

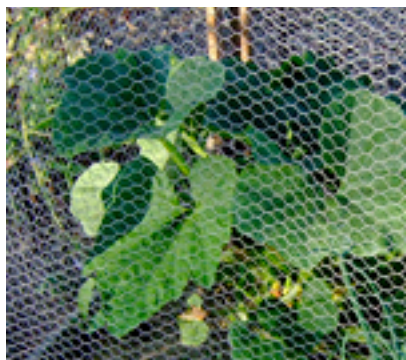
# Garden Dirt

from Oak Park Community Garden

Aside from the normal going's on at Oak Park Community Garden, this month we have some great news! Rancho Simi Recreation and Parks will be ordering lumber and supplies, and installing five new parcels for us! Soon we will be able to pare down the list of prospective gardeners who have been patiently waiting to start digging in the dirt. To see our new, all-inclusive parcelmap, visit [oakparkcommunitygarden.org](http://oakparkcommunitygarden.org). You can find it under "Information." Meanwhile, let me tell you about...

## The Great Zucchini Adventure

**Picture a lovely mid-March day at the garden.** The sun-warmed soil is ready for digging. My husband (we'll call him RR) and I have started our plants from seed this year. And now, our little seedlings are ready for transplanting. Along with many other veggies, the zucchinis are going in! We set each plant in it's place - not too close together - and surround the roots with rich soil and organic fertilizer. We settle them in with a nice drink. We cover them all with framed chicken wire cages to keep out any squirrels or other unwanted critters. (Oh nooo! No sharing!) In all, we've got four beautiful baby zucchini plants. Thereafter, we make twice-weekly visits to water, weed, and watch them grow - which they do. I dream of zucchini blossoms.



**Fast forward to mid-May.** We arrive at the garden to find lots and lots of big, bright, beautiful, yellow blossoms on healthy plants that fit perfectly into those cages we were oh, so clever to build. Bees are buzzing about doing their pollinating dance and we are excited to know that soon we will be eating the "fruits of our labor." Oh boy!



**Skip to June.** Mid-month we realize that our plants have somehow become behemoths. Their humongous leaves push against the wire cages in their effort to reach the sun and be free. They've become imprisoned giants, but safe, nevertheless. No critters can eat them. And sure enough, down under the leaves, there they are! Perfectly formed, colored and textured, organically grown zucchinis. Maybe three of them. We're so pleased with ourselves as we eat our grilled zucchini for the next two days. Then, on our next visit, we pick... oh, maybe three more.

Me: "Wow! This is great. I should make some zucchini bread."

I get on the internet and search for the best - in my opinion - zucchini bread recipe and get to work. One loaf for eating now, and one for the freezer. Yep. This should do us for quite a while. With each twice-weekly trip to the garden we bring home three or more delicious zukes. Life is good.

**Moving on to July.** The same zucchini-picking pace has held up throughout the weeks. There's been fried zucchini, zucchini in salad (and zucchini AS salad), grilled zucchini, zucchini soup, zucchini-vegetable soup, ratatouille, zucchini cakes (kinda like crab cakes) and two more loaves of zucchini bread.

Me: "I think I've had enough zucchini for the summer."



RR: "Me too, but it's only July!"

There are only two of us and we can't possibly consume all of this. We've made several gifts to our neighbors, but the picking is out-pacing the eating. Those are SOME healthy plants! More gifts to the neighbors. By the end of the month, I start having nightmares about giant zucchinis popping open the refrigerator door and filling the kitchen floor knee deep.

**August.** One foray into the garden yields several normal-sized zucchini, and another enormous one that has been hiding in the shade under those humongous leaves. How could we have missed this? It looks like a green baseball bat. According to the food scale, it weighs just shy of six pounds.

Me: "Holy cow. What am I going to do with THIS?"

Into the frig it goes... with all the other zucchinis, most of which are destined for the neighbors. Several days later, another baseball bat! I'm beside myself. And I'm on my own here. The neighbors are now refusing to answer their doors. I'm wondering if I should uncage the behemoths and invite the squirrels. In an effort to clear the frig, I shred and freeze six cups of zucchini for baking, later in the year. By the end of the month, I can't look a zuke in the eye (I know, they don't really have eyes, but in my dreams they DO!) RR, bless his heart, blanches, dices and freezes another eight cups of it for soup, later in the year.

**It's September.** Most everything else in the garden has run its course, and is beginning to die back. The darned zukes just won't stop. But at least they are slowing down. This is the month to prepare the soil and plant a fall and winter garden. New winter vegetables will replace the old, tired summer ones and we'll begin again. Soon the behemoths will be pulled up by the roots. Gone. And soon I'll be dreaming of beets and peas.

Maybe I should have read the guidelines: *The average family* [read: The average family OF FOUR!] *only needs to plant one or two of each variety. Over planting usually leads to hoards of huge inedible fruit and/or scouring the neighborhood for people to take the surplus.* [Ya think?]