When To Plant My Garden

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After moving to Lumberton, I found I love to grow herbs and tomatoes; there is truly something southern (or is it a Steel Magnolias reference) about growing tomatoes. I may not have a green thumb, but I have found myself capable of growing things in my yard. I enjoy it so much that I can’t wait to plant them. This is why this spring has been so difficult for me to be patient.

A few years ago when we had an early spring, I planted my garden, and we had a late frost that wiped out all the budding trees and my newly planted beds. An older and wiser co-worker just chuckled and told me, “You never plant your garden until after Easter.” Apparently, this is something that had been handed down for generations and thought it originated with the Farmers’ Almanac. The story goes back before the 1500s to the Northern European farmers’ tradition of not planting their crops until after the “Three Ice Men.” The Three Ice Men represent three saints which feasts were held for in mid May. Each saint represented something in agricultural tradition. As the story goes, planting was not done until after the last feast was held or some type of freakish weather system would prevail to ruin the crops. When this tradition was brought over and translated into our calendar, the date of the last feast moved to the floating date of Easter. Thus, the tradition of not planting anything before Easter was born.

It has been extremely hard to wait for Easter this year. I have not planted a thing in my yard, wondering if I was just being a superstitious sot. However, when the temperature dropped down Thursday and there was talk of a frost over Easter weekend, I was glad there was nothing growing furiously in my yard. Now that Easter has passed, I feel a little better about planting but will keep my eye on the weather to make sure there is nothing unusual headed our way.

The question now is what to plant. There will be the traditional things, such as basil, rosemary, chives, mint, pineapple sage, and tomatoes, because I know I can find all of them. Then there will be the “finds.” These are the things that I have never planted before, or perhaps have not seen and can’t wait to try.
The “find” items often are found at the Robeson County Master Gardener Plant Sale. This sale happens around 8 a.m. on April 28 in the North State Optics parking lot on Fayetteville Road and involves some of the neatest plants. Each plant is $2 and also comes with education on how to plant and raise it. You know the plant will live in our area, because these plants were grown right here. The Dirty Rascals Junior Master Gardener 4-H Club will also be selling herbs they started from seedlings and giving away free recipes to use with your herbs. All of their herbs are $2 and the proceeds go to help the club’s educational opportunities. Also, the club members have made and decorated two rain barrels they will sale for $25 each. So if you are planting after Easter and are looking for high-quality “finds” at a great price, come by and check out the sale.

You can create a great space after Easter while supporting local groups that are beautifying and educating all at the same time.

For more information, please contact Shea Ann DeJarnette, Extension 4-H Youth Development agent with North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center, at 671-3276, by E-mail at Shea_Ann_DeJarnette@ncsu.edu, or visit our website at http://robeson.ces.ncsu.edu. For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact Shea Ann DeJarnette no later than five business days before the event.