

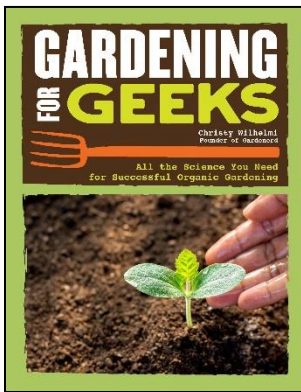
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All gardeners are geeks at heart! At least that's what self-described gardening geek, Christy Wilhemi, says. For those who embrace the science behind how plants work, how soil lives, and how bugs help, a new book by the founder of Gardenerd will be a welcome addition to gardening book shelves.

[**GARDENING FOR GEEKS: All The Science You Need for Successful Organic Gardening**](#) is set for release in February 2020 from CompanionHouse Books, an imprint of Fox Chapel Publishing.



GARDENING FOR GEEKS (Fox Chapel Publishing, February 2020, \$19.99, paperback, 978-1620083581) is a fantastic resource for beginners to learn all the basics of gardening, even in urban areas. The book explains the science behind how plants work, how soil lives, how bugs help, and much more. It also progresses into bigger concepts for a wide scope of gardening techniques and strategies. Advice ranging from planning to pest control, including recommendations and step-by-step directions is thoughtfully provided.

Wilhemi is available for interview. She can also write a short article or share excerpts for your publication or site. Here is just some of what she can discuss:

- **WHAT MAKES YOUR GARDEN GROW? THE GEEKY STUFF**

GARDENING FOR GEEKS is packed with advice that helps everyone from the novice to the seasoned gardener understand how to get the best yields and achieve long-term success and sustainability. Throughout the book, Geeky Gardening Tips offer DIY techniques, such as conducting a home germination test that reveals if seeds are past their prime; pruning like an artist; becoming one with the helpful bee, and much more.

See sample Geeky Gardening Tips on page 6

- **THE DIRT ON SOIL: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW**

Not all dirt is created equal. If your soil isn't healthy your plants won't flourish. Wilhemi shows you how to achieve optimum pH balance and nutrient levels; explains why worms can be a gardener's best friend, and reveals why composting is a must. She also shares the best organic fertilizers and gives you a whole new appreciation for icky organisms, like fungi, bacteria, protozoa, and nematodes that make up the "soil foodweb."

-more-

- **THE GARDEN IN APT. 3B: SMALL SPACE & URBAN GARDENING**

Wilhelmi provides the best planting strategies for a small space, gives a primer on biointensive methods that will help you make the most of a limited area, and offers techniques for manipulating sunlight and ensuring that all plants receive the needed amount of sun.

- **PLAN BEFORE YOU PLANT: KNOWING WHAT AND WHEN TO PLANT**

Smart planning is essential for starting and maintaining a healthy garden. Wilhelmi explains how and why to find your frost dates, shares details on cool, warm, and hot season crops, reveals why plant families should stick together, and offers essential information on crop rotation and companion planting.

- **NOT ALL PESTS ARE PESTS: THE GOOD VS. THE BAD**

“Gardening is all rainbows and butterflies until your first head of lettuce is savagely snatched underground by a gopher, or your beautiful Swiss chard becomes ravaged by aphids overnight,” says Wilhelmi. She differentiates between friend and foe pests, and offer cutting-edge advice for drawing the good guys and repelling the bad without nasty synthetic pesticides. She’ll even share which flowers can both beautify and protect your garden.

- **CAN IT, DRY IT, COOK IT: HOW TO PRESERVE AND PREPARE WHAT YOU’VE GROWN**

“There is no substitute for the flavors a home garden can bring to the table,” says Wilhelmi. She offers expert tips for keeping veggies fresh for weeks and preserving them with canning, drying, and other methods. Best of all, she shares a series of mouth-watering recipes for going from garden to table. Recipes are versatile and can be adapted to the veggies that are in season or in your fridge.

See sample recipes on page 7



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christy Wilhelmi empowers people to grow their own food, to be more self-reliant, and to reduce pollution and waste, one garden at a time. Christy is founder of Gardenerd (www.gardenerd.com), the ultimate resource for garden nerds, where she publishes newsletters, her popular blog, and podcasts. She also specializes in small-space, organic vegetable garden design and consulting. She holds regular organic gardening classes in California, and has co-taught organic gardening at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, CA. Christy has been a board member of Ocean View Farms Organic Community Garden in Mar Vista, California since 1999, and gardens almost entirely with heirloom vegetables. Between 70-80 percent of her family's produce comes from her garden of less than 300 square feet. Her writing has appeared in many publications, such as *Edible Los Angeles* and *Edible Westside Magazine*, and *Heirloom Gardener Magazine*. Christy's previous book, [400+ Tips for Organic Gardening Success: A Decade of Tricks, Tools, Recipes, and Resources from Gardenerd.com](#) was published in 2017 on Amazon. She lives in Los Angeles, CA with her husband, some chickens and two gardens.

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BOOK INFO

Gardening for Geeks, February 2020, Fox Chapel Publishing, Paperback
\$19.99, 248 pages, ISBN: 978-1620083581

SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Your book, *Gardening for Geeks*, is a complete DIY guide to cultivating a successful garden, but let's take a step back and start by asking why you think people should grow gardens. Can you explain what the benefits are of growing your own food, and why it's worth taking the time to do it?
2. What are some of the biggest mistakes first-time gardeners make, and how can they be avoided?
3. When did you start gardening, and why did it become such a passion for you?
4. Bees and worms—two creatures that most of us don't feel much affection for—are essential to gardening. Can you explain why?
5. What are some varieties of raised garden beds, and how do you decide which is best for you?
6. Healthy soil is, of course, essential for a healthy garden. In your chapter on soil you discuss whether or not to use chemical or organic fertilizer and come down on the side of the latter. Why and what are some of the best organic fertilizers?
7. Why is composting so important?
8. Why are some key things that everyone should understand about crop rotation?
9. Urban gardening and small-space gardening is more popular than ever. Can you tell us about some of the most exciting or unusual examples of this that you've seen?
10. What are some of the challenges that urban gardeners face and how do you address them?
11. In *Gardening for Geeks* you explain the difference between good and bad pests. Can you give us a primer on this? What are a few pests that you should welcome into your garden and some that you should discourage? What are a few ways to attract the good and repel the bad?
12. What are some of the best irrigation options for home gardeners?
13. What are the major ways to create a sustainable garden that does not compromise the top soil or waste water? Can you tell us about the most sustainable gardens you've seen in your career?

14. You encourage readers to look for seed companies who subscribe to the Safe Seed Pledge. What is this, and why is it important?
15. One thing that's really unusual about *Gardening for Geeks* is that you offer a host of ideas for what to do after the harvest for preserving and cooking the food you've grown. Can you give us some quick tips for keeping produce fresh for the longest possible time after harvest?

SAMPLE GEEKY GARDENING TIPS
from *Gardening for Geeks* by Christy Wilhelmi

Geeky Gardening Tip #1: When building a garden bed, be careful of redwood. It is often sprayed with a solvent to aid curing, which can leech into your soil. Verify with your lumberyard that the wood has been kiln-, not solvent-dried.

Geeky Gardening Tip #2: To keep critters away from your compost pile, always layer brown material (carbon rich items, such as wood chips or dried leaves) on top.

Geeky Gardening Tip #3: A germination test is one sure way to know whether your seeds are past their prime or not. Lay a paper towel on a flat surface and put ten seeds in a straight line across the center, about a half-inch or so apart. Fold the paper towel up around the seeds, keeping it flat. Run the towel under a stream of water to dampen it. Place the whole thing in a plastic bag. Seal the bag and place it on top of your refrigerator out of direct light. Check back to make sure the towel stays wet. Seed packets will state "Days to Germination," so mark your calendar and check for sprouts when time is up. If seven out of ten seeds germinate, you're in pretty good shape. If five out of ten seeds germinate, that's a 50 percent germination ratio, so double up on the number of seeds you plant in each hole. If less than 50 percent sprout, plant the remainder of the packet in a fit of passion or swap them for newer seeds.

Geeky Gardening Tip #4: To test existing soil moisture, drill a hole in garden soil with your index finger past the second knuckle. Pull away some soil to see if it looks wet at the tip of your finger. If it's dry, it's time to water.

Geeky Gardening Tip #5: When setting up mounded, raised beds, place stakes at each corner of your target bed area and run string along the sides to map out clear lines for your beds. Whether you are building stacked mounds with layers of organic material, or just hilling up soil and compost, these lines will ensure your beds are straight.

SAMPLE RECIPES

from *Gardening for Geeks* by Christy Wilhelmi

Romantic Notions of Roasted Vegetables (with Halloumi)

Serves 2–3

You can play around with using carrots, parsnips, turnips, and even potatoes and sweet potatoes here. Throw in eggplant, kohlrabi (cooks like potatoes) and see what happens. Beets have strong flavors, so fair warning—they will influence the overall flavor. Vegetables that take longer to cook are cut into smaller dice, so everything ends up cooking evenly. Eggplant is cut larger so it doesn't get soggy. Halloumi is a Greek cheese that browns and holds its shape when grilled. It's wonderfully salty and elevates this dish to the next level. Throw in some kale and you've got a great meal.

Ingredients

1 eggplant, cut into 1½" chunks

2–3 parsnips (5 ounces) cut ½" dice

1–2 carrots (5 ounces) cut into ¾" chunks

1 kohlrabi, peeled and cut into ½" dice

1 tablespoon fresh parsley (or 1 teaspoon dried)

1 tablespoon fresh oregano (or 1 teaspoon dried)

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt and pepper

3 oz. Halloumi cheese, cut into ½" dice (optional, but a really good one)

5 kale leaves, stems removed

⅛ teaspoon garlic powder

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Chop vegetables as noted. Rough chunks are perfect for this dish. Place first four ingredients in a 9"× 13" roasting pan. Sprinkle with parsley and oregano, then drizzle with about 2 tablespoons olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste, then toss ingredients to coat. Bake 15 minutes.
3. While it's roasting, prepare Halloumi cheese, if using. When the timer goes off, add Halloumi to the roasting pan, stir and return to the oven for another 15 minutes. Chop kale leaves into 1" wide strips and place in a bowl. Drizzle with 1 teaspoon olive oil and sprinkle with garlic powder. Massage the oil into the kale.

4. In the last 5 minutes of cooking, test vegetables for doneness. They should pierce easily with a fork. Add kale to the roasting pan and finish cooking. Kale should be cooked, with a few crisp edges.

Sesame Roasted Radishes

Serves 2–3 as a side dish

Now we move on to specific dishes that highlight your harvest in a way you might not expect. Radishes have a very distinct flavor when raw, and to some gardeners, that flavor only goes so far. Once you roast them though, they transform into something completely different. If you were ever on the fence about growing radishes, this recipe will nudge you over. It's a riff on one part of a recipe from Jamie Oliver.

Ingredients

1 pound radishes, greens removed

1 tablespoon walnut or peanut oil

1 green onion, chopped

1 tablespoon soy sauce

Toasted sesame oil

Eden Shake (order from www.edenfoods.com), furikake, gomashio, or sesame seeds

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Trim radishes and cut them into quarters. Place them in a casserole dish and toss with walnut oil. Roast until radishes are tender and starting to brown, about 25 minutes.
3. Remove from oven and add green onion and soy sauce. Stir to coat, then return to oven for 5 more minutes. Test for doneness: radishes should easily pierce with a fork.
4. Remove from oven and drizzle lightly with toasted sesame oil. Sprinkle Eden Shake over the top and serve warm.