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**Pueblo at Bath Street, Santa Barbara**

RSVP required: [nursing@csuci.edu](mailto:nursing@csuci.edu)

# IN THE GARDEN WITH MR. GREENJEANS

by Randy Arnowitz

## Veggie Barrels



Just add  
ranch dress-  
ing and voila!  
lunch!

### Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

My wife and I live in a condo and have only a small, sunny patio area instead of a real garden. We both love fresh vegetables and are regulars at the Saturday farmers' market. Have any ideas on how we can grow our own incredible edibles although short on space?

Sincerely,

Leif E. Greens



Randy – Mr. Greenjeans – resides in a potting shed with 200 orchids and his golden retriever “Peaches.” He enthusiastically welcomes your gardening questions; address them to [greenjeansmr@verizon.net](mailto:greenjeansmr@verizon.net).

### Dear Leif,

Depending on how short on space you are, your patio can probably accommodate some type of containers or raised beds.

A bit on the ugly side, large, black, 15-gallon nursery pots can be used for most veggies but half-wine barrels are the Cadillac, or rather the Lexus of vegetable container gardening. Nurseries sell them for about 45 bucks (seems like only yesterday that they were \$7.99) and they last for years. Be sure to have the nursery guy drill some holes in the bottom for you if you're not handy with a drill.

Some gardening folks fill their containers with garden soil; alone or with compost mixed in. That doesn't work for me so I use straight potting soil. My pick-of-the-week for potting soil is Fox Farm Ocean Forest brand.

Everything I grow in that stuff thrives and I mean *everything*, from veggie starts and houseplants to container-grown roses and trees.

Another option for limited space gardening is prefab raised beds. There are plenty of these online and they come in every size and material you can imagine. Some are even waist high so you don't have to ruin your back while you work.

Although I haven't tried them, lately I've noticed people have been raising tomatoes and other crops upside-down in those planter baggie thingies. I guess if you have a pergola, arbor or overhanging eaves you could try these. It seems to me though that veggies – or almost anything for that matter – perform better when grown in the largest possible container that you can accommodate. Whether your tomatoes are growing upside-down, inside out or traditionally straight-up,

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if they're in containers smaller than five gallons they are going to quickly outgrow their digs and will have to be watered daily. It is for this reason that I vote for the half-barrel method.

## Grass Growing Wild

Dear Mr. Greenjeans,

I have an assortment of ornamental grasses in my garden including Dwarf Red Fountain Grass, Hairy Awn Muhly and Chinese Fountain

Seems to me that although Dwarf Red Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum 'Eaton Canyon'*) doesn't go dormant it does get a little tired after a year or two. I've found that this grass likes the warm weather and I wait until later in the spring before cutting this one back. Given a haircut too early, 'Eaton Canyon' takes its time coming back.

Hairy Awn Muhly (*Muhlenbergia capillaris*) may or may not go dormant depending upon what part of Santa Barbara you live in. Regardless of



*Pennisetum 'Eaton Canyon'* benefits from tough love



*Pennisetum orientale* comes back and blooms profusely after a spring shearing

Grass. I'm not sure if I'm supposed to cut these grasses down or if so, when the best time would be to do that. Thanks for any help.

Signed,  
Juana Snippet

Dear Juana,

Although most or at least many ornamental grasses can be cut down in late winter or early spring, I let the individual grass tell me when the time is right. I know that Chinese Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum orientale*) usually goes dormant and turns brown during our winter. You can cut it down mid-winter and look at nothingness until it begins to grow in the spring or you can enjoy them straw-like and dormant as I do and chop them down in the spring.

whether it does or not, this grass will benefit from an annual shearing. Very forgiving, this guy will pop back up within days of cutting and will do so regardless of the time of year. I do mine in mid-February and it has virtually next to no down time.

Keep in mind that some ornamental grasses are evergreen and don't always benefit from a shearing. Others, such as Ruby Grass (*Melinis nerviglumis*) are short lived and after a season or two of cutting them back they may just be finished. It's always good to check with a nursery or online before taking your shears or mower to any of your grasses. San Marcos Growers has a site that includes many of the frequently grown grasses: [www.smgrowers.com/index.asp](http://www.smgrowers.com/index.asp).



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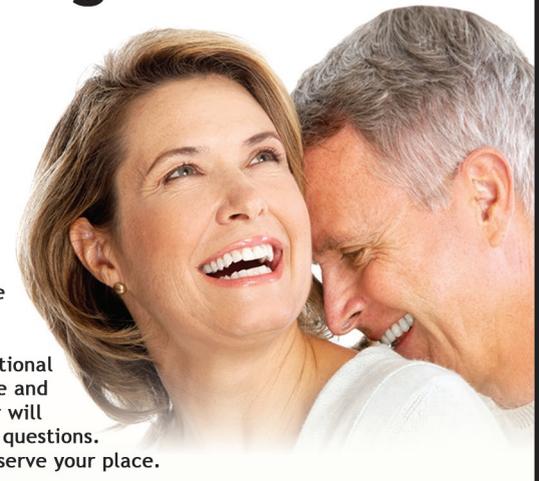
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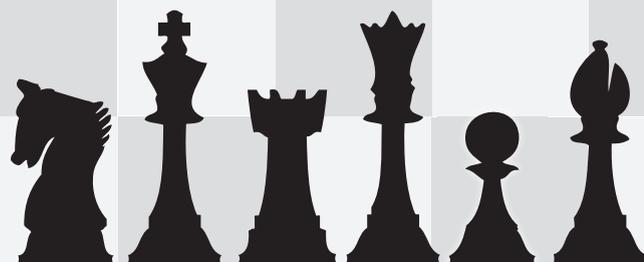

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