and coordinated activities on the home front. Doing their part for the community in many capacities, they organized War Bond drives, scrap metal drives, Victory Gardens, patriotic gestures, and held ceremonies for those departing for the military as well as erected small shrines for those who did not return. Block captains went nightly door-to-door to make sure lights were out for safety from possible air raids.

People were encouraged to grow food gardens at home or in community gardens as a food source and morale booster during World War II and afterward, using the traditional gardening knowledge of the elder population for the most part and encouraged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for their efforts.

Many find that “a planting of seeds today is an act of hope for tomorrow.” We can do that here in our area, even in our on-again, off-again snowy spring season. Windowsill gardens, sprouts, and other indoor growing methods as simple as starting seeds

in potting soil in containers can give us that sense of hope and resilience. We can even grow a tasty salad from seed within days in the form of sprouts.

Growing sprouts

Many kinds of seeds make tasty sprouts, but of course it takes lots of sprouted seeds to make a meal. With fully grown plants, we can use a few leaves per person for salad and cooked greens.

Sprouts grow fast and have good nutrition, though. We can buy sprout systems or use the DIY versions.

A key to healthy sprouts is rinsing often to keep them fresh. Growing up, my mother put cheesecloth or netting held in place with a rubber band over a mason jar of water and the desired seeds (we mostly used alfalfa seeds for sprouts), and in a few days we had our fresh sprouts. Her method was to soak tiny seeds for two or three days until they swelled, pour off the excess water, then rinse with clean water daily until the sprouts reached the desired size.

Sunflower sprouts are sweet and tasty, but it's difficult to separate the hard shells from the sprouts in a jumbled jar method—so by improvising, we had better luck and an easier harvest. The easiest way to harvest them that we found was to keep them in a tray after the soaking stage, rinse daily, then cut them by hand with scissors when they are 3-6 inches tall. Lots of people do wheat grass this way, too.

Monument Community Garden

We started the demonstration beds preparation at Monument Community Garden in March, with numbered beds, and we'll have our traditional sunflowers as surroundings again. Check out our extensive “li-

brary” of articles and videos of handy gardening tips and tricks for our area on our Facebook page, Monument Community Garden. I've been keeping that going for six or seven years now, with lots of information at the ready to maximize our short outdoor gardening season.



Above: The secret sauce to the rich organic Monument Community Garden soil is the alpaca beans and fall leaves mixed into the soil every fall or alternating years, growing beans, which fix nitrogen in the soil, and pine straw paths and mulch. Here, 2019 saw the garden in its prime before a deer invasion. 2020 promises denser, protective sunflower plantings. Photo by Janet Sellers.

Janet Sellers is an avid “lazy garden style” gardener, using those organic, no-till methods when possible for optimal results. If you have local, helpful garden tips, send them to janetsellers@ocn.me.

Art Matters

Winston Churchill on art, inspiration, and courage

By Janet Sellers

“Just to paint is great fun. The colors are lovely to look at and delicious to squeeze out.”

—Sir Winston Churchill

In our current mandated, protective isolation with the pandemic, we need to help each other keep our spirits up and our health strong. I found enormous encouragement reading about the life interests of Winston Churchill, especially his love of painting. He held dear what all artists do, and that is the being in the flow of creative imagination, the joy of it as a pastime. “We cannot aspire to masterpiece,” he wrote. “We may content ourselves with a joy ride in a paint-box. And for this Audacity is the only ticket.”

If we sum up Winston Churchill, we'd need to do it in his own words (the polite version), “We must just KPO.” The initials stand for “Keep Plodding On,” words for which he is most famous in his country and the world during a time when any words of defeat must not be uttered. People who knew him personally said if there was one word to describe the great Winston Churchill, it would be the word “inspiring.” Inspiration means to “breathe the spirit into.”

The son of a British aristocrat and an American-born British socialite, Churchill lived and breathed this zeal for life, all the while channeling his gusto for enjoying it and his urgency for making things happen for the right outcomes for all in his country, from the traditionally reserved aristocracy to the foot soldier fighting in the trenches. “Inspiring” originated as a term for a divine or supernatural being, in the sense of imparting a truth or idea to someone. Churchill's dauntless, influential personality transformed naturally into leadership and getting his government and his people to follow him. His drive knew no bounds in thankfully the most beneficial of ways.

Churchill had such an urgency about him that, in recollections of his verve, his colleagues reported that everyone in his presence and connected to him began to run, not walk, in the corridors of the Whitehall offices, continually influenced by his contagious urgency to accomplish what was needed in all the times of war and peace.

Elected to Parliament at age 25, he was celebrated as a lifelong avid reader, scholar, war correspondent, author, journalist, and painter. He took up painting as a soothing pastime after the travesty of his ordered attack at Gallipoli, Turkey, and continued painting all his life. “Painting came to my rescue in a most trying time,” Churchill wrote in an essay in his small book *Painting as a Pastime*. He loved painting outdoors, en



Above: “The discoveries of healing science must be the inheritance of all. That is clear. Disease must be attacked, whether it occurs in the poorest or the richest man or woman, simply on the ground that it is the enemy; and it must be attacked just in the same way as the fire brigade will give its full assistance to the humblest cottage as readily as to the most important mansion.”—Winston Churchill. Churchill loved painting and wrote essays on the topic that became the little book *Painting as a Pastime*. “Armed with a paint-box, one cannot be bored, at loose ends, or have several days on one's hands,” he wrote in the book. Public domain photo.

plein air.

His interests knew no bounds, and he was able to create in people a desire to take action even in the most hopeless of times to follow his lead into an optimistic future. He was of such character that he could bring together the common man and the elite and strengthen all the people's resolve in the most dismal of circumstances. He was an experienced soldier, knew the march, and understood the needs of his people to never give up—there was no choice but to create his leadership into winning and accomplishing peace.

Churchill was known for his strategic foresight, his intuition of how things could play out in the moment, the foreseeable future and for the long term. Even during the terms of the 1938 Munich Agreement/Munich Betrayal, the Chamberlain-Hitler negotiations that let Germany take over Czech lands, Churchill criticized the terms as impotent and dangerous. He was right, and World War II was the consequence.

Even at that, Churchill set his spirit on leading

Britain and all of Europe out of that war and into a brighter future with his strategies. He was absolutely determined. In his own words, “I am convinced that every man of you would rise up and tear me down from my place if I were for one moment to contemplate parley or surrender. If this long island story of ours is to last, let it end only when each of us lies choking in his own blood on the ground.”

After both world wars, Churchill took time to visit friends, travel, and paint. “Painting is complete as a distraction,” he wrote in 1948. “I know of nothing which, without exhausting the body, more entirely absorbs the mind. Whatever the worries of the hour or the threats of the future, once the picture has begun to flow along, there is no room for them in the mental screen ... when I get to heaven I mean to spend a considerable portion of my first million years in painting, and so get to the bottom of the subject.”

Janet Sellers is an artist, writer, speaker and educationalist. She is known for her public art sculptures and monumental murals, smaller paintings, and writes about many things. janetsellers@ocn.me.

