



Making your garden veggies last

Thanks to hot sunny days and cool rainy evenings, 2016 is shaping up to be one of the best years for vegetable growers in a long time!

As the nights become cooler and our gardening season comes to an end, you may be looking for ways to store the tastes of summer and make them last a little longer.

Storage methods

Hang it!

It's best to let fruit and vegetables ripen on the plant as long as possible to increase flavour but as the risk of frost nears, this may not be possible. An alternative is to pick the entire plant and hang them in a location where they won't freeze. Plants that respond well to this method include tomatoes, melons and pumpkins.



Store it!

Dry storage areas are classically thought of as the cool/cold rooms our grandmothers filled with jars of pickles and preserves. Many vegetables will keep for months in cold storage if you give them the right conditions. Monitor your stored vegetables frequently and remove any spoiled or moldy items immediately.



Good locations for dry storage include cool and dry basements, unheated attics, entryways, spare rooms or root cellars. Example vegetables include pumpkins, squash, potatoes, carrots and other root crops, cucumbers, green beans, and tomatoes. Of these, tomatoes will last the least amount of time; however pumpkins and other squash can last up to 6 months.

Freeze it!

Freezing garden vegetables is one of the fastest and simplest ways to preserve. Some vegetables need to be blanched before freezing to halt the maturing process. Carrots, peas and beans, broccoli, asparagus and brussel sprouts should be blanched. Tomatoes, leafy greens, rhubarb, winter squash, potatoes and sweet corn (with husk on) do not require blanching before freezing.



To blanch, just dip your pre-cut veggies in boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes and then transfer them to ice water immediately. Dry them off and store in airtight containers or freezer bags.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

The best salsa recipe EVER!

You have tried other salsa recipes over the years. Now try the best!

- 8 cups of fresh tomatoes (peeled, chopped and drained)
- 2 1/2 cups of red (or yellow) onions, diced
- 1 1/2 cups red/green/orange peppers, diced (your choice)
- 1 cup chopped jalapeno pepper
- 6 cloves minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- 1/8 cup canning salt
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/3 cup vinegar
- 1 - 15 oz. can of tomato sauce
- 1 - 12 oz. can tomato paste

Mix all ingredients together and bring to a slow boil for about 10 minutes.

Ladle into hot jars within 1/2 inch of the top of the rim.

Follow normal canning procedures to seal jars and process in hot water bath for about 10 minutes.

This is a medium heat salsa that is a bit chunky. If you want a smoother salsa, cut your veggies into smaller pieces.

Makes approximately 3 quarts of salsa. Enjoy!

General vegetable storage rules

- Treat your fruits and vegetables with care. Scratching or bruising can reduce the life of your veggies after harvest.
- Store mature fruits and vegetables. Immature fruits and vegetables will start to rot quickly so wait as long as possible to harvest, especially with root vegetables as they can withstand some frost.
- Remove excess soil. Let the vegetables dry and brush off any soil but do not wash.
- Clean the storage area thoroughly before each use.
- Keep the storage area dark.
- Check on your stored vegetables every week or two, removing spoiled items.
- Use vegetables taken from cold storage as soon as possible. They will not last as long as when they are freshly picked.





Let's talk urban agriculture

Thank you to the many residents who participated in our Phase 1 engagement of the urban agriculture strategy development.

This month, you'll have the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft strategy. Join us to provide your thoughts on the recommendations for seven strategy areas: community gardens; public agriculture and edible landscaping; urban farms; farmers' markets; school agriculture programs; urban livestock and home gardens.

Open houses:

Antler Lake Hall, September 28, 4 – 8 p.m.
 Sherwood Park Log Cabin, September 29, 4 – 8 p.m.

There will also be an in-depth online survey. Visit www.strathcona.ca/urbanag to find out more and stay involved.

Axle weights for agricultural use

Let's work together to protect our roads from damage. Agricultural producers can now apply for a Road Use Agreement (RUA) that will allow 100% axle weights outside of spring road bans on approved routes.

Getting started

- Call Transportation and Agriculture Services at 780-417-7100 to apply for an annual RUA
- Include specific route information



February - March

Spring road bans are approaching

- Call for approval to haul at 100%



March - May

Spring road bans in effect. Weights will be lowered to 90% initially and then again to 75%.

- Call for approval to haul at 90%



May - February

After spring road bans, weights will increase to 90%. As conditions improve, they will be raised to 100%.

- Call us in June to verify approval to haul at 100%

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
 780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca/roadbans



Get ready for fall cleanup

The cool days of autumn are a great time to get outside and do some much-needed garden clean up. Getting rid of leftover plant material in flower beds and vegetable gardens can reduce the risk of some common problems next year.

Remove all plant material from the garden, with the exception of winter vegetables or cover crops. In the fruit and vegetable garden, it is important to remove mummified fruits on or around fruit trees and grapevines.

Prevent disease

Removing plant material prevents disease causing bacteria and fungi that overwinter. Common garden diseases that can be managed by fall sanitation include strawberry leaf spot, black rot of grapes and leaf spots of tomatoes caused by fungal pathogens Septoria and Alternaria. Many leaves that have fallen in the rose bed can be infected with black spot diseases. These dead infected leaves guarantee that the leaf disease will come back even stronger the following year so make sure to clean out your rose beds.

In the fruit and vegetable garden, dig up and remove decomposing roots to prevent the release of disease-causing microbes into the soil.

Prevent insects

For every apple that is left on the ground, there is an opportunity for the apple maggot to burrow into the ground for the winter and emerge as a fly the next June or July and deposit eggs just under the apple skin. Birds and squirrels can help transport some of these dropped apples and aid in the expansion and distribution of the apple maggot population distribution. When you pick up dropped apples and dispose of them, you help to break this cycle.

Prevent rodents, weeds and other wildlife

The cleaner you keep your garden, the less likely you will have weeds growing next year. Fall cleanup will also make it harder for rodents

living under the snow to find food like weed seeds and fruit tree bark. Damage from mice on fruit trees can be devastating. It is recommended that you wrap your fruit trees with a hard, rigid plastic wrap to prevent rodent damage. You can get this at any hardware store or garden center. It is very important to remove this wrap first thing in the spring so that your bark is less prone to damage from sweating or moisture accumulating under the wraps.

Cleaning up fallen fruit will also discourage pests, rodents and other wildlife from visiting your yards for an easy lunch!

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
 780-417-7100

Store your garden tools properly

Remember to take the time to clean and store your garden tools to help make them last.

- Clean all tools to remove dirt. This removes any trapped moisture next to blades or handles, reducing the possibility of rust.
- Check your owner's manual for small engine tools to see if a winter fuel stabilizer should be added.
- Remove any existing rust using sandpaper or steel wool. Wipe wooden handles with linseed oil to prevent cracking and splitting.
- Replace any leaking or bent fittings with new parts.
- Remove garden hoses and shut the water off to your outdoor spigots, avoiding costly frozen pipes and basement flooding.



Left to right: Joel Gould, Strathcona County's Agriculture Services Manager; Hazel Christy, President of Canadian Institute of Planners; Mayor Roxanne Carr; John Steil, Stantec Principal



Agriculture Master Plan receives national award of excellence

Strathcona County's Agriculture Master Plan won a national 2016 Award for Planning Excellence. Mayor Roxanne Carr accepted the award on behalf of the County at the Canadian Institute of Planners' annual Awards for Planning Excellence on July 7 in Quebec City.

One of only five awards bestowed this year, it is the most prestigious award an urban planning project can receive in Canada. The Agriculture Master Plan won within the rural / small town planning category, as "an example of changing the focus of land development from continued urban sprawl to recognition of the importance of sustainable agricultural economy."

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100

Strathcona County completed the Agriculture Master Plan in 2015 with Stantec and Toma & Bouma Management Consultants, to provide a long-term priority for Agriculture. Stantec submitted the plan to the Canadian Institute of Planners for award consideration.

Canada thistle

Summer seems to have cooled its jets and harvest is just around the bend. Hay crops are lush this year, and canola bloomed heartily. Crops aren't the only plants that did well in the heat and humidity though; Canada thistle is an annoyance in the County, to say the least.

Cirsium arvense, or Canada thistle is a stubborn noxious weed that spreads aggressively with any single plant gaining up to 6 meters of root coverage in a single season. There are roughly 8 new shoots for every 1 meter of root and perhaps 200 new buds per plant. Put those numbers together and you can see how it spreads so quickly.

Prevention and control

To control Canada thistle, persistence and ongoing management are key for long term success. The first step is prevention, through monitoring fence lines and roadsides for invasions, purchasing clean seed and feed, as well as cleaning all equipment. For larger parcels, tillage is an option as it will deplete the root reserves of the thistle, though above ground cover must be removed in order to prevent the re-establishment of root stalks.

On smaller parcels, mowing can be just as effective as tillage. Persistence is key, and mowing several times per season is

necessary in order to see a decrease in the establishment of the thistle into the future. Always make sure to double bag the dead thistle after mowing in order to prevent the spread by seed or root fragment.

When to control thistle

The most important time for the control of Canada thistle is during the fall. This is the time when Canada thistle is sending sugar reserves into its taproot to help with regrowth next year. Tilling or mowing to break up root systems and/or using chemical control in late October and into November will decrease Canada thistle the following spring. Several chemical control options can be obtained at your local hardware store, or as recommended by an agronomist.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100
www.strathcona.ca/weeds



Reduce wildfire risk on your property

Fall is a high-risk season for wildfire – we can help you protect your property.

Contact Emergency Services to book a free FireSmart property assessment and recommendations on how to reduce risk to your home and family.



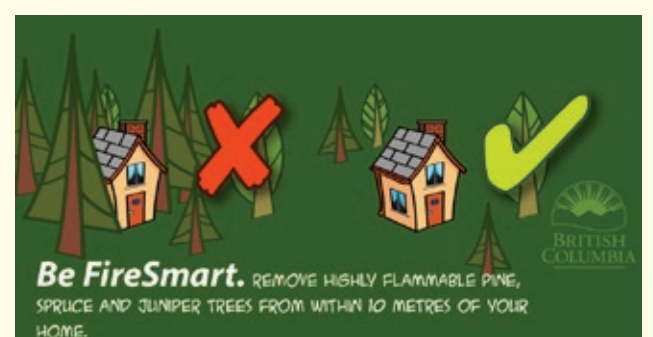
To date in 2016, Emergency Services has conducted 214 assessments on homes and seven subdivisions within Strathcona County. The most common concerns from a FireSmart perspective are the use of flammable landscaping trees (spruce and pines) in proximity to structures, and the accumulation of dry plant materials under decks and in the gutters.

Here are some easy things you can do to remove fire hazards and fuel sources:

- Mow and water your grass around your home; remove all long grass, shrubs, logs, branches and needles within 10 metres of your home.
- Remove any dry and dead plant debris from under decks, in the gutters and accumulations against any structure.
- Store firewood a minimum of 10 metres from any structure.
- Always keep a watchful eye on fire pits and burn barrels when they are in use.

Further information

[Safety.educators@strathcona.ca](mailto:safety.educators@strathcona.ca)
780-464-8468





Hunting in Strathcona County

2016 hunting season:
September 1 to December 7

Know the rules and regulations that are in place before you plan your hunt. The 2016 Alberta Guide to Hunting Regulations is now available. For locations of hunting licence issuers, please visit the Government of Alberta website at www.albertaregulations.ca or call 1-877-944-0313.

Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Edmonton District, is responsible for wildlife management and enforcement of Alberta's Wildlife Act.

Further information

Transportation and Agriculture Services
780-417-7100 www.strathcona.ca/hunting

Alberta Fish and Wildlife, Edmonton District Office
780-427-3574

24-hour numbers

Strathcona County RCMP 780-467-7741
Report-a-Poacher 1-800-642-3800

Upcoming Events in Strathcona County

Brookville Fall Market

September 17, 2016 | Brookville Hall
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

ARAS Garage Sale and Family Movie under the Stars

September 17, 2016 | Ardrossan Memorial Hall
10 a.m. - 4 p.m. | Movie 7 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Deville Community Market

Every Tuesday | Deville/North Cooking Lake Hall
4 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Visit the Strathcona County events calendar for more events and info!

www.strathcona.ca/calendar



Rural Internet Access Program - Update

Hundreds of residents in rural Strathcona are now enjoying high-speed internet at home (hello Netflix!) thanks to the recent installation of six new towers through the County's Rural Internet Access Program.

To date, 12 rural subdivisions and surrounding areas have access to new or improved internet service. Upgrades to existing towers are also in progress to improve service in at least eight other subdivisions.

High-speed internet will soon reach even more rural residents as new tower installs continue into 2017. The County is currently processing applications for another nine internet towers, serving 19 subdivisions and two community halls (Hastings Lake Hall and Deville/North Cooking Lake). Residents visiting these community facilities will now enjoy access to Wi-Fi. Rural Strathcona County Library and Bookmobile patrons will be able to take advantage of a full suite of digital content and programming.

About the Program

Tower installs and upgrades are being implemented in designated rural areas where internet access is unsatisfactory. Through the Rural Internet Access Program, the County offers incentives for local internet service providers to install new towers to increase service in these hard-to-reach areas. Service providers own the towers – which generally reach just above the trees – and are responsible for related building and maintenance.

Want to know more? Watch for upcoming open house sessions this fall to learn more about the program and what it could mean for your area. It's an opportunity to chat with representatives from the County and local internet service providers.

Further information

www.strathcona.ca/ruralinternet
ruralinternet@strathcona.ca
780-464-8024

Poster contest

In the spring of 2016, the Agricultural Service Board held its annual poster contest for Grades 3, 4 and 5 students from Strathcona County and Fort Saskatchewan. The students were asked to draw posters with the theme 'Get Growing with Urban Agriculture'. The contest winners were each presented a cheque at the June 14 Council meeting.

The Agricultural Service Board wishes to thank all the students who entered the contest.



CountryTalk

News for rural residents provided by Strathcona County's Agricultural Service Board



The Agricultural Service Board (ASB) acts as an advisory body to Council on agriculture matters, while promoting and developing agriculture policies and programs to meet the needs of residents and the municipality.

Agricultural Service Board
Ty Faechner, Chair

Transportation and Agriculture Services
Joel Gould, Manager, Agriculture Services
780-417-7100


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