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"Message from Mariah"

We had a great turn out at the workday at the entrance garden on November 10th. Thank you to Ann Buckler, Miriam Bonk, Ruth Yates, Marlene Smith, Bill Smith, Misty Smith, Debra Pence, Christina Kaila, Ann Dickens, Shannon Dyson, Penny Shissler, and Barb Vogentanz who all showed up to help with the garden! And thank you to everyone who came by to get divisions! We have learned and now know to not recommend switchgrass, sea oats, and large asters for entrance way gardens such as the one at the office.

Thank you also to everyone who volunteered at the county fair this year! We had good coverage this year, though we could always use a little more help next year. Thank you to Amy Henderson, Shannon Dyson, Jacki DePiazza, Michelle Johnson, Patrice Hopkins, for helping to do tours at the container garden. Thank you of course to Debra Mayfield, Stephanie Frederiksen, Vivian White, Jackie DePiazza, and Ruth Yates for maintaining the container garden throughout the year. Thank you to Linda Crandall who made a nice Bay-wise sandwich board this year for the fair as well as helped with the plant clinic table. Thank you to Lynn Duff, Macy Hovland, Mary Bauer, Kimberly Dean, Barb Landers, Courtney Antemann, Elizabeth Clark, Jacqueline Fournier, Thao Nguyen, Tracey Pintell-Quade, Janet Marks, Michelle Johnson, Cary Braun, Debra Pence, Lynn Williamson, Louise Snell, Fran Beale, Jessica Howard and Ann Buckler who also helped with the plant clinic table. Thank you to Bill and Marlene Smith for getting some videos of the table! Thank you to Ann and John Richards for hosting us! Thank you to Kimberly Dean and Liz Ward who helped with 4-H judging this year as well, they appreciate the help.

Our next meeting will be December 5th here at the Extension office.

Thanks for all of the good you do!



Trunk or Treat
Submitted By: Mariah Dean

A HUGE THANK YOU!!!!!! To Shannon Dyson and Michelle Johnson for volunteering at the Trunk or Treat event at the St. Mary's County Fairgrounds this fall! Last year, Summer Webb who is a local girl scout leader, reached out to me about Master Gardeners potentially doing a trunk for their Trunk or Treat event. She had the idea that we dress up as gardeners and talk to the kids about gardening. For various reasons we could not do it last year. However this year when I sent the email out about it, Shannon Dyson and Michelle Johnson volunteered to do it!

Shannon and Michelle decorated the trunk amazingly! They had mint plants and examples of paper-crafted pollinators around "the garden". They showed the visitors the mint plant and talked about how a lot of our candy comes from plants such as mint. Then they gave the visitors mints because what is Halloween without some candy. They also gave out some educational handouts for adults as well as craft activities for kids. They said it was a lot of fun.

Thank you Michelle and Shannon so much. Volunteers stepping up to do things like this is so helpful and awesome. Additionally, Shannon and Michelle had some great ideas that I was happy and able to support! I agree that next year we should try to have more candy and plants, at least peppermint patties!



Updated USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map
Submitted By: Mariah Dean and Kimberly Dean

Every 10 years or so, the USDA goes through and updates their Plant Hardiness Zone Map. They updated it again in 2023. The updates are based on the last 30 years of temperature data. Southern St. Mary's County as well as a lot of the Chesapeake Bay's coast went up a half a zone. So, we are now 8a as opposed to 7b which we were before this recent update. About half of the country went up a half a zone.

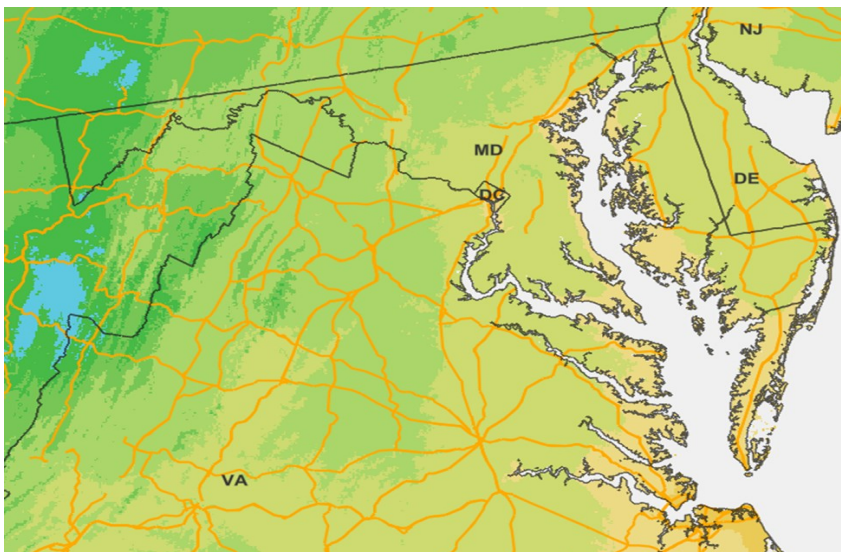
Kimberly Dean had a positive view on the warming temperatures:

"We have been talking about it for a while now, but you may want to take a look at the newly published USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Many are waking up to find that they are no longer categorized as zone 7b but rather zone 8a. So what does that mean? The lowest winter temps in our area have warmed to 10 degrees. That may open the window to many new plant varieties that you can add to your garden in the next season. Happy Shopping!"

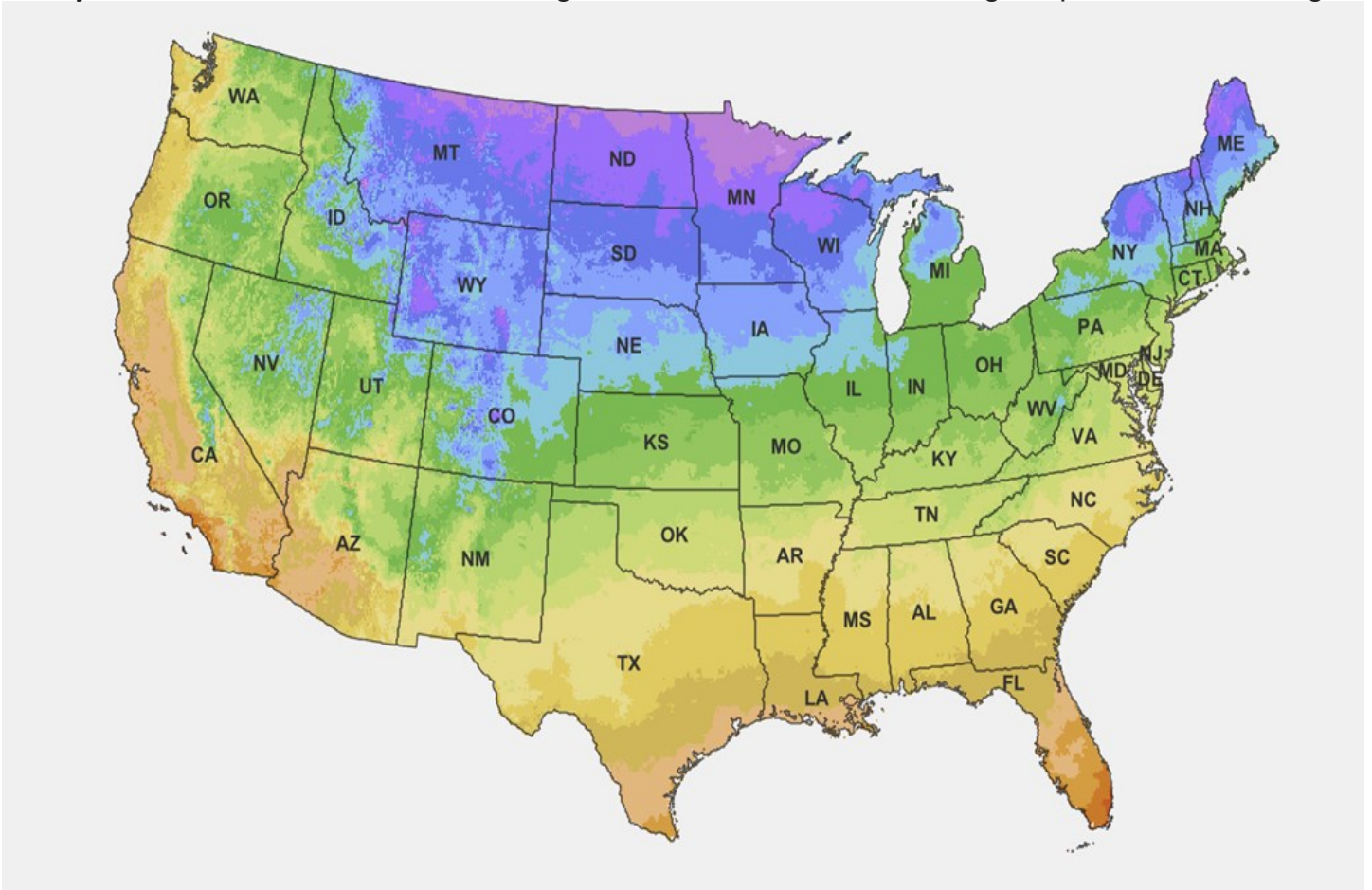
Below is a screen snip of Maryland, the entire country, as well as the rating key. To see the full updated version of the interactive map please go to <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>

Here is a news article from USDA covering some of the reasoning for the updates <https://www.ars.usda.gov/news-events/news/research-news/2023/usda-unveils-updated-plant-hardiness-zone-map/>

Temp (F)	Zone	Temp (C)
-60 to -55	1a	-51.1 to -48.3
-55 to -50	1b	-48.3 to -45.6
-50 to -45	2a	-45.6 to -42.8
-45 to -40	2b	-42.8 to -40
-40 to -35	3a	-40 to -37.2
-35 to -30	3b	-37.2 to -34.4
-30 to -25	4a	-34.4 to -31.7
-25 to -20	4b	-31.7 to -28.9
-20 to -15	5a	-28.9 to -26.1
-15 to -10	5b	-26.1 to -23.3
-10 to -5	6a	-23.3 to -20.6
-5 to 0	6b	-20.6 to -17.8
0 to 5	7a	-17.8 to -15
5 to 10	7b	-15 to -12.2
10 to 15	8a	-12.2 to -9.4
15 to 20	8b	-9.4 to -6.7
20 to 25	9a	-6.7 to -3.9
25 to 30	9b	-3.9 to -1.1
30 to 35	10a	-1.1 to 1.7
35 to 40	10b	1.7 to 4.4
40 to 45	11a	4.4 to 7.2
45 to 50	11b	7.2 to 10
50 to 55	12a	10 to 12.8
55 to 60	12b	12.8 to 15.6
60 to 65	13a	15.6 to 18.3
65 to 70	13b	18.3 to 21.1



This year's fair had beautiful flower arrangements to dream about creating the perfect table setting!



***Pictures of Fair Flower Arrangements
Submitted By: Kimberly Dean***

This year's fair had beautiful flower arrangements to dream about creating the perfect table setting!



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4-H Flower Judging
Submitted By: Kimberly Dean

One of my favorite events to volunteer is the fair. In particular, I enjoy judging the 4-H flower submissions. It is so rewarding to meet young gardeners and encourage them in their gardening journey. It is especially rewarding at the end of the season when you may be feeling burned out in your own garden. When you find an opportunity like this to give back to the community, especially the youth, I find inspiration again.

I hope you will look for these little rewards by working with the community. #babyrosegeeks

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All the Dirt on Native Seed Collecting “Re-Cap” ***Submitted By: Bill and Marlene Smith***

Dealing with technical glitches and inclement weather, the proverbial saying “The show must go on” was the attitude of Charles County Master Gardeners Marlene Smith and Molly Moore when presenting “All the Dirt on Native Seed Collecting”.

The event took place on October 14, 2023 at the Leonardtown Library in Leonardtown, Maryland. After the presentation, a tour of the library’s Front Yard Project native garden was to take place, followed by native seed collecting using techniques learned from the presentation.

Technical glitches with the library’s projection system wreaked havoc, causing an unstable display. At one point it seemed Marlene and Molly might have been ready to perform the presentation with finger puppets, but the library staff was able to bring out a table top projector and set it up.



Failing Ceiling Projector Photo Courtesy Liz Kurtz



Fallback Table Top Projector Photo Courtesy Bill Smith

The display was stable but it was about ¼ the size of the original display. Still with the reduced size, all participants were able to view the presentation without any difficulty.



Upon entry to the room was a display of books about butterflies, bees and attracting pollinators, and also various Master Gardener and UMD extension handouts for the audience to snap the QR code for a copy



Another display was setup showing examples of the seeds that were used throughout the presentation.

Before starting the presentation, Molly asked if the audience would state their names and where they were from.

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Crowd shot of audience

Photo Courtesy Bill Smith

Many were local to the area (St. Mary's, Charles and Calvert Counties), while others came from Washington, DC, Fort Washington, and Montgomery County, MD and Arlington, VA. They represented various clubs and affiliations, including Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Friends of St Clements Bay, Southern Maryland Audubon Society and St Mary's Garden Club, while some were not affiliated to any organization and just wanted to learn about native seed collection.

Starting the presentation, Marlene Smith is a Charles County Master Gardener, Bay-Wise Master Gardener, Maryland Tree Steward and a Xerces Ambassador. Molly Moore is the President of the Southern Maryland Audubon, Charles County Master Gardener, and Maryland Master Naturalist/ Nanjemoy Creek Environmental Education Center.

Following the introductions, they gave the reasons "Why collect native seeds?" The first 4 bullets explain the horticulture reasons for collecting.



The remainder 5 bullets are on a personal level for collecting seeds, most for the joy of gardening.

Then they got into the meat of the presentation, "10 Steps to Native Seed Collection".



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All the steps are important, but not understanding step 5 could or would cause problems with the seed collection/cleaning/saving. This step shows the 2 seed groups and identifies the different types of seeds within each group and how to harvest the seed.

During this step there is a 46 second video from the Smithsonian Channel showing the explosive nature of the ballistic seeds. To see this video and the entire presentation follow the link:

All the Dirt on Seed Collection: <https://youtu.be/Bc8hsjZHz9s>

Now that everyone is armed with the knowledge, it was time to collect the seeds in the library's Front Yard Garden, but Mother Nature decided differently.

This is where the weather glitch comes into play. At the start of the presentation it was overcast, during the presentation it was sunny, but at the end it was raining. Referencing Step 1, bullet 5 from the presentation, **"Don't collect in the rain or right after the rain"**, meant no seed collection in the Front Yard Garden, but all was not lost. Days prior, Marlene and Molly had collected seeds from the Front Yard Garden and their own native gardens as a backup plan. Even though it was not outside in the garden, Plan B allowed the participants to gather seeds to take home for cleaning.

There was a short break to re-arrange the tables into 4 groups of 2 tables per group; the 17 seed types were distributed among the tables.



The tables arranged for inside seed collection Photos Courtesy Bill Smith

Here is a listing of the 17 varieties of seeds that were set out for collection. As a reference for attendees to choose their plants, an excerpt of the Bona Terra [Native Plant Catalog](#) was made available. This guide provides one of the most extensive set of symbols that describe each plant characteristic, as shown below for the varieties available in their catalog.

Aquilegia canadensis, Wild columbine ☀️☁️💧💧SRL 🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

Asclepias incarnata, Swamp milkweed ☀️☀️💧💧CL 🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

Agastache foeniculum, Anise hyssop (not in catalog; characteristics not available)

Asclepias tuberosa, Butterfly weed ☀️☀️💧SCL 🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

Conoclinium coelestinum, Blue mistflower ☀️☀️💧SCL 🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

Echinacea purpurea, Purple coneflower ☀️☀️☀️SRCL 🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿

Lobelia siphilitica, Great blue lobelia ☀️☀️☀️💧SCL 🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿🌿



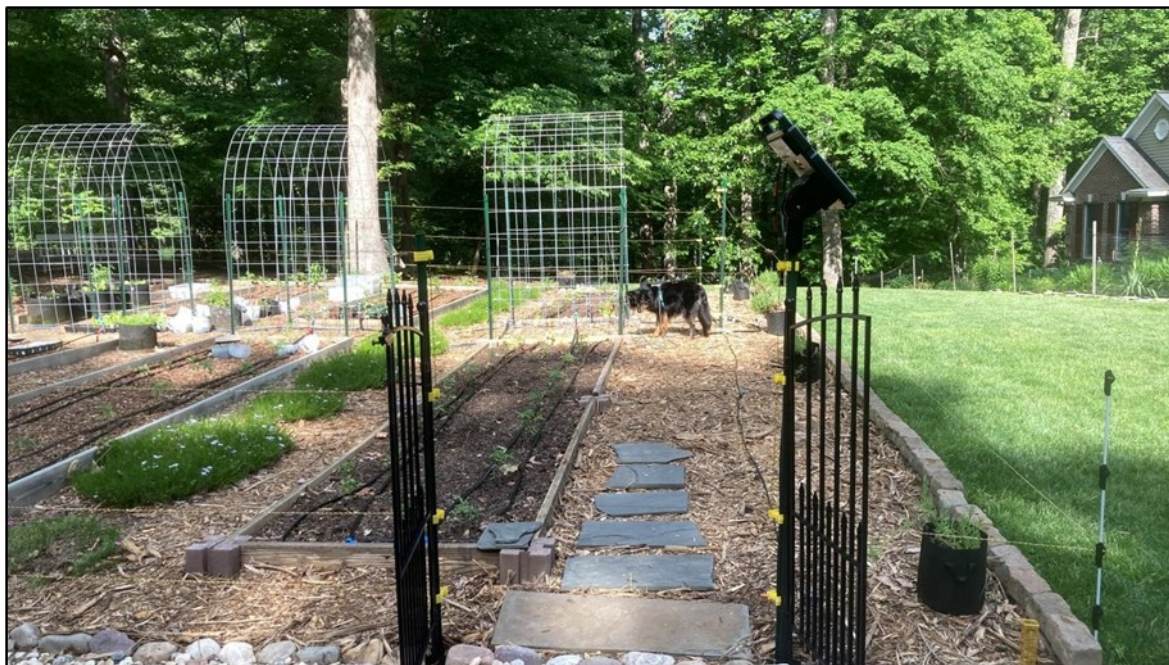
As the workshop was wrapping up, several attendees braved the elements to take a tour of the Front Yard native gardens, led by St. Mary's Master Gardener and Front Yard volunteer, Amy Henderson.

A copy of the [presentation slides](#) is also available for those interested.

Amy Henderson (second from right) giving tour of the Front Yard

Mistycal Garden 2023 Evolution (Part 2) *Submitted By: Bill and Marlene Smith*

Re-cap from part 1; we had completed the expansion of our vegetable garden, electric fencing and irrigation installed winter sown plants in the ground, waiting for results and Misty waiting to give tours.



We were checking the garden daily and quit pleased with the progress of all the plant i.e. Tomatoes, okra, green peppers, jalapeno peppers, strawberries, cilantro, squash, zucchini, various types of lettuce and cucumbers on the arbors.

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Foreground squash, zucchini okra tomatoes. Background lettuce, more tomatoes and peppers



Strawberries

To support the tomatoes we set the bamboo poles at both ends of the tomatoes for the “Florida Weave” system to trellis the plants in place. We ran jute string between each pole weaving around the plants. The expanded section of tomatoes were doing great.



Poles in Place (5/28/23)



One Level String (6/3/23)



Two Levels of String (6/6/23)

These pictures tell a story of how good the vegetable garden was doing. We even had a tomato, a little baby tomato on the vine and we were hoping that we would have our first ripe tomato by Independence Day. Here is a picture of our little hopeful.



The First Tomato of this Year

Everything was looking like we were going to have a good year in the garden. Fence and irrigation were working ideally. We had picked lettuce for salads and even gotten a few strawberries. Then it HAP-PENED! The one thing we thought we had beaten,

we **HAD NOT! It was the dreaded DEER!**



Our furry horned foe the *Odocoileus virginianus* a.k.a. the white-tailed deer Photo Courtesy Bill Smith

This is a picture after the fact that a neighbor took showing the deer in the front yard. They had already done the damage. The lettuce was eaten; peppers were nothing but little twigs sticking out of the ground and the same with the okra. They may have nibbled on the cucumbers, but the worst was seeing all the tomato plants, the tops chewed off and some leaves striped. I was devastated and I could see the same from Marlene's expression. Thinking the growing season was over before it started.

We took a few steps back from our emotions and evaluated the damage. There was no coming back for the lettuce. They have eaten them, roots and all. There were still some strawberries plants. The peppers still had a few leaves and the tomatoes plants had lost anywhere from 2 – 12 inches of height.

After assessing the damage and we checked the fencing for faulty areas and the surrounding area for deer prints. We could only speculate where they came into the garden, but nothing for certain. The one area where we did not plant anything we still had an obstruction in the way keeping them from jumping the garden.

A day or two later I walked outside to see a deer in the garden. **NOT AGAIN, NOT ON MY WATCH.** I chased him out of the garden throwing anything I could get my hands on. I watched him exit which showed me where he got over the fence. It was in an area where the fencing navigated around a tree causing a smaller distance between the inner and outer fence and he had a nice landing on a spot in between the beds. I started dragging trash cans to the area of the garden that was vulnerable and then placed poles in the cans crossing them.



Cans and Poles to deter Deer

Making sure that the area was secure from any other deer I was extremely motivated and wanted to take immediate action to deter the deer from ever wanting to enter the garden again. This was not a simple task because I had a hip replacement the week prior. So there I am dragging a trash can while maneuvering a walker and then placing the poles in the cans.

Marlene was on the West side of the property planting native plants. She was returning when I was finishing. She watched me and just shook her head in disbelief.

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We decided not to give up on the garden and plowed forward with the planned maintenance. The picture showing the cans and poles was taken well after the incident, but notice in the back ground. The tomato plants were recovering with plenty of fruit. The peppers, both green and jalapeno, came back as well. The okra recovered but not a very strong recovery. We kept adding strings for the Florida Weave to support the tomatoes as they grew. We staked the peppers and okra as they were getting heavy and falling over.

On July 5th it happened. We picked our first tomatoes, cherry tomatoes but tomatoes none the less. It was a small bounty but it was a start.



First Tomatoes pick July 5th.



First Cucumber picked July 17th

My excitement had returned as our garden returned. We started getting other vegetables and the sting of the deer was still there as a reminder that making sure the fence was working properly and the barriers were in place.

By mid-August the tomato plants were taller than my out reached hand, which is 8 feet 2 inches and full of fruit. Everything was looking good.



Reaching for the Sky



Dwarfed by Tomato Plants



Cucumber Arbor

Thinking we would not have anything this year and to walk away with the following yield totals:

Vegetable	Pounds	Vegetable	Pounds
Tomatoes	244.36	Cucumbers	14.64
Peppers (green)	6.23	Okra	1
Peppers (jalapenos)	6.63	Zucchini	5
		Butter Nut Squash	2.5

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In a way the deer did a Chelsea Chop on the plants which made the plants bushier and produced more fruit. We also attributed the re-growth of the plants to winter sowing and having the expansion allowing more plants in more sun.



Expanded Garden Area

Southern Tomato Pie

Recipe Submitted By: Marlene Smith, CCMG

Have you ever come away from a potluck wishing you'd asked someone for a recipe? This summer I had the pleasure of enjoying Tomato Pie for the first time at the St. Mary's Master Gardener Quarterly Meeting in August. It was soooo good that I went back for seconds. But before I had the chance to ask around for the recipe, the meeting was adjourned, and I left without knowing who had made it and without getting the recipe. But never fail, an internet search provided lots of options. Never one to follow a recipe exactly as written, I combined several and came up with the following. If you still have any fresh tomatoes sitting around, I highly recommend you try it!

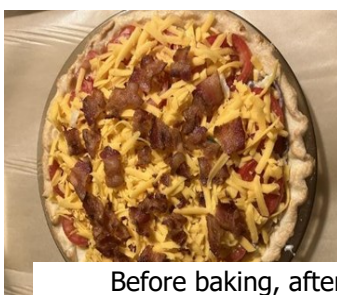
Southern Tomato Pie

Ingredients: Prep Time 40minutes, Cook Time 45minutes, Resting Time 20 minutes, Total Time 1hour hour 25minutes, Servings 6 - 8 people.

Instructions

1. Separate egg. Brush unbaked pie crust with egg white and bake according to directions.
2. In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion; cook until lightly browned on the edges (about 6 minutes). Transfer onion to a large bowl and set aside to cool completely.
3. Line 2 baking sheets with paper towels. Place sliced tomatoes in a single layer on the paper towels. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt. Allow to sit for 30 minutes to remove some of the moisture, then pat dry with additional paper towels.
4. Once the onion is cool, stir in egg yolk and remaining egg white, Swiss cheese, 1 cup of the cheddar, mayonnaise, basil, pepper, and ½ teaspoon salt.
5. Spread half of the mayonnaise mixture in the bottom of the prepared crust. Sprinkle with 1 tablespoon bread crumbs. Arrange half of the tomatoes on top. Repeat with another layer of the mayonnaise mixture, another layer of breadcrumbs, and another layer of tomatoes. Sprinkle remaining ½ cup of cheddar cheese over top and crumbled bacon.
6. Bake in a 350°F oven for about 45 minutes, or until brown and bubbly.
7. Cut into slices and serve warm or at room temperature. I find that it's easiest to slice when I allow the pie to rest for at least 20 minutes being cutting into it.

This recipe was adapted from https://www.theseasonedmom.com/wprm_print/70737
See original recipe for tips and notes.



Before baking, after baking, and sliced. Mmmmmmmmm.....
Photos by CCMG Marlene Smith

Cranberry Rosemary Vinegar
Recipe Submitted By: Karen Doherty

Pack fresh or frozen whole cranberries into a glass bottle. Add leaves from 2 (6 " long) sprigs of rosemary. Pour white wine vinegar into the bottle to about one inch from the top, completely covering the cranberries and rosemary. Cover and allow to sit for 2 - 3 weeks. Strain out the berries and rosemary. Store in a glass bottle that is sealed with a non-metallic lid.

Essential Guide to Growing and Cooking with Herbs



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