Dente's Notes from the Culverhouse Gardeners General Meeting
18 Feb 2012 from 9:30 to 11:30 AM at the Turtle Rock Community Center

Leadership Team should get our well water tested to be sure our salts register less than 700ppm.
Leadership Team might buy a 50 lb bag of cover crop seeds out of common funds (from Troy at Stockyard?) before everyone is able to get on site to plant their own cover crop.

Dr. Kluson recommended buying these:

- A container of "BioRush 3-1-2" to inoculate your garden soil with mycorrhizal fungi. Might have to be done just once, depending... (I found BioRush online for $13.95 at www.horticulturalalliance.com, but it might be sold locally, too. **Product Information: "**BioRush® 3-1-2 is the gardener's answer to recreating a natural growing system in their garden. BioRush® 3-1-2 will support any transplanted material from roses to vegetables by containing everything the plant needs to establish quickly and naturally. Over 100 natural ingredients, such as beneficial bacteria, fungi, biostimulants, sea kelp, humic acids and more comprise this natural solution.")

- Buy a copy of James P. Stephens book, Vegetable Gardening in Florida, University Press of Florida, available for ordering at www.upf.com , $16.95. (I bought my copy at Barnes and Noble a couple of years ago. Check Selby Gardens bookstore, too.)

Assorted notes:

Feed the SOIL not the plant.
Crops are part of a system that includes flowers and cover crops, too.
Use cover crops for short periods of time (fava beans and clover in winter, cowpeas and sea hemp in summer). Don't let them get woody or dried out before cutting them down. Use the cuttings for mulch. Do two or three cover crops a year between your regular plantings.
Get organic seeds from www.JohnnySeeds.com and other special order companies.
(Gardeners, What companies have YOU ordered organic seeds from? Send me an email.)
Our soil may not reach its highest production level for a few years. Be patient!
Strategies for improving soil health: composting, cover crops, rotation, carefully selecting varieties, encourage natural selection, time your seeding and planting, keep a sense of humor!

Soil pH
Shoot for 5.5 to 6.6 acidity. Our soil scores about 5 right now.
Soil is about ½ solid, ¼ water, and ¼ air.
Soil pH determines the concentration of nutrients in the soil. Search the web for charts online that show this relationship.
Here is a chart that shows pH preferences for various vegetables and herbs:
http://homeharvest.com/vegeherbphpreference.htm
Some soils need liming every three years or so, unless you constantly add compost.
Dolomite is good to add magnesium instead of using lime.

Assorted notes

Add calcium to prevent future tomato end rot, if you see it start to happen.
Explore soil survey map of our garden at http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/HomePage.htm
Work on soil structure and increase soil life and organic matter.
Look up the "Three Sisters" system of gardening.
When you buy or acquire compost, get high-quality compost.
Research compost at this website: http://www.wastenot-organics.wisc.edu/
Compost increases nitrogen and potassium, but not phosphorus. This is important because phosphorus kills mycorrhizal fungi.
"Green sand" can be used to boost potassium without harming the mycorrhizal fungi.
Look for sources of large amounts of good compost.
Buy red wigglers at local bait supply stores for your garden bed.
Research some no-till methods so you don't disturb the good organisms you are encouraging in your garden bed: (1) lasagna gardening, (2)just cutting cover crops like millet or rye and punching a hole in it to plant your veggies.
Concept of rotation: change by FAMILY, not just plant.
Download a free copy of Managing Cover Crops Profitably at
http://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books/Managing-Cover-Crops-Profitably-3rd-Edition