



Growing succulents: An expert shares tips

Keeping these
trendy plants happy

BY TERESA WOODARD
CHICAGO TRIBUNE (TNS)

Take a look around Bill Hendricks' collection of 4,000 succulents, and it's easy to understand the recent craze for these high-style, easy-care plants. One with rosette shapes are taking center stage in container designs and bridal bouquets. More architectural forms are becoming the go-to accessory for today's mantels and tabletops. And still other strappy types are being tucked in living walls, galvanized frames, topiary forms, birch logs, thrift-store stilettos, vintage spice tins, fairy gardens, green rooftops and even doghouse tops.

All cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti

What trendy homeowners are now discovering, the 72-year-old Hendricks has known for decades. "I've always been fascinated with succulents," he says. "I'm fascinated by their diversity, their color and 'wow,' and their stories from different places all over the world."

At age 7, Hendricks says, he bought his first succulent, a thick-leaved aloe plant, at a Cleveland dime store. He credits that still-living aloe plant with spurring his lifelong love of plants and leading him to a successful career in the nursery business. Today, he is president of the 500-acre Klyn Nurseries, a wholesale nursery in Perry, Ohio, and was named 2014 Grower of the Year by Nursery Management magazine. While his nursery grows 1,850 species of landscape plants, Hendricks says, he keeps the succulents as a hobby.

"I'm not into sports; I'm into plants," Hendricks says. "That led me to an interest in geography and travel. So when I travel, I travel to see plants."

Hendricks explains that all cacti are succulents, but not all succulents are cacti. Succulents are plants that have the ability to store water within their leaves, stems or roots. Like a camel's hump, these adaptations allow the plants to survive long stretches without water. (Cacti, on the other hand, are a distinct family of succulents and are distinguished by their signature spines.)

Today, Hendricks grows succulents and cacti in a 100-by-30-foot greenhouse at Klyn Nurseries. All are meticulously labeled and grown mostly in clay pots packed onto raised tables, with a few hanging from containers.

He points to one Eastern prickly pear cactus, or *Opuntia humifusa* — he prefers using plants' botanical Latin names — and shares the story of an East German plant-swapping friend. In the 1960s, Hendricks had sent him seeds from this succulent found in Castalia, Ohio. Hendricks was surprised to learn in his friend's return letter that he was familiar with the town from his World War II days as a German officer; turns out, he had been a prisoner of war at nearby Camp Perry.

As Hendricks walks to the center of the greenhouse, he shares a story of the ponytail palm (*Beaucarnea recurvata*) that once climbed to the ceiling with its Hershey Kiss-shaped base and palmlike top. In 1966, he purchased the plant in a 4-inch pot for \$1.25. Over the years, it outgrew its various pots and eventually Hendricks' greenhouse. Although he found a new home for the plant at the Cleveland Botanical Garden, the 1,000-pound plant was too difficult to move, so it had to be cut into pieces and removed from the greenhouse.

Growing tips

Hendricks, who is president of the Midwest Cactus and Succulent Society and a frequent lecturer on succulents, offers advice on growing succulents. He not only draws lessons from personal experience but also his library of some 2,000 succulent articles and books:

Plant succulents in containers with drainage holes. If there are no holes, add some with a drill or

See Plants, Page C2



ABIGAIL CURTIS | BDN

Weaver Jolene Bryant works on a blanket on her loom at her home in Knox.

Living off the land

Work never stops for debt-free Knox couple

BY ABIGAIL CURTIS
BDN STAFF

Jolene Bryant pushed the shuttle deftly through the warp threads of the cloth she was weaving on a wooden loom, the rich, purple, blue and green colors of the fabric glowing like jewels in her Knox home.

"It's nice not to be beholden to a boss."

JOLENE BRYANT

Looms and woven fabric in vivid colors seem to dominate the house of the 35-year-old weaver and mother, who also spins yarn, grows vegetables, raises chickens for eggs, keeps bees and more at Aborn Hillside Farm. She and her husband, Luke Bryant, who grew up on a Waldo County dairy farm, are trying their best to make a living by working primarily for themselves. They barter. They "wheel deals," as Jolene says, all the time. And they live off the land as much as they can.

"I just like doing what I want to do," said Jolene, a small dynamo of a woman. "The goal is to make enough money to live on



ABIGAIL CURTIS | BDN

Handwoven mats, vegetables and the first blanket Jolene Bryant ever wove make a colorful display in an upstairs room of her home.

and invest a little. In 2007, we paid this house off. We have no credit cards. We drive old beaters. We have no debt whatsoever. That is the secret."

Although the work never stops, the chores change with the seasons, they said. In the spring and summer, they are busy planting and tending their acre of tilled land.

"We do colors," Luke Bryant said, adding that they're known for carrots, beans, beets and other vegetables in rainbow shades.

They also care for the fruit trees — apples, peaches and cherries — and work on expanding their perennial permaculture crops, such as rhubarb, raspber-

ries, blueberries and horseradish. Their Community Supported Agriculture business has about 20 customers, and they deliver weekly totes full of vegetables, flowers, herbs, eggs and fruit during the summer and fall growing seasons. That's the time of year they also sell their wares at a farmstand on Knox Ridge.

"Come the end of October, I've had it in the garden," Jolene said. "That's when it kind of shifts to fiber stuff."

She weaves durable rugs, feather-light throws and warm blankets on her two looms, one of which is 5 feet tall. But Jolene learned to weave on a much more

See Living, Page C2

Exploring 'real food' cooking principles

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

SOUTH PORTLAND — It's finals week at Southern Maine Community College and students in the culinary arts kitchen are busy fricasseeing fresh rabbit harvested from Unity.

In the dining room, members of the public dig into a multicourse lunch, draining bowls of honey crisp apple and vidalia sweet onion soup. The impressive menu indicates that cider from Ricker Hill Orchards in Turner and apples from Cornish combine forces for the powerful dish.

Grabbing leaves of fresh kale, students in the advanced cooking specialties class plate rainbow carrots and chiongia beet salad. Cooking with vegetables sourced from popular farms such as Stonecipher in Bowdoinham, a favorite of James Beard-winning chef Sam Hayward at Portland's Fore Street, they are on the culinary frontlines.

"We are meeting the needs of the marketplace and training the future leaders," said Geoffrey Boardman, who chairs the school's culinary arts department. "So we are getting on the bandwagon."

On the cusp of 2016, that bandwagon no longer sings a solo "buy local" note.

The school's new community table series, which launched in October, demonstrates SMCC's commitment to delve deeper into the new food economy.

Farm to table is all well and good, but "the trend is kind of



KATHLEEN PIERCE | BDN

Southern Maine Community College Students Alexandra Chilton (right) and Abigail Bangs plate fricassee of rabbit, procured from a farm in Unity at last week's community table luncheon.

tired," said culinary arts professor Maurice Leavitt.

Leavitt came up with the idea to teach students to learn to cook, source and prepare "real food." Following guidelines created by the national student-run Real Food Challenge, chefs in training were charged with creating a "healthy, just and sustainable" meal.

Beyond calculating food miles, students researched food producers to see if they upheld safe and fair

conditions, receive living wages, treat animals humanely, and preserve natural resources including energy, wildlife, water and air.

He asked students to think beyond what's fresh and recipe-ready to find companies that are independently owned and fair-trade certified, for example.

"Who do you want to do business with?" he asked.

To find the answer, students picked up the phone and asked questions. In the process of creat-

ing the menu they learned something most diners don't know.

"Just because it is local doesn't mean it is good," said student Sean Pray, twirling handmade fettuccini on a kitchen utensil.

At his side, Alexandra Chilton, a 25-year-old finishing up her final year, ladled butternut squash sauce.

"It's fun. But it's a challenge to work with all local this time of year," said Chilton, admitting that

See Students, Page C2

Farming workshop to inspire beginners

BY KATHLEEN PIERCE
BDN STAFF

AUGUSTA — Can you teach a new farmer old tricks?

At the Agricultural Trades Show at the Augusta Civic Center, Jan. 13-14, a coalition of local farm service providers aim to do just that.

The Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine established in 2012, will hold a series of free workshops to help people who have been farming for less than a decade thrive in the field and hopefully attract newcomers to this rewarding but challenging life.

"We are expecting a banner year, attendance-wise, and are reaching out to military veterans interested in farming," Tori Jackson, associate professor of agriculture and natural resources at the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, said.

"We've seen a huge cultural shift toward local food, and with that comes increased interest. More people want to become farmers," Jackson, who also is the BFRN chairperson, said.

Through expanded workshops the network will tackle a diverse array of topics, from financing a farm business to planning for farm succession, such as transferring land to the next generation to going organic.

Holistic management and tips on harvesting wood along with "adding cross-country ski trails in the winter to diversify income and things like maximizing wood lots" are a few practical skills show-goers will learn Jackson said.

The network consists of members of the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Maine Sea Grant and Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society, among other like-minded groups and is a clearinghouse for farm business success.

Maine has 8,000 farms and rising Jackson said. "We are still on an upward trajectory. People are still interested in getting into agriculture but are lacking business skills."

Often new farmers "like the idea of contributing to the food system," she said.

"They picture in their mind the idyllic life of the farmer, our job is to bring them into reality," she added.

Farmers, through gungho and hearty, are not always business minded. Financing a farm and transferring land to a new farmer

See Workshop, Page C2