

The Edible Gardening Gal Talks Suspicious Neighbors and Rookie Mistakes

By [Tricia Woolfenden](#) Thu., Aug. 9 2012 at 5:37 AM



Karin Fields (aka, the Edible Gardening Gal) wants to teach Floridians how to grow their own dinners.

In her former life -- before she became The Edible Gardening Gal and an urban garden guru -- Karin Fields was a professional singer. The career left her with a lot of free-time during the daylight hours and that's when she got hooked on gardening. The passion was so deep that she dropped the singing aspect and decided to refocus her life to "trying to teach people, and improve the world; make a difference," she said.

These days, Fields is living out that dream, giving frequent public and private lectures on the basics of home/urban gardening. She works often with school children, teaching them about the origins of their food and how to coax sustenance from the ground. She's a fixture at local farmers' markets and has a weekly stint at the Yellow Green Farmers Market in Hollywood, where she cheerfully doles out advice on how to successfully grow food in the challenges of South Florida's climate.

Though she focuses on practical matters -- how to fight aphids, how much water to give a struggling tomato plant, etc. -- she's also got her eye focused on the bigger picture, which is a desire to empower people to put healthy, nutrient-rich foods on their own tables. Fields' work fits into South Florida's growing scene of pro-gardening advocates, a group which also includes figures like [Michael Madfis](#) and [Farmer Jay](#).

"The whole thing is just to feed people, really," said Fields, who credits other people's kindnesses as helping her along in life. She believes this career path is her way to channel back some of that positive energy. "I wanted to do something good and this was the way to go."

As an introduction to Fields, Clean Plate Charlie invited her to play a garden-centric round of "fill in the blanks" with us via email. Our questions and her answers (underlined and in italics) are below.

The biggest pest in the garden is *my new neighbors...they called the cops on me and said I was growing pot when they saw my new hydroponics setup. I really need to go over there to introduce myself-- bring 'em a nice bottle of vino to say HALLOOOO!*

If I were to break Americans of one eating habit it would be *live and let live*.

The one fruit or vegetable I'd take on a desert island would be *pineapple*.

When I stray from healthy, whole foods, the first thing I reach for is *anything -- it can get ugly*.

Growing tomatoes in South Florida is *I would use the words "doable with the right information."*

The No. 1 rookie gardening mistake would have to be *reading a gardening book that is not for your specific zone. I still laugh about all my beginner mistakes. One book told me to cover all my starts with a Dixie cup. Apparently this tip was for "spring in to summer gardening" for the regular people. I understand now it was to keep them warm.*

Don't tell anyone, but I secretly hate *rare tropical fruits -- please don't hate me*.

Shortcuts in home gardening are *for the wimps*.

I have a hard time *speaking. "Mental pause" has set in.*

If I could work with anyone to show someone how to start a garden I'd work with
Michael Madfis -- oh wait, I work with him now!

The most underrated crop would have to be *pineapples again. They grow themselves.*

No yard in South Florida should be without *bananas. Dwarf Cavendish. They grow themselves, too.*

In an alternate universe I would probably be doing *the exact same thing* for a living.

Don't be surprised to see me *riding my scooter over to your house for our appointment.*

I would really like to see more people in South Florida *grow their own food, for gosh-darn sakes.*

The most satisfying aspect of what I do is *showing people how they can put food on their family..ya know what I mean.*

As part of her business, Edible Gardening by Karin, Fields is available for home appointments to help novice gardeners get started. Find Fields every Saturday and Sunday at the Yellow Green Farmers Market, or track her down through her website, www.ediblegardening.biz.