

April - Gardening

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SPEAKERS

Ashley Biggs, Marcus Williams, Announcer

Announcer

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Ashley Biggs

Hi, everyone, its Ashlee Biggs with the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, and the Maryland State Library Agency, monthly podcast. Welcome to LBPD Guest hour. Today we have Marcus Williams. He is a master gardener. And he is going to be talking to us about gardening gardening techniques and how the world kind of revolves around plants. So let me read his bio for you. And then we're going to jump right on in Marcus. William is a Master Gardener how horticultural agents serving in Baltimore City, Maryland. He received his MS in food safety and biosecurity from Virginia Tech in 2017. And his BS in Plant and Soil Science from Virginia State University in 2009. He has worked as a volunteer Green Ranger for AmeriCorps in Knoxville, Tennessee, and as an agricultural and natural resource agent with Virginia Cooperative Extension. Most recently, he's worked for the USDA in Howard County as a soil conservation technician. Prior to joining the extension, he worked at the Maryland's emerging cannabis industry. And you can contact him at 410-856-1850. Again, that number is 410-856-1815. Marcus, welcome so much. Thank you for being here.

Marcus Williams

Pleasure to have you. Awesome.

Ashley Biggs

So I gotta ask, were you a plant person as a child,

Marcus Williams

of course, so I was a part of for age. And the area that I'm from, if you like planters peanuts, I'm from the whole planet is peanut stuff. We're gonna be genius. I've been around plants my entire life.

Ashley Biggs

So what drew you to plants?

Marcus Williams

So I took agriculture classes when I was in high school. And it didn't help. It didn't hurt that play football, I had a football scholarship to Virginia state. And that kind of spurred my love because they had agriculture there. So I was able to do something that I liked and do something else that I liked at the same time.

Ashley Biggs

Very cool, very cool. April's comm is here, and it's gardening month national gardening month. And I guess that means that it's the perfect time, like the soil I guess is good. And the weather is supposed to be good. So a lot of our individuals are across the state. So we have people who have home gardens outside some people have them inside, but walk me through it walk me through it. Like if I wanted to start a garden in my apartment, what would I What would I want to start with what I want to start with like a venus flytrap or something

Marcus Williams

that'd be an interesting place to start with. You want to make sure you first have the right speed to start with you and make sure that you know that your lease has eight hours of sunlight. And next you want to make sure you have the proper pot is deep enough for what you want to grow. And it's a lease from an inch to about five inches wide in the plant Do you want to grow to the plant has significant space, you kind of I kind of tell people you don't want to throw everybody in the closet because we can all fit the same thing with your plants. You don't want to plant them in the space too small.

Ashley Biggs

I know nothing. I'll be honest, I know nothing about gardening. I'm terrified of gardening. What kind of pots would I need to have would I need a clay pot when the plastic pot would I need can I use a teacup you know

Marcus Williams

if it's a you can use a teacup. If it's big enough to house the plants you want to plan you can use a clay pot you can use a plastic pot, just making sure it's sturdy. And also it has hold water holes at the bottom of it. So when you go to water your plant, it's a water that you plant isn't sitting in water. It kind of drains right through.

Ashley Biggs

Okay, so what kind of plants are really good for growing inside the home? You can

Marcus Williams

grow anything from herbs to almost whatever you'd like. If you like wanting to and wanting to grow lettuce. You can grow lettuce inside your house. If you have a space. You can grow anything almost I've seen people grow palm tree. I've seen people bought grow fruit? I've seen just about anything

inside, if you can think it, and did you have the know how to actually grow it, you can go just about anything,

Ashley Biggs

what's your favorite thing to grow?

Marcus Williams

My favorite thing to grow is something that I don't like, personally, I like to grow tomatoes, okay, they take a little bit of skill to grow them. Tomatoes are very finicky. But they'll also tell you what's wrong with them. If they're not getting enough sunlight, they'll do this. If they're getting too much sunlight, they'll do that if they're getting too much water. If they're deficient in certain nutrients that turn colors, they're turning anywhere from Blue, to brown, to yellow, they'll tell you everything that they need. So if they need it there, they'll indicate it.

Ashley Biggs

You've been gardening for quite some time, you know, you obviously represent years of knowledge. But what should our home gardeners for those who want to start planting outside? What should they first do? Like? Should they do they need to get their soil tested? Or do they need to buy soil like what what's what's the first step.

Marcus Williams

So if you're going to go directly in the ground, then you definitely need to get your store tested, you need to get your store tested, I hate to say almost four or five months ago. So you can the reason that I say four or five months ago is because you want to get your results in time enough that you can actually make a change to your store. But if you don't want to mess with all of that, if you have raised beds, you can grow into raised beds. And what you can do, you can buy store to put in it. And you basically start with a clean slate, no diseases, no person or anything. You don't have to worry about pH being all you can just start from scratch.

Ashley Biggs

What is a raised bed, I don't know what that means. Oh, of course.

Marcus Williams

A raised bed is basically a structure that sits on top of the ground. And you put stall into it. Ice is usually made of wood, but he made made of anything from steel to rubber to plastic. And basically it's a box and you feel that box that we're soil. It can be anywhere deep from a couple of inches deep to 16 inches deep, just depending on what you want to grow with space you have. Okay,

Ashley Biggs

so let's start my backyard garden. I'll get one of these raised beds and I'm going to put some soil in it. What kind of soil should I be putting in it? I I can walk into Lowe's. Yes. And they've got 15 million kinds of soil plus sand and other things right there. What kind of soil should I be putting in my garden bed.

Marcus Williams

So I'd like to go off of the quarter system. You use a quarter potting soil, up quarter peat moss for pore space, a quarter cow manure or chicken manure or horse manure. But we knew we're in general. So this quarter pipes or quarter peat moss, order manure newer and a quarter. Make it like that make the lightest stuff before for space. Lows.

Ashley Biggs

You can find all that at Lowe's. Yes, ma'am. Okay, cuz I don't think I've ever walked in to Lowe's and asked for manure.

Marcus Williams

So definitely, you could say I want some compost. They have things they have something like this called black cow and as manure or compost. It's not in the state that you would think it's not like straight out of the animal. It's been processed. So there's no Where did you get any diseases from it? And it's in a bag.

Ashley Biggs

Okay, so I'm going to be doing a quarter potting soil quarter peat moss, quarter manure. And what was that fourth one?

Marcus Williams

vermiculite where he used garden stool. Okay, and

Ashley Biggs

garden soil? Yes. And I get that into my bed. And now I'm looking at the plants because I have walked into I have been, you know, to the gardening Center at Lowe's and they have ones that are already started and they have ones that are just seeds. Which one would I would I as a first time gardener want what I want the one that that's already started or what I want the one that where I plant the seed and I make it happen from seedling up.

Marcus Williams

So it really depends on how quickly you want to see something. I enjoy watching the miracle of nature so I'll get some seeds. But if you don't want to do that and you want to take out the guessing game and want to see what you already have. You can get plants that are are a couple months old, like you normally see in the in the garden sandwich or transplants, or you can transplant your flowers or vegetables, or what have you directly into the store, but you just have to make sure that you have the space.

Ashley Biggs

What do you mean by have the space, can you go over that?

Marcus Williams

Of course it can. So we have, so when you put in your plants, you have to make sure that they have space to grow. That means for their roots to reach down and get nutrients. And it also means to grow lengthwise, and that's vertically and laterally sort of able to spread out. So you want to have at least five

inches in between plants at the least that it can spread out. And that's just sort of not touching, you want to have some space in between them. Because they're starting to fight for resources. You don't think of plants fighting for resources, but they'll be fighting for resources.

Ashley Biggs

I assume that they do it with boxing gloves.

Marcus Williams

Actually, they do. But they might do a boxing gloves. But most of the time the action happens underneath the ground, where they're taking water and then taking the nutrients and your see if you've ever seen when you plant plants around a big pine tree, that pine tree is going to take nutrients from the soil, but it's also going to take nutrients before the providers around the can get to it. So they will start to become deficient. And that pine tree will kind of manipulate the soil and turn the store to something that's not hospitable.

Ashley Biggs

Okay, I'm gonna go with my home garden. I'm going to pick the seedlings that have already sprouted because I'm impatient and I want to see them right away. Bing Bing, I live in the Baltimore metro area. You know, what kind of plants should I be looking at purchasing that are that are going to be raised in this area and do well in that potting mix that we talked about.

Marcus Williams

So it depends on what you want. If you want vegetables, I'm surprised that we have a vegetable is native to Baltimore City. They're called Fish peppers. This peppers actually native to Baltimore City, so they're ready for this climate right now. But if it's something that didn't, that's not something you want. It depends on what you want to grow. You can do roses, you can do vegetables, you can do fruits, you can do fruits, you can do something that's native to Maryland itself, which is the papar tree. You can plant pop or you can plant I've seen people with figs I've seen people would just about everything.

Ashley Biggs

So I'm someone who always wanted to try my hands at my own vegetables. Would that potting with it being raised up off the ground are the roots going to get enough? Are they going to be deep enough so that I could grow a carrot or a thing of lettuce.

Marcus Williams

So that comes back into the depth of your raised bed. If you're going to plant something that is a has the right of the vegetable underground, like carrying like a rutabaga, like a turnip or potato, you have to make sure it has enough depth. So something like a carrot you want to at least make sure it has pin into the bed is 10 inches deep. So when you plant that carrot seed that the period has enough room to grow.

Ashley Biggs

Okay, so I'm gonna pick I'm being imaginative here. I'm gonna pick peas. Peas are good. I know that our parents made us like force fed them to us when we were kids, but as an adult, I season them so

rapidly. So I'm gonna do peds I'm gonna do a head of lettuce. I'd like to do squash because I love squash with that three take up all my garden.

Marcus Williams

Yes, squash takes up an enormous amount of space. Just one squash plant is going to need a nice throw around the neighborhood attend and just buy stuff for just one plan. Because depending on what route a squash that you get, most people use the yellow crookneck squash and the spice and then you have to remember that peas do best when they're on a trellis. So you would have to put a trellis in your raised bed point apiece to be able to grow up to invite on to

Ashley Biggs

okay Is the trellis is that like a, I know what it is like the sun. How's it work in the garden, though,

Marcus Williams

that's exactly how it works, it works the same way, like a fence that you can just kind of put a stake on one side of the bed and put on a stick when he ever said a bit and have something mesh or something fits like that the US can grow on and kind of last yourself too. And when they're ready, just pick the pieces right off the trellis.

Ashley Biggs

Okay, so I'm now have a garden that's full, it's got my three favorite veggies, each one wouldn't each one have its own growing requirements in terms of like how much water how much sunlight, how much.

Marcus Williams

So they're all going to be things that we'll see in the summertime. So they're all going to need at least eight hours of sunlight. And they're all going to need at least eight hours of darkness. So kind of, they're going to need to simulate a good amount of sun, and they're going to need the only for sun and also, for darkness, their work requirements are going to be pretty much the same glass is going to be the most different. Squash does best when it has an abundance of water. But if it gets enough water, it'll be fine.

Ashley Biggs

So for the for the home gardener, the first time home gardener, how would they find out like, you know, they got their seedlings they got or they got their seeds. They've planted them. But I just happened to pick my three favorite vegetables that apparently sound good with water or seem all good with water. But I've seen it where I have seen plants that like some require water once a week some require water every day. How? How do they find that out? Is there like a are there websites are there places to go to get information about what each individual vegetable or garden plant or rose or what have you might might need to

Marcus Williams

know when you buy the seedling. Or even when you buy the seeds from the store, they're going to have all the information you need to know, on eBay, if you buy the seedlings, it's going to be on a little card sticking in the plant that's going to have the sun requirements is going to have the space in the

knee, it's going to have the water requirements, it's going to have everything on the flip side on the seas, it's going to have on the back of the seed package that's going to have all that same information, they kind of try to take the guesswork out of it. And if you are still confused from all that, what you can do is you can go to the Extension website. And you can go to vegetables and fruit vegetables day you can go and just put in that vegetable. And they'll give you all the information that you need.

Ashley Biggs

For those who are wondering, the Maryland the University of Maryland extensions website is extension.umd.edu. And one of the first choices is Home and Garden Information Center.

Marcus Williams

Home and Garden Information Center is in isn't Ellicott

Ashley Biggs

City. Yeah, but it's got a but it's got a wealth of information for our our listeners to click through. Correct. So if I wanted to eventually be a better home gardener, and should I take classes on gardening, should I? You know, I know practice makes perfect of course. But should I check out the classes at the extension office for more information like what what should I do to improve my gardening skills.

Marcus Williams

So if you want to go to a next step from just doing it yourself, you can take Master Gardener classes that what we do is we offer those two extension. We have one class going on right now, where for 15 weeks, you're going to our local Silber, Arboretum and we also in conjunction with the state class, we're on Zoom and you're listening to classes done by extension personnel from around the state. And you'll learn everything from water science, horticulture, pruning, biology, ecology, just about anything you can think of when it comes to plants and you're learning tonight the class is going to be on fertilization and nutrient management and pruning. So you'll learn that when you decide that you want to take the Master Gardener class is kind of a semester of college in a couple of weeks.

Ashley Biggs

Now with the extension are there costs associated with with these buses

Marcus Williams

only cost varies from county to county, locale and locale. The classes in Baltimore City with our class is \$250. That includes the book that includes all the materials that you use while you're in class. And then also includes the classes that we have outside, the ones that you take on Zoom. That's the ones that are held at Silver Arboretum on a Saturday where we're learning specific Baltimore City subjects. So about container guard about water waterways that are in Baltimore City, this about sort of thing Baltimore City. So it's basically a drill down version of what you're learning online, but specifically, for Baltimore City, and it's the same for all the other localities classes that are not Wednesday and on Zoom, are gonna be county specific.

Ashley Biggs

Now, going back to Container gardening, that's kind of like what we talked about in the very beginning, right, where we had plant inside of our part inside of our imaginary apartment, correct? On your patio, or on your patio. Okay, very cool. So if I were in more advanced gardener, what should I expect to gain from these master classes? It's like, what should I be able to walk away from it.

Marcus Williams

So you should be able to walk away with being able to teach one day's classes to people in your neighborhood, and also a greater knowledge of agriculture as a whole, in what our agriculture horticulture as a whole, and how to kind of pull off techniques wherever it's coming from pony, or tea budding, or planting certain varieties of crops or even being able to access certain knowledge about certain plants.

Ashley Biggs

So what's your best advice for, for a home gardener getting started, what's your best advice,

Marcus Williams

you want to try everything, some things are gonna work, some things aren't gonna work, you want to basically if you're going to grow underground, you want to get your store tested. It's kinda like, if you are a banker, and you want to know what ingredients, you're starting off with, that you want to test that you want to test your soil, it's okay, this is here, this is here, and this is here. So I don't want to put something in my store at my sort of the knee, you want to definitely the things that you see in the store catalogs might not always work, you want to definitely find what season that you prefer, you might live spring. So you might want to only playing the spring, you might not like you might like it when it's hot outside. So you want to play in the summertime. Or vice versa. If you want to extend your summer and you want to play into the fall, you might want to play in what's called the second summer, which is that three months, August, September, October in the beginning, and you can plant in that tiny plant anything because it's still warm. Or if you prefer to be in a phone. Then you will start in September and go September, October, November, December and still be able to play something.

Ashley Biggs

There are plants that can still grow in December. Of course,

Marcus Williams

there's some plants that thrive on a cold weather.

Ashley Biggs

Like what? Rosemary or rosemary? Yes. Oh, well, that explains why it died when I put put it in a pot house let's jalopy.

Marcus Williams

Yes, it was too hot for it.

Ashley Biggs

See, I told you I don't know much about gardening. And this is this is amazing information.

Marcus Williams

Most definitely. So it's some herbs and some vegetables, that it has to be at least 60 degrees or 6085 degrees to do well in this some herbs like our lettuces, they don't do well and however, so they like a cooler plant. They like a cooler welfare. So they start to do something that's interesting if you're in the plant world, so if you put a lettuce in it starts to grow and warm weather, what it'll do is it'll start to vote. What that what that means is it'll start to go to seed and an opponent, it'll put our seeds but it won't be something that you want to eat. But it's something interesting to look at.

Ashley Biggs

Can you describe for us, the feel of certain plants, you know how to tell when a plant is maybe by by field or by touch? How a plant may be sick?

Marcus Williams

Of course. So if a plant has that's kind of a combination of seeing and also feeling so if a plant has an insect you'll be able to feel on the underside side of a leaf you have to turn the leaf over, but you can feel like an egg sack. Right? Then there'll be some right it'll be raised area up this okay, I want to see what to say. But you won't be able to, of course, see what it is. But you will be able to kind of fill in the same with something that is there, and you can scrape it off, or you can put in the plastic bag and discard. If the plan is sick, you can feel where the plan is starting to die. And you can kind of feel the area so you know something's wrong. And you have to either take a picture, or you have to take the leaf off and kind of have a sample of it. And what you can do is you can either bring it into the extension office, or if you're near home with what we call it, the Extension Center, and Ellicott City, you can bring it there, and they can tell you what it is as well.

Ashley Biggs

So many of our patrons are visually impaired, could they take a picture and have incentive via email and say, Is my plant? Okay?

Marcus Williams

Yes, they could, if you can answer a couple of questions, you know, what's going on with it as far as the stool? Is the sole dry? What kind of plant it is? And what did you buy? So you can tell us some if you can relate some simple questions that they can tell you what's wrong with the plan.

Ashley Biggs

That's really cool. Because I know that there are apps out there like Be My Eyes and like look out where it describes things. But to actually have a conversation with someone sometimes might be a little bit better. You know that that actually brings up another thought in my head when you were getting started. I'm assuming that not every plant survived? How I won't say how do you get over the guilt. Because you do feel a little guilty.

Marcus Williams

We have to remember that plants have feelings. And plants also feel pain when they start to drought and when they die. And it's been kind of research done that plants give off electric stimuli when they are flourishing whether or not flourishing so plants can actually feel

Ashley Biggs

okay, so now my brain is going to have a Little Shop of Horrors where the plant could feel. For those who have not had the experience a Little Shop of Horrors as a musical where a plant from outer space comes comes and takes over a plant shop.

Marcus Williams

Shop and he's like feed me see more.

Ashley Biggs

Well, Marcus, I want to thank you so much for being here with us today and for giving us such wonderful information. Do you have any last minute thoughts that you'd like to share?

Marcus Williams

Definitely, this is the time to be planning to start gardening in the next month. So plan everything, try everything. Remember that gardening is a year round sport is something that you do all year round. If you're not actively in the door, then you're planning to be in the store when it gets warm enough.

Ashley Biggs

Wonderful. Marcus, thank you so much for being here. I truly, truly appreciate it. And I know the patrons of the library for the blind and print disabled, and the Maryland State Library Agency. Appreciate you being here to

Marcus Williams

my pleasure.

Announcer

This has been a presentation of a Maryland State Library Agency. For links to additional resources provided by today's presenter, please visit the show notes. For more information on MSLA or the Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, visit [Maryland libraries.org](https://marylandlibraries.org)