

NEWSLETTER

A P R I L 2 0 2 3

CONTAINER GARDENING

by Markaye Russell

The necessity of vegetable gardens has varied over time. Gardening has gained popularity recently, even with easy and inexpensive access to food at grocery stores. Now is the time for planting and sowing seeds in the garden! Some of you might think “Yeah, starting a garden would be great, but I don’t have space.” Even if you lack space for a garden or even a raised bed garden, all that is needed is a little sun, some water, and an area where you can set a few pots. You’ve got all the ingredients for a summer container garden that will have you enjoying some fresh vegetables in no time! Here are some things to consider:

- **Container:** Choose a container that has good drainage and is food safe. Avoid containers made of pressure treated wood or containers that previously stored chemicals.
- **Soil:** Start your container with good soil and compost and consider sand or pebbles for drainage.
- **Lighting:** For optimum results, ensure your plants receive 6-8 hours of direct sunlight. If you have less lighting, choose plant varieties that prefer shade.
- **Choose Your Plants:** Select what you like to eat and what works well for your location and container. Crops such as lettuce, spinach, and many herbs can withstand shady sites. Crops such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and eggplants require good sunlight. Other crops to consider are green onions, beans, squash, radishes, and carrots. If you need additional assistance, contact your local Agriculture Cooperative Extension office for gardening support.
- **Water:** Containers tend to dry out more quickly, so you will want to keep track of soil moisture and water your plants when needed.
- **Bonus:** Containers can also grow beneficial plants for pollinators. Look for plants that are native to your region and appropriate for container growing. For planting information related to your region, check out your local LSU AgCenter Cooperative Extension Office.

Gardening has been around for as long as humans have been growing food. Through the centuries, gardens have served not only as places to grow plants but as spaces for people to relax, to focus, and to connect with nature and each other.



Today, gardening can provide many mental health benefits for your daily life. Gardening can improve many aspects of mental health, focus, and concentration. Gardening can make you feel more peaceful and content. Focusing your attention on the immediate tasks and details of gardening can reduce negative thoughts and feelings and can make you feel better in the moment. Self-esteem is how much you value and feel positively about yourself. Helping a plant grow is a big achievement. When you see your work pay off with healthy plants, your sense of pride gets a boost.

Coping with Stress through Nutrition

by Brittney Newsome

Good nutrition and healthy eating behaviors can help you respond to stressful situations by strengthening your brain health, improving your mood, building up your immune system, and increasing overall well-being. Be creative with healthy eating and be sure to plan ahead for most meals and snacks from a variety of sources such as:



- **Vegetables:** Dark green, red, orange, fresh, frozen, or canned.
- **Fruits:** Fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.
- **Grains:** Breads, pasta, breakfast cereals, tortillas, grits, oats, rice, and popcorn. At least half of your grains should be whole grains.
- **Protein foods:** Lean meats, poultry, fish or other seafood, eggs, peanut butter, dry beans and peas, soy, nuts, and seeds.
- **Dairy:** Fat free or low-fat milk or calcium/vitamin D fortified milk alternatives, yogurt, and cheese.
- **Oils:** Canola, olive, and other vegetable oils.



Choosing foods from these different food groups by practicing portion control will likely provide you with the nutrients you need to reach your health and wellness goals. Some people feel more confident when consuming a supplement as an additional source of nutrients. If this is you, purchase a standard multivitamin and mineral supplement. Remember, large doses of some individual vitamins and minerals can be harmful to your health.

- Eat your meals and snacks on a set schedule. This is good for your brain, good for your blood, and good for your mood. Try not to skip meals, and try not to graze or eat constantly throughout the day.
- Try to make mealtimes relaxed and enjoyable.

- Choose or prepare snacks that are a good source of protein and fiber such as nuts, yogurt, fruit, cut veggies, cereals, leftovers, or certain snack bars.
- Avoid high fat and fried foods that may be difficult to digest.
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake. These chemicals can increase anxiety and blood pressure. They also interfere with sleep which is essential for good health.
- Drink plenty of water.



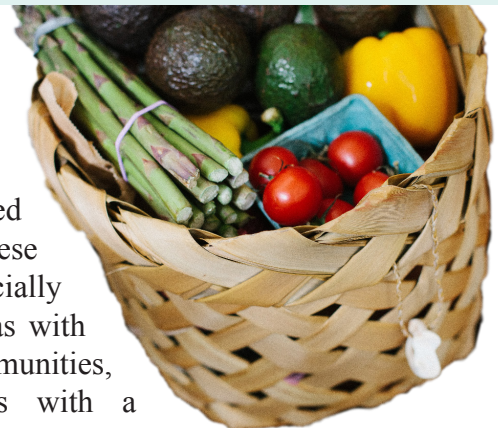
HEALTHY RETAIL FOR HEALTHIER FUTURES: GEAUX SHOP HEALTHY

by Joy Sims

As we gear up to “Fuel our Futures” for this year’s National Nutrition Month, it’s essential to understand the role that our food system plays in promoting healthier food environments and behaviors. Accessing healthy, nutritious, and high-quality food is an often-mentioned barrier to health for many members of Healthy Community Coalitions across Louisiana. When people lack access to healthy food in their community, they must travel greater distances to shop for food, pay higher prices for low-quality food with poor nutritional value, and experience higher rates of obesity and

other diet-related chronic diseases. These issues are especially common in rural areas with limited resource communities, and in communities with a greater proportion of racial and ethnic minority populations.

Food retailers - which include farmer’s markets, grocery stores, and sometimes even corner stores - are uniquely



positioned between communities and the products they consume, making them an ideal environment for encouraging healthy food choices and promoting good health. LSU AgCenter agents across the state have been working diligently to engage with local food retailers and community members through a comprehensive, research-based approach to improving healthy food access in communities.

The Geaux Shop Healthy (GSH) program, launched in 2022, was developed by the LSU AgCenter Healthy Communities program which adapted research-based healthy retail programs to fit Louisiana's unique needs. The program begins with a store assessment to determine the availability and quality of healthy items followed by the distribution of free marketing materials and events such as taste tests and grocery store tours plus technical assistance from the LSU AgCenter to improve marketing, display, and customer engagement efforts. Additionally, the

program offers a rewards program to partnering retailers for implementing GSH strategies; rewards include food donation bins, produce display stands, customized aprons, and shopping baskets. GSH partners, like Doug's IGA in Tallulah and the Dollar General Store in Crowville, have worked hard to provide access to healthy food options in underserved communities in Louisiana.

In conclusion, as we celebrate National Nutrition Month this March, let's acknowledge the link between our environment and health behaviors. Let's take an opportunity to invite sustainable change into our communities and advocate for healthy retail programming. The Geaux Shop Healthy program is already making a positive impact on the food environment in Louisiana, and by promoting and participating in similar initiatives, we can further improve the health outcomes of our residents. To learn more about the Geaux Shop Healthy Retail Program efforts in your community, please connect with your local LSU AgCenter.

by Cathy Agan

There's a fun new workout craze called Cardio Drumming, and it really rocks! Cardio drumming is a type of physical activity that people of all ages, fitness levels, and abilities can enjoy. This fast-paced workout combines drumming and cardio with the rhythm of music. It is a fun, unique workout that can be done while standing or sitting. As with any workout routine, you should check with your health care provider to make sure it is right for you. If it is, you can get drumming with little to no equipment right at home.

You can purchase cardio drumming equipment or just use what you have on hand at home to start drumming and moving. You will need something to serve as drumsticks. You can purchase drumsticks or use wooden spoons. Another option is to cut a swimming pool noodle in thirds and use two of the sections as your drumsticks. If you want to add a challenge, you can purchase weighted sticks specifically designed for cardio drumming. You will also need something to drum on. An inflatable stability ball is a great option but is not necessary. You can drum on a bucket, a tabletop, or even the back of a chair. If you decide to use a stability ball, you will need something to hold and stabilize the ball. Try a tub, a bucket, a laundry basket, or a trash can to hold your stability ball.

When you are ready to drum, you can sit, or place your "drum" in a chair to raise the height for standing. Play your favorite music and start drumming! If you prefer to follow a drumming routine, you can find all kinds of cardio drumming workout videos online. You can drum alone or with a group. Make sure to follow your health care providers advice for what type and how much physical activity is safe for you.

The benefits of cardio drumming go beyond being fun. It is a low impact workout, so it is great for those who cannot participate in high impact workouts. Cardio drumming can help reduce stress, negative emotions, and anxiety. Physical activity can help lower blood pressure levels. Since you are drumming to music, cardio drumming is an outlet for self-expression and emotional release. It's a great way to blow off some steam. Group drumming reduces isolation and promotes group involvement. Cardio drumming activates both sides of the brain and improves rhythm, motor skills, and hand-eye coordination. It strengthens the upper body while burning calories. It's a fun workout that you may find you just don't mind doing. Give it a try!



THAT
WORKOUTS
ROCK

UPCOMING EVENTS

OUACHITA

- Spring Into Health, May 5th, 11:00AM to 2:00PM, Anna Gray Noe Park.
- Ouachita Parish Healthy Communities Coalition Focus Forum, May 9th, 1:30PM, LSU AgCenter Ouachita Parish Extension Office.
- Healthy Communities Work Day, May 12th, 1:00 PM, Facen Park.
- Community Health and Wellness Expo, June 3rd, 10:00 AM to 2:00PM, Monroe Civic Center.
- Summer Reading Kickoff, June 3rd, 10:00AM to 12:00PM Carver McDonald Library Branch
- Ag Day, June 13th, 10:00AM to 12:00PM, Carver McDonald Library Branch.
- Ouachita Parish Healthy Communities Coalition Meeting, June 13th, 1:30PM, LSU AgCenter Ouachita.

MOREHOUSE

WEST CARROLL

EAST CARROLL

- Spring Levee Festival, May 13th, Lake Providence.

RICHLAND

MADISON

FRANKLIN

TENSAS

- St. Joseph Farmer's Market, May 27th, 9AM - 1PM

CALDWELL

CATAHOULA

CONCORDIA

Statewide event: Charitable Food Summit, May 2nd, Pennington Conference Center in Baton Rouge.

WAKE-UP SMOOTHIE

PROVIDED BY MARKAYE RUSSELL

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/4 cups orange juice
- 1 banana
- 1 1/4 cups frozen berries
- 1/2 cup low-fat plain yogurt 1 tablespoon sugar

DIRECTIONS:

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Cover the ingredients with the blender lid and blend until creamy. Serve immediately.

With a stash of berries in your freezer, you can jump-start your day with this nutritious, tasty smoothie in just minutes. This delicious breakfast option is a great source of vitamin C, as well as a beacon of fiber and potassium.

For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our website: LSUAgCenter.com

Matt Lee, LSU Vice President for Agriculture Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, LSU College of Agriculture. The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment. Matt Lee, LSU Vice President for Agriculture Louisiana State University Agricultural Center Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service LSU College of Agriculture.

If you need an ADA accommodation for your participation, please contact Quincy Vidrine at least two weeks prior to the event. The LSU AgCenter provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.



Flavors
OF HEALTH

INFORMATION

Catahoula/Concordia Parishes Ana Gouge, LSU AgCenter (318) 414-6055	CDC Food Systems Coordinator Cecilia Stevens, LSU AgCenter (318) 435-2908
East Carroll/West Carroll Parishes Carolyn Robinson, Southern University (318) 559-1459	Franklin Parish/Caldwell Parishes/ FCS Regional Coordinator Quincy Vidrine, LSU AgCenter (318) 435-2903
East Carroll/Morehouse Parishes Jocinda Jackson, LSU AgCenter (318) 559-1459	Madison/Tensas Parishes Joy Sims, LSU AgCenter (318) 574-2465
Ouachita/Morehouse Parishes Kimberly Butcher, LSU AgCenter (318) 323-2251	Morehouse/Union Parishes Marianna Langston, Southern University (318) 368-9935
Ouachita Parish Cathy Agan, LSU AgCenter (318) 323-2251	Ouachita/Union Parish Markaye Russell, LSU AgCenter (318) 323-2251
Richland/West Carroll Parishes, Brittney Newsome, LSU AgCenter (318) 281-5741	Northeast Region Social Media Liaison Camryn Price, LSU AgCenter (318) 435-2157