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***“Thank You and Message from Mariah”***

Hi everyone! I hope you have been enjoying a lovely fall and have some nice things planned for the upcoming holiday season. I am really looking forward to our first ever holiday plant swap! I hope that you all enjoy it! Please do not feel pressured to bring a plant to attend the meeting. It is just meant to be something nice around the holidays for MG’s to enjoy and bring something home from the MG program besides gardening knowledge. And something from the group, because we are all constantly learning from each other.

Our next meeting will be December 14<sup>th</sup>. It will be in the big conference room at the Extension office, which I know you all will probably be so glad to see again! We will have the plant swap outside in the parking lot. Then a dinner. Then the meeting with volunteer recognition, handing out certificates, and pins. Please let me know ahead of time if there is anything new you’d like to discuss at the meeting.

The fair is a big endeavor for us but it went well. Thank you so much to everyone who helped out! Special thanks to Ann and John Richards who always include Master Gardeners at the fair! Also huge thank you to Debra Mayfield, Stephanie Frederiksen, Vivian White, Melissa Rodriguez, Rob Martinez, and others who have been helping out at the Grow It Eat It garden at the fairgrounds! It looked amazing and was a big educational attraction at the fair. Thank you to everyone who helped with the MG booth in the Extension building as well, many of whom also helped out at the GIEI garden, but also Brenda Songy, Michelle Johnson, Rebecca Cervino, Lynn Williamson, Dawn Letts, Jacqueline Fournier, Michelle Johnson, Louise Snell, Bob Palmby, Veronica Spicuzza, Jane Sanders, Valerie Hockgraver, Christi Bishop, Patrice Hopkins, Caroline Braun, Tracey Pintell Quade, Macy Hovland, Debra Pence, Sara Everheart, Jon Everheart, Jessica Howard, Gerri Frazier, and Debbie Kole. Thank you to Danica Mottola, Rebecca Cervino, Valerie Hockgraver, Elizabeth Clark, and any others who helped with 4-H judging as well. Thank you all so much for all you do for our community!

We have a bunch of in-person programs this fall. We could really use all of your help with these. Please keep an eye on your emails and let me know what you can help with!

Thank you all for your continued support, dedication, and hard work to help our community with the Master Gardener program.

Thank you,

Mariah Dean, Master Gardener Coordinator, St. Mary’s County



## ***Grow It Eat It at the Fairgrounds***

***By: John Richards***



Thank You Master Gardeners, and especially Deb Mayfield's family of Girl Scouts for the transformation of the Grow It Eat It Garden this Summer. It has become a beautiful attraction to the Fairgrounds.

Thank you to all of the MG volunteers who worked during the past year to maintain the landscaping around the buildings. Visitors frequently compliment the gardens. The Fairgrounds are in constant use as a meeting place for residents and thousands of visitors witness the pride taken in our gardens. Thank You All!

John Richards, President of St Mary's County Fair Association 501 c3 All Volunteer Organization

## ***Fatsia***

***By: Ann Richards***

Fatsia's early November blooms look similar in some ways to our Native Button Bush which grows in our field drain ditches on the back of the farm. The large leaves, however, are evergreen to zone 8 and the plants grow all over the world according to Google. They like shade and moisture during dry spells, some protection from harsh winds and will achieve 15 feet in height. They can be pruned into submission and will keep a nice bushy appearance.

I bought this plant at an end of season sale about 8 years ago and was surprised when it did not lose it's leaves during the first Winter. The leaves are large, glossy green, and tropical looking. They make an interesting focal point amid the usual shrubs in our garden and the flowers are interesting little button balls on lollipop stems.



***Fall Tree Planting at the “Greener Front Yard”  
project in Leonardtown  
By: Nicole Basenback and Liz Curtz***

Friends of St Clements Bay has launched an effort to create a "Green Front Yard" for the spectacular new building now housing Leonardtown Library and Garvey Senior Activity Center. The vision of an outdoor space whose native trees and plants not only invite people to relax or enjoy outdoor classes, but also provide bird and pollinator habitat is taking shape. In September, almost 60 community volunteers spent over 200 hours preparing the garden site by spreading 30 cu yd of leaf gro compost, laying 500 cardboard boxes as weed barrier, and then topping it off with spreading 40 cu yd of mulch. We couldn't have done it without the generous support and many hands from our community! In October, almost 50 trees and shrubs were planted within the new garden areas. A natural play area of large boulders was also added. So if you are visiting the library or senior center, stop on by the new Front Yard and check it out. Please be careful crossing the main drive, and look for the painted crosswalk that will soon be added.

Activities for this fall have just about wrapped up! In the spring, help will be needed to plant perennials and grasses, and keep everything watered and weeded. Benches and signs will also be installed. If you are interested in participating in this project, please contact Liz Curtz at [curtzeli@gmail.com](mailto:curtzeli@gmail.com) and ask to be added to the volunteer list for spring updates.

WE NEED BRICKS!

Have you finished a new patio? Or taken out an old one? The Front Yard Project NEEDS BRICKS! We are looking for red or grey, regular 3"x6" bricks to use as a border for the new garden beds. A sturdy border is needed to help keep grass and weeds out of the gardens. If you have any that you would like to donate, please fill out the form below and we will be in touch.

**Brick Donation Form**



*The “Front Yard” site in progress during October tree planting. Photo: Nicole*

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*Aerial view of the “Front Yard” site after site preparation completed in September. Photo: Jessica Howard*



*“Front Yard” site at the new Leonardtown Library / Garvey Senior Activity Center building to be reimagined as a sustainable and inviting green space. Photo: Nicole Basenback*

***Fall Cleanup for a Better Spring***  
***By: Debra Mayfield-UMD-St. Mary's MG—Oct. 2021***

### Beds

- Flowers and vegetables whose foliage has begun to brown and shrivel should generally be removed before winter. Removing the spent foliage is an excellent way to reduce the chance for the fungi and insect pest to over winter.
- Some herbs require a thicker layer of mulch to protect their roots during extended freezing weather. WAIT, until after the first hard freeze, apply a 3- to 6- inch layer of organic material such as straw, pine needles, or chopped leaves.
- Tender perennials like Lantana, Scented Geraniums, Salvias, Rosemary, Lemon Verbena, Marjoram and Hyssop are not reliably winter hardy. Cut plants back to within a couple inches of the ground after the first hard frost and covering the remaining stub with soil. Then cover the soil with a 4- to 5- inch layer of mulch. An alternative method is to encircle the plant with a cage of hardware cloth or chicken wire. The cage diameter should be about 12 inches larger than the plant (6 inches on each side). Fill the cage with mulch.
- Roses should be cut back to no more than 25%, removing spent flower heads and weak spindly growth. Do major pruning chores in the late winter or spring. Never fertilize roses from fall thru early winter.
- If not interested in winter seasonal interest, remove all seed heads from most perennials and wildflowers. Seed heads of many flowers are food for many overwintering birds such as coneflowers, rudbeckia, & yarrow to name a few.
- Pull and dispose of all weeds. Especially winter annuals such as chickweed, annual bluegrass and henbit.
- Add compost to beds to help feed over the winter and make beds ready for new growth in the spring.
- Plant spring blooming bulbs in the fall. Plant fall blooming bulbs like fall crocus and colchicum in the fall.
- Fall is a great time to divide and/or plant new perennials. Apply 2 inches of organic mulch around newly planted perennials to retain soil heat to promote root growth and prevent heaving of plants over winter's freeze/thaw cycles.
- After first frost, dig and store tender bulbs and tubers such as gladiolus, tuberous begonias, dahlias and cannas.

### Containers

- Container Grown plants are very frost sensitive so move indoors.
- Remove and dispose in trash any diseased plants and soil.
- Take cuttings of annual you wish to start indoors.
- After you have weeded, dispose of spent healthy plant material and soil in compost bin.
- Large containers may be mulched also.
- Store empty ceramic and plastic containers in a dry storage building or garage to prevent breakage.

### Lawn Care

- Rake up leaves, woody twigs and branches.
- New Fertilizer law in MD prohibits the application of fertilizer from November 15 to March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Lawn may need one final cutting. Remember to mow high!

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## Trees and Shrubs

- Soil Test is a great activity for fall. The analysis will provide recommendations for the liming and nutrients.
- Continue to water trees and shrubs through the fall. Dry soil kills roots and puts stress on trees and shrubs. Water plants every 3 – 4 weeks when temps are above freezing and soil is not frozen. Apply water early in the day.
- Pruning is generally best left until late winter or spring for most trees and shrubs. Pruning in fall will leave the cut stems vulnerable to further dieback. Dead or damaged limbs can be removed at any time.
- Fall is a great time to plant shrubs and trees. Nurseries still have good inventories in stock and prices are greatly discounted.
- Autumn leaves can easily be turned into valuable, soil-enhancing organic matter. Use your mower or shredder/vacuum to break leaves up into smaller pieces. A mulching blade on the mower will speed this process but using a standard blade will do an adequate job. It may take several passes to get finely shredded product. Once shredded they will break down quickly.
- Dry leaves can be tilled under in the vegetable or flower beds to provide a source of organic matter.
- Root systems of many hardy perennials, shrubs and trees need to be protected from harsh winter winds. Apply a 2 – 3 inch layer of mulch across the entire root zone, after a hard freeze. The goal of winter mulch is to keep plants dormant through the winter, so it must be applied after the ground is cold and plants are fully dormant. Each year is different but generally between Thanksgiving and Christmas.
- Shredded leaves can be recycled directly on your lawn.
- Shredded leaves are also great addition to your compost bin. Add with green trimmings and grass clippings. If you don't have the green material, add a source of nitrogen to the leaves, such as commercial fertilizer or well rotted, dry cow, horse, sheep or poultry manure.

## Water Garden

- Stop feeding fish and remove all non-hardy plants from pond. An option is to add a heater to prevent or reduce ice buildup.
- Remove pond pump and filter. Remove excess debris from the pond.

## Garden Tools and Equipment Maintenance

- Scrape off all dirt with a wire brush or steel wool. Clean and coat with oil to prevent rust. Store all tools off the ground in a dry spot.
- Sharpen and lubricate all pruning tools.
- Drain water from hoses and irrigation equipment. Disconnect all hoses and store kink-free in garage or storage building.
- Gas powered tools. Add gas stabilizer and run for 5 mins. To stabilize the whole system. Remove blade and sharpen to get ready for spring.

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- Cleanout garden carts, wheel barrows and wash spreader to remove all fertilizer and pesticides.
- Store all pesticides in a dry location with temperatures above 49 degrees.
- Use up all gasoline, do not store over winter. Never use old gasoline in your equipment.

### ***Continuing Education: A Way to Brighten Your Cold, Dreary, Winter Days***

This past year I have spent many enjoyable hours taking courses at the Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond. The good news is that although LGBG is not that far away, I didn't have to drive there; the classes that I have been enjoying were a part of their growing continuing educational offerings that are offered online via Zoom. One of the programs I enjoyed was a series of classes offered both in the spring and fall that were part of a series called the "GROW NATIVE: Landscaping with Virginia Natives webinar series"

The series was sponsored using grants from several branches of the government and also lots of local non-profits. It offered a bit of everything for people looking to learn more about growing native plants. It started last March with a class done by Dr. Doug Tallamy about why planting natives is important and that spring grouping of classes also included classes on "Layering Your Landscape", "Landscaping With Layers", the "Plight of the Pollinators", "Common Invasive Plants in Virginia" and how to put "The Right Plant in the Right Place". The spring session finished up in May and then there was a summer break. The next grouping of classes started in September and finished up last week. In this session they included classes on; "The Humane Gardener", "The Shrub Layer", How to Build a Forest In Your Front Yard", Selecting Native Plants for Fall and Winter Interest and Ecology", "Common Invasive Plants in Virginia, Identification, Control, and Native Alternatives", and "Conservation Landscaping with Natives". By the last class of the series over 3,000 people were signed up to attend!

The bad news for you all is that you missed both of these sessions of classes; but the good news is that they are either now available online, or will be soon. You can find out more about both sessions of this series by checking things out at <http://www.plantvirginiannatives.org>

### ***Some New Information About Cardboard Sheet Mulching in Landscaping***

Over the last few years I have gotten into several conversations with other Master Gardeners about the widespread use of cardboard under wood mulch to control weeds. It was a technique I learned while taking my MG Basic Training class, although I don't remember if I learned it as part of the class or from other trainees there. I do know that it is also a process that was more fully fleshed out at Master Gardener events over the years and certainly from speakers at the Annual Training Day Workshops in College Park. It is also widely talked about and taught by those who practice permaculture. As a new MG it was a practice I followed because I do not like to weed more than I have to, and just like landscape fabric, I found that it does reduce weeds – and is usually free. Several years ago, at a series of

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workshops I went to that was organized for those who are in the “Green Industry”, I began hearing that the use of cardboard under mulch might not be as beneficial as I thought.

In the last seven (7) years I have completely stopped using cardboard in my landscaping, and although it has been challenging I do believe it is worth it environmentally. Rather than trying to explain why I made this switch, and what the environmental issues are, I thought I would write this short article with links to the articles about the research that has been done on this subject so those interested could learn more from the experts who have done the research. I am also including a link to a group I enjoy learning more from... and am always amazed by, “The Garden Professors”.

<https://meridian.allenpress.com/jeh/article/25/4/239/80254/Impact-of-Mulches-on-Landscape-Plants-and-the>

(You may have to follow the links for the PDF)

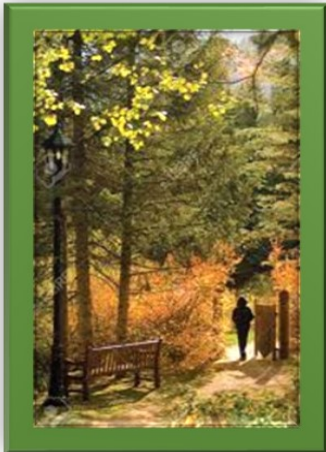
And more about the use of cardboard in gardening (and dozens of other subjects) is here...

<https://gardenprofessors.com/>

<https://gardenprofessors.com/?s=cardboard>

Happy reading!

## ***Thru the Garden Gate*** ***October 2021***



Fall is upon us with autumn colors at a peak as this newsletter goes to press. The open garden gate draws us out for a walk to explore hidden byways. This year everywhere one steps the crunch of acorns follows! Why? Read on. Just for fun, an “Ode to Acorns” is included, and the featured book review is about our National

Tree, the mighty oak.

October is a wonderful month to travel. Second only to May, it provides perfect weather and fewer tourists in almost all destinations, which is exactly what we found on a recent trip to Spain. Gardening and plants are always of major interest no matter where we wander, so in this issue you’ll find information on the courtyard gardens of Córdoba. Since Thanksgiving is around the corner, a recipe for a harvest pudding is included straight from Plymouth, Massachusetts, home of the first feast.



### **Acorns: Always Fascinating!**

Do you remember your elementary teacher using acorns as a counting guide in math? Or, maybe you were in scouts and recall making little figurines out of acorns. Or perhaps you’ve visited the Fairy Houses at AnnMarie Gardens and noticed little acorn fairies tucked into woodland cottages? Acorns hold an endless fascination and this year we have a deluge of them!

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At our house, the driveway has been covered daily with hundreds (maybe thousands) of acorns for the last month. And, if you've done any fall weeding, you may have been pulling out already rooting acorns. My crop from yesterday's weeding is featured in this photo. The longest root is 4 ½ inches long!

### Why are there so many acorns falling in 2021?

Typically, acorns "fall" in the fall season in boom and bust cycles in order to help plant new trees, and to provide food for a variety of critters, not just squirrels. A single Oak tree can produce thousands of acorns in its reproductive season. Oak trees don't have acorns every year and some acorns require 18 months to mature. When a bumper crop of acorns is produced, the year is botanically referred to as a 'mast' year. Oaks have irregular cycles and have a 'mast' year every 2-5 years. There isn't a single reason for the abundance of acorns being seen this year, but theories range from climate temperatures and rainfall amounts to harsh summers affecting acorn production, or the availability of spring winds during pollination. The specific cause remains a mystery. But, the Farmer's Almanac lists an abundance of acorns as #15 of the twenty signs of a cold harsh winter ahead! (<https://www.farmersalmanac.com/20-signs-of-a-hard-winter-479> )

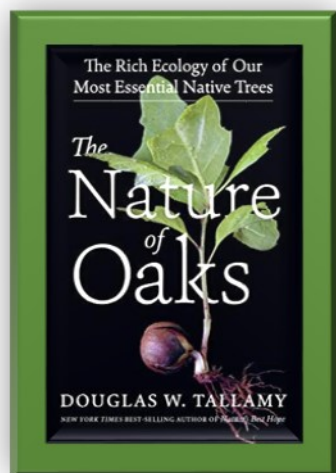


### Ode to an Acorn

O noble seed,  
 Of the mighty Oak.  
 In wondrous forests do you soak!  
 In spring showers and summer sun,  
 all to fulfill your noble aim,  
 an Autumnal bed is your gain.  
 You fall amongst the leaves, down on the ground,  
 travelling swiftly, without too much sound.  
 And there, you will find  
 You are not all alone,  
 Nestled among conkers, twigs and pine cones.  
 Food for wild animals, or bird life maybe  
 or likely buried  
 to become a new tree.

by Brian F. Kirkham

## Fall Book Review



Oak trees are in peril due to logging, diseases, insect invaders, drought conditions, wildfires and urban sprawl which is why this book is timely.

*The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees*, written by Douglas W. Tallamy, Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, and published by Timber Press in April, 2021, provides a revealing look into the life of the oak tree through many seasons. The New York Times best-selling author writes in a conversational style, including fascinating facts, and practical information on selecting the best oak species for your yard, and planting and caring for America's National Tree. *The Nature of Oaks* is available at St. Mary's County Library.

### Courtyard Gardens in Córdoba, Spain

Several weeks ago, my husband and I traveled to Spain exploring the history, culture, food and wine of Andalusia. We began our journey in Córdoba, the first capital of Spain and home to some of the most beautiful courtyard gardens in the world. Every year in May there is a competition to judge whose garden is most beautiful and throughout the year visitors may wander into these courtyards to admire the beauty of the flowers and trees and visit with the owners.

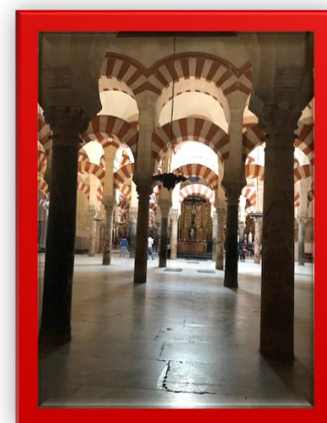
Córdoba is a city located in the southern region of Andalusia and was an important Roman city and a major Islamic center in the Middle Ages. It's best known for *La Mesquita*, an immense mosque dating from 784 A.D. featuring a columned prayer hall and older Byzantine mosaics.

The Moorish architecture of the old city is beguiling. One walks through narrow streets with white washed walls leading to gated entries that open into amazing gardens! The annual Courtyard Festival is deeply rooted in the traditions of the city and celebrated its centenary in 2021.

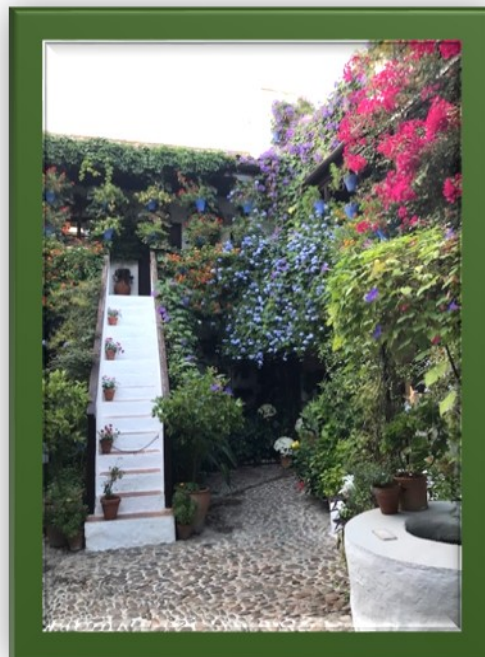
Courtyards are found in private homes or in clusters of homes that enjoy the courtyard in common. Here are a few of my pictures.

Although Córdoba is more Southern than Maryland, many of the plants grown here are found in the courtyard gardens such as basil, impatiens, azalea, begonia, geranium, ferns, hydrangea, honeysuckle, pansy, petunia, rosemary, roses, ivy, chrysanthemum, and green mint.

The best way to visit is in silence, although the owners are always present and love chatting. But, one doesn't want to miss hearing the fountains and observing the flowers and entering into the calm serenity of the gardens.



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## ***Feast Your Eyes on These Seasonal Recipes!***

### ***Harvest Pudding (Native American Pudding)***



cornmeal mush.

In New England a very popular dessert, especially at Thanksgiving, is a harvest pudding known popularly as “Native American Pudding.” It’s delicious!

It is a dessert made of cornmeal dating back to the Colonial days of America, when newly arrived colonists at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and elsewhere sought to recreate the dishes of their homeland with ingredients they had on hand in the new land. The recipe is derived from British hasty pudding, a dish made with wheat flour or oatmeal boiled with milk. Colonists lacked these flours but had ample corn, thanks to Native Americans—hence the name. The Native Americans made a similar version of this dish called *supawn*, a

#### **Ingredients:**

- |                      |                                    |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3 cups of whole milk | 1/3 cup molasses                   |
| ½ cup cornmeal       | 1 teaspoon cinnamon                |
| ½ teaspoon salt      | ½ teaspoon ginger                  |
| 1 tablespoons butter | ½ cup dried cranberries (optional) |
| 2 eggs               |                                    |

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**Directions:**

Grease the inside of slow cooker with butter and preheat on high for 15 minutes

In large heavy pot, whisk together milk, cornmeal, and salt, and bring to a boil. Continue whisking another 5 minutes; cover and simmer on low for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and add butter.

In medium bowl, combine eggs, molasses, and spices. Add some of the hot cornmeal mixture to the egg mixture to temper the eggs; then transfer egg mixture into the pot. Stir in cranberries, if you like.

Scrape batter into the slow cooker (5-6 quarts) and cook on high 2-3 hours or on low for 6-8 hours. The center will not be quite set.

Serve warm topped with ice cream, whipped cream, or light cream.

Enjoy!

***Fall into Winter Recipes***  
***By: Jon and Sara Beth Everheart***

Here are a few recipes that we enjoy during the fall into winter seasons. We use herbs, fruits, and vegetables from our garden and what we can't grow we purchase from the local farmers market. Any spices, sugar, or flour that we use in our recipes we purchase from Amazon (you really get a decent deal buying in bulk). We hope you enjoy them!

**Crockpot Hot Apple Cider (Dark Spiced Rum Optional)\***

**Total Time - 4 to 7 Hours, Serves 4**

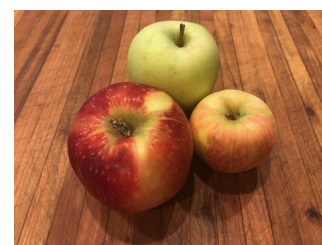
**Required Ingredients**

3 Quart Crockpot	2 Star Anise
Ladle	2 Cinnamon Sticks
Coffee Mugs	½ Cup Orange Juice
1 Apple Studded with 2 TSP of Cloves (Any Apple Type Will Work)	4 Cups Apple Juice or Apple Cider
1 TSP Allspice Berries	Dark Spiced Rum (Optional)

**Directions**

- Place all ingredients (except dark spiced rum) into the crockpot and turn on high for 3-4 hours or low for 6-7 hours. Stir 1-2 times during the cooking time.
- Ladle the hot apple cider into mugs. You will probably want to use a small strainer to do this so you catch the spices before they make it into your mug.
- Optional - Add 1 oz of dark spiced rum to your mug of hot apple cider. You can also garnish with a fresh wedge of apple.
- Leftovers will last up to 3 days in the fridge. Just reheat the cider in mugs in the microwave.
- TIP: You can double the recipe to serve more people, but you will need a larger crockpot possibly!

\*Note: We usually get apples and apple cider from the farmers market. We think it really makes a huge difference when you use fresh, local apples.



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## Crockpot Potato and Corn Chowder Soup\*

Total Time - 8.5 Hours, Serves 4

### Required Ingredients

- 6 Quart Crock Pot
- Immersion Blender (Or Food Processor)
- 1 LB Cubed Potatoes (Can Leave Skins On or Off)
- 3-4 Cups Chicken or Veggie Stock
- 4-5 Ears of Fresh Corn Cut off the Cob ~OR~
- 2 15oz Cans of Corn with all Juices (Can Also Use Frozen Corn and Add Water)
- 1 TSP Salt
- 1 TSP Black Pepper
- 2 Bay Leaves
- 1 White Onion Sliced
- 1 Cup Milk
- 2 TBSP Butter



Note: We used potatoes and onions from our garden and corn from the farmers market to make this recipe. Any type of potato, corn, or onion will work fine in this recipe.

### Directions

- Place all ingredients (except milk and butter) into the crockpot and turn on low for 8 hours. There should be enough liquid to cover all of the ingredients. If not, then add additional stock or water.
- After 8 hours, puree everything that's in the crockpot.
- Add the milk and butter to the pureed mixture and cook on high for an additional 30 minutes.
- Serve in bowls with your favorite toppings (sour cream, chives, chopped bacon, shredded cheddar cheese, chopped fresh onion or green onions, red pepper flakes, etc.).

## Crockpot Fig Jam\*

Total Time - 4 Hours, Serves 2

### Required Ingredients

- 3 Quart Crockpot
- Immersion Blender (Or Food Processor)
- 25 Fresh Figs with Stems Chopped Off, Cut in Half
- ¼ Cup Maple Syrup
- 1 Cup Ginger Ale
- ¼ Cup Lemon Juice
- 4 Slices of Lemon Rind
- 1 Sprig of Fresh Rosemary
- 1 TSP Vanilla
- 2 TBSP Granulated Sugar

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### Directions

- Place all ingredients into the crockpot and turn on low for 4 hours.
- Take out the rosemary sprig and lemon rinds.
- Blend ingredients until you have a smooth consistency. The figs contain natural pectic so you should have a jam consistency when you are finished blending.
- Store in the fridge with a tight lid and will last up to 7 days.



\*Note: We have a very large fig tree in our front yard that produces hundreds of figs every August/September. We have been saving them by putting them in the freezer to enjoy at a later time. Our rosemary also did great this year and this was a nice way to use some of it in a different application.

## ***Toasted Figs*** ***By: Linda Crandall***

As many of us have, I discovered figs as a child many years ago in 'Fig Newton's, but retired Master Gardener Bev Middleton introduced me to figs as an adult in a completely different way. She grew figs and would bring fresh figs to our late summer, early fall Quarterly Meetings as a great, local fruit addition to the wonderful potlucks we have. Since she introduced me to figs, and I really enjoyed them, I planted several fig trees, and included fig trees of different type. One thing I have learned while growing my own figs is that different varieties of figs mature and produce at different times and they also taste somewhat differently. Now, with my little "Fig Forest", from mid-August on through the fall we almost always have fresh figs. Something that is true of all figs is that they make great snacks on the go. Even though I enjoy figs as a quick, sweet snack... I have learned they can dress up very easily. One of my favorite fig recipes, is one I call "Toasted Figs" and it is quick, easy, and impresses many people

Start with as many figs as you need. Wash each fig and air dry. Cut figs in half and set cut side up on a lightly oiled cookie sheet or toaster oven pan. Top each fig with a small, fairly thin slice of cheese. You can experiment with cheeses here, but I would suggest choosing cheeses that 'make sense' flavor-wise. I prefer to use Brie, my husband likes this best when made with Swiss cheese. Slide tray of figs into oven and broil until figs are warm and cheese melts.

Serve immediately.

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## **Max's Fig Cake**

**By: Patricia Armstrong**

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Prepare two loaf pans with butter and flour.

1 cup oil	1 cup chopped nuts (walnuts)
2.5 cups sugar	1 teaspoon each:
3 eggs	salt
2 cups plain flour	baking soda
1 cup buttermilk (put splash of white vinegar in milk, let sit five minutes)	allspice
1 cup fig preserves	cinnamon
Beat oil, sugar and eggs. Add in vanilla and preserves.	nutmeg
	vanilla

In separate bowl, blend flour, salt, soda, allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Alternate blending flour and buttermilk into the wet ingredients, ending with flour. Fold in chopped nuts.

Pour into pans and bake one hour or until brown.

To make fig preserves:

Blend 3 cups of fresh ripe figs with one cup of sugar in a pot. Let sit one hour. Then cook on low until thickened.

Can preserve in jars if desired to keep longer.

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