

News from the December Garden Meeting: We started by discussing the status of the garden application. Here's a summary of what gardeners should know: Garden applications are now available for both Eagle Heights and University Houses Gardens. Applications are due February 15, 2010, for the 2010 growing season. Applying by the Feb. 15 deadline does not guarantee that you will receive a plot, but it is highly recommended. If you apply after Feb. 15, you will be placed on a waiting list and may or may not receive a plot later in the season. Applications and instructions for submitting them are available on the garden website, www.eagleheightsgardens.org. The cost to University Apartments Residents is \$25 per plot for the growing season.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to planning the seed fair. We expect to provide free seeds and information on gardening to Eagle Heights and University Houses gardeners from 10 am to noon on Saturday, March 20 in the Eagle Heights Community Center. Please mark your calendar.

Our next meeting and potluck dinner will be at 6:30 pm on Wed., Feb. 24 in the Eagle Heights Community Center (note the change from our usual time and day). All gardeners are welcome -- please come and help run the gardens!

Are you nearing the end of your pickled, frozen, and dried garden output from 2009? Is the middle of winter bringing on cravings for fresh-from-the-garden fruits and vegetables? If so, try growing some sprouts indoors to give you a quick fix throughout the rest of winter. They are easy to grow, inexpensive, and contain a multitude of nutrients of flavors. Growing them can also be a great winter project to do with children.

First, consider which variety of sprouts you might like to grow and purchase seed packets for the sprout variety of your selections. Seed sprout packets can be found at many garden and health food stores. Be sure to buy the sprouting kind instead of the planting kind, because some seeds for planting are treated with fungicides and other chemicals. Popular and successful types include buckwheat, soybean (soak 12 hours; eat when root is 2 inches long), mung bean (soak 12 hours; eat when root is 1-2 inches long), lentil (soak 12 hours; eat when root is 1 inch long), peas (including chickpea; eat when roots are 2 inches long), alfalfa (soak 6-12 hours; eat after three days and before root is longer than 2 inches), barley (soak 12 hours; eat when ½ inch long), oats (same as barley), and rye (same as barley). Radish sprouts are a personal favorite of mine. They have a robust spicy flavor that is great for adding zip to salads and sandwiches. Read the backs of the seed packets for instructions on additional varieties.

Next, place 4 tablespoons of one kind of seed in a quart-size, wide-mouth glass jar. Remove any seeds that appear broken or damaged. Fill the jar with lukewarm water and secure a thin cloth (a strong paper towel will work too) in place over the mouth of the jar with a rubber band. Soak the seeds overnight in a warm dark place (under a table next to the heater). The next day, pour the water out of the jar. Rinse and drain the seeds thoroughly, using the cloth lid as a sieve. Repeat the rinsing and draining process two or three times each day. The sprouts should not be sitting in water. When the sprouts begin to form (about the fourth day), move the jar to a sunny windowsill during the day and return them to the warm dark spot at night.

As a general rule, eat the sprouts after they are 3-6 days old but before they are larger than 4-5 inches tall. When the sprouts are ready to eat, place them in Ziploc bags or airtight plastic containers to store them in the refrigerator. Rinse them with cold water every day to help them stay fresh longer. The sprouts are delicious plain, and also make wonderful additions to salads and sandwiches, especially wrap sandwiches. Many sprout varieties are also excellent in Asian

food. Consider filling some wonton wrappers with a spoonful of sprouts and some meat or tofu. Then, prepare the wrappers as you would cook pot stickers, spring rolls, or other Asian finger foods.