

## Living with Gardener's Brain

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Gardeners live for the growing season. Mid-November through early March can be a very difficult time for them. Some gardeners fret those winter months away pouring over seed catalogs, or now days seed company websites. They anxiously await the release of the new All-American Garden selections list. They start planning where they are going to plant that new perennial or shrub or tree. They pull out the graph paper and plan their garden and re-plan their garden and modify it a dozen times. When another family member comes by they try to hide what they've been doing. When the seed packages start showing up in the mail they try to hide them in the garage or a seldom used file drawer. They anxiously await March 17<sup>th</sup> and hope that the weather will let them plant their potatoes. Then they wait with trembling hands until the third or fourth week of March so they can start their pepper and tomato transplants. Yes, if you have Gardner's Brain, that three to four month span in winter is very very hard!

I have Gardener's Brain. But fortunately I've learned to "woodchuck" that part of my brain. I put it into a state of hibernation for just as long as I can possibly manage and keep the rest of my brain busy with other things. One of the last things my gardener brain did last fall was order onion and leek plants. I'll admit that I was excited in late February when it started to warm up and my garlic really started popping out of the ground. The gardener brain was starting to stir at that point. But what really snapped it out of its hibernating state was when the email arrived that said my onion and leek plants had been shipped! At that point the brain was wide awake, in full gear and I bought pea and lettuce seeds that very afternoon!

If you are a gardener you probably read those first two paragraphs nodding, fully understanding what I described. If you aren't a gardener you either laughed out loud, or shook your head in disbelief. Some people look forward to the spring and warmer weather so they can hit the lake or start laying out in the sun by the pool. For gardeners, they look forward to long evenings of working in the garden; weeding, or planting or transplanting. They can't wait for the first harvest of anything. They hope that they can be the first to announce to their gardening friends that they had picked their first tomato. It's a different world inside a gardener's brain.

The rest of this is directed at all you other gardeners out there. Remember this one thing right now, it is still only March. Keep your garden timelines in perspective. Sure, the weather on St. Patrick's Day was not very conducive to be planting anything, let alone potatoes. That's okay. We've still got until the middle of April to get potatoes planted. I'm just getting my seed potatoes cut into planting pieces now. As soon as the weather and soil allow I'll be putting onions and leeks in the ground. Potatoes, because I plant mine fairly deep, will have to wait a little longer to get the soil warmed up, and maybe dried out. Even if (when) we have unseasonably warm weather, don't let your enthusiasm get ahead of the calendar. It's okay to sometimes push the season up a few days, maybe even a week, but that still means you plant SOME of your tomatoes the first weekend in May as opposed to the second weekend of May.

Growing up on the farm, we had a huge garden and it provided most of the vegetables that we ate year round. It was necessary to help stretch the food dollar. I garden today because I find the activity enjoyable. I do like having fresh produce and the thrill of growing new and different vegetables or at least new and different varieties. Sure, you non-gardeners may have read this and laughed, but I bet you never turned down fresh produce from your gardening friends though!