

Seed to Supper®

A beginner's guide to low-cost vegetable gardening



Fulfill 2020 Edition

Fulfill Garden-Based Learning

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and
Oregon State University Extension Service**

Adapted by



**Unless otherwise stated all materials are adopted by Oregon Food Bank and Oregon
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Welcome, gardeners!

We invite you to experience the deep satisfaction that comes from growing a portion of your own food.

This booklet was created for participants of the Seed to Supper course, a shared program of Oregon Food Bank's Learning Gardens and Oregon State University Extension Service. This version has been adopted by Fulfill and the Master Gardeners of Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Seed to Supper is a comprehensive beginning vegetable gardening curriculum designed for adults gardening on a budget. It highlights practical, low-cost techniques for building, planning, planting, maintaining and harvesting a successful vegetable garden.

Seed to Supper is part of Fulfill's work to build more food secure communities—places where all people at all times have access to enough food for a healthy life. Increasing community food security through programs in gardening, nutrition education, advocacy, and community organizing goes hand-in-hand with our work to help people living with low incomes meet their short-term food needs.

Whether you've taken a Seed to Supper class or come across this booklet in another way, we hope that the information in these pages will help you make budget-friendly decisions in your garden and ultimately share in the joy of eating your own homegrown vegetables.

Happy gardening,



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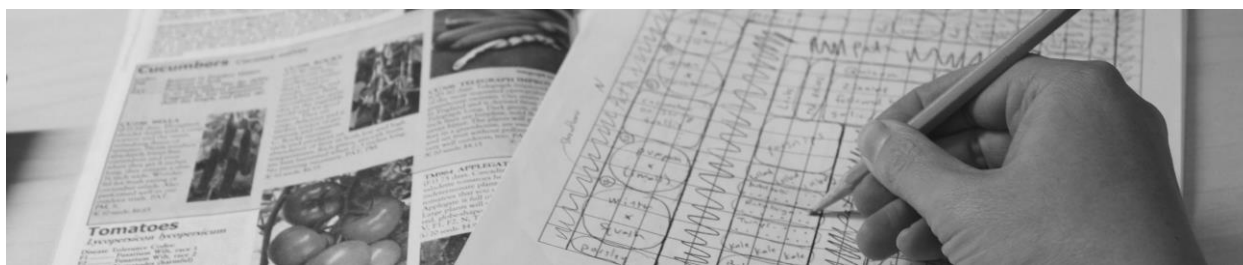
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Planning Your Garden

MAKING A PLANTING PLAN

What do you enjoy? Make a list of vegetables that you or your family enjoy eating. Make another list of what you would like to try.

Make it convenient and cost effective. Place your garden where you can easily view and access it. When a garden goes unnoticed it will quickly be lost to unwanted weeds. Given the time and effort you will put into your garden you may want to grow crops that give you the most value for your money.

Make it realistic. Most people do not have the space or time to grow everything they want, so you may need to narrow down your choices. Start by thinking about what grows well in our climate. You may love sweet potatoes, but they are a warm weather crop and are not well suited for our northeastern climate. The Common Crop Chart will help you refer to crops that grow well in our region.

How much space will it take up? Think about how much space each vegetable will take up in the garden. Reference the Vegetable Planting Guide to understand your vegetables 'footprint'. Will you be growing in a container or in the ground?

CHOOSING VARIETIES

When it comes to vegetables there are multiple varieties to choose from in each type of plant. Getting your seeds or plant starts from a local company means you get plants that were bred for New Jersey. Some varieties are even specifically bred for containers.

In general, go for quick maturing plant varieties. For example baby carrots, scallions instead of onions, small or cherry tomatoes, and even bush varieties of squash. Review the "Vegetable & Varieties ideal for container gardening" chart for more ideas on which varieties work well.

Rutgers Cooperative Extension lists a number of recommended vegetable varieties on their website.



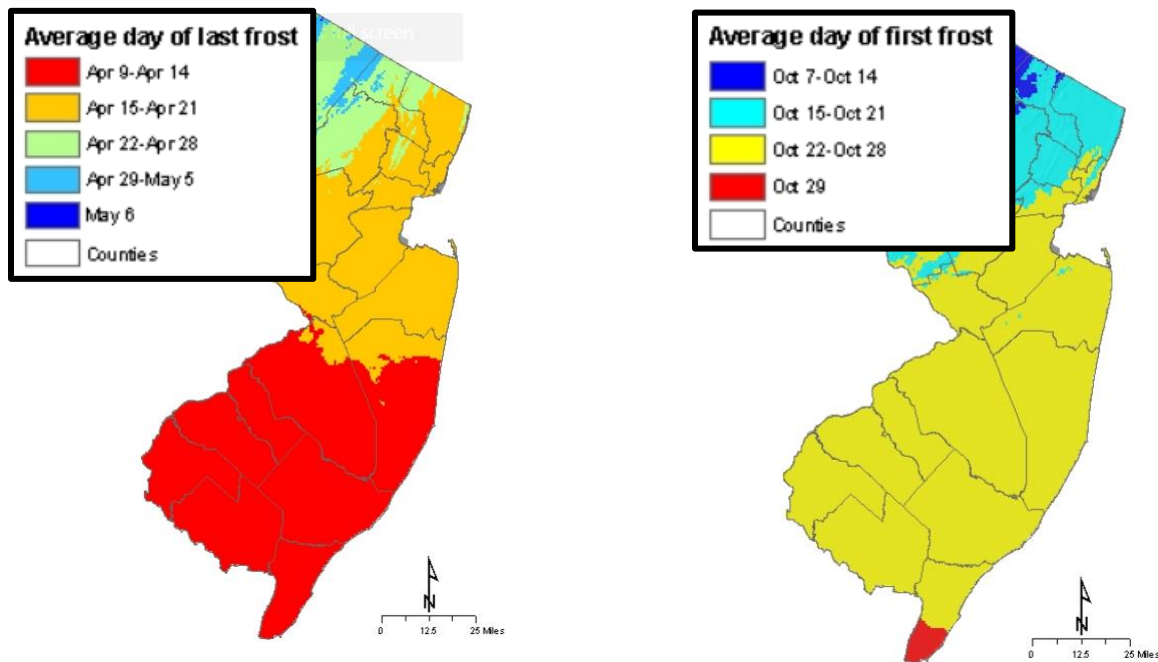
PLANTING DATES

Planting your seeds or plant starts at the right time reduces the risk of damage from frost or hot weather. Refer to the map below to better understand New Jersey's average first and last frost dates. Seed packets and seed catalogs also have information about planting dates. They may mention the last and first frost dates.

Seed packets and the Common Crop Chart also tell you “days until harvest,” or the number of days from planting a seed until that crop is ready for harvest. This lets you work backward from your first frost day. For example, if your tomatoes need 80 days until harvest, and the first average frost date is only 50 days away, it is too late to plant tomatoes. The tomatoes will not have enough time to ripen before the frost hits. Many seed packets also give you information about length of harvest, or the number of days the crop continues to produce food.

Charts, seed packets, and seed catalogs may list a long planting window, but remember that plants do not “read” charts. Plants respond to soil temperature and weather conditions.

Seeds will germinate (start to grow) when the soil is moist and the temperature is warm enough. The seed packet tells you what the temperature should be. For more information on soil temperature refer to the lesson on Planting Your Garden.



CROP ROTATION

Crop rotation by plant family can help prevent disease, pest problems, and loss of nutrients from the soil. A plant family is a grouping of plants that are similar. As you plan your garden, think about grouping your crops by family and rotating each family into a different space every year. If your space does not allow for crop rotation, you can still keep

your garden healthy. Do it by building up your soil with compost, growing cover crops, keeping the garden clean, and choosing disease-resistant plant varieties.

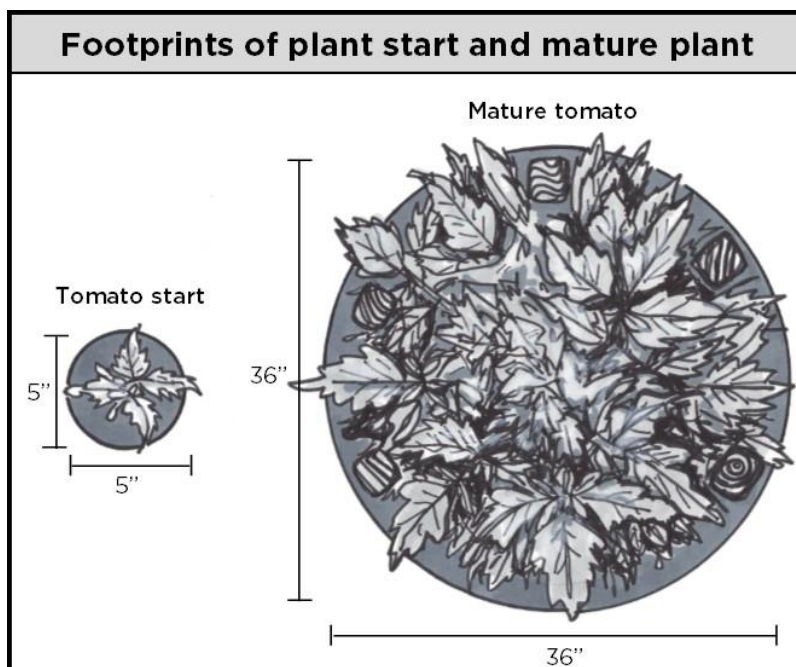
Succession planting	
Pull up	Replace with
Peas	Carrots
Broccoli	Salad greens
Spinach	Collard greens
Lettuce	Radishes
Tomatoes	Garlic
Beets	Kale
Salad greens	Leeks

MAKING A PLANTING MAP

Sketch your space. Start by drawing a rough sketch of your garden area. Be sure to mark things like outdoor water faucets, fences, buildings and sheds, and any large trees or shrubs. Also, mark which directions are north, south, east, and west. Include the rough dimensions of your planting space. If your garden will be in containers you will need to understand these aspects as well.

Plant spacing. Plants need plenty of space above and below the ground. Plant leaves need enough room to reach sunlight and natural breezes, which keep them dry and help prevent disease. Leaves use sunlight to create their own energy, so plants grown in full sun produce larger vegetables and sweeter fruit than plants grown in the shade.

Plant roots also need room to reach the water, air, and nutrients in the soil. Plants that are too close together will not thrive because they are competing with each other.

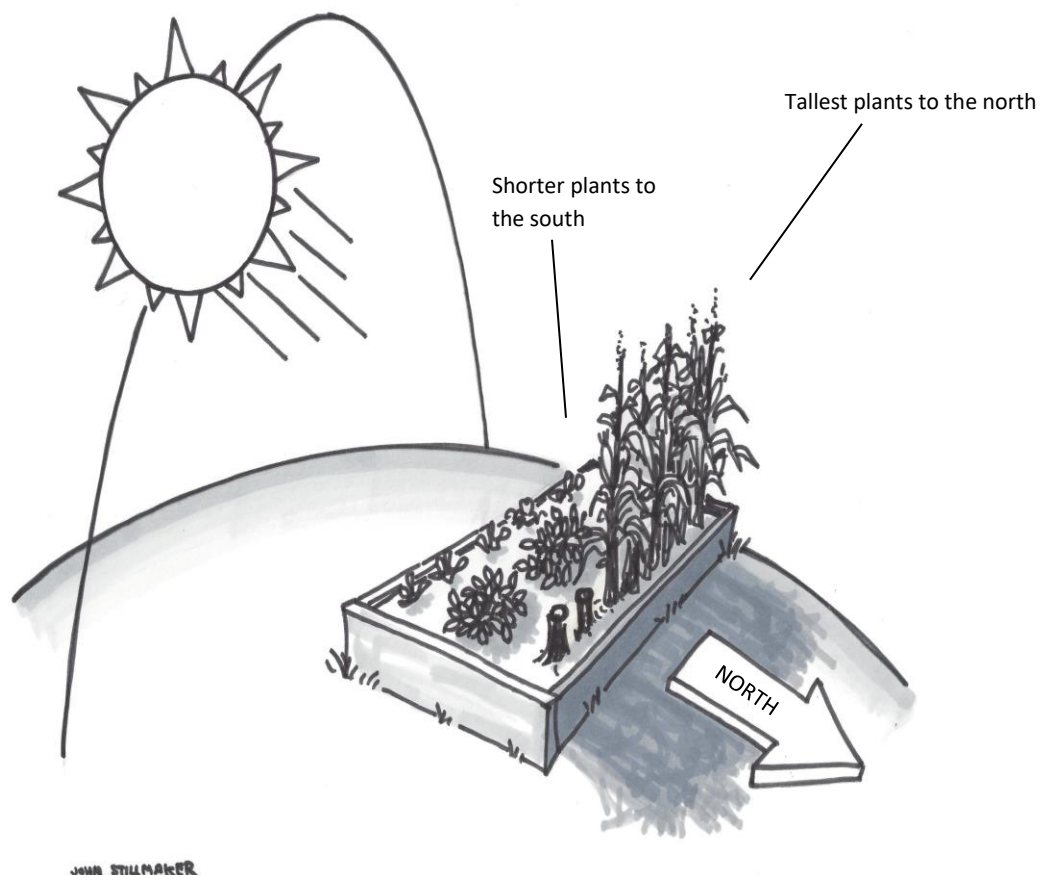


Your plants might look too far apart when they are small, but they will use up the space when they reach full size. As you arrange your garden, plan for the proper width and height of your plants at maturity.

Plan for the “footprint” of your plants at maturity. Plant starts and seedlings are tiny, but healthy, full-grown plants can be large. Seed packets and planning calendars may give instructions for “seed spacing” (the space between seeds), “row spacing” (the space between rows), and “thinning” (the space between full-grown plants in the rows). The footprint takes all of these into account and helps you picture the space of what a full-grown plant will need.

Plan for the height of your plant at maturity and for the shadows they will cast. The full height of a mature plant is important, because tall crops can shade out short crops. In North America, the sun always shines from the south, casting shadows to the north. Plant your tall or trellised crops like corn or tomatoes on the north side of the garden, so they do not shade shorter vegetables. Put shade-tolerant plants under or near tall plants.

Make a map for every season. Because your plantings change from season to season, you may need more than one map. For example, you could have one map for spring plantings and another for summer plantings. Or you could have a map that shows crop rotation. Your map could have an arrow showing the change from one crop to another, such as peas in spring and summer switching to garlic in the fall.



Vegetable Planting Guide

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs129/>

Vegetable	Spacing (In.)		Transplant or Seeds	Planting Dates*	Avg. Yield per 10 ft. of Row
	In Row	Btwn. Rows			
Beets	3	15	seed	Ap, Ma, Ju, Jl	14 lbs
Broccoli	15	30	transplant	Ap, Ma, Jl, Au	8 heads
Corn, Sweet	12	24	seed	Ma, Ju	10 ears
Cucumbers	36	30	seed or trp.	Ju, Jl	8 lbs
Eggplant	30	30	transplant	Ma, Ju	20 fruit
Tomatoes	24	36	transplants	Ma, Ju	50 lbs
Turnips	3	18	seed	Ap, Jl	7 lbs
Watermelons	36	96	seed	Ju	3 melons

Vegetable	Average amount of garden bed feet required	Footprint per plant	# of Plants
Bush Beans	15-20 ft.	12"x12"	15-20
Pole Beans	5-6 ft.	4"x4"	15-18
Beet	5-10 ft.	4"x4"	15-30
Broccoli	3-5 ft.	12"x12"	3-5
Cabbage	5-10 ft.	12"x12"	5-10
Carrot	5-10 ft.	3"x3"	20-40
Cauliflower	3-5 ft.	12"x12"	3-5
Chard	3-5 ft.	12"x12"	3-5
Collards	5-10 ft.	12"x12"	5-10
Sweet corn	10-15 ft.	12"x12"	10-15
Cucumber	4-6 ft. trellised	6"x6"	2-3
Eggplant	2-3 ft.	12"x12"	2-3
Kale	5-10 ft.	12"x12"	5-10
Lettuce	5 ft.	6"x6"	10
Onion	3-5 ft.	4"x4"	9-15
Parsnip	10 ft.	3"x3"	40
Peas	3 ft.	4"x4"	9
Pepper	3-5 ft.	12"x12"	3-5
Potato	25-30 ft.	12"x12"	25-30
Pumpkin	6-12 ft.	6'x6'	1-2
Radish	3-5 ft.	3"x3"	12-20
Spinach	5-10 ft.	4"x4"	15-30
Summer Squash	6 ft.	36"x36"	2
Winter Squash	6-12 ft.	6'x6'	1-2
Tomato	9-15 ft.	36"x36"	3-5
Watermelon	2-4 ft. trellised	12"x12"	2-4

Plant families	
Plant family	Crops
Beet family (Amaranthaceae)	Beets Chard Spinach
Cabbage family (Brassicaceae)	Broccoli Cabbage Cauliflower Collard greens Kale Radishes Turnips
Carrot family (Apiaceae)	Carrots Cilantro Parsnips Parsley
Grass family (Poaceae)	Corn
Legume family (Fabaceae)	Beans Peas
Nightshade family (Solanaceae)	Eggplant Peppers Potatoes Tomatillos Tomatoes
Onion family (Liliaceae)	Garlic Leeks Onions
Squash family (Cucurbitaceae)	Cucumbers Summer squash Zucchini Winter squash Pumpkins Watermelon
Sunflower family (Asteraceae)	Lettuce Sunflowers Artichoke

Personal planting plan



Personal planting map

This image shows a full page of blank graph paper. The grid consists of small, equal-sized squares formed by thin gray lines. There are 20 columns and 20 rows of squares, creating a total of 400 square units. The background is white, and the grid lines are light gray.

Wrap Up for Week 1:

1. What are three things that you took away from this class?

2. What are some things that are still confusing?

Getting ready for next week:

- Bring a soil sample (if you have a garden site).
 - Take a photo of your garden to share (if you have a camera).
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Common Crop Chart

Crop	Planting Window	Footprint	Planting method	Height	Days to harvest	Some shade ok?	Single or 2-week succession
Basil	May-July 15	12" x 12"	Transplant or row	Medium	90-120	Full sun only	Succession
Beans, snap (bush)	May-July 15	12" x 12"	Row or banded	Medium	60-70	Some shade ok	Succession
Beans, snap (pole)	May-June 30	4" x 4" trellised	Row or banded	Tall	70-90	Full sun only	Succession
Beets	April-July 31	4" x 4"	Row or banded	Short	50-80	Some shade ok	Succession
Broccoli	April-Aug 10	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	55-90	Full sun only	Single
Cabbage	April-July 31	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	80-90	Full sun only	Single
Carrots	April-July 15	3" x 3"	Row or banded	Short	70-90	Some shade ok	Succession
Cauliflower	April-Aug 10	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	90-150	Some shade ok	Single
Chard	April-July 31	12" x 12"	Transplant or row	Medium	50-60	Some shade ok	Single
Cilantro	March-June	12" x 12"	Transplant	Short	60-90	Some shade ok	Succession
Collard greens	May-July	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	80-100	Some shade ok	Single
Corn (sweet)	May-July 15	12" x 12"	Row	Tall	70-110	Full sun only	Single
Cucumbers	June-July 15	6" x 6" trellised	Transplant or hill	Medium	55-75	Full sun only	Single
Eggplant	May-June 1	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	70-75	Full sun only	Single
Garlic	Sept-Oct	4" x 4"	Row	Short	220-300	Full sun only	Single
Herbs (perennial)	Fall or spring	24" x 24" variable	Transplant or hill	Medium	Perennial	Some shade ok	Single
Kale	April-July 31	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	60-70	Some shade ok	Single
Leeks	April-June 30	4" x 4"	Transplant or row	Short	120	Some shade ok	Single
Lettuce	April-July	6" x 6"	Row or banded	Short	65-80	Some shade ok	Succession
Onions	April-July	4" x 4"	Transplant	Short	100-120	Some shade ok	Single
Parsley	April-July 15	12" x 12"	Row or banded	Short	80-90	Some shade ok	Single
Parsnips	April-July 15	3" x 3"	Row or banded	Short	110-120	Some shade ok	Single
Peas	April-July 31	4" x 4" trellised	Row or banded	Medium	75-100	Some shade ok	Succession
Peppers	May-June 30	12" x 12"	Transplant or hill	Medium	80-100	Full sun only	Single
Potatoes	May-June	12" x 12"	Hill	Medium	70-120	Some shade ok	Single
Radishes	April-Sept	3" x 3"	Row or banded	Short	25-35	Some shade ok	Succession
Spinach	April-Aug	4" x 4"	Row or banded	Short	40-50	Some shade ok	Succession
Squash, summer	June-July 15	36" x 36"	Transplant or hill	Medium	55-70	Full sun only	Single
Squash, winter	June	6' x 6' vine	Transplant or hill	Medium	90-150	Full sun only	Single
Tomatoes	May-June 30	36" x 36"	Transplant	Tall	60-85	Full sun only	Single
Watermelon	June	12" x 12" trellised	Transplant or hill	Medium	55-85	Full sun only	Single



Making Garden Beds

GARDEN SIZE

How big is your garden? That depends on your answers to these questions:

Why are you gardening? Are you gardening to feed yourself? Your family? Your community? Will your garden also be a play space for your children?

Who will do the work? Will the garden be a group project, with family members or friends helping out? Or will it just be you?

How much time do you have to spend gardening? Be honest with yourself about how much time you can spend in the garden.

How much room do you have? If you have a large area for gardening, you might feel like you need to grow a large garden. However, a small, weed-free garden produces more and will give you more pleasure than a big, weedy mess. If you find that you have the time and energy for a larger garden, you can always make your garden bigger next year.

As you design your garden, make sure you can easily reach the middle from the paths on both sides of the bed. Beds are usually three to four feet wide, and can be as long as your space allows. If you have several beds, separate them with paths. You will need at least 18 inches for a footpath and 24 to 36 inches for a wheelbarrow or garden cart.

RAISED BEDS

A raised bed is any garden bed that is raised above the ground. Raised beds help you avoid stepping on the soil and compacting it. They help you focus on the areas where plants will be growing, so they help you save on fertilizer, compost, water, and your own time and labor. Raised beds also drain well and warm up sooner in spring so you can plant earlier.

Some raised beds have retaining walls, and some do not. Retaining walls can help you hold the soil in place, but they are expensive and usually unnecessary. They also create hiding places for slugs and other pests. Retaining walls are useful if you want to create beds with special shapes, use narrower paths, or make it easier for people with limited mobility to reach the beds. If you choose to build

retaining walls, you can use concrete blocks, rocks, or boards (but not pressure-treated boards manufactured before 2002 or boards that could have lead paint on them.)

Method 1: Making a basic raised bed

This is an easy way to start a new bed.

Step 1: If the soil is compacted, loosen it two to three inches deep with a shovel or digging fork. Do not rush this step. Wait until the soil is dry enough to crumble when you loosen it.

Step 2: Spread about two inches of finished compost in a layer over the soil.

Step 3: If you plan to use organic fertilizer, add it now. Broadcast it, meaning scatter it evenly, over the layer of compost.

Step 4: With a shovel or digging fork, dig the compost into the soil to about six inches deep. You can also use a tiller.

Step 5: Make sure to have a path marked on at least two sides of your raised beds from 18 to 36 inches. Shovel the path down six inches and add this soil to the top of the beds. You now have a soil and compost mixture about eight inches deep.

Step 6: Rake the beds level. The slope of the soil at the edges will leave about 36 inches of flat planting space on top of the 48 inch-wide bed.

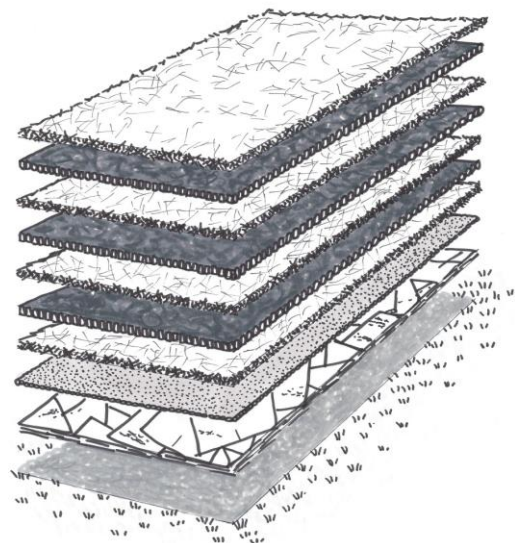
Once you finish shaping the beds, add sawdust, fallen leaves, wood chips, bark, or straw on top of the paths to reduce mud and smother weeds.

Method 2: Sheet mulching

Sheet mulching turns raw organic material like grass clippings, fallen leaves, and vegetable scraps into planting soil. It is also called “composting in place” or “lasagna gardening.”

Like other compost piles, sheet mulched beds need dry, brown, carbon-rich materials and green, wet, nitrogen-rich materials placed in layers. Small amounts of nitrogen fertilizer like linseed meal or fish fertilizer can help sheet mulched beds turn into garden soil faster.

Begin sheet mulching in your beds several months before you want to plant. Fall is a great time to sheet mulch, because the material will break down slowly over winter and will be ready for planting in spring.



John Stillmaster

Step 1: Begin by mowing or trimming grass or other vegetation as low as you can in the area where you plan to make your bed. Next, mark off your new garden bed with stakes and twine.

Step 2: Loosen the soil in the bed to several inches deep with a digging fork to make sure there is good drainage.

Step 3: Remove weeds from the bed and put them in your green waste bag or garbage bin.

Step 4: Cover the bed with four to six overlapping layers of newspaper or cardboard to smother the grass and weeds. The newspaper or cardboard will break down and become part of the soil.

Step 5: Soak the newspaper/cardboard. Then cover it with a thin layer of nitrogen fertilizer.

Step 6: Top the nitrogen fertilizer with one to five inches of brown material like dead leaves, straw, or shredded newspaper. Make sure that the material is loose and not clumped together.

Step 7: Add one to five inches of green material like kitchen scraps, green yard waste, coffee grounds, or composted manure. (The brown and green layers should be the same thickness.)

Step 8: Continue to add alternating layers of brown and green materials until you reach a final height of about 18 inches. Sprinkle a little nitrogen fertilizer every four layers or so to speed up the composting.

Step 9: As you collect more materials you can add more alternating layers of brown and green up to the height you want for your bed. Keep in mind that taller beds take longer to break down into the garden soil. When you add more layers, always end with a brown layer. This top layer is the “blanket” that keeps flies away. You can also cover the top layer with burlap sacks to keep the pile neat and in place. Remove the burlap at planting time.



If a pile gets too wet, cover it with a sheet of black plastic. Keep the plastic in place with bricks at each corner. The plastic will help to warm the pile so it breaks down faster. It will also help keep nutrients from leaching through the soil and past the plant roots during the raining season.

Sheet mulching is a slow process. A sheet mulched bed may take six months to become ready for planting. A bed “finished” when the green and brown layers have broken down and you can no longer recognize what they were. The pile should look and smell like fresh earth.

Method 3: Double digging

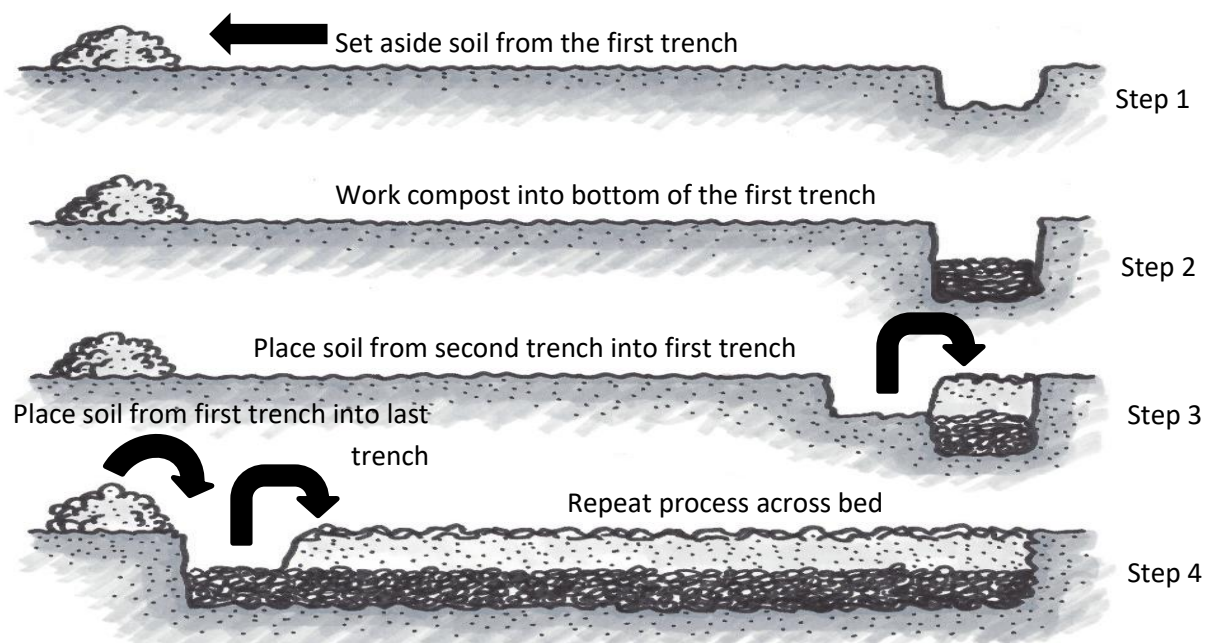
Double digging turns heavy, compacted soil into a bed that is ready for planting right away. However, it is hard work and time-consuming. Use a long-handled square shovel to dig efficiently and protect your back. Use a digging fork to loosen the soil.

Step 1: Dig a trench (one foot wide by one foot deep) at one end of the bed, and put the soil into a garden cart or wheelbarrow or just set aside.

Step 2: Lay two to four inches of compost in the bottom of the trench, and break up compacted soil in the trench. To do this push a shovel or digging fork into the soil, and wiggle it back and forth.

Step 3: Dig a second trench next to the first trench, and put the soil from the second trench on top of the compost in the first trench (grass-side down). Lay two to four inches of compost in the bottom of the second trench, and mix as in Step 2.

Step 4: Repeat Step 3 until you finish the whole length of the bed. Mix the soil you dug up from the first trench with the compost before returning it to the bed. The loosened soil and all the compost you added will raise the level of the bed.



Method 4: The no-dig method

The no-dig method is a quick and easy way to build a bed that is ready for planting right away. But it can be more expensive because you need to start with a pre-made planting mix.

Step 1: Clear the area of weeds. Then put down layers of cardboard or newspaper to smother grass and weeds and keep them from growing up into your bed. Soak this material.

Step 2: Mound four to eight inches of pre-made planting soil over the cardboard/newspaper. If your bed is shallow, you can plant shallow-rooted crops like lettuce and spinach to start with. As you add compost in the future, your bed will become part of the soil below and you will be able to plant crops that have deeper roots.

CHOOSING A CONTAINER

If you are gardening with containers, there are many options to consider. Planter boxes, hanging baskets, and terra cotta pots are what first come to mind, but don't stop there! You can grow delicious food in something far less glamorous and expensive. Bigger is going to be better when we're talking vegetables, but you can grow food in containers as small as a cake pan. Here are some things to consider when choosing a container:

- Choose the right size container for the plant. Think about the root system of a plant you are growing, and plan accordingly. If a vegetable needs a large space between plants in the garden, the same is true of a container. You may only get one plant in a container.
- Whatever you use for a container will need drainage holes. Holes should be about a half inch across.
- Avoid containers with narrow openings. Cheap plastic pots will deteriorate faster, but will get the job done.
- Wooden containers are susceptible to rot but redwood and cedar are relatively rot resistant. Avoid painted wood, and wood treated with creosote, penta, or other toxic compounds, as the vapors can damage plants.
- Use containers that are between one and five gallon capacity. Small pots restrict the root area and dry out very quickly. The size and number of plants to be grown will determine the size of the container used. Deep-rooted vegetables require deep pots.
- Set containers on bricks or blocks to allow free drainage.
- In hot climates, use light colored containers to lessen heat absorption and discourage uneven root growth.
- Make sure your container is not see-through in any way, or the roots will burn.
- Avoid using tires, as they break down and leach toxic metals and chemicals into the soil.
- For more information on sourcing cheap or free containers for your garden, refer to the **"Resources for your Gardening Budget."**

Resources for gardening on a budget

Ideas for creative, low-cost sourcing of garden materials

CONTAINERS/MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES

- **Home:** Repurpose plastic containers you might otherwise throw away, like yogurt containers, milk jugs, and tin cans.
- **Nurseries:** In the springtime, home growers and nurseries have an abundance of cheap plastic pots that shrubs and trees come in.
- **Restaurants/grocery stores:** Five-gallon buckets are plentiful at restaurants and grocery stores: ask around. This is a good-sized container for the larger veggies like tomatoes and broccoli.
- **Thrift stores:** Look for used containers, gardening supplies, and creative containers like bowls, kitchen supplies, and plastic totes.
- **Online:** Visit www.freecycle.org or the “free” listings on www.craigslist.org.
- **Stores:** Big box stores offer deals, especially late in the garden season. Look for sales in the garden section and check the clearance racks.

GARDEN SPACE

- **Community garden space:** City governments, churches, schools, and other programs offer garden space. Some community gardens have long waiting lists, but others are looking for new gardeners. Call the community garden operator in your area—and be sure to ask about scholarships!

MULCH

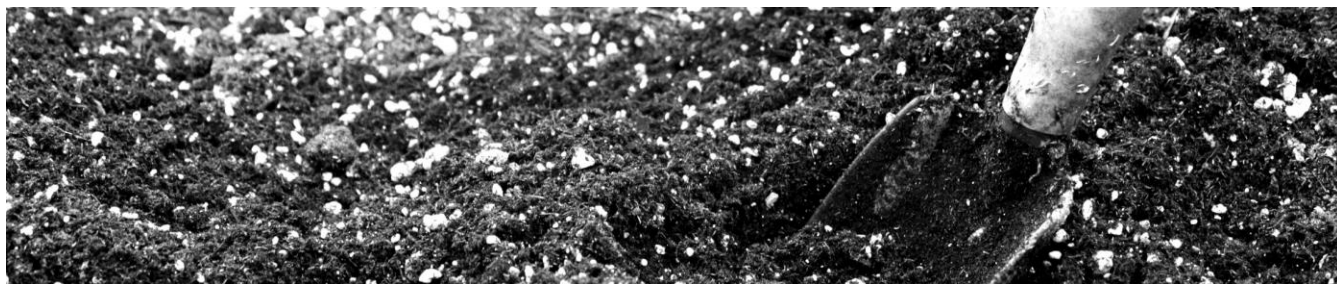
- **Fallen leaves:** Instead of raking your leaves to the curb in the fall, use them to mulch your paths and protect your garden beds in winter.
- **Wood chips from landscapers and tree companies:** Local tree companies and landscape companies need to pay to get rid of the wood chips they grind up when they cut down trees. Look up companies in the Yellow Pages or online and ask if they will dump the wood chips in your garden instead of hauling them to the landfill.

SEEDS & STARTS

- **SNAP program:** Use food stamp (SNAP) benefits to buy plant seeds and starts. For information, visit www.snapgardens.org
- **Stores:** Look for seed sales at big box stores every winter (usually around February). Ask about coupons.
- **Online seed companies:** Many offer online specials or sales.
- **Nurseries:** Look for plant starts on sale at local nurseries in summer.
- **Fulfill:** Ask about free seeds or starts.

SOIL & COMPOST

- **Big-box stores and nurseries:** Check the clearance rack for torn bags at nurseries and big box stores. Also ask about coupons.
- **Bulk soil suppliers.** Buying soil or compost in bulk is less expensive than buying it in bags. You can usually pick it up or arrange for delivery. Check with your local waste disposal company or a bulk soil supplier to learn about bulk soil delivery.
- **Google:** Type in “free dirt,” “free soil,” “dirt fill exchange,” or “free compost” and the name of your town. Follow the links to see what you can find!
- **Local landscaping companies:** Companies are sometimes willing to deliver extra soil left over from projects. Search for companies online or in the Yellow Pages. Be sure to ask where the soil came from, and whether it might be contaminated with lead or anything else harmful.

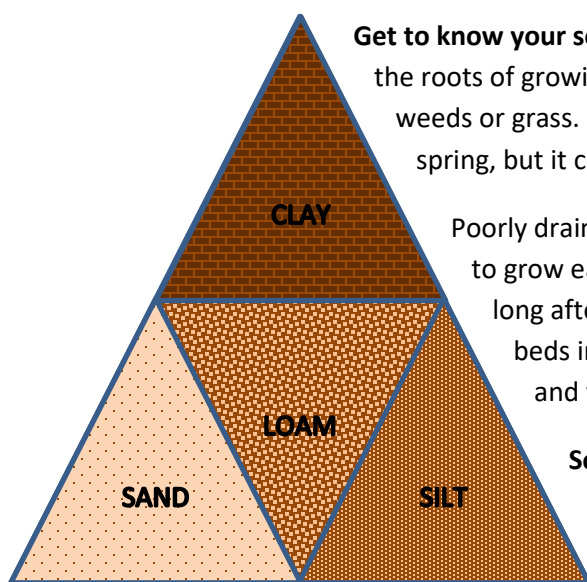


Getting Started with Healthy Soil

IMPORTANCE OF CHOOSING YOUR SITE

Choosing the right place for your garden is just as important as choosing the vegetables you will grow. All vegetables need sunlight, fertile, well-drained soil, but a garden must be convenient for the gardener too. When picking a site, think about these five things: the amount of sunlight, what the soil is like, how the air flows, whether the spot is convenient for you, and if there are any problem areas.

Select for sunlight. An open, south facing, gradual slope is best. If cannot find a spot like that, any shade free location will do. All vegetables need at least six hours of sunshine, and some need a lot more. Not enough sunlight will weaken your crops no matter how much care you give them.



Get to know your soil. Good gardening soil is loose enough so air can get to the roots of growing plants. It is fertile enough to grow a good crop of weeds or grass. Good soil dries out enough so that it warms early in spring, but it can still hold water for several days in summer heat.

Poorly drained soil stays wet and cold later into spring, making it hard to grow early-season vegetables. If your soil is heavy and stays wet long after the rain stops, you could grow your vegetables in raised beds instead. Beds that are raised off the ground drain faster and warm up earlier in spring.

Soil testing. Consider testing your soil when you are starting a new garden. A soil test can measure your soil's pH and the amounts of nutrients in your soil before you begin planting. The pH number tells you how acidic or



alkaline your soil is. Vegetable gardens are most productive when the soil is slightly acidic, between pH 6.0 and 7.0. You may want to have your soil tested every three to five years to see if you need to supply any nutrients to your soil. [RCE Soil Instructions](#) & [RCE Soil Questionnaire](#)

Is there good air flow? Avoid a location where there is little air movement. A natural breeze helps keep plant leaves healthy. Diseases like tomato blight, mildew on squash, and mold on green beans thrive in warm, humid air that does not move.

Avoid problem spots. Some areas are just not good for vegetable gardening. Avoid low areas at the bottom of a hill where cool air and frost can settle and injure your plants. Avoid spots close to a creek because the soil may be too wet and the garden could get flooded in heavy rains. Avoid windy areas. Avoid locations near busy roads because automobile exhaust can pollute vegetables. Avoid sites where lead paint might be in the soil such as along a building, under gutters, or where an old building once stood.

BUILDING HEALTHY SOIL

Healthy garden soil encourages healthy plant growth. Many problems in the home garden have nothing to do with disease or insects, but are the result of poor soil. You know the soil is poor if it is dried and cracked in summer, wet and puddled in winter, or hard to dig.

The ideal garden soil is described as **loamy**. Loamy soil forms into a ball and holds its shape when moist, but it crumbles easily when squeezed. It supports plant roots by providing them with both water and air. Loamy soil also drains well, which helps it warm up in spring so you can plant earlier.



Garden soil is made of air, water, organic matter (decayed plant material), and particles of broken rock. Air and water sit in the empty spaces, or pore space, between the soil particles. Loamy soil is 50% pore space. Water fills the small pores, and air fills the large pores. If the broken rock particles are mostly sand, the soil has large pores and holds lots of air but not much water. If the rock particles are mostly clay, the soil has small pores and holds lots of water but not much air. Plants and their roots need both water and air to grow.

Organic matter makes up a very small part of healthy soil, but it is essential in a vegetable garden. Organic matter is anything that was once living and is now broken down in the soil. In nature, soil microorganisms and earthworms break down, or decompose, raw organic materials like fallen leaves, plant trimmings, and food scraps until they cannot be broken down any more. You can add this decomposed organic matter to your garden beds as compost. Planting in raw organic material can harm your plants, so the material must first decompose, or turn into compost, before you add it to your garden beds.

SOIL FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

When plants are growing in the ground, their roots bring up nutrients from the subsoil. Plants are also surrounded by critters that digest coarse matter and make the nutrients available. This can't happen in containers, so the growing medium needs to be nutrient rich. This may seem high maintenance, but remember- you're growing food above cement instead of in the ground.

It's not a good idea to use garden soil as a planting medium for containers, as it can't maintain its health and tends to compact too quickly. You can get potting mixes from nurseries that work great. Some contain pasteurized soil, others are soilless. Both contain additives that keep the soil aerated, help to retain nutrients, and allow for rapid drainage while still retaining moisture. Potting soil is "sterile" and will not contain weed seeds or diseases. You can also make your own potting soil from equal parts sand or perlite, loamy garden soil, and peat moss or coconut pith. Depending on your circumstances, this may be cheaper for you.

If your container garden is going to be on a rooftop or balcony, you should consider the more lightweight soilless potting mix if you are concerned about the weight you're adding to the container. You have to fertilize more, however, as these soilless mixtures cannot retain nutrients as mixes containing soil.

Make sure that the planting medium drains rapidly, but also retains enough moisture to keep the roots evenly moist. Line the base of the pot with newspaper to prevent soil loss.

COMPOST

Good soil naturally contains a small amount of organic matter. Adding compost to your garden beds every year will increase the amount of organic matter in the soil and make it better for growing vegetables.

There are many good reasons to add compost to your garden beds. When you work compost into the beds, the soil can absorb moisture better and hold onto it longer. Moisture evaporates from bare soil, so spreading a layer of compost as a mulch on top of the soil during the dry season helps the soil hold onto moisture. That means you do not have to water the garden as often.

Compost also helps to protect the environment. Soil improved with compost acts like a sponge, so more water stays in the soil and less water runs off the surface. With the less runoff, the soil holds onto nutrients right where plants can use them.

What to put in your compost pile	
Brown layers (high in carbon)	Green layers (high in nitrogen)
Dry leaves	Garden waste
Straw	Kitchen scraps
Sawdust	Coffee grounds
Torn paper bags	Grass clippings
Dry corn husks	Pet hair
Shredded newspaper	Composted manure
NO: Meat, dairy, bones, diseased plants, weeds, or poop from people or meat-eating animals like dogs or cats.	

Making compost. Starting at the bottom of the pile, add brown and green materials in alternating six inch layers. See the “What to put in your compost pile” chart for a list of brown and green materials. Compost piles that have both brown and green materials decompose faster. The materials also break down faster if they are chopped into small pieces.

Continue to add layers until your bin is full or until you run out of material. If it is dry outside, water your pile occasionally to keep it damp, like a wrung-out sponge. Let your compost pile sit for a week or two, then fork the materials from the first bin into the second bin. If you created a free-standing pile, fork the materials into an empty spot on the ground. Mix up the materials as you go, then water the pile. Repeat this until you do not recognize

materials. Total time may vary because decomposition happens faster in summer than in winter. When your pile looks like garden soil, it is ready to use.



FERTILIZING

Adding compost. Your garden uses up compost each growing season, so you need to add more every year. You can add finished compost at a rate of two to six inches to your garden beds each year. Finished compost has already broken down, so you can add it to your garden beds at any time and you do not have to wait to plant. You can make your own compost, or you can buy finished compost in bags or bulk.

Being able to read nutrients in soil will help you with the Soil Test Results as well as mid-season fertilization. Giving plants the right amount of nutrients at the right time is key to growing a successful garden.

Plants need 16 nutrients. **N-Nitrogen, P-Phosphorus, and K-Potassium** are important nutrients that are found in most fertilizer mixes. Plants need them in larger amounts than other nutrients. The three numbers on a fertilizer label tell you the percentages of available N-P-K. For example, 15- 5- 10 would mean 15% Nitrogen, 5% Phosphorus, and 10% Potassium.

Organic and synthetic fertilizers. You can grow a successful garden using either organic or synthetic fertilizer. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Look at the comparison chart below and decide which type of fertilizer you want to use. You might base your decision on the needs of your plants, how much you want to spend, the materials that are available to you, or your personal values.



John Stillman/KC

How to apply fertilizer. There are several ways to apply fertilizer. The method you choose depends on the kind of fertilizer you have and when you are using it. For a homemade organic fertilizer, you can broadcast, band, side-dress, or place a ¼ cup “in the hole.” For a pre-mixed or liquid fertilizer, be sure to read the instructions on the container before using it.

Broadcast. Scatter the fertilizer over the surface. Then work it into the soil with a shovel, digging fork, or rake. To save time and labor, add the fertilizer and compost at the same time in spring.

Band. Use the corner of a hoe to dig a trench about three inches deep and sprinkle fertilizer in the trench. Cover the trench with soil, then sow seeds one and a half to two inches above and to the side of the filled trench. As the seeds germinate, the plant roots will grow downward into the fertilizer and absorb the nutrients. Banding is also a good way to fertilize a row of transplants or to add fertilizer to plants that are already growing.

Side-dress. Scatter the fertilizer on the surface of the soil, close to the growing plants. Keep the fertilizer off leaves to prevent burning. Lightly scratch it into the top inch of garden soil with your fingers or hand cultivator, taking care to avoid plant roots. Water the fertilizer so the plants can absorb the nutrients.

In the hole. Use this method when you are transplanting vegetables into the garden. Put a small scoop of fertilizer in each planting hole and mix it into the soil at the bottom of the hole. For homemade organic fertilizers, put a quarter cup of it in the hole. For pre-mixed fertilizers check the instructions on the container.

Organic and chemical fertilizer comparison	
Organic fertilizers	Chemical fertilizers
Organic fertilizers, such as seed meal, bone meal, and kelp, come directly from plant or animal sources. They are sold on their own and in pre-packaged complete mixes.	Chemical fertilizers (also called “commercial,” “synthetic,” or “conventional” fertilizers) are manufactured in a chemical process. They are sold as pre-packaged complete mixes.
Advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support soil microorganisms, which are good for long-term soil health and tilth • Contain micronutrients essential to plant health • Release nutrients more slowly, so more nutrients stay in the soil instead of washing into groundwater and damaging the environment • Slower release also means less chance of damage to plants Disadvantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrients are in a form that must be broken down by soil microorganisms, which means nutrients are not immediately available for plant use • Microorganisms are less active in cool temperatures, which slows the release of the nutrients • Sometimes more expensive in the short run 	Advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made to be water-soluble, so nutrients are immediately available to plants after the fertilizer is watered in • Sometimes less expensive in the short run Disadvantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually supply only N, P, and K, with micronutrients missing • Do not supply organic matter • Unless the formula is time-released, nitrogen leaves the soil quickly • Many chemical fertilizers are concentrated and very water-soluble, so it is easier to apply too much and damage plants

Before the growing season. Fertilize before you sow seeds or transplants start. The timing depends on the type of fertilizer you are using. In the first year of a new garden, fertilize about a month before you sow seeds or transplants in spring. This gives the soil microorganisms time to break down the fertilizer into a form that the plants can use. After a season or two of organic gardening, you will be able to fertilize at planting time without needing to wait. For “in the hole” fertilizer applications, fertilize when you transplant your plants.

During the growing season. Plants need nitrogen for healthy growth. If your plants look pale green or yellow and their growth slows down about four to five weeks after planting, they may need more nitrogen. Side-dress a small amount of quick-release nitrogen fertilizer, like fish emulsion, and then water the plants. Do not give extra nitrogen to plants grown for their fruits like tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and peas. That extra dose of nitrogen can make these plants produce only leaves and no fruit.

Fertilizing with containers. Containers also lose nutrients quickly. Liquid fish emulsion or liquid seaweed are good fertilizers for container gardens. Follow the instructions on the container for the amount to use. Containers should be fertilized once a week after the plant is firmly established. This might seem like a lot, but it’s one of the things we do to make up for the fact that plants are growing in places besides the actual ground.

IMPROVING AND PROTECTING SOIL HEALTH

As you add more compost each year, you will see your soil improve. It will be more fertile, easier to dig, and will drain better. Your soil will keep improving as long as you protect it.

Protecting your soil in winter. If you are not growing a winter crop, you can use the fall and winter to improve your soil by mulching or growing a cover crop.



Mulching. Mulch is any material that you spread on top of the soil to stop weeds and protect roots. Types of mulch include black or clear plastic, and organic materials like newspaper, cardboard, chopped leaves, straw, and compost. Organic mulches help improve the soil when they break down. Spread a thick layer (four to six inches) of organic mulch over the beds and paths at the end of the growing season. The mulch will keep down winter and spring weeds, and prevent soil compaction during the long winter season. In spring, you can mix the mulch into the beds if it has broken down into compost. If the mulch has not broken down over the winter, pull it off the beds before planting.

During the growing season, you can also spread mulch around the base of plants to keep water in the soil and prevent weeds from growing. Except for finished compost, do not let the mulch sit right up against the

plant stems.

Cover Crop. Also, called “green manure,” cover crops are placeholder crops that you plant during the offseason and then cut down before planting a crop for harvest. Cover crops help build up soil nutrients and prevent erosion. Planting cover crops is an easy, inexpensive way to build better soil for gardening. Gardeners usually grow cover crops in fall and winter, and remove them in spring. As they grow and cover the soil, cover crops help reduce the impact of heavy rains, which can compost garden soil or wash it away. The roots of cover crops loosen heavy soil and improve the movement of air and water in the soil. Legume cover crops, like field peas and vetch, add nitrogen to the soil. When you turn cover crops under, you are adding organic material to the soil and improving soil structure and fertility.



You can plant cover crops in your garden from about mid-August through early October. Austrian field peas, fava beans, and hairy vetch make good cover crops for the home garden. Plant the seeds early enough so the cover crops are well established before cold weather arrives. If vegetable crops are still growing in your garden you can sow your cover crop seeds between the rows.

In spring, when the soil dries out a bit but before the cover crop begins to flower pull out the cover crop or cut it down to the ground. You can use the pulled cover crop to build a compost pile, or you can dig or till it into the soil. If you decide to dig or till in your cover crop, do it at least three weeks before you planting so it has time to decompose.

Protecting soil life. As you add compost over time, you will not need to dig or turn the soil as much. Your soil will begin to build an ecosystem of healthy fungi and bacteria, roots, fibers, plant debris, air pockets, and soil particles. This will help loosen the soil, improve drainage, and increase air circulation in the soil.

Digging, tilling, or turning healthy garden soil can disturb the soil's natural structure and cause soil erosion and compaction. When you spread finished compost over a healthy, established garden bed, you can wiggle a digging fork in the soil to work in the compost instead of tilling or turning it under with a shovel. You can also lay finished compost on top of the bed and plant directly in it.

Container Gardening. If you have decided to garden using containers there are some steps you want to take to ensure your plants stay healthy. When choosing a container make sure no toxic material has previously been inside and the drainage holes are at the bottom. There should be enough space provided for the roots and soil of your fully grown plant. We recommend cleaning a used or recycled container with soapy water followed by a disinfectant solution of one part bleach to nine parts water.

At the end of the season, compost your remaining materials and thoroughly clean containers as described above. When preparing container gardens for the new growing season, it is good practice to revitalize the soil each season by adding compost so that your plants will get the nutrients they need to reach their full maturity the next season. To maintain a healthy garden you should plant using a soil

Garden soil recipe for larger containers:	recipe and water only when the top of the soil is dry to the touch. Peat can be	Garden soil recipe for small containers:
+ One part mature compost		+ One part peat moss
+ One part perlite		+ One part perlite
+ One part garden soil		+ One part mature compost

especially beneficial when using the small seed starting containers, because of its excellent water and nutrient holding capacity. The low pH of peat can balance the high pH of composts, soils, and high alkaline tap water.

*Cornell Cooperative Extension

Class activity: Soil

Use a soil sample that you brought from home.

1. Describe your soil's characteristics.

Things to look for: color, smell, texture, moisture, bugs or worms, plant debris

2. What are some of the main components of healthy soil?

3. What is organic matter?

Class activity: Container depth *Reference pages 15-16*

For each size of container, write a list of vegetables that can grow in that size pot.

6 in. deep



8 in. deep



10 in. deep



3 gallon pot



5 gallon pot



Class activity: Compost *Reference pages 35-38*

Work in pairs:

1. What are the main components of compost?

2. Create a list of the materials you can use to make compost at home.
Discuss if they would go in the green or brown category, and why.

Greens	Browns

3. Do you compost? If so, do you have any tips for the class or did you get any tips from the class?



Planting Your Garden

SEEDS OR TRANSPLANTS?

Before planting your garden, you must decide which crops to seed directly into the soil and which crops to transplant into the garden as plant starts.

Seeds can be less expensive than planting starts, so direct seeding can give you more plants for less money. Seeds also give you a bigger choice of plant varieties, because most stores have space for only a few varieties of plant starts.

Transplanting has its advantages too. Many favorite summer crops need a longer growing season than we have in New Jersey. Plant starts for these crops are grown in a warm greenhouse, so they get a jump on the growing season. When you transplant them into your garden, you give them plenty of time to produce a crop before the first frost kills them. Also, transplants are already big enough to get a head start on weeds, while young plants can get crowded out by weeds.

Direct seed (DS) leafy greens and crops with large seeds or long taproots.

Transplant long-season crops likes tomatoes, tomatillos, and eggplant. These crops from tropical or subtropical climates need an early start in a greenhouse to ripen fruit in our short summers.

Many other corps can be either direct seeded or transplanted. These include members of the cabbage family, the beet family, the onion family, and many herbs. Experiment to see what works for you.

Knowing when to plant. Whether you plant seeds directly in the garden or use transplants, it is important to plant each crop at the right time. Air and soil temperatures are important for healthy plant growth, so plants that go into the garden too early or too late may do poorly.

Minimum soil temperatures for germination	
Crop	Temperature (°F)
Beans, snap	48-50
Cabbage	38-40
Carrots	39-41
Corn*	60-65
Eggplant	55-60
Melons	55-60
Onions	34-36
Peas	34-36
Peppers	55-60
Potatoes	39-41
Radishes	48-50
Tomatoes	50-55
*Supersweet varieties are especially sensitive to low temperatures.	

Your seed packet will tell you the minimum soil temperature the seeds need to germinate. Gardening calendars may list dates when the soil is warm enough, but temperatures can change from year to year. Checking the actual temperature with a soil thermometer will help you plant at the right time.

Choosing seeds or transplants		
Direct seed		
Large seeds	Deep taproots	Others
Corn	Radishes	Garlic (cloves)
Beans	Beets	Leaf lettuce
Peas	Turnips	Arugula
Squash	Carrots	Mustard
Pumpkins	Rutabaga	Potatoes
Cucumbers	Parsnips	(called “seed” potatoes)
Melons		
Transplant only		
Long-season crops		
Tomatoes	Tomatillos	Eggplant
Hot peppers	Bell peppers	Basil
Direct seed or transplant		
Cabbage family	Beet family	Onion family
Broccoli	Chard	Onions
Cauliflower	Spinach	Leeks
Collard greens	Quinoa	Chives
Cabbage	Herbs	Others
Kale	Parsley	Head lettuce
Kohlrabi	Cilantro	
Bok choy		

DIRECT SEEDING

All seed packets list the same basic information: when to plant, how deep to plant, distance between plants, and days until harvest. Learning to read seed packets will help you make a good decision when you grow crops from seed.

Buying and storing seeds. Try to buy only enough seeds for this one planting year. Some seeds can last for several years if you store them properly, but they germinate best in the year stamped on the packet. You can store leftover seeds in a cool, dry place like a closet or basement. Put leftover seed packets in a sealed jar to absorb moisture.

What seeds need to germinate. To germinate, or break out of their shells and begin to grow, seeds need moisture and warmth. Soil temperature effects germination. In spring, when the soil is cold, seeds will sometimes rot before they have a chance to sprout. You might be able to plant large seeds like

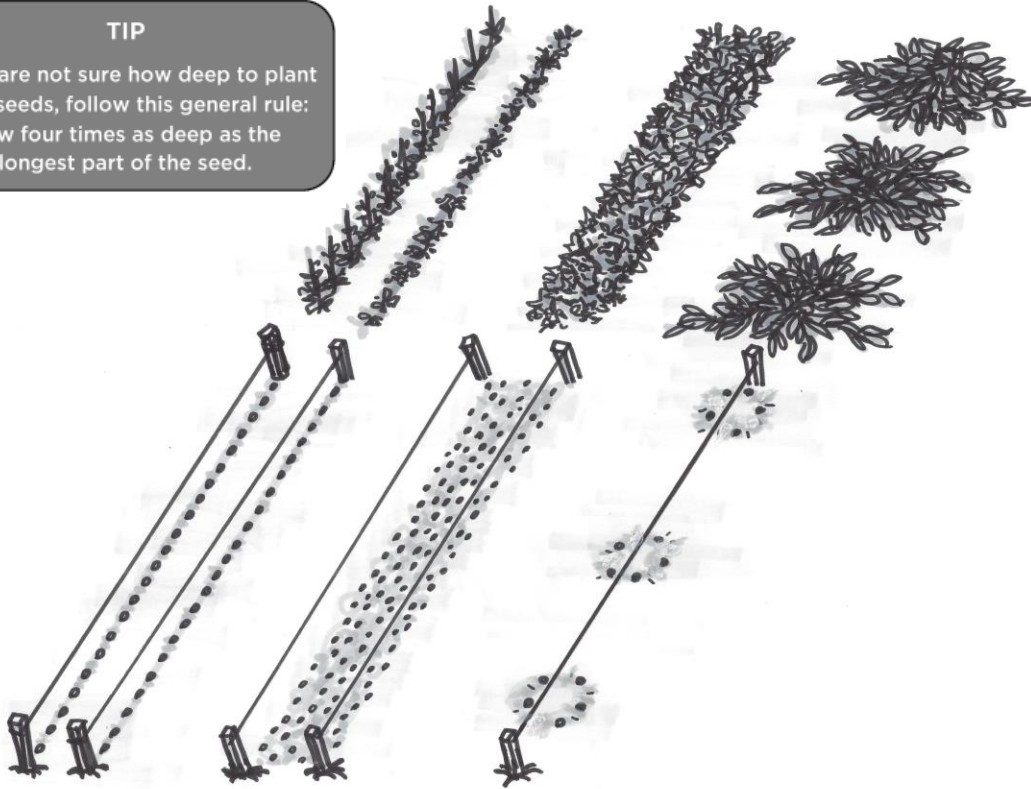
beans, peas, and corn in cold soils if you pre-sprout the seeds.

To pre-sprout, spread the seeds out between two layers of damp paper towels, and place the towels in a plastic bag. Keep the bag in a warm place until you see small roots breaking out of the seeds. Once the seeds have sprouted, plant them as usual. Handle them carefully to avoid breaking off the tiny roots.

Preparing your seedbed. Loosen the soil with a digging fork or shovel, then rake the seedbed smooth to create a loose, even “tabletop” to your bed. To make less work for yourself, spread your compost and any fertilizer you are broadcasting before you loosen the soil. Mix the compost and fertilizer in as you work the bed.

TIP

If you are not sure how deep to plant your seeds, follow this general rule:
Sow four times as deep as the longest part of the seed.



John Stillmaker

Sowing patterns. When you sow your seeds you can choose one of these patterns: row planting, banded planting, or hill planting.

Row planting. Seed packets usually have directions for planting in long, single rows. The packet will tell you how deep the rows should be, how far apart to plant the seeds, and how far apart to space the rows.

Draw rows in the soil using your finger or the edge of a garden tool. You can sow large seeds in the rows one-by-one. For smaller seeds, you can tap the seeds out of the packet or sprinkle them down. Once the seeds are in place, check your seed packet to see how deep the seeds should be, cover them with that amount of soil. Wait until you sow all the seeds before covering them so you can see if you missed any spots. Some of the seeds will not germinate, and others will be eaten by birds or other garden pests. As insurance, sow twice as many seeds as you need and plan to thin the seedbed later.

Row planting works for all plants, but the distance you must leave between rows may waste space in a small garden. You may want to use a different sowing pattern for some crops.

Banded planting. You can sow seeds in a wide row instead of long, single rows. Radishes, spinach, beans, peas, beets, lettuce, and carrots grow especially well in banded rows.

Draw the outline in the soil with your hand or the edge of a garden tool. Broadcast your seeds evenly in the

row. Sow more seeds than you think you need. Rake them in and gently cover them with the correct depth of soil. As the seedlings grow, thin some of the plants to give the others room to grow.

Weeding a banded planting can be more time-consuming than weeding a row planting, because you cannot easily run a hoe between your crops.

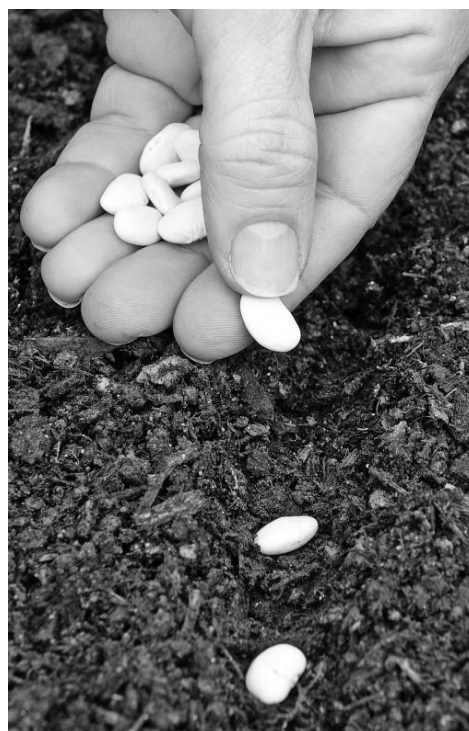
Hill planting. A “hill” is a grouping of seeds planted close to each other in a small cluster. This is a good way to plant larger vegetables with big seeds, like watermelon, squash, corn, and cucumbers. Planting several seeds in each cluster helps you make sure that at least one seed will germinate and grow.

Look at the planting depth on your seed packet, then poke four or five holes in a small cluster. Put one seed in each hole and gently cover the seeds with soil. After the seeds germinate, thin each cluster to two or three plants. When the seedlings get bigger, thin each cluster to one plant. The distance between clusters should be the same as the crop’s footprint.

Planting depth. How deep to plant seeds depends on the crop. Check your seed packet for information. If there are no directions on the seed packet, then follow this general rule: sow as deep as four times the longest part of the seed. If the seed is about a quarter-inch long, then plant it about one inch deep.

But if your soil is particularly heavy, sow seeds only two or three times as deep. In heavy soil, cover the seeds with light potting soil instead of garden soil. The potting soil will make it easier for seedlings to push through. In any kind of soil, seeds that are sown too deep may never germinate. If seeds are not deep enough, they may wash away, dry out, or be carried off by birds or insects before they germinate.

Watering seeds. Seeds need moisture to germinate. Mist or lightly water often enough to keep the seedbed moist but not soggy. The soil should feel like a wrung-out sponge. Water new seedbeds every day or two. If the weather is very dry and hot, you may need to water a new seedbed several times a day.



Seedlings have shallow, tender roots, so you will have to water often until the roots grow deeper and are stronger. As the plants grow, increase the amount of water so that the moisture goes deeper into the soil. Let the soil dry slightly between waterings.

Thinning. When you thin, you remove some seedlings to give the remaining ones space to grow strong roots and leaves. Thinning lets the remaining plants fill out their footprint. A vegetable garden is not productive when plants are growing too close together. Plants that are too close together compete with each other for sunlight, water, air, and nutrients. They are also easy targets for diseases and pests such as slugs.

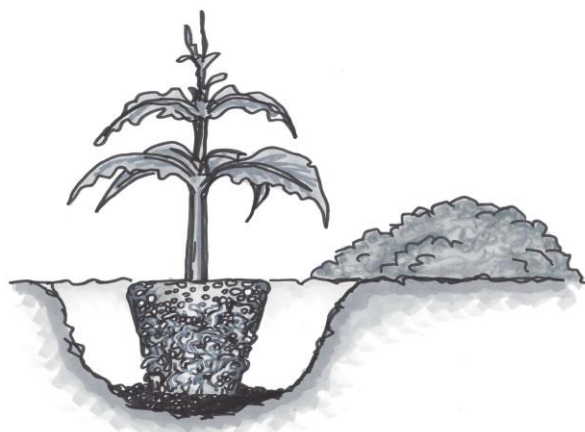
Begin to thin seedlings as soon as plants develop their first set of true leaves. These are the mature leaves, which look different from their seed leaves. Thin about once a week until the plants are as far apart as they are supposed to be for mature growth. Remove the seedlings that look weaker and let the stronger ones grow. Gently pull up the weaker seedlings or snip them off at the ground. Water the seedbed well after thinning to keep the remaining plants from drying out. Some thinned seedlings, like lettuce, beets, chard, kale, collard greens, and spinach, can be eaten as “baby greens.”

TRANSPLANTING

Instead of sowing seeds, you can start off with transplants. Broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, tomatoes, and peppers all do well when transplanted into a garden as seedlings.

When you buy seedlings, choose stocky, disease-free plants. Transplants should have a few set of leaves and well-developed roots. Avoid plants that look yellow, are woody, or are already flowering. Also avoid plants that have been in the pot so long that roots are long and wound together.

Sometimes transplants have just come from the greenhouse and did not have time to “**harden off**.” When plants are hardened off, they are moved outdoors from the warm, humid greenhouse to get used to garden conditions. Harden off your young transplants when you bring them home. Take them outside during the day, and bring them in at night. Also expose them to a bit more sunlight each day. Do this for three days.



Space your transplants according to their footprint so that have plenty of room to grow. Nursery transplants often come with more than one plant in a single pot. If you are able to gently separate the roots without breaking them, you can plant each seedling separately. Remember that even a well-weeded garden will produce less if the plants are too close together.

Transplant seedlings in early morning or early evening to prevent wilting. Water the starts several hours before transplanting them. Handle them carefully to avoid damaging roots or bruising stems.

How to transplant. Dig a hole that is wider and slightly deeper than the root ball. The hole should be big enough that the top of the root ball does not stick above the soil line.

Set the transplant gently in the hole. The bottom leaves should be at or just below the top of the planting hole. Tomatoes are an exception. Dig a deeper hole, cut off the bottom sets of leaves, and plant the tomato so that only two or three sets of leaves are above the soil level.

Gently backfill the hole with loose soil, being careful not to compact it. Be sure that the root ball is not sticking above soil level.

Water the transplant well, but gently. This first watering keeps the young plant from drying out and helps settle the soil into any large air pockets below the surface. You may need to add more soil if the area around the transplant sinks during the first watering.

To make sure that your transplants take root, keep them well-watered during their first week in the garden.

How to read a seed packet

General seed type

Specific variety

Distance between mature plants

How much sun the plant needs

Number of days it takes for the first leaves to come up

When to start your seeds indoors and outdoors, in relation to average last frost date. (Some crops, like tomatoes, are not suited to sowing outdoors.)

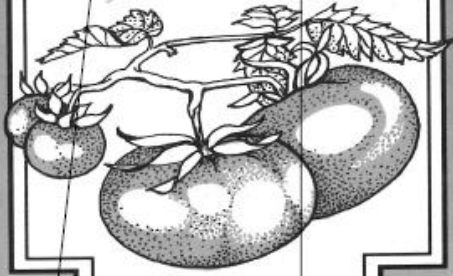
TOMATOES

TM877 Gold Nugget
CHERRY TOMATO

60 days. The compact bushes are covered with golden fruits that have an unusually rich, sweet taste. Determinate habit.

Sampler / 1/8 gram

\$2.65 - Packed for 2010



Territorial Seed Company
P.O. Box 158, Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424

TOMATOES *Lycopersicon esculentum*

Sowing Indoors-Start seeds in sterile seedling mix, 6-8 weeks before your average last frost date. Water lightly after planted and cover with a grow dome or plastic to ensure that seeds do not dry out. When the first set of true leaves have emerged, transplant into a larger pot, burying the stem to a point just below the first set of leaves. At this point, make sure not to overwater, so the stem will have time to adapt in the soil and develop roots.

Sowing Outdoors-Not recommended

Growing Tips-Cover the young plants with floating row covers or protect them with "Wallo' Waters" to help promote good early growth. The use of Red Plastic Mulch can also increase yields.

Fertilization Tips-As transplants, fertilize with fish emulsion or dilute fertilizer solution every 10-14 days. Apply 1/4 cup of our blended organic fertilizer into the soil around each plant. A handful of bone meal should also be added around each plant if the soil is acidic.

Seed Specs-Min. germ. standard: 80%. Usual seed life: 3 years.

Phone orders and catalog requests: 541-942-9547
Fax orders: 888-657-3131
Web site: <http://www.territorial-seed.com>

Thin Plants to	18-30"
Light Requirements	full sun
Days To Germination	6-14
Soil Temp. For Germ.	70-90°
Seed Depth	1/4"

Days from sowing until harvest

Year when seed will germinate best

How deep to sow the seeds

How warm the soil needs to be for seeds to sprout

Seed packet © by Territorial Seed Company. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission of Territorial Seed Company.

Activity: Reading a seed packet *Reference page 55*

Using the chart below, find out what a seed packet is telling you in terms of the crop's growing needs and planting window.

Crop	Varieties	Date to plant	Days to Harvest	Foot-print	Height	Some shade ok?	Planting method	Single or 2-week succession	Number of plants /seeds	Notes
<i>Example: Tomatoes</i>	<i>Stupice, Sungold,</i>	<i>May 30</i>	<i>60-65</i>	<i>36"x36"</i>	<i>Tall</i>	<i>Full sun only</i>	<i>Transplant</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>need to be supported</i>

1. What are some important things to look for on a seed packet?

2. What's a good way to store seeds at home? How could you check to see if they are still viable?

Class activity: Garden resources

Discuss where to find the following things in your community:

- Bark/Mulch
- Fertilizer
- Seeds
- Transplants
- Compost
- Tools
- Land to garden
- Vertical structures
- Trellising materials

Wrap Up for Week 3:

1. What are three things that you took away from this class?

2. What are some things that are still confusing?

Getting ready for next week:

- Bring in a picture (or a drawing) of a trellis or vertical garden.

Vegetables & varieties ideal for container gardening

Cool season: mid-February - April **Warm season:** May - June **Extended harvest:** mid-July - September

Flowering Plants (tomatoes, beans, zucchini, etc.) require a minimum of 6 hours of sunlight per day

Edible Leaves (lettuce, collards, kale, etc.) require a minimum of 4 hours of sunlight per day

Edible roots (turnips, carrots, beets, etc.) require a minimum of 3 hours of sunlight per day

VEGETABLE	TYPE OF CONTAINER	RECOMMENDED VARIETIES	WHEN TO PLANT	NOTES
Asian Greens	Minimum container depth: 4-6"	Mizuna, Mustards, PakChoi (Green Fortune), Tatsoi	Cool season	Fast growing, shallow rooted
Basil	Minimum container depth: 8"	Genovese, Globe, Largeleaf Italian, Purple Ruffles, Red Rubin, Siam Queen, Spicy Globe, Sweet Basil	Warm season	Grows well with tomatoes
Beans, Green	5 gal. window box, minimum container depth: 6"	Bush types such as Blue Lake, Bush Romano, Contender, Greencrop, Kentucky Wonder, Montepellier, Tender Crop, Topcrop, Tricolor come as both bush and pole bean	Warm season	Climbing types work too, if you have a good trellis support
Beets	5 gal. window box, minimum container depth: 10"	Chiogga, Detroit Dark Red, Early Red Ball, Early Wonder, Golden, Little Egypt, Scarlet Supreme	Cool season	Can grow in partial sun
Broccoli	1 plant/5 gal. pot, 3 plants/15 gal. tub	DeCicco, Green Comet, Italian Green Sprouting, Super Blend	Cool season	Choose early maturing, compact varieties
Brussels Sprouts	1 plant/5 gal. pot, 2 plants/15 gal. tub	Evesham, Jade Cross	Plant in early spring, matures late fall	
Cabbage	1 plant/5 gal. pot, 3 plants/15 gal. tub	Discovery, Dwarf Modern, Early Jersey Wakefield, Little Leaguer, Red Ace	Plant in spring to mature mid summer	Take a second crop off a cabbage plant by harvesting the first head, then cutting a cross on the remaining stem which will then produce 4 smaller heads
Carrot	Minimum container depth: 8"	Baby Finger, Baby Finger Nantes, Danvers Half Long, Goldenhart, Little Finger, Minicor, Ox Hart, Royal or Red Cored Chantenay, Short & Sweet, Thumbelina, Tiny Sweet	Extended harvest, succession plant all season	Smaller, shorter varieties grow best but you can eat the ones you thin, too.
Chard	1 plant/2 gal. pot, minimum container depth: 8"	Bright Lights, Parma Giant, Scarlet Charlotte	Cool season	
Collard Greens	1 plant/2 gal. pot, minimum container depth: 8"	Any variety	Cool season	
Cucumber	1 plant/3-5 gal. pot	Burpee Hybrid, Burpless Early Pik, Bush Champion, Bush Whopper, Crispy, Fanfare, Lemon, Marketmore 86, Parks Burpless Bush, Patio Pik, Pot Luck, Salad Bush, Salty, Spacemaster, Sweet Success	Warm season	Look for bush variety as opposed to vining

Vegetables & varieties ideal for container gardening

Eggplant	1 plant/3 gal. pot	Asian Bride, Bambino, Black Beauty, Florida Market, Green Goddess, Ichiban, Long Tom, Mission Bell, Modern Midget, Slim Jim, Small Ruffled Red, Thai Green	Warm season	
Garlic	8" deep container	Most varieties	Plant in October to harvest in following July	
Green Onion	Can be grown in a cake pan	Beltsville Bunching, Crystal Eax, Evergreen Bunching	Extended harvest, succession plant all season long	You'll have better luck growing these than full sized onions
Kale	1 plant/2 gal. pot, minimum container depth: 8"	Lacinato, Showbor dwarf	Cool season	
Lettuce	Minimum container depth: 4"	Bibb, Buttercrunch, Dark Green Boston, Grand Rapids, Little Gem, Oak Leaf (heat tolerant), Romaine, Ruby, Salad Bowl, Tom Thumb	Succession plant all season long	If you eat it as baby lettuce, you can grow lettuce in a very shallow bowl, even a seed flat. Just cut the lettuce leaves and they will grow back. Can be grown in partial shade.
Parsley	Minimum container depth: 8"	Evergreen, Gigante Italian, Moss Curled, Sweet Curly	Extended harvest, cool season	Can be grown in partial shade
Peas	Minimum container depth: 6-12"	Super Sugar Snap, Oregon Giant (snowpea), Little Marvel, Sugar Bon, Sugar Mel, I axton's Progress, Sugar Rae, Melting Sugar, Burpee's Blue Bantam, Early Patio, Snowbird	Cool season	
Pepper	1 plant/2 gal. pot, 5 plants/15 gal. tub	Bell Boy, California Wonder, Canape, Jalapeno, Keystone Resistant, Long Red Cayenne, New Ace, Red Cherry, Sweet Banana, Thai Hot, Yolo Wonder	Warm season	
Potatoes	Pot should be at least 18" wide, start with 10" of soil in a 3 ft. deep container	Charlotte, Epicure, Irish Cobbler, Kennebec, Red Pontiac. Early (new) potato varieties are best.	Extended harvest, warm season	To sprout potatoes, stand them in a warm, dark place with the buds pointing upwards. Fill a pot half way with used soil, then place the sprouted potatoes sparsely in soil and cover with 1" of soil. Water well and wait for foliage to appear. Feel around for a tuber to see if they're ready.
Radish	Minimum container depth: 4-6"	Burpee White, Champion, Cherry Belle, Comet, Early Scarlet, French Breakfast, Icicle, Scarlet Globe, Sparkler	Cool season	Consider inter-planting these in pots among other slower growing vegetables (such as carrots or tomatoes); they'll be ready to harvest by the time the other plants need more space. Can be grown in partial shade.
Spinach	Minimum container depth: 8"	America, Avon Hybrid, Dark Green Bloomsdale, Melody	Extended harvest, cool season	
Summer Squash	1 plant/5 gal. pot	Baby Crookneck, Creamy, Diplomat, Dixie, Early Prolific Straightneck, Gold Neck, Golden Nugget, Gold Rush, Scallopini, Senator, (Green) Zucco, most Zucchini varieties	Warm season	Squash can really vary on how compact the plants are. Try for these varieties or anything that lists compact growing.
Tomatoes	1 plant/5 gal. pot bushel baskets	Better Boy VFN, Burpee's Pixie, Early Girl, Patio, Pixie, Red Robin, Saladette, Small Fry, Spring Giant, Sugar Lump, Sweet 100, Tiny Tim, Toy Boy, Tumblin' Tom (for hanging baskets)	Warm season	Lean toward cherry tomatoes and small tomatoes as opposed to Beefsteak tomatoes. Also, varieties that are determinate will be a bush variety which works better for containers. If you grow an indeterminate variety, make sure you have something for the vines to grow on.



Caring For Your Garden

MAINTENANCE

Now that your garden is planted, you can focus on keeping it healthy. Maintenance can be the most time-consuming part of vegetable gardening, but it good for your plants and for you too!

Watering. Plants need water to be healthy and productive. As you plan your garden, think about how you will give your plants the water they need. Sandy, clay, and loamy soil types absorb water differently. Water moves through sandy soil about twice as fast as it moves through clay soil, so it takes longer to water clay soil. Loamy soil lies between these two extremes-it holds onto water and drains well, making it the best soil for growing plants.

No matter what soil type you have, your watering should be deep and infrequent. In general, watering two or three times a week is enough. Seedbeds and new transplants are exceptions- they need water every day or two. If you are not sure if the soil is moist enough, you can use your hands to feel for moisture below the first inch or two of soil. If it feels like a wrung-out sponge, it is just right!

You can also check your watering by filling a jar with garden soil and placing it near plants before you water them. If the soil at the bottom is still bone-dry after you water, you will need to keep going so that the water reaches the roots of your plants. Aim for plant roots instead of leaves when you water.



Watering for containers. Container plants lose moisture quickly. They'll need to be monitored and most likely watered every day in the heat of the summer. Also, think about how far away your containers are from the water source.

There are three basic watering methods: hand watering with a hose or watering can; soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems, and portable sprinklers. The method you choose will depend on the size of your garden, your budget, and your available time.

Hand watering with a hose or watering can delivers water directly to plants' roots and cuts down on waste. Water deeply but gently. Remember, hand watering takes time. Be careful to water all parts of your beds where plants are growing.

For leaf lettuce and other greens growing close together, it is okay to water on the leaves. Aim your hose upward so that water falls down on the bed like a gentle rain. Water until the soil stays "shiny" for 10 to 15 seconds after watering. This tells you that the soil has soaked up as much water as it can.

For all other crops, especially cucumbers and tomatoes, keep the leaves dry when you water. Water gently at the base of the plant and avoid blasting the soil, seeds, or roots with a heavy stream of water.

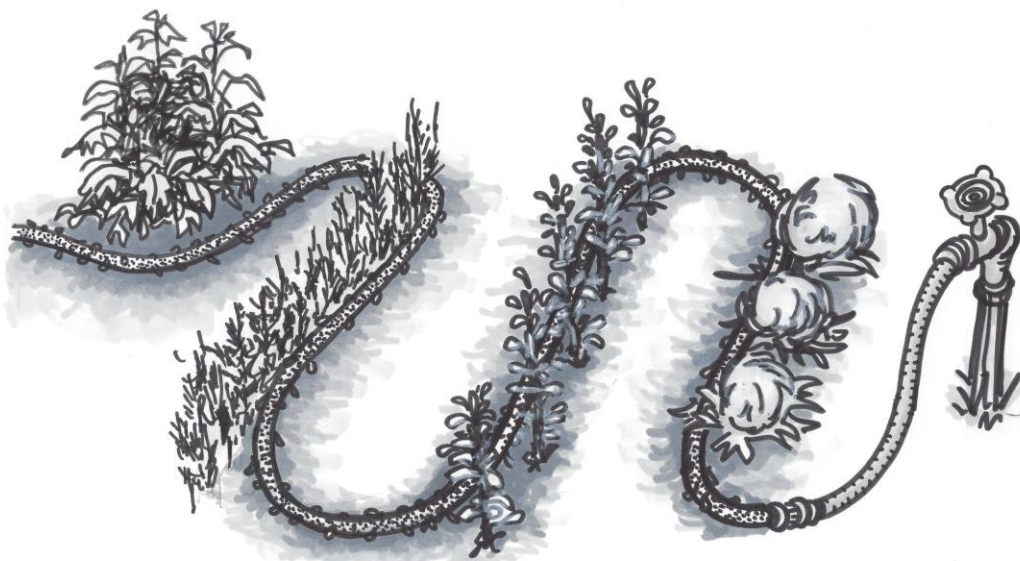
Soaker hoses and drip irrigation are less wasteful than overhead watering with a sprinkler. A drip system slowly places water right over the plant roots. Soaker hoses and emitter drip lines have tiny holes that let water seep or drip slowly along the length of the hose.

Emitter-type drip systems deliver water to individual plants. You can change an emitter system anytime during the growing season as you add or remove plants. A disadvantage of emitter systems is that they can be expensive and difficult to set up.

Soaker hoses and drip irrigation systems help reduce leaf diseases because they keep water off leaves. They cut down on weed by watering plant roots and not bare soil. A typical drip system runs for one to two hours,

once or twice a week. Be careful not to overwater. The surface may look dry even if the soil underneath is still wet. If in doubt, check the soil.

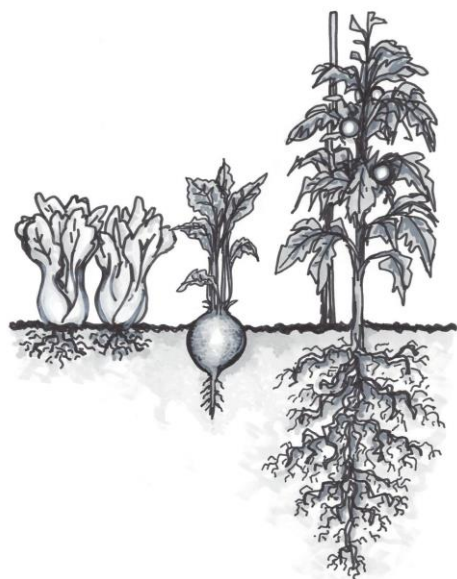
Portable overhead sprinklers take less of the gardener's time than other watering methods-you can just turn them on



John Stillmaker

and walk away. But sprinklers wet plant leaves, so they can cause leaf diseases. They also waste water by watering paths and other bare spots in the garden, encouraging weeds to grow.

If you use an oscillating or rotating sprinkler, raise it above the tallest plants so that the plants do not block the flow of water. If you run more than one sprinkler at once, place sprinklers so their patterns overlap to make sure all your plants get water. If water runs off into your paths, you need to water at a slower rate. Overhead sprinklers lose water to evaporation and wind, so avoid using them in windy weather.



How often to water. No matter how you water your garden the goal is to water the roots of your plants at about the same rate that the soil dries out. Take into account your soil, your plants, and recent weather as you think about how much and how often to water your garden. Clay soil holds much more water than sandy soil. Larger plants use more water than seedlings, but shallow roots mean seedlings dry out fast. Hot, windy weather also dries the soil. Watch your plants to figure out when to water. If your plants begin to wilt, you have waited too long.

Different plants, different watering needs

Germinating seeds and seedlings need to stay moist all the time, but be careful not to wash them away. Water them with a gentle mist every day or two. In hot weather, you may need to water twice a day.

Developing plants need deep, infrequent watering to encourage root growth. Water at least six inches deep, and then let the top inch or two of soil dry out completely before watering again.

Table C-1. Most Critical Periods of Water Needs by Crops

Crop	Most Critical Period	Crop	Most Critical Period
Asparagus	Brush (period following fern mowing)	Onions: dry	Bulb enlargement
Beans: lima	Pollination and pod development	Peas	Seed enlargement and flowering
Beans: snap	Pod enlargement	Peppers	Flowering and fruit development
Broccoli	Head development	Potatoes: white	Tuber set and tuber enlargement
Cabbage	Head development	Potatoes: sweet	Root enlargement
Carrots	Root enlargement	Radishes	Root enlargement
Cauliflower	Head development	Strawberries	Establishment, runner development, fruit enlargement
Corn	Silking and tasseling, ear development	Squash: summer	Bud development and flowering
Cucumbers	Flowering and fruit development	Tomatoes	Early flowering, fruit set, and enlargement
Eggplants	Flowering and fruit development	Turnips	Root enlargement
Lettuce	Head development		
Melons	Flowering and fruit development		

Source: Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Shallow-rooted plants, like lettuce and onions, draw water from the top one foot of soil. Once your shallow-rooted crops are established, allow the top inch or two of soil to dry out and then thoroughly soak the area around the roots.

Deep-rooted plants, like tomatoes, parsnips, and winter squash, draw water from the top two feet of soil. They need water less often than shallow-rooted plants but they need more water each time to reach their deep roots.

Common watering problems.

Frequent, shallow watering. Plants develop roots near the soil surface. These plants are easily stressed by dry weather and disturbances from weeding.

Overwatering. Plants can drown when soil pores fill up with water, leaving no oxygen for plant roots. Too much water also leaches away nutrients and can cause pollution. Make sure your container has enough drainage to not flood the plants.

Waiting too long to water. Plants dry out very quickly in hot weather. Monitor your plants and water them as soon as they look like they need it.

WEEDING

Weeds are just plants growing in the wrong place, but they compete with your crops for sunlight, water, nutrients, and space to grow. This can be a big problem especially when your crops are still young and small.

Weeds can also bring pests and diseases into your garden. By controlling weeds you give your plants a better chance to succeed.

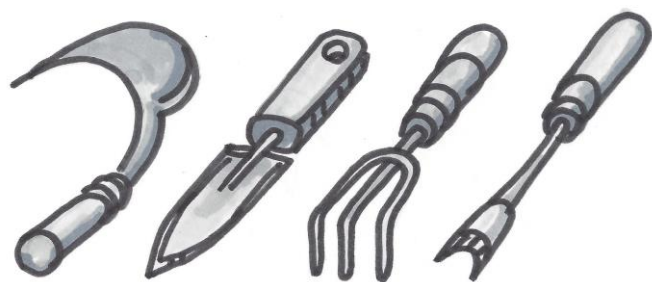
Weed seeds can stay alive for years and will come to the surface when you begin to work the soil. Removing weeds before they make seeds will save you time and work in the years to come. The easiest way to control weeds is to stop them from getting started in the first place. Begin with a well-prepared seedbed which means getting rid of all weeds before you plant. There are many ways to keep your garden weed-free. Try a few of them to see what works best for you.



Organic mulches. Straw, compost, or shredded leaves are examples of organic mulches. These mulches also add organic matter to the soil as they break down. To go a step further you can first place a few layers of newspaper or cardboard. Organic mulches keep the soil loose, so weeds that do come up are easier to pull.

Certain leaves to stay away from are walnut and oak. Also, make sure that you are using straw rather than hay.

Plastic mulch or landscape fabric. Plastic mulch has the ability to warm the soil for early transplanting as well as block sunlight from potential weed competition. Landscape fabric does have the benefit however of letting moisture pass through to the soil for hand watering or sprinkler irrigation. Cut holes in the plastic or fabric for your plants to grow through and make the openings big enough for watering by hand. If you are using drip irrigation or soaker hoses place the tubing on the soil before laying down the plastic or fabric.



Water management. Just like crops, weeds need water to germinate and grow. How you water can mean more weeds or fewer weeds. Drip irrigation, soaker hoses, and careful hand watering all put water close to your plants and leave unplanted soil dry. That means fewer weeds will grow. Sprinklers water a large area, including unplanted soil.

Close spacing. When plants are as close together as they can be, their outer leaves touch and form an umbrella that shades out weeds. On the other hand, close spacing can make it harder to find weeds that do grow. Also, you need to pull weeds by hand because hoeing could damage your crop.

Mowing. Keep grass cut and get rid of any weeds growing near your vegetable garden. You do not want grasses and weeds to make seeds which could drift into the garden.

Cover crops. Plant a cover crop every winter. This will help the soil hold onto nutrients and stop weeds from growing in the bare soil during winter.

Rotation. Crop rotation can reduce weed problems. Group crops by family and rotate them into new sections of your garden every year.



Using transplants. Transplants have a head start against weed seeds.

Cultivation. Despite your best efforts you cannot avoid at least some weeds. The best approach is to weed early and often. Young, tender weeds are easy to hoe, hand pull, or till. Remove them during the heat of the day between watering. Do not let them grow because large weeds are harder to get rid of.

Methods of cultivation

Hand pulling and hand digging work well in small gardens. A hoe, especially a scuffle hoe, works well in larger areas. Pull or hoe weeds when the soil is damp, but not wet. Working wet soil damages soil structure, especially if the soil is heavy. On the other hand, weeds are hard to remove when the soil is too dry. Try to weed a day or two after you water or after the rain has stopped.

Tillers are practical only in large, open areas. They can damage roots or stems if they come too close to your plants. In general, hand weeding and hoeing are the best ways to weed in the home garden because they let you weed close to your plants without damaging the roots.

Disposing of weeds. It is best to take weeds out with the trash or put them in your yard waste bin. It is recommended not to place them in your compost pile as some weeds take root and eventually go to seed. Each season there are a specific variety of weeds that show up in high quantities. It is good practice to focus on ridding the garden of these weeds first and then pull out the less invasive plants afterwards.

Common New Jersey weeds

Nutsedge



Ragweed



Lambsquarters



Wild Turnip



Carpetweed



Mile A Minute Weed



PROTECTING YOUNG PLANTS

Early protection. For the first few days after transplanting, protect young plants from wind and sun. Use newspaper or cardboard to shield the south side of transplants, where the sun is strongest. Use plastic bottles with the bottoms cut off to protect tender young plants from cold and from bird and insect damage.

Row covers. These covers can be used to protect both transplants and direct-sown seeds and provide a few degrees of protection during a cold snap. Secure the edges to protect crops from insects, cats, and other uninvited garden visitors. Row covers come in a variety of materials. You can drape greenhouse plastic, lightweight row cover fabric, or landscape fabric over metal or plastic tubing to form small, low tunnels. These materials will last several seasons. You can also use plastic sheeting but it may last only one season.

Install row covers after sowing your seeds after your seedlings come up or after transplanting. Check underneath your row cover now and then to make sure you did not accidentally trap pests in with your plants. Remove or loosen row covers to increase airflow if temperatures under them get too hot. Also remove row covers when cucumbers, squash, or other plants that produce fruit begin to bloom. That will let pollinating insects reach the flowers.

VERTICAL GARDENING

Vertical gardening is the use of trellises, nets, strings, cages, or poles to support plants as they grow upward. Plants grown vertically take up much less space than plants grown on the ground.

Good candidates for vertical gardening are vining and sprawling plants like cucumbers, tomatoes, melons, and pole beans. Some plants attach themselves to the support but others need to be tied on. Install support structures at planting time to avoid accidentally damaging your plants.

You can buy tomato cages and other support structures at hardware stores and nurseries but many gardeners save money by building their own out of materials they have on hand.

When trellising heavy fruits like squash and melons, tie old cloth or nylons under the fruit to support it and keep it from dropping off the vine.

Keep them well-watered because vertically grown plants are more exposed, they dry out faster and need more water than when they are spread over the ground.

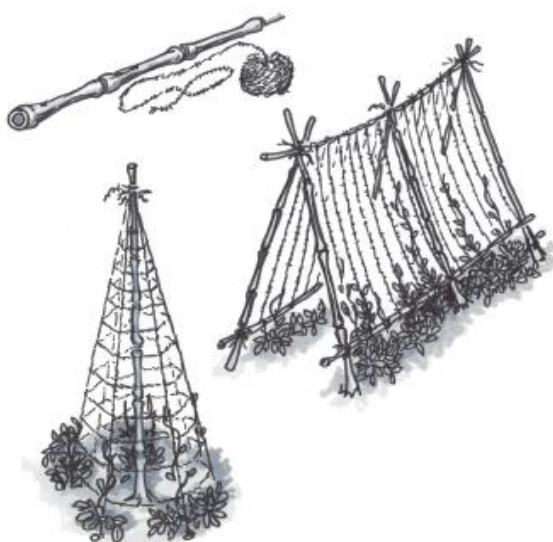
Vertical plantings are tall so they cast a shadow. Locate them on the north side of the garden to avoid shading your other plants. Plant shade-tolerant crops near vertical ones to get the most use from your growing space.

If you are using containers, you can maximize vertical space for climbing vegetables by placing the container next to something climbable (such as railing, some string, or rebar posts.)

Trellises and vertical gardening

Do-it-yourself trellises using common household items

Basic teepee and A-frame trellises
built with bamboo and twine



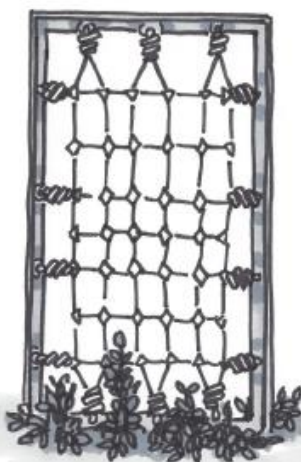
Old bicycle wheels and twine
supported by rebar or wood 2x4s



Chicken wire or hardware
cloth supported by rebar



Old cribs, bed springs, and headboards re-purposed as trellises



Trellises and vertical gardening

Do-it-yourself trellises using common household items

Supporting tomatoes

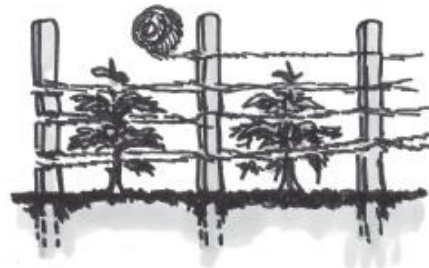
Rebar and chicken wire or hardware cloth



Chicken wire or hardware cloth in a circle around rebar

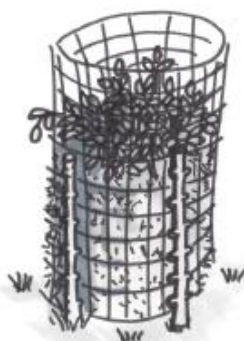


Tomato tied to a single stake



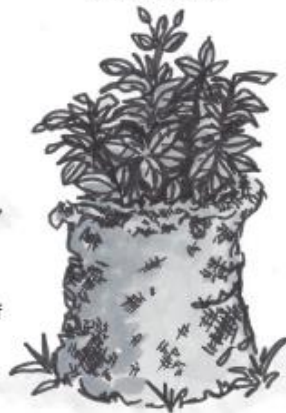
"Stake and twine":
Continue adding levels of twine as tomatoes grow

Growing potatoes vertically



"Potato tower" made of rebar and chicken wire

Potatoes grown in a burlap sack



Potatoes grown in a large cardboard box with open bottom

Leave bottom open and plant potatoes at soil level. As leaves grow, continue to cover with straw or soil. Potatoes will form as stem grow upward. Be careful to keep potatoes tubers out of direct sunlight as they grow.

Class activity: Trellis ideas

Make a list of some of the things that can be used to make trellises for vertical gardening.

Sketch some ideas for your garden site. *Reference page 152-153*

Activity: Weed identification

1. Describe any weeds that you see in your garden:

Show the ones you have brought into class.

2. What is a weed?

3. What does it mean to control weeds? *Reference pages 85-92*

Biologically:

Physically:

Chemically:

Wrap Up for Week 4:

1. What are three things that you took away from this class?

2. What are some things that are still confusing?

Getting ready for next week:

- Bring in photos or live specimens of bugs and weeds from your garden.



Pest Management

UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Integrated Pest Management (IPM). All gardeners have pest problems from time to time. Plant diseases, insects, slugs, and various animals can damage plants, but they will not necessarily kill them. How you react to a pest problem will depend on how much you value the damaged crop, how much it will cost to fight the pest, your feelings about pesticides, and your personal approach to gardening.

Many gardeners do not like to use pesticides because of the potential harm to the gardener, the environment, children, pets, or other living things. Integrated pest management (IPM) is a holistic approach to garden maintenance. It predicts and prevents pest activity before it can take hold, which reduces the need for pesticides. With IPM, you decide how much damage you can tolerate, keep an eye on pest activity, prevent as many pest problems as you can, and control pests using the least toxic method.

PREVENTION

Remember, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Before taking any pest control measures, follow these steps:

Grow healthy plants. The most important way to protect your plants is to give them what they need: sunlight, water, air, and nutrients. Healthy plants have fewer problems with pests.

Choose disease-resistant varieties. Plant breeders have bred disease resistance into many plant varieties. Check seed catalogs and seed packets to see which varieties are resistant.

Rotate your crops. When crops change locations every year, pests have a harder time making a permanent home in your garden.

Rule out other causes for garden problems. Most problems are caused by human error, such as planting in the wrong spot, overwatering, or not using enough fertilizer. Things like a cat running through the garden or a pesticide drifting from a neighbor’s garden can also cause problems that you might think were caused by an insect or disease.

Set a tolerance level. A few holes in the leaves do not mean the whole plant is going to die. Decide how much damage you can live with. You might come to see a few holes as a sign of your garden’s healthy ecosystem!

Check plants regularly for insect damage. If you think you have a problem, check your plants several times a week and different times of the day. Be sure to look at the undersides of leaves, where insects often hide. Catching problems early will make them easier to control.

Remember that not all bugs are bad. Most insects are harmless, helpful, or even necessary to the success of your garden. Make sure that the insects you see are actually a problem before rushing to get rid of them. The chart to the right shows some common beneficial insects.

You can invite beneficial insects to your garden by growing a habitat for them. Some flowers attract beneficial insects. Try planting a border of these flowers near your vegetables. Certain vegetable plants will attract pollinators and other beneficial insects if they are allowed to bloom.

CONTROL

If you find out that insects are the cause of your problem, you will need to bring the pest population back to acceptable levels using physical, biological, or chemical controls.

Physical control methods:

Hand picking large or slow-moving insects, slugs, and snails can keep pests in check in small gardens. Be sure to look for pests on the undersides and in the folds of leaves.

A strong stream of water from your garden hose can knock off, injure, or down small, soft-bodied pests. This works well on aphids, mites, mealybugs, and spittlebugs. The water must hit the pests directly, so aim at the undersides of leaves too.

Use clippers to prune out clusters of insects like aphids, or single leaves that look unhealthy.

Hang netting over your plants, especially corn and bean seedlings, to keep out birds, cats and squirrels. Garden netting will last for a few years before it needs replacing.

Floating row cover is a lightweight white fabric used to cover garden beds. It keeps out pests but allows air, light, and water to reach the plants growing underneath. Lay down the fabric right after sowing seeds and bury the edges or hold them in place with bricks or rocks. You may want to leave the cover on all season. Just loosen it as your plants grow.

Plant collars can protect seedlings from cutworm damage. Use toilet paper tubes, tin cans, or paper cups to form collar around each seedling. Bury the edge one inch deep.



Shiny objects can scare birds away from your crops. Drape shiny ribbon through plantings of tall or vining plants like corn and pole beans and peas. Hang old CDs or place shiny pinwheels in your garden beds.

Chicken wire keeps cats, birds, and squirrels from scratching in the soil. After you sow seeds, place the wire directly on the soil or raise it slightly above the bed. Remove it once the seeds start to grow.

Biological control methods:

Encourage beneficial insects like ladybugs, green lacewings, and minute pirate bugs. They eat large numbers of “bad” bugs. You can buy them online or in garden stores.

B.t. (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) is a bacterium that is poisonous to some insects. When a pest insect eats B.t. it stops feeding and dies. B.t. is harmless to most beneficial insects and is safe around humans, plants, and other animals. You can buy B.t. where garden products are sold.

Companion planting is the practice of planting two or more plant species close together to gain benefits of growth, flavor, or pest control. Benefits of companion planting include pest control, nitrogen fixation, enhancing nutrient uptake, and improving water conservation. Companion planting can take several forms: they may improve the health or flavor of a companion, they may interfere with the growth of a neighbor plant, they may repel or trap an undesirable insect or they may attract a beneficial insect.

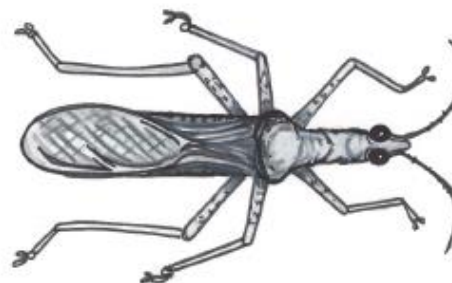
The best way to see how plants interact with each other in your garden is to observe them and keep careful records of your successes and failures. Just as every person is different, no two gardens are alike; your own experimentation and observation will be key to learning what works in your garden.

Beneficial insects

Beneficial insects like these help in your garden by eating pest insects.



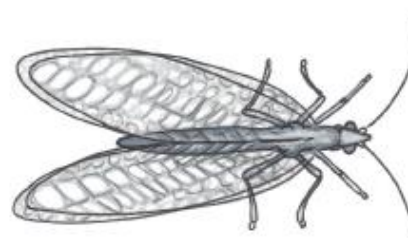
Minute Pirate Bug



Western Damsel Bug



Ladybug/Lady Beetle



Green Lacewing

Need help identifying an insect?
Ask a Master Gardener!

Companion planting suggestions		
Crop	Compatible	Incompatible
Asparagus	Tomato, parsley, basil	Onion, garlic, potato
Basil	Tomato, marigold, pepper	
Bean	Carrot, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, celery, chard, lettuce	Onion, garlic, fennel, kohlrabi
Beet	Cabbage and onion families, lettuce	Pole beans, mustard
Cabbage family	Aromatic herbs, celery, beets, onions, spinach, chard	Tomato, pole beans, strawberries
Carrot	Lettuce, onions, leeks, rosemary, sage, beans, cabbage, radish, tomato	Dill, parsnip, celery
Celery	Onion, cabbage, tomato, bush beans, nasturtiums	
Corn	Potato, peas, beans, cucumber, pumpkin, squash	Tomato
Cucumber	Beans, corn, sunflowers, radish	Potato, aromatic herbs
Eggplant	Beans, marigold	
Lettuce	Radish, strawberry, cucumber and carrot	
Onion	Cabbage family, beets, tomato, strawberry, lettuce, summer savory	Peas, beans
Parsley	Tomato, asparagus	
Pepper	Basil	
Potato	Beans, corn, cabbage family, marigolds	Squash, tomato, cucumber, sunflower
Radish	Nasturtium, lettuce, cucumber	
Spinach	Strawberry, fava beans	
Squash	Nasturtium, corn, marigold	Potato
Tomato	Chives, onion, marigold, nasturtiums, carrot, parsley	Potato, fennel, cabbage, collards, kale, broccoli, cauliflower

Chemical control methods:

IPM focuses on using prevention, physical controls, and biological controls first but there may be times when you decide to use a pesticide. Pesticides can be made from either synthetic or natural chemicals. Some are even okay for use in organic gardening. But any chemical method of pest control raises concerns about human safety, toxicity to beneficial insects, runoff, leaching, disposal problems, and possible residue on food crops.

Pesticides should be a last resort. Use them only if nothing else works and always follow the directions. When choosing a pesticide be sure that it is labeled for the plant you plan to use it on. This is especially important for edible plants. Choose pesticides that are:

Least toxic to you Specific to the pest you are targeting Least harmful to the environment

Insecticidal soap is one of the safer pesticides for controlling insect pests. Soap kills by damaging an insect's outer skeleton. It is useful against soft-bodied pests like aphids, thrips, mites, and some caterpillars. Insecticidal soap is virtually non-toxic to humans and other animals.

Insecticidal soap must touch the pests directly to kill them. It works only while it is still wet and there is no residue after it dries. It does not kill insect eggs so repeat sprays often are needed to control newly hatched pests. Soap can damage certain plants so be sure to follow directions.

Neem oil is a natural pesticide that is effective and safe to use in vegetable gardens. It kills fungus growth on plants. It is even used on tomatoes and melons where fungus can spread too fast for synthetic fungicides to work. Neem is also used to smother insect eggs and soft-bodied pests like aphids, mites, and white flies.

Iron phosphate granules (Sluggo, Worryfree, and EscarGo). The wheat smell of this non-toxic bait attracts slugs. Slugs stop feeding, dry out, and die in three to six days after eating the bait. The bait stays active for about a week or longer, depending on the weather.

All of these products are sold at most garden centers. Other pesticides are also available.

[RCE Pest Management](#)

IDENTIFYING COMMON PESTS

Aphids. Aphids are tiny, slow moving, soft-bodied insects that may be green, yellow, or black, sometimes with wings and sometimes without. They weaken plants by sucking juices from tender growth and spreading disease. Damage includes curled leaves, yellowish spots, and shiny leaves from “honeydew,” a sticky substance the aphids produce.

Why is this pest in my garden? Almost every vegetable has at least one species of aphid that likes to feed on it. Most plants can live with a little aphid damage. Plants that are sickly, stressed, under-watered, under-fertilized, or over fertilized have trouble protecting themselves from aphids.

Control methods: Keep plants healthy by giving them enough nutrients, water, and sunlight. Use organic fertilizers which release nitrogen slowly in to the soil. Introduce natural predators like ladybugs and green lacewings. Plant “trap crops” to lure aphids away from your vegetables. Use a strong stream of water from a hose to blast aphids off plants or crush aphids by hand. Be sure to check the undersides of leaves so you get all the aphids on the plant. Insecticidal soap is a good control but you must spray it directly on the aphids to kill them.

Cabbage maggots. These pests feed on the stems and roots of cabbage family crops, such as cabbage, broccoli, kale, brussel sprouts, radishes, and turnips. They stunt the plants, cause them to wilt during the day, and sometimes even kill them. Root crops with cabbage maggot damage may be too full of holes to eat by the time you harvest them.

Why is this pest in my garden? Cabbage maggots can overwinter in old plant material and emerge as adult flies the following spring.

Control methods: Get rid of overwintering sites by cleaning up and destroying plant debris in fall. Cover plants with floating row covers to keep the adult flies from laying eggs on or near the plants.

Cabbage worms. These small green caterpillars are the young form, or larvae, of the imported cabbage butterfly. They attack cabbage family crops by chewing large, jagged holes in the leaves. The size of the caterpillars depends on their age. They are usually easy to see on stems or the undersides of leaves.

Why is this pest in my garden? Cabbage worms overwinter on cabbage family plants and appear mid-spring. Leaving cabbage family plants in the garden during winter encourages cabbage worms.

Control methods: Older plants can handle some damage from cabbage worms. Cover young cabbage family plants with floating row cover to prevent the adult butterflies from laying eggs on the plants. Remove worms by hand picking. Remove cabbage family plants in fall.

Cucumber beetles. These small but easy-to-see beetles look like green ladybugs with black spots. They chew holes in cucumber, zucchini, squash, and melon leaves. As they feed on the plants, they spread plant diseases.

Why is this pest in my garden? Cucumber beetles spend the winter in protected sites, such as under old plant material, in wooded areas, and in cracks of buildings and fence posts. They come out when temperature reaches about 50°F in spring. In summer, cucumber beetles like the moist soil under cucumber, melon, and squash fruits.

Control methods: Use floating row covers to protect young squash, melon, and cucumber seedlings. Remove the covers when the plants start to bloom so that bees can pollinate them. Take away hiding spots by growing plants vertically. In late summer water only the roots of plants to limit cucumber beetle damage. After harvest, remove old plant material, especially roots and fruits. Hand pick and squish cucumber beetle when you see them.

Flea beetles. These tiny, blue-black beetles eat holes in the leaves of many vegetables. Leaves with flea beetle damage look like they have been hit with a spray of tiny bullets. The beetles are about the size of a pinhead and jump like fleas when you get near them.

Why is this pest in my garden? Flea beetles feed on many crops, including beans, beets, cabbage family members, corn, mustard and other greens, eggplant, peppers, potatoes, and tomatoes. They like small, tender leaves and do more damage to young seedlings than older plants, which have “outgrown” them.

Control methods: Older plants can handle a lot of flea beetle damage without suffering so control may not be necessary. You could plant large, healthy transplants that will quickly outgrow flea beetles. Or you could use floating row cover to protect seedlings and small transplants.

Leafminers. Leafminers are tiny white or yellowish maggots that live inside leaves. You will notice leafminer damage before you notice the maggots. Leafminers feed on the plant tissue between the upper and lower surfaces of the leaves. They make squiggly, hollow tunnels as they move through the leaves. If you notice this damage you can tear one of the mined leaves in half to see the tiny maggot inside. The maggots grow in to adult leafminer flies.

Why is this pest in my garden? Leafminers feed on beets, chard, spinach, and other members of the beet family, including common weeds like lamb's quarter and pigweed. They winter over in the soil near crops that they fed on the year before. Then they come out in April or May to feed on leaves.

Control methods: Place floating row covers over your beet, chard, and spinach plants as soon as you seed them. This will keep leafminer flies from laying eggs on the plants. Crop rotation helps to keep overwintered leafminers from reaching next year's crop. Rotate your beets, chard, and spinach to a new spot in your garden each season. Keep your garden free of weeds. If you find damaged leaves cut them off your plants and put them in your garbage bin, not your compost.

Slugs. Slugs are like snails without a shell. They are soft-bodied and slimy and can be less than an inch to several inches long. Slug damage on a plant is easy to see. The plant has slime trails and irregular holes with smooth edges.

Why is this pest in my garden? Slugs prefer mild winters, wet springs, moist summers, and watered soil. The amount of slug damage depends mainly on rainfall and nighttime temperatures. Slugs need soil moisture and they feed only when temperatures are over 50°F. They hide and lay eggs in place like grass, mulch, soil cracks, rocks, boards, debris, and worm tunnels. Slugs lay eggs after rains start in the fall. It is best to control slugs before they lay eggs.

Control methods: Slugs come out at night so **hand pick** them off plants about two hours after sunset. Slice them in half, sprinkle them with salt, or scrape them in soapy water. In the daytime, turn over the boards and other hiding place and get rid of the slugs you find.

Slugs like shelter during the daylight. Place small **trap boards** under plants and between garden rows. Get rid of the slugs you find under the boards each morning.

The smell of yeast attracts slugs. To make a **beer trap** cut a two-inch hole about two-thirds of the way up the side of an empty yogurt container. Bury the container so the hole is just above the ground. Add two to three inches of beer and cover with a lid. Instead of beer you could mix together one tablespoon of yeast, one tablespoon of flour, one tablespoon of sugar, and one cup of water. Remove dead slugs every day. Replace with new beer or yeast mixture every week.

Iron phosphate granules kill slugs by freezing up their digestive systems so that they can no longer eat. Slugs cause the most damage to vegetable gardens when plants are young. Use the **bait** just before or when you plant or seed. That will encourage slugs to come out of their hiding places. Put out bait again in early fall before slugs start laying their eggs. Bait once more a little later in fall to kill slugs that just hatched. Read the product label before using.

Squash vine borer. The adult version of this pest is a wasp-like moth with metallic green forewings. The name essentially comes from the way in which the larvae bore into the stems of squashes, pumpkins, gourds, cucumbers, and muskmelons. The feeding process attacks the vascular system of the plant causing the vines to wilt and die.

Why is this pest in my garden? The emergence of adult moths from the pupae and vine crops are aligned. Eggs are glued to the stems and leafstalks near the base of the plant. The new, young borers feed on the new vine crops and cause damage.

Control methods: The use of the row covers can be effective in preventing insects from reaching a crop but must be securely anchored down on all sides. When the plants begin to bloom remove covers to allow for pollination. Scout your garden early for infestations, looking for borer eggs near the base of the stem and removing them before they hatch. After each harvest year destroy leftover crop residue and change planting sites for next year.

Animal Pests

Groundhogs. With fencing above and below the ground and proper landscaping techniques you should be able to keep the groundhogs at bay. If they are truly hungry you may have to begin a different approach.

Deer. If deer become an issue in your area it is recommended that you build an 8 foot sturdy, fence. Deer have the ability to jump over low fencing and can decimate an entire garden in just a few hours.

Birds. Utilizing netting around vegetables and fruits like blueberries and tomatoes will keep birds off your plants. Make sure the netting does not interfere with the growth of the plant.

PLANT DISEASES

1. Select disease-resistant varieties, particularly for those diseases that appear in your garden each year.
2. Avoid planting on wet, poorly drained sites. Pull soil up into raised beds if drainage is not very good.
3. Dig or till compost into the soil each year.
4. Grow healthy plants by providing adequate light, water, space, and nutrients.
5. Avoid watering foliage in the evening.
6. Avoid handling wet foliage.
7. Harvest your vegetables before they become over-ripe.
8. Cut off and discard leaves and pull up and discard entire plants that are badly infected by disease.
9. Clear your garden at the end of the season of all plant debris. This should be composted or tilled into the soil. Plant parts infected with especially damaging diseases, like late blight of tomato and potato, southern blight, and white rot (garlic and onions), should be bagged and put out with your trash.
10. Keep weeds to a minimum and control those insect pests like thrips, aphids, flea beetles and cucumber beetles that are most likely to spread diseases.

[RCE Vegetable Diseases](#)

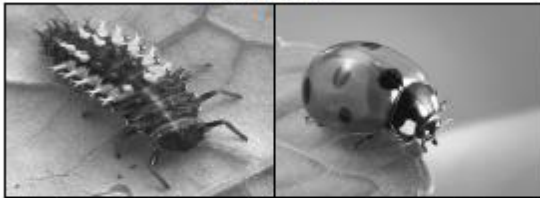
*Consult your local extension agent for further support.

Good Bugs

How to attract them

Photos below show larvae stage on the left and adult stage on the right.

Ladybugs



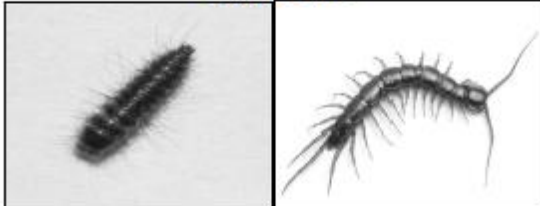
Plant flowers that produce pollen and nectar. Spray a combination of whey and yeast on plants.

Minute Pirate Bugs



Plant flowers that produce pollen and nectar.

Centipedes



Keep a compost pile. They like organic matter. Practice low-till gardening.

Damselflies



Protect wetlands in your area or dig your own pond.

Green Lacewings



Plant flowers that produce pollen and nectar.

Honey Bees/Mason Bees



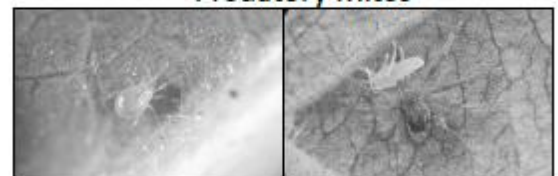
Grow flowering plants to promote pollination. Mason bees are native to the Northeast, and look similar to a house fly.

Yellow Jackets/Hover Flies



Leave nests alone unless they are interfering with the lives of people. Plant flowers to attract these pollinators.

Predatory Mites



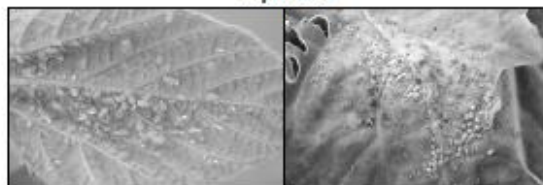
You probably already have some; don't discourage them with pesticides.

Bad Bugs

How to get rid of them

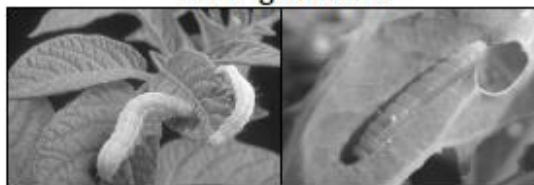
Photos below show larvae stage on the left and adult stage on the right.

Aphids



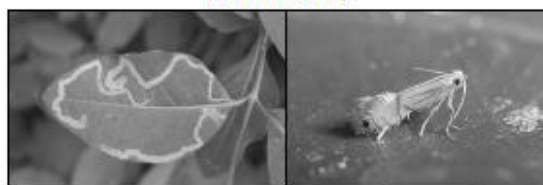
Grow healthy, strong plants. Encourage ladybugs and green lacewings. Spray with insecticidal soap.

Cabbage Worms



Remove plant debris in the fall. Use row covers on young plants. Pick off by hand.

Leafminers



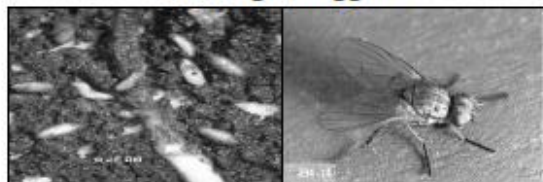
Use row cover on young beets, chard, and spinach. Cut off damaged leaves.

Cucumber Beetles



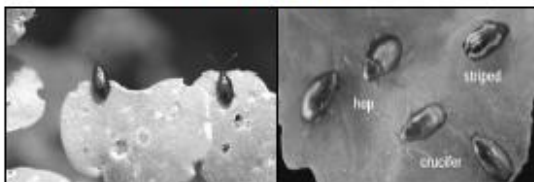
Use row cover on young squashes. Grow plants vertically. Hand pick and squish.

Cabbage Maggots



Remove plant debris in the fall. Use row cover on young cabbage family crops.

Flea Beetles



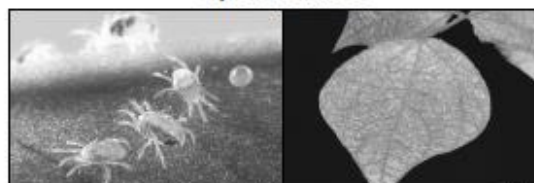
Plant healthy transplants. Use row cover on young plants.

Slugs



Use trap boards, beer traps, trap crops, and bait.

Spider Mites



Spray with a forceful jet of water or insecticidal soap. Predators include ladybugs.

Class activity: Beneficial insect vs. pest discussion

Using photos, specimens or insects you see on a garden tour, break into small groups and discuss the following questions:

Can you identify the bugs? Are they pests or friends? How do they contribute to the garden? How would you attract more of them if they are good, and how would you prevent or control them if they are bad?

After a few minutes, come back together as a class to share what you talked about. Use this discussion to lead into the “Good Bug / Bad Bug” activity below:

Activity: Good bug | Bad bug

Use this activity to recognize what good and bad bugs look like.

Reference pages 148-149

1. What are three things that you took away from this class?

2. What are some things that are still confusing?

Getting ready for next week:

- Which crops do you want to learn more about harvesting, preserving and storing?



Harvesting and using your bounty

GARDENING FOR YOUR HEALTH

ChooseMyPlate.gov, which replaced the Food Pyramid in 2011 recommends filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggests that we should increase our intake of fruits and vegetables and eat them in greater variety.

Eating a rainbow from your garden. The color of a fruit or vegetable tells you about the nutrients it contains and it can help you make smart decisions about what to eat. When you eat fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors you get a healthy mix of vitamins and nutrients. The crops that you grow in your garden are nutrient-rich and most are good sources of dietary fiber, which helps keep you feeling full.



Eat a rainbow from your garden Color-by-color health benefits of common garden vegetables	
Red	Orange & Yellow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy heart • Memory function • A lower risk of some cancers • Urinary tract health <p><i>Examples: tomatoes, peppers & beets</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy heart • Vision health • A healthy immune system • A lower risk of some cancers <p><i>Examples: carrots, winter & summer squash</i></p>
Green	White, Tan & Brown
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lower risk of some cancers • Vision health • Strong bones and teeth <p><i>Examples: kale, chard, collards & peas</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A healthy heart • A lower risk of some cancers • Maintains healthy cholesterol levels <p><i>Examples: onions, garlic, parsnips & potatoes</i></p>
Blue and Purple	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lower risk of some cancers • Urinary tract health <p><i>Examples: eggplant, purple carrots & purple peppers</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory function • Healthy aging

Some information in this chapter reprinted with permission from Robbins, J., W. Colt., and M. Raidl. 2003. Harvesting and Storing Fresh Garden Vegetables. Bulletin 617. University of Idaho Extension, Moscow.

Crop	When to Harvest	How to Harvest	Storage Temperature (F) / Humidity %	Expected Shelf-life
Basil	July- September	Pinch off 4" when the plant begins to flower	ROOM in water	5 days
Beans, Snap or Green	July- September	Thick as a pencil and often, using two hands snap bean off vine/bush	40-45/ 95	10 to 14 days
Beets	June-March	Pull out when shoulders begin to emerge from soil	(without greens) 32/ 98	3 to 4 months
Broccoli	June- November	Cut 5 to 6 " below head	32/ 98	10 to 14 days
Cabbage	July- November	Cut from base when head is compact and firm	32/98	3 to 4 months
Carrots	July- November	Loosen soil and pull out at ½" wide	(without greens) 35/ 98	2 to 3 months
Cauliflower	September- November	Cut below head when 6 to 8"	32/ 90- 98	1 month
Collard Greens	July- December	Pinch leaves off at 10 to 12"	32/ 95- 100	10 to 14 days
Corn	July- September	20 days after top silk forms	38/95- 98	2 to 10 days
Cucumbers	July- September	Variety dependent no longer than 8"	55/ 95	10 to 14 days
Eggplant	July- September	Variety dependent	55/ 90- 95	10 to 14 days
Kale	Year-round	Pinch leaves off at 8"	32/ 95- 100	10 to 14 days
Lettuce	April- November	Leaf: Cut at any size Head: Cut when compact	32/ 82-90	14 to 21 days
Onions	August- November	Pull when tops begin to yellow and fall. Cure for 14 days	(without tops) 62- 68/ 65- 70	1 to 3 months
Peppers	July- September	Bell: Prune when 3 to 4" Hot: Prune when turn color	55/ 90	14 to 21 days
Potatoes	June- October	Dig gently into ground around entire plant.	62/ 90	2 to 3 months
Winter Squash	September- November	Cut 2" stem when skin is hard to puncture	62- 68/ 50-75	2 to 3 months
Summer Squash	July- September	Cut at 6 to 8"	41- 50/ 95	7 to 14 days
Radishes	April- November	Pull at ½" to 1" wide	(without greens) 32/ 95- 100	5 to 6 days
Spinach	April- November	Cut at any size	32/ 95- 100	10 to 14 days
Tomatoes	July- September	Prune when slightly under ripe and almost full color	62- 68/ 90- 95	7 to 21 days
Watermelon	August- September	Cut only when tendrils turn brown and skin is hard to puncture	50- 60/ 90	14 to 21 days

*Adapted from Oregon Food Bank by Fulfill

Food Safety

GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

The best step in keeping your fresh produce last as well as free of contaminants is prevention. Growing, harvesting, packing, and distributing are all areas that the gardener has control of to prevent fresh produce from being contaminated along the garden to table food chain.






Before Harvest: **Wash hands** with soap and warm water for 20 seconds before harvest and when returning from breaks. Making sure everything from your pruners to your storage containers are **washed and sanitized** each day before you begin your harvest is an important step in keeping fresh produce clean. If you're using pruners or a harvesting knife make sure the blade is sharpened prior to harvest.

During Harvest: Tomatoes are harvested much differently than lettuce. Take the **necessary tools** to appropriately harvest each crop. This will ensure the health of the plant so that it will continue to grow or not spread disease. As previously stated harvest most vegetables **before the sun is at its highest**. This will allow the produce to transition better to cold storage. This is also for your own safety as it is unsafe to be working during the heat of the day.

Post-Harvest: Any produce that needs to be cleaned should be **washed in cold, potable water**. Thoroughly **clean and sanitize** all tools and equipment that were used during harvest. Clean and sanitize containers and areas where the produce will be stored.

ACTIVITY

Pick and Pack. Explore and Gather.

Root	Leaf	Fruit	Flower	Herb
Beets 	Arugula 	Peppers 	Sunflowers 	Parsley 

- Do you have a recipe that you are willing to share with the class?

Crop-by-crop guide to harvest, storage and nutrition

In this section you will find basic information about 30 common garden crops, listed in alphabetical order. You will find information about when to harvest, how to harvest, and what each crop should look like when it is ready to pick. You will also find tips on preparing and storing food, as well as nutrition facts.

Harvesting for freshness

At the moment of harvest, your garden produce is at the peak of its quality, nutritional value, and flavor. To get the most out of your garden, try to harvest only what you need for a meal and use it right away.

Harvest in the morning when the vegetables are cool and will take handling better. Try not to bruise or damage your harvest. Keep the food you just picked out of direct sunlight and use it or store it as soon as possible.

Basil

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Wait until basil leaves are about three to six inches long and rich green or purple, depending on variety. Basil plants grow and produce leaves all summer, and picking encourages more growth. Harvest by picking a few leaves from each plant instead of all the leaves from one plant.

When flowers appear, pinch off the top three or four sets of leaves to remove the flowers. Getting rid of the flowers helps the plant send its energy into the leaves. Use the leaves that you pinched off as

part of your harvest.

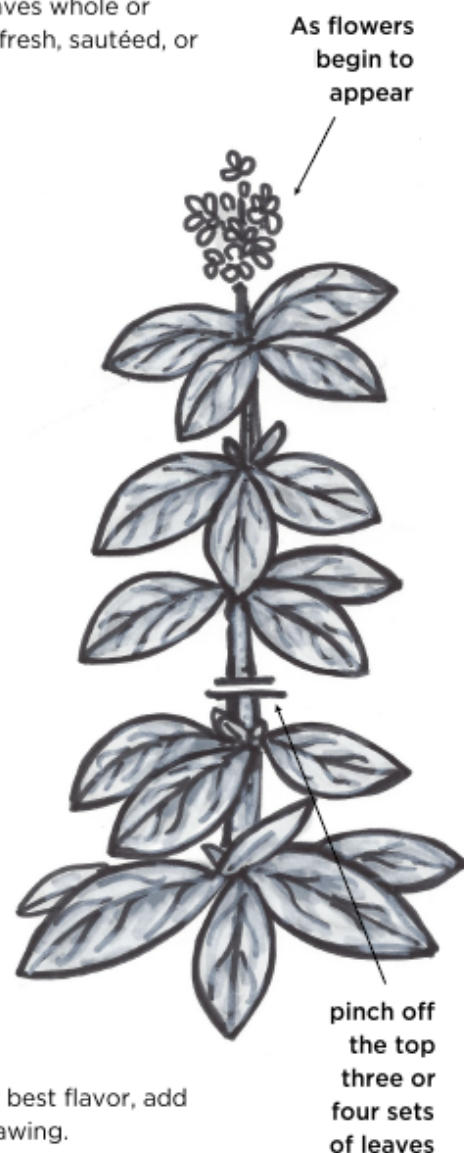
How to use and store: Basil is best right after harvest. Eat the leaves whole or chopped, and use them fresh, sautéed, or baked in many summer meals.

Store fresh basil with its stems in a cup of water (like cut flowers) for up to seven days. Cover

the basil with a plastic bag with holes poked in it, and keep it out of direct sunlight. Store basil leaves in a dry, airtight plastic bag in your refrigerator for several days. At the end of the season, you can hang whole basil plants upside down to dry.

Blend fresh basil leaves with vegetable oil, freeze in ziplock bags, and use a little at a time in fall and winter. Pesto, a green sauce made from basil, garlic, nuts, cheese, and oil, can be pre-made and frozen in ice cube trays. Pop out the frozen pesto cubes and store them in a ziplock bag in the freezer for later use. For best flavor, add the cheese only after thawing.

Nutrition facts: There is just one calorie in two teaspoons of chopped basil. Basil has small amounts of vitamins A and K, niacin, folic acid, and fiber.





Harvest snap beans when they are as thick as a pencil.

Beans, snap (bush or pole)

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Snap beans (also called green beans) come in various colors, shapes, and sizes. In general, snap beans are ready to pick when they are about as thick as a pencil and before the pods fill out. Harvest by holding the plant with one hand and pulling the beans off with the other hand.

Pick often to encourage the plant to produce more beans. Look carefully to find beans that are hiding. If you miss some beans and the pods get full, you can still pick them and eat the soft beans inside. If the pods have dried out, you can shell them and keep the dry beans for replanting next year.

How to use and store: You can eat snap beans fresh, steamed, boiled, sautéed, or baked. Also use them in soups, salads, and stir-fries.

Store snap beans in a plastic bag in your refrigerator for seven to ten days.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked snap beans contains 22 calories and two grams of fiber. Snap beans are a good source of vitamin C.

Beets (roots and greens)

When to harvest: June–March

How to harvest: Pick beet greens just like chard (a cousin of beets). Harvest the leaves one at a time when they are four to six inches long, and leave the root in the ground to harvest later.

Beet roots are ready to harvest when the “shoulders,” or top part of the root, stick out above the soil. You can wait to harvest beets until they reach the size you want. The roots can range from golf ball to grapefruit size. Smaller beets are tender and flavorful, while larger beets are usually tougher and more fibrous. The root should be firm and dark, with a smooth surface. To harvest, hold the area where the leaves meet the root and pull gently. You can also use a shovel or hand trowel to dig around and below the beet to loosen the soil. It is easiest to harvest beets when the soil is slightly damp.



Beets are ready for harvest when their “shoulders” stick out above the soil line.

How to use and store: Eat beet roots raw, roasted, baked, boiled, steamed, or microwaved. Use them in salads, soups, and roasts. Red varieties add bright color to a meal, but be aware that the red color can stain. Use beet greens the same way you use spinach and chard.

Unless you plan to use beet roots right after harvest, do not wash them. Just brush the dirt off and let them dry slightly before storing. You can store beets with greens still attached in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for one to two weeks. Beets with the greens cut off will last for three to five months in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Wash the beet roots just before using them.

Store unwashed beet greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to five days.

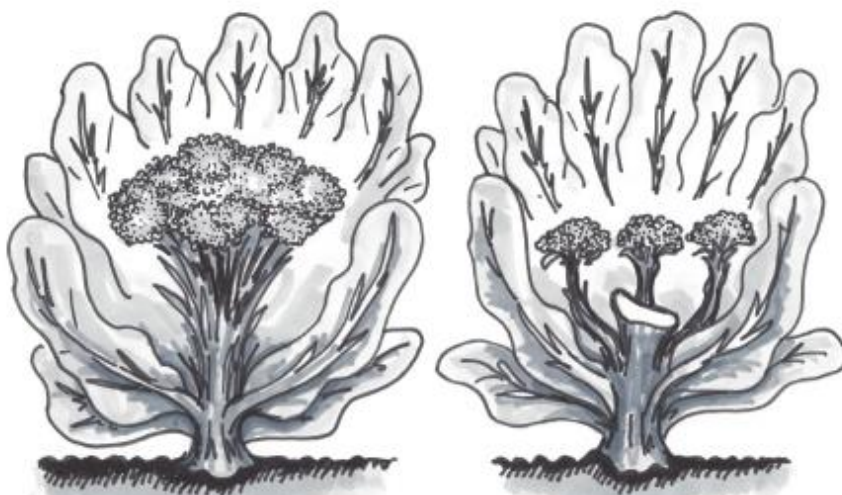
Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked beet root contains 110 calories, 1.5 grams of fiber, and small amounts of iron, vitamin C, and folate. One half cup cooked beet greens contains 19 calories and two grams of fiber. The greens are an excellent source of vitamins A and C.

Broccoli

When to harvest: June–November (overwintered varieties, February–May)

How to harvest: Harvest broccoli heads when they are tight, compact, and blue-greenish. Be sure to harvest before the small yellow flower buds appear. The yellow flowers are edible, but they mean that the broccoli is bolting (going to seed). Harvest by cutting the stalk five to six inches below the head.

Broccoli head and side-shoots



Central head

Side shoots coming up after head is cut

Broccoli will continue to send out smaller side shoots for several weeks after you cut off the central head. Harvest these smaller stalks by cutting them off several inches from the main stalk.

How to use and store: Enjoy broccoli raw, roasted, steamed, boiled, microwaved, or baked. Use it in soups, stews, casseroles, and salads. It also makes a great snack or side dish. Broccoli stems and leaves are nutritious and tasty, so eat them too!

Broccoli tastes best when it is kept cool. Harvest it early in the morning and store it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator right away. It will keep in the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked broccoli contains 22 calories and two grams of fiber. Broccoli is an excellent source of vitamins C and A, and a good source of folate.

Broccoli will continue to send out smaller side shoots from the main stem for several weeks after the central head has been cut.

Depending upon variety and maturity, a head of cabbage can range from softball to soccer ball size.

Courtesy of Billy Cox



Cabbage

When to harvest: July–November (summer-planted varieties, November–April)

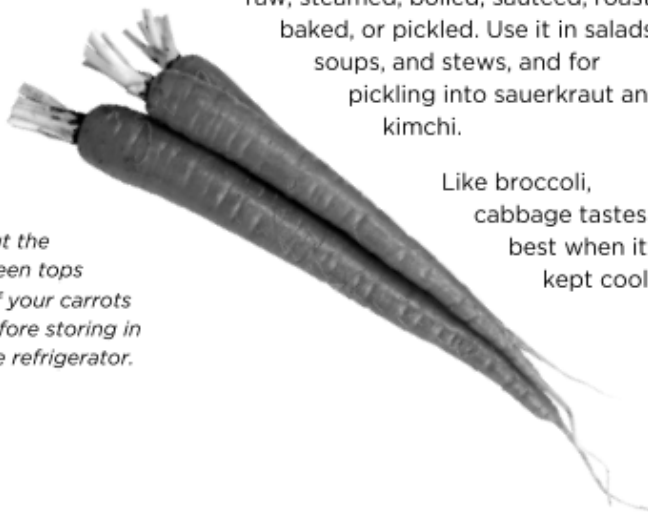
How to harvest: Harvest cabbage any time after the head develops. A head of cabbage can range from softball to soccer ball size, depending on variety and maturity. For best flavor, harvest cabbage heads when they are compact and feel firm, and before they begin to split open. Harvest by cutting the stem as close to the head as possible with clippers or a sharp knife.

After you harvest the head, “cabbage sprouts” (like Brussels sprouts) will grow at the base of each remaining leaf. The sprouts are ready to harvest when they feel firm and are two to four inches wide. Harvest by cutting or twisting the sprouts free of the stalk.

How to use and store: Enjoy cabbage raw, steamed, boiled, sautéed, roasted, baked, or pickled. Use it in salads, soups, and stews, and for pickling into sauerkraut and kimchi.

Like broccoli, cabbage tastes best when it is kept cool.

Cut the green tops off your carrots before storing in the refrigerator.



Harvest early in the morning, wrap the head in a plastic bag or plastic wrap, and put it in the refrigerator right away. Cabbage picked in summer and early fall will keep for three to six weeks. Cabbage picked in the colder months will keep three to four months.

Nutrition facts: One cup of chopped raw cabbage contains 22 calories and two grams of fiber. Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C.

Carrots

When to harvest: July–November

How to harvest: You can begin harvesting carrots when they reach about one half inch wide. Keep harvesting for three to four more weeks as they grow. Carrots planted in summer are frost hardy and will keep growing when an early frost is followed by warmer weather. Carrots get sweeter as they grow, but they can become bitter and woody if they get too large and begin to split.

To harvest carrots, use one hand to hold the leaves close to the base and wiggle and pull the carrot. Use your other hand to loosen the soil next to the root with a hand trowel or other digging tool. Loosening the soil will help you avoid breaking the top off the carrot. It is easier to harvest carrots when the soil is damp.

How to use and store: Enjoy carrots raw, boiled, sautéed, roasted, or steamed. Cut off the green tops and place the carrots in a plastic bag or crisper drawer in the refrigerator. Properly stored carrots will keep for four to six months.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked carrots contains 35 calories and 2.5 grams of fiber. Carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A.

Cauliflower

When to harvest: May–June and September–November (overwintered varieties, March–June)

How to harvest: Cauliflower is ready to harvest when the head is about six to eight inches wide and the “curd” (the bumpy top part of the head) is firm, smooth, and compact. Be sure to harvest before the curd begins to separate. When the curd separates, the head will look a little like rice.

Harvest cauliflower by cutting the main stem just below the head. Leave a few green leaves around the head for freshness.

How to use and store: Enjoy cauliflower raw, steamed, roasted, boiled, or sautéed. Use it in soups, stews, and curries, and as a raw snack on a veggie platter. Boil and mash cauliflower to make a tasty, low-carb replacement for mashed potatoes.

Like cabbage and broccoli, cauliflower stores best when it is harvested early in the morning and cooled right away. Cauliflower will keep for two to four weeks in plastic wrap or in the crisper drawer in the refrigerator.

To blanch, fit a wire basket into a large pot with a lid. Use one gallon of water per pound of cauliflower. Put cauliflower into boiling water and seal with lid. Boil for three minutes. Rinse with cold water and drain. Once dry, seal in a plastic bag and freeze for six months to a year.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked cauliflower contains 14 calories and 1.7 grams of fiber. Cauliflower is an excellent source of vitamin C.

Chard (Swiss chard)

When to harvest: May–December (year-round in mild-winter areas)

How to harvest: Chard leaves can be eaten at any size. When you thin chard seedlings to make space for the crop to grow, use the thinnings as “baby chard.” When you pick leaves from a mature plant, use the cut-and-come-again method to make your harvest last longer. Cut the largest leaves from the outside of each plant about one and a half inches from the main stalk, and let the inner leaves keep growing. Mature plants grow about one to two feet tall and can keep producing for several months. Chard becomes tougher and more fibrous as it ages. If you prefer tender greens, begin harvesting when leaves are about eight to twelve inches long.

How to use and store: Mature chard leaves have two edible parts: the tender greens and the more fibrous stems. The greens cook quickly and are delicious raw, sautéed, or added to omelets, soups, stews, lasagnas, and gratins. Use them as you would spinach or beet greens. The stems take a bit longer to cook. Enjoy them steamed, sautéed, boiled, or roasted. Use them as you would celery or asparagus. To separate the stem from the leaf, use a knife to cut the leaf away or strip it off with your thumb and pointer finger.

Chard is very perishable. It tastes best fresh, so try to harvest only what you need for your meal. If you harvest more than you can eat right away, store it unwashed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. It will last for two to three days.

Nutrition facts: One cup of raw chard contains seven calories and 0.6 grams of fiber. Chard is an excellent source of vitamin A and a good source of vitamin C.



“Blanching” cauliflower helps it keep for six months up to a year.

Use the cut-and-come-again method to extend your chard harvest. Cut the outside leaves and let the inside leaves grow.



Cilantro, coriander

When to harvest: May–June and September–October (coriander seeds, August–September)

How to harvest: Cilantro plants can produce both an herb and a spice. The leaves (herb) are called cilantro. The seeds (spice) are called coriander. If you want cilantro leaves, begin harvesting when the plant is about six inches tall. Use scissors to cut close to the ground. Use the cut-and-come-again method to harvest bright green leaves from the outside of the plant.

When the temperature warms to about 75°F, the plant starts to bolt (go to seed). As the plant sends up a tall flower stalk and puts its energy into making seeds, the leaves become less tasty. Harvest coriander seeds when the plant begins to turn brown and the flowers have become little round seeds. Be sure to harvest before any seeds burst open. Cut the whole plant and hang it upside down in a paper bag. Shake the bag once in a while to loosen the seeds. After several weeks, you will need to “thresh” the dry seeds by beating them in the paper bag or rubbing

them between your fingers. Threshing separates the inner seeds from the hard outer shells (the “chaff”).

How to use and store: Use chopped or whole cilantro leaves to add a fresh, zesty flavor to your meal. Sprinkle the leaves on salads, stir-fries, or meat dishes. Blend the leaves into guacamole, salsa, or pesto, or cook it into sauces and soups.

Like most herbs, cilantro tastes best just after harvest, so try to pick only what you need for your meal. If you harvest more than you can use, place the stems in a cup of water (like cut flowers). Cover with a plastic bag with holes poked in it, and keep in the refrigerator for up to seven days. You can also freeze cilantro. Lay several sprigs flat in an airtight bag and freeze for up to six months. Do not thaw cilantro before using it—add it straight from the freezer to a dish you are cooking.

Use coriander seeds to flavor Indian and Middle Eastern dishes, omelets, rice, pickles, casseroles, burgers, and baked goods. First, toast the seeds in a dry pan without any oil, and grind the toasted seeds with a mortar and pestle.

Cilantro plants can produce both an herb and a spice. The leaves (herb) are called cilantro, and the seeds (spice) are called coriander.



Store coriander seeds whole without toasting or grinding them. Be sure the seeds are dry before you store them. Keep them in an airtight container in a cupboard or other cool, dark, dry place.

Spices lose flavor over time, but whole coriander seeds should be good for one to two years when they are stored properly.

Nutrition facts: One quarter cup of cilantro leaves contains one calorie and 0.1 grams of fiber. Cilantro is an excellent source of vitamin K and a good source of vitamin A.



Collard greens: cut the tough stem away from the tender leaf and cook separately.

Collard greens (collards)

When to harvest: July–December (in mild weather, collards can overwinter through early spring)

How to harvest: Collards are a nutritious, hardy crop that keeps growing in the colder months. All aboveground parts of collard plants are edible at any stage of growth. For smaller, tender greens, grow collards close together and harvest when the plants are six to ten inches tall. Harvest by pulling up the entire plant and clipping off the roots. For an extended harvest, wait until the plants are 10 to 12 inches tall. Then begin harvesting larger, older leaves from the outside of the plant using the cut-and-come-again method. For the best flavor, harvest in the cool of the morning or after a light frost.

Overwintered collards produce broccoli-like florets called “collard raab” in spring. Harvest collard raab by cutting the florets where they meet the stalk. Be sure to do it before yellow flower petals emerge. Leave the central stalk in place and the plant will continue to produce florets for several weeks.

How to use and store: Collards are a hardy, sweet green that you can use in the same ways you use chard or kale. Like chard, mature collards have a fibrous, edible stem that takes a bit longer to cook. Strip the stem from the leaf with a knife. Enjoy collards chopped or sliced

and added to soups, omelets, pastas, and even smoothies. Try collards steamed, braised in broth, stir-fried, used as a wrap with a filling inside, or eaten raw.

Place collard greens in a plastic bag and store them for 10 to 14 days in the refrigerator.

Nutrition facts: One cup of chopped raw collards contains 11 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber. Collards are an excellent source of vitamins A and C and a good source of folate.

Corn (sweet corn)

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Corn is ready for harvest about 20 days after the first silk strands poke out from the ear. The tip of the ear should feel flat and not pointed. The kernels should be plump. Use a fingernail to pierce a kernel a few rows down from the top to see if there is milky liquid inside. But if you can, avoid peeling the leaves away from the ear until you are ready to cook the corn. This will help preserve flavor.

To harvest an ear of corn, hold it with one hand and twist until it comes loose from the stalk.

How to use and store: Enjoy corn raw or cooked in salads and soups, and use it in baked dishes. Cook corn on the cob or cut the kernels off the cob before or after cooking.

Corn tastes best just after harvest, but it will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for two to ten days.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked corn contains 89 calories and 2.3 grams of fiber. Corn is a good source of thiamin.



Corn is ready for harvest about 20 days after the first silk strands appear.



Cucumbers become seedy and bitter as they get bigger, so harvest early and often.

Cucumbers

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: There are many cucumber varieties. Harvest size and color depend on the variety you are growing. Be sure to check your seed packet for harvesting information. In general, cucumbers are ready when the fruit is firm, bright, and green, with no dullness or yellowing, and before the seeds begin to harden. Harvest slicing cucumbers when they are six to eight

inches long. Harvest pickling cucumbers when they are two to six inches long. Harvest lemon cucumbers, a round cucumber variety, when the skin is firm and light green with a hint of yellow. Cucumbers become seedy and bitter as they get bigger, so harvest early and often.

To pick a cucumber, support it with your hand while you clip the stem about a quarter inch above the fruit. Clipping will help prevent damage to the fruit or the vine. Harvest every day or so. If you leave cucumbers on the vine, your plant will stop producing. Clip off any stunted, rotten, or browning fruit to help the plant direct its energy to producing healthy fruit.

How to use and store: Enjoy slicing cucumbers and lemon cucumbers in salads and as fresh snacks. Also try them juiced, chopped into sauces and salsas, pureed into cold soups (gazpacho), and stir-fried. As the name suggests, pickling cucumbers make great pickles!

Store cucumbers in plastic wrap or in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for 10 to

14 days.

Nutrition facts: One half cup raw cucumber contains 15 calories and 0.4 grams of fiber. Cucumbers contain small amounts of vitamin C and folate.

Eggplant

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: The size, shape, and color of a ripe eggplant depends on which variety you are growing. Read your plant tag or check in a seed catalog for information about your variety before you harvest. In general, a ripe eggplant should be glossy and firm with only a slight give when you press it with your thumb. Fruits picked on the smaller side taste best.

To harvest an eggplant, hold the fruit while you clip it from the plant close to the stalk. To keep the harvest going all summer, harvest ripe eggplant fruits early and often.

How to use and store: Enjoy eggplant grilled, roasted, stuffed, or stewed. Mix it into soups, curries, casseroles, stir-fries, pasta dishes, and dips. Raw eggplant can cause digestive upset, so it is best to cook it.

Keep eggplant wrapped in plastic in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked eggplant contains 14 calories and 1.2 grams of fiber. Eggplant contains small amounts of folate, vitamin C, and iron.



Eggplant types vary in size, color, and shape.

Garlic

When to harvest: June–July for mature storage bulbs (garlic scapes, May–June; green garlic, March–May)

How to harvest: After overwintering in the garden, garlic leaves begin to turn yellow and dry out in early summer as the bulb reaches maturity. Garlic bulbs are mature and ready for storage when half of the leaves have turned yellow and half remain green. “Green garlic” (immature garlic) can be harvested throughout springtime, but it does not store well. To harvest mature or green garlic, use a digging fork, shovel, or hand trowel to loosen the soil around the garlic. Be careful not to damage the bulb. Hold the leaves close to the bulb and wiggle until the bulb comes loose from the soil.

“Hardneck” garlic varieties send up an edible curly flower stalk called a garlic scape. Harvest the scape while it is still green, before the flower opens. Clip the scape off close to where it meets the leaves and leave the bulb in the ground until it matures.

How to use and store: Garlic adds flavor to meals without adding fat or salt. Use it to flavor soups, stews, casseroles, pasta sauces, salad dressings, curries, roasts, and marinades. Garlic gets sweet and creamy when you roast it. Roast whole heads of garlic and spread on crackers.

Garlic bulbs will store for six to seven months when cured properly. To cure garlic, shake any loose soil off the bulb and lay it flat with its leaves still attached in a dry place out of direct sunlight for three to six weeks. After curing, trim off the roots close to the bulb with scissors, and wipe loose dirt from the bulb with a dry cloth. Be careful not to remove the outer layer of skin from the bulb. If you accidentally remove any skin, use that garlic first because it will not store well.



“Softneck” varieties have flexible leaves. You can clip off the tops to an inch above the bulb, or braid the leaves together. “Hardneck” varieties have stiff leaves and are hard to braid. Clip the tops to an inch above the bulb. Always store garlic in a dark space with good air circulation.

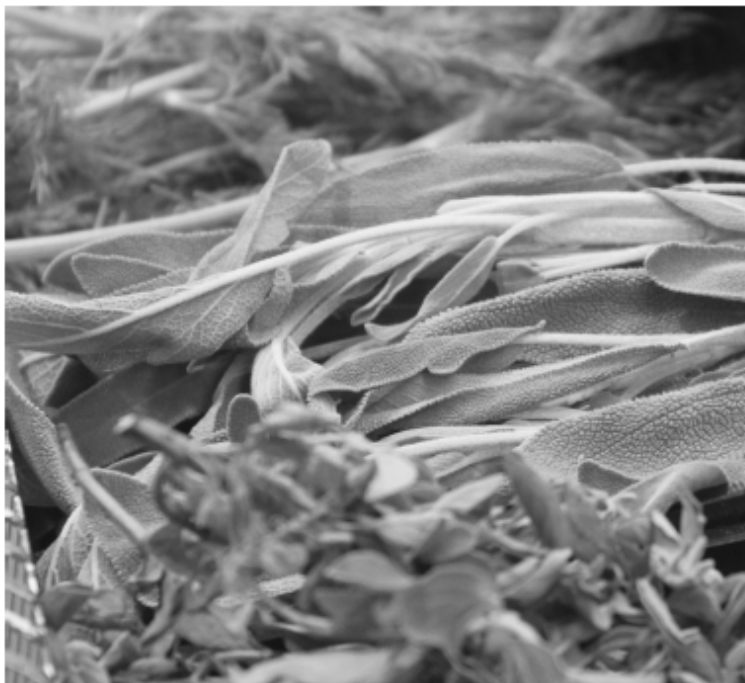
After curing your garlic, trim the roots close to the bulb with scissors and wipe off loose dirt with a dry cloth.

Nutrition facts: One clove of garlic contains five calories and no fat, sodium, or cholesterol. Scientific studies suggest that garlic may lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Herbs (perennial)

When to harvest: Year-round, varies

How to harvest: You can begin harvesting small amounts of leaves as soon as your herb transplants establish themselves. You can harvest most perennial herbs at any time of year. Both the leaves and flowers of chives are edible and can be picked anytime. Culinary sage, mint, oregano, rosemary, sweet marjoram, thyme, and winter savory are most flavorful when harvested just as their flower buds begin to appear, but before they bloom.



Herbs add flavor and depth to your meals without adding fat or salt.

Use scissors or clippers to harvest herbs. Snip just below a pair of leaves, leaving four to six inches of stem below for new growth. Harvest chives by cutting just above ground level. You can harvest just what you need for a meal, or you can harvest heavily for drying and storage. As a general rule, do not harvest more than one-third of the plant at once.

How to use and store: Herbs add flavor and depth to meals without adding fat or salt. Use sage to flavor meatloaf, stews, and bean dishes. Try mint on meats, in salads, and as a tea. Use oregano, marjoram, savory, and thyme to flavor soups, pastas, pizzas, and roasts. Enjoy chives in salads and egg dishes. Dried herbs are stronger than fresh herbs. If you are following a recipe that calls for dried herbs and you are using fresh, just use a little more of the fresh herb.

Fresh herbs will keep for up to a week in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, but it is best to harvest only what you need for a meal. Herbs can also be dried and then

stored in airtight containers away from light and heat. You can air-dry them in a warm, dark place for several weeks, oven-dry them at 180°F for four hours, or microwave-dry them on high for one to three minutes.

Nutrition facts: Herbs are low-calorie, low-sodium, fat-free foods.

Kale

When to harvest: Year-round

How to harvest: Kale can be smooth, bumpy, curly, or lacy, and frosty green to deep purple, depending on the variety. It is a cold-hardy crop that will grow all year, but cold weather improves the flavor. Kale is best when planted in late summer and harvested in the colder months. The leaves are edible at any stage of growth. For an extended harvest, use the cut-and-come-again method. Harvest the outer leaves while they are still tender and about eight inches long or less. To pick kale, clip or twist the base of the leaves closest to the stalk. You can also harvest the entire plant at any time by pulling it up by the roots and clipping off the leaves. For best flavor, harvest in early morning or after a frost.

How to use and store: You can eat kale raw or cooked. Mature kale leaves have a thick stem that takes longer to cook. Strip it out and cook it separately. Cut the leaves into strips and steam them, or massage them with oil and salt to soften. Mix kale into salads, pastas, soups, stews, bean dishes, and stir-fries. Blend it into smoothies and juices. Bake it into kale chips (see the recipe on page 130).

Wrap kale in a plastic bag and store it in the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: One cup of chopped raw kale contains 34 calories and 1.3 grams of



Mature kale can be smooth, bumpy, curly, or lacy. Kale can range in color from frosty green to deep purple.

fiber. Kale is an excellent source of vitamins C and A.

Leeks

When to harvest: August–November (overwintered varieties, February–May)

How to harvest: A leek is like a long onion without a bulb and with flat leaves. Leeks withstand freezing temperatures and can grow year-round. They are ready for harvest when the base of the stem is one to two inches wide.

Dig leeks by pushing a digging fork, shovel, or hand trowel straight down next to the plant. Hold the leek with one hand and use the tool to loosen the soil until the leek comes up.

Growing tip: “Blanch” leeks to make more of the stem edible. When the stem is about as thick as a pencil, mound soil up to the level of the first leaves. Any part of the leek that is hidden from sunlight will be white and tender.

How to use and store: Leeks are milder than onions or garlic. You can eat them raw or cooked. First, rinse them very well because they collect soil between their layers. Leeks are a good substitute for onions in recipes that take a long time to

cook. They are especially good in soups and stews.

Leeks will store for one to three months in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Wipe the soil away, then cut off the roots and the top, leaving just one to two inches of green leaves.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked leeks contains 16 calories and 0.5 grams of fiber. Leeks also contain small amounts of iron and vitamin C.



To grow tender, white stems, blanch leeks by mounding soil around the base of the plants as they grow.

Lettuce

When to harvest: April–November

How to harvest: Harvesting depends on whether you are growing “leaf” lettuce or “head” lettuce. Pick leaf lettuce at any stage of growth. Wait to harvest head lettuce until it forms a tight, compact head. Lettuce grows best in spring and fall weather. It tends to bolt (send up a flower stalk) in hot summer weather, which makes it bitter and much less tasty. For all lettuce varieties, be sure to harvest before the plant bolts.

Use the cut-and-come-again method to harvest leaf lettuce. Snip a few of the outer leaves about an inch above the ground. The center leaves will keep growing, and you can harvest more every week or so. Harvest head lettuce by removing the whole plant. Clip the bottom of the plant at soil level or pull the plant up by the roots.

How to use and store: Use lettuce in salads and sandwiches. Wrap a lettuce leaf around cold cuts. Shred lettuce and use it to top tacos and bean dishes. Try something new: include lettuce in a smoothie, brush lettuce leaves with olive oil and grill them, or blend lettuce into a cold summer soup.

Lettuce tastes best fresh from the garden, but you can store it in plastic wrap in the refrigerator for two to three weeks.

Nutrition facts: One cup of raw shredded lettuce contains seven calories and less than one gram of fiber. Lettuce also contains small amounts of vitamins C and A.

Lettuce tastes bitter once it bolts (sends up a flower stalk) in hot weather.



Courtesy of Elaine Rickett, awomanofthe-soil.blogspot.com



Green onions are just onions that you harvest before they reach maturity.

Onions

When to harvest: August–November (overwintered varieties, July)

How to harvest: Harvest onions anytime during their growing season to use right away. You can also harvest at the end of the season for storage. Onions come in white, yellow, red, and purple varieties. “Green onions” (also called “spring onions”) are onions that you harvest before they reach maturity. When you thin your onion bed in spring, eat the thinnings as green onions. In general, harvest green onions when the tops are about as thick as a pencil. When mature onions are ready to harvest, their tops fall over. When a quarter or more of the tops have fallen, pull all the onions out of the ground within a week. Onions that have “bolted” (sent up a flower stalk) do not taste good.

To harvest green or mature onions, use a digging fork or hand trowel to loosen the soil around the roots. Hold the top of the plant with your hand and gently pull the onion loose from the soil.

How to use and store: Cooked onions add flavor to soups, stews, roasts, stir-fries, and omelets. Use raw onions in salads, sandwiches, salsas, and wraps.

Use green onions soon after harvest. They will keep in the refrigerator for only up to a week.

To store mature onions, you must cure them first. Right after harvest, lay them flat with their leaves still attached in a dark place at room temperature (60° to 80°F) for 10 to 14 days. When the leaves have dried, cut the tops off one to three inches above the bulb. Trim off the roots, and dust off any loose soil. Do not rinse the onions in water or remove the outer skin. Store the onions in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place, like a pantry, for up to eight months.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked onion contains 46 calories and 1.5 grams of fiber. Onions also contain small amounts of vitamin C, calcium, and iron.



When mature onions are ready for harvest, their tops fall over.

Parsley

When to harvest: Year-round

How to harvest: Two types of parsley are common in home gardens: curly parsley and Italian parsley (also called “flat leaf” parsley). Begin harvesting both types once the plants are well established, or when the outer stems are three to four inches long.



Curly Parsley



Italian Parsley

Harvest parsley using the cut-and-come-again method. Use scissors to snip the outer stems close to the ground. Harvest only as much as you need for a meal.

Curly parsley is mild, and Italian parsley is more flavorful.

Growing tip: Parsley is a biennial herb, meaning that it will flower and die in its second year. In cool-summer climates, it is possible to extend the harvest into the second year. To do this, pinch off the flower stalk before it can grow and keep harvesting leaves.

How to use and store: Parsley adds flavor and depth to a meal without being overpowering. Curly parsley is mild. Use it as a garnish for salads, soups, and meat dishes. Italian parsley is more flavorful. Use it cooked or raw in herbed roasts, stews, soups, and salsas. It is also wonderful in vegetable, bean, pasta, and Middle Eastern dishes.

Parsley will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for one to two months.

Nutrition facts: One tablespoon of raw parsley contains 1.4 calories, 0.1 grams of fiber, and small amounts of vitamins C and A.

Parsnips

When to harvest: October–April

How to harvest: Parsnips look like long, fat, white carrots. They are sweetest when temperatures drop below 40°F, so begin harvesting in late fall after the tops freeze back. You can leave parsnips in the ground and harvest them during winter. Protect them by covering the ground with mulch (straw is a good choice). Parsnips get woody when the roots are large and when the plant begins to flower. Try to harvest when the roots are still small to medium-sized and tender.

Harvest parsnips the same way you harvest carrots. Use one hand to hold the leaves close to the base and to wiggle and pull the parsnip. Use your other hand to loosen the soil with a hand trowel or other digging tool.

How to use and store: Parsnips have a sweet, nutty flavor. Use them in much the same way as you use carrots. Roast them with other vegetables. Add them to soups and stews. Grate them raw into salads. Bake them into cakes and muffins.

Parsnips have a sweet, nutty flavor, and can be used like carrots.



To store parsnips, first cut off the tops and dust off any soil. They will keep in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for two to six months.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked parsnips contains 63 calories and three grams of fiber. Parsnips are a good source of vitamin C and folate. They contain small amounts of calcium and iron.



Harvest snap peas when they are about as thick as your little finger.

Peas, snap or snow

When to harvest: May–July

How to harvest: Snap peas and snow peas have edible pods that are crisp and sweet. Snap peas are sweeter after the pods begin to fill out. Harvest snap pea pods when they are about as thick as your little finger. The pod should snap when you break it in half. Snow peas have flat pods. Harvest snow pea pods when the peas are barely visible through the skin. Pick both kinds of peas by holding the plant with one hand and the pea pod with the other, close to where it attaches to the plant. Gently pull the pod free of the plant. Take care to avoid ripping either the pod or the plant.

How to use and store: Peas are one of the first sweet crops you can pick in late spring and early summer. Enjoy snap pea pods raw as a snack, or mix them into salads, salad rolls, or pasta dishes. Add snow pea pods to stir-fries, soups, noodle dishes, and Asian-inspired meals.

Wash and dry snap and snow peas before storing them. They will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for one to three weeks.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked peas contains 67 calories and 4.4 grams of fiber. Peas are a good source of vitamins C and A, thiamin, and folate. They contain small amounts of niacin, riboflavin, iron, and calcium.

Peppers

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Peppers are a diverse and colorful crop. The many types range from tiny to large, from pointy to round, and from sweet to spicy. Colors include red, orange, yellow, green, purple, brown, and black. Harvest bell peppers as soon as they reach about three to four inches long. You can pick them while they are still green and immature, or you can wait until they reach their mature color if there is enough warm season left. In general, hot peppers are ready for harvest when they turn red. Jalapeños will turn red if left on the plant long enough, but they are usually harvested green.

To harvest a pepper, hold it in your hand and pop it off the plant. It should come off easily. To avoid damage to the plant, you can also harvest peppers with clippers or scissors.

Some gardeners are sensitive to handling hot peppers. Avoid rubbing your eyes after harvesting or wear gloves.

How to use and store: Peppers can be eaten raw or cooked. They add loads of flavor to sauces, salsas, soups, stews, stir-fries, and pasta dishes.

Fresh peppers will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for eight to ten days. Dried peppers stored in a sealed container will last for six months to a year. Dry the peppers in a food dehydrator or at 180°F in the oven.

Nutrition facts: One large uncooked green bell pepper contains 20 calories and no fiber. Peppers are an excellent source of vitamins C and A. Hot peppers are usually not eaten in great enough quantity to contribute to nutrition, but they are also high in vitamins C and A.



Potatoes

When to harvest: June–October

How to harvest: Potatoes grow underground, so you need to look for clues to know when they are ready for harvest. If you are growing potatoes for storage, dig them in September or October, after the aboveground stems and leaves have mostly died back. You can dig “new potatoes,” which are just immature potatoes, at any time and any size. Use them right away because they do not store well.

To harvest potatoes for storage, dig up the whole potato bed all at once. To harvest new potatoes, dig up only small sections and take as many potatoes as you need. Gently sink a digging fork four to six inches straight down into your potato bed and pull the handle toward you. Set potatoes aside as they begin to pop up. If you accidentally stab a potato with the fork, use it right away because damaged potatoes do not store well. Any potatoes left in the ground will re-sprout the next year, so do your best to clean out the bed at the end of the season.

Hot peppers can irritate the skin and eyes. Do not rub your eyes after handling hot peppers, and consider wearing gloves to protect your skin.





Growing tip: If your potatoes are green, they were exposed to too much light. This green portion is bitter and can cause digestive problems. Cut out the green skin with a knife. If there is too much green to cut, throw the potato away. The aboveground part of a potato plant is not edible. The flowers and berries are pretty, but do not eat them.

How to use and store: Potatoes add texture to dishes, and they absorb flavors from the other ingredients. Mash them, bake them, or roast them with other root vegetables like onions and carrots. Boil potatoes and dice them into a warm salad, stir them into egg dishes, or blend

them into a thick, creamy soup. Be sure to cook potatoes all the way through, because raw potatoes can cause digestive upset.

Potatoes that you harvest in fall will store well for six to eight months if you cure them first. Place the potatoes in a dark, well-ventilated area at room temperature (60° to 75°F) for seven to ten days. Then dust (but do not wash) dirt from the potatoes. Store the potatoes in a cool (around 45° to 50°F), dark place with good air circulation. Potatoes are about 80% water, so storing them at high humidity will prevent shriveling.

New potatoes should not be stored. You can keep them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one week.

Nutrition facts: One medium potato contains 160 calories and four grams of fiber. Potatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of iron and niacin.

Pumpkins

See *Squash, winter*



Courtesy of Ron McKenzie

Radishes

When to harvest: April–June and September–November

How to harvest: Radishes are one of the fastest-growing crops. Some varieties are ready for harvest just one month after planting. Radishes come in a variety of colors including white, pink, and purple. They can be either round or long, like a small carrot. Begin harvesting as soon as the radishes are about one-half to one inch wide. They will pop up aboveground, so you can see how wide they are. Radishes left in the ground too long become woody and spicy.

Harvest radishes by holding the leaves at the base and gently wiggling until the root comes loose from the soil. A hand trowel can make the job easier.

How to use and store: Radishes are crispy and mild. Slice, shred, or chop them and add them raw to sandwiches, salads, tacos, and pasta dishes. Try radishes salted and roasted, pickled, or dipped in your favorite dressing.

To store radishes, remove the tops about a half inch from the radish. Wash radishes and store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. They will keep for five or six days.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of sliced radishes contains 20 calories and no fiber. Radishes are an excellent source of vitamin C.

Spinach

When to harvest: April–June and September–November

How to harvest: Spinach leaves can be eaten when they are very small or when they are bigger. They will grow to the size of a hand or even larger. Spinach leaves



should be deep green or silvery green. They may be smooth or bumpy, depending on the variety.

Radishes are one of the fastest-growing crops in the garden.

Harvest spinach using the cut-and-come-again method. Snip a few larger leaves from the outside of a plant, close to the ground. The center leaves will continue to produce for a month or more. Spinach will “bolt” (send up a flower stalk) as the weather warms. This makes the leaves taste bitter. If you did not harvest the whole plant before it bolted, then pull it up as soon as possible and snip off any dark green leaves to use in meals.

Harvest spinach one leaf at a time using the cut-and-come-again method.

How to use and store: Enjoy spinach raw or cooked. Steam it, drizzle it with olive oil, and season it with salt. Bake it into egg dishes and casseroles, blend it into dips and smoothies, stir it into pastas and bean dishes, and build green salads around it.

To store spinach, wash it and keep it in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 10 to 14 days.

Nutrition facts: One cup of raw spinach contains 40 calories and five grams of fiber. Spinach is an excellent source of vitamins C and A, and iron.



Courtesy of Janna Tangedahl at Twist.Wordpress.com

Squash, summer (including zucchini)

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: Summer squash is the name for all tender-skinned squash, including zucchini, crookneck, and pattypan. Their shapes and colors vary, but all are best when harvested small, before they become seedy and fibrous. Harvest zucchini when it is no more than six to eight inches long. Harvest round types when they are no more than three to four inches wide. They will still be edible when they get bigger, but they will not taste as good.

Small summer squash taste best! Harvest when they are no longer than six to eight inches.



The blossoms of both summer and winter squash are also edible! Use them as pizza or quesadilla toppings, stuff them with cheese to make fritters, and even bake them into muffins.

How to use and store: Like potatoes, summer squash has a mild flavor and picks up the flavors of the other ingredients in a dish. Slice it and barbecue it. Bake it into savory meals like egg dishes and lasagna. Or bake it into sweet treats like muffins and brownies. Mix it into stir-fries and pasta dishes. Steam it, stuff it, or use it raw in salads and tacos.

Store summer squash in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for five to fourteen days.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked summer squash contains 18 calories and 1.3 grams of fiber. Summer squash contains small amounts of vitamins C and A, calcium, and iron.

Squash, winter (including pumpkins)

When to harvest: September–November

How to harvest: Winter squash is the name for all hard-skinned squash and pumpkins. This type of squash grows during summer and stores well into the winter. A ripe winter squash can weigh from a few pounds to a few hundred pounds, and it can be green, red, yellow, blue, white, or multi-colored. Winter squash and pumpkins need to ripen completely on the vine if they are to store well. When winter squash is ready, the skin is tough and hard to pierce with a thumbnail. Also, the stem will begin to turn from green and soft to tan and woody.

Use clippers to cut the stem two inches from the squash. The attached stem helps the squash keep longer in storage.

How to use and store: For varieties with very thick skins, use a large knife to split the squash into halves or quarters and remove the seeds with a spoon. Place the squash pieces in a shallow pan of water and cover with tinfoil. Bake at 450°F for about 45 minutes. Once the flesh is soft, scoop it out and use it in pies, soups, and sweet breads and other baked goods. Some varieties, like butternut squash, have thinner skin. You can peel them and then slice, cube, or shred the flesh. Bake, roast, or fry the pieces and use them in



sweet or savory dishes.

Winter squash stores well in a cool, dark place for two to six months, depending on the variety. Cure it first by leaving it in a warm location for 10 days. When you store several squashes, be sure to scatter them and not pile them in one spot.

Tip: Do not cure acorn squash, because curing can make the skin tough. Eat acorn squash soon after harvest because it will store for only up to two months.

Nutrition facts: One half cup of cooked winter squash contains 40 calories and 2.9 grams of fiber. Winter squash is an excellent source of vitamin C and contains a small amount of folate.

You can peel off the skin of a winter squash before cooking. Or you can cut the squash into halves or quarters and bake with the skin still on.



Save winter squash and pumpkin seeds for roasting! Clean them, toss them with vegetable oil and salt, and bake at 300°F for 45 minutes. Stir in your favorite spice to add flavor.

Tomatoes

When to harvest: July–September

How to harvest: There are more than 4,000 tomato varieties in the world. Common garden varieties come in almost every color: white, pink, red, orange, yellow, green, purple, black, and even striped! Tomatoes may be large and round, tiny and pear-shaped, or long and pepper-like. The plant tags that come with your tomato transplants will tell you what your ripe tomato should look like when they are ready to harvest. For all varieties, pick the fruit when it is just slightly under-ripe. The fruit should feel firm with just a little give. The color should be at or close to mature color, and the tomato should be easy to pull off the vine. Full-sized, under-ripe tomatoes will continue to ripen after harvest. If you expect a frost, pick all full-sized green tomatoes before they are damaged.

To harvest large tomato varieties, hold the fruit and twist it off the vine with your hand. To harvest smaller grape or cherry

tomato varieties, hand pick each one or snip entire bunches off the plant with scissors or clippers.

How to use and store: Garden-fresh tomatoes are delicious summer treats. Use them as a base for sauces and salsas. Slice or chop them for pizzas, sandwiches, pasta dishes, and green salads. Blend them with other vegetables into a cold summer soup. Stuff them with your favorite cheese and bake them. Skewer and grill them. Enjoy them fresh, sprinkled with a little salt and some herbs from your garden.

Store ripe tomatoes in a plastic bag in your refrigerator for four to ten days. Green tomatoes will store for one to six weeks in the refrigerator. Move them out of the refrigerator to ripen at room temperature when you want to use them.

Nutrition facts: One medium-sized raw tomato contains about 25 calories and 1.4 grams of fiber. Tomatoes are an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of vitamin A.

There are more than 4,000 tomato varieties in the world.



Courtesy of Spencer Masterson



Watermelon

When to harvest: August–September

How to harvest: Watermelon can be difficult to grow in the Pacific Northwest because it needs a long warm season to ripen. A watermelon will not ripen off the vine, so be sure to harvest only when it is fully ripe.

To know when a watermelon is ripe, look for these signs: 1) the green, curly tendrils near where the vine attaches to the fruit will turn brown and dry out; 2) the surface color of the fruit will turn from smooth and shiny to rough and dull; 3) the skin will become tough and will be hard to pierce with a thumbnail; and 4) the underside of the melon (where it lies on the soil) will turn from light green to yellowish.

A ripe watermelon should detach easily from the vine. Simply pick it up off the ground.

How to use and store: Eat watermelon by itself, or blend it into juices, smoothies, and cold summer soups. Pour watermelon

juice into popsicle molds and freeze them. Slice watermelon into salads or serve it with fish, cheese, or salted meat.

Store a whole watermelon in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator for two to three weeks.

Nutrition facts: One cup of watermelon contains 50 calories and less than a gram of fiber. Watermelon is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of vitamin A. It contains small amounts of calcium.

Zucchini

See *Squash, summer*

When a watermelon is ripe, the curly, green tendrils on the vine turn brown and dry out.



Cooking from your garden

RECIPES

There are many resources available to help you prepare seasonal produce from your garden—even if you’re unfamiliar with how to cook it!

NJ SNAP-Ed	https://njsnap-ed.gov/humanservices/dfd/programs/njsnap/njsnap-ed/eat-healthy/
Jersey Fresh	https://findjerseyfresh.com/recipes/
USDA Mixing Bowl	https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/search/recipes
Food Hero	http://foodhero.org/



To learn more about Rutgers Department of Family and Community Health Sciences (FCHS)

<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fchs/recipes/>

FCHS is dedicated to helping families plan and create healthy, nutritious, satisfying meals. Our recipes include fresh fruits and vegetables wherever possible. Each recipe includes a demonstration video. Enjoy!

The following pages contain a few tried-and-true recipes to help you make the most of your harvest. These recipes were developed by the Oregon State University Extension Service Food Hero campaign and by chef volunteers from Oregon Food Bank's education programs. They are just a few of the low-cost, healthy, flavorful meals you can make with fresh garden produce.

PASTA RATATOUILLE

12 (1-cup) servings

Ingredients:

6 cups water
1 pound pasta
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large onion, chopped
5 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 medium green bell peppers, chopped
3 small zucchini, cubed
1 small eggplant, cubed
3 medium tomatoes, cubed
1½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon black pepper
2 teaspoons basil, chopped
1 cup shredded Swiss cheese

Directions:

- Bring water to a boil in a large pot. Add the pasta and cook until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and set aside.
- Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic, and sauté about four minutes.
- Add the bell pepper, zucchini, and eggplant. Cook about 10 minutes.
- Stir in the tomatoes, salt, pepper, and basil.
- Continue to cook another three minutes or until the vegetables are crisp-tender.
- Serve over pasta.
- Top with Swiss cheese.
- Refrigerate leftovers within two to three hours.



CHINESE RAMEN CABBAGE SALAD

12 (1/2-cup) servings

Ingredients:

5 cups shredded cabbage
2 cups chopped broccoli (or broccoli florets)
1 cup shredded carrot
½ cup chopped green onion
1 package chicken-flavored ramen noodles, crushed (reserve seasoning packet for dressing)
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon sugar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil

Directions:

- In a large bowl, combine the cabbage, broccoli, carrot, green onion, and uncooked ramen noodles.
- For the dressing, combine the ramen seasoning packet, vinegar, sugar, and oil in a small bowl. Stir well.
- Pour the dressing over the salad. Toss to coat. Refrigerate until served.
- Refrigerate leftovers within two to three hours.

Notes:

- Add chicken, tuna, tofu, nuts, or other sources of protein.
- Use any kind of vinegar or substitute low-fat Italian dressing for the dressing ingredients.
- Reduce sodium by leaving out the seasoning packet.



Recipes and photos by: Food Hero, an online resource provided by the Oregon State University Extension Service.



Courtesy of Heather Arndt Anderson

Recipes by Food Hero, an online resource provided by the Oregon State University Extension Service.

VEGGIE SKILLET EGGS

Eight servings

Ingredients:

6 medium or large eggs
 ¼ teaspoon black pepper
 ½ teaspoon oregano or basil
 ½ cup shredded cheese (1½ ounces)
 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
 1 small onion, chopped (about 2/3 cup)
 1 clove garlic, chopped or 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
 2 cups chopped mixed vegetables (green beans, zucchini, peas, corn, broccoli)
 1 medium tomato, sliced

Directions:

- Beat the eggs with the pepper, oregano or basil, and cheese in a medium bowl.
- Heat the oil in a nine-inch frying pan. Add the onion, garlic, and mixed vegetables, and cook over medium heat until soft.
- Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables. With a knife or spatula, lift the outer edges of the egg mixture so it flows to the bottom of the pan.
- Cook until the eggs are set, about six minutes. Top with tomato slices.
- Cut into eight wedges and serve hot.
- Refrigerate leftovers within two to three hours.

KALE CHIPS

Six servings

Ingredients:

1 bunch fresh kale, chopped (eight cups)
 1 tablespoon vegetable or olive oil
 12 teaspoon seasoned salt

Directions:

- Wash the kale leaves.
- Slice off thick stems and discard or set aside for use in soups or stews. Thoroughly dry the leaves in a salad spinner or by blotting with paper towels.
- Tear or cut the leaves into bite-sized pieces. Place in a large bowl.
- Drizzle the oil over the kale and toss to lightly coat the leaves.
- Spread out the kale leaves on a cookie sheet.
- Sprinkle with the salt.
- Bake at 350°F until the edges brown, about 10 to 15 minutes.
- Serve hot.

Notes:

- If making the kale chips ahead of time do not store them in an airtight container. They can get soggy if stored for too long.



© www.foodhero.org

CURRIED CARROT-GINGER SOUP

Six servings

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
2 cloves garlic, minced
3 large carrots, peeled and chopped
1 cup peeled and chopped sweet potatoes or yams
2 teaspoons grated fresh ginger
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons curry powder
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cumin (optional)
3 cups vegetable broth
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk or soy or coconut milk
Salt and black pepper to taste

Directions:

- Heat the oil in a stockpot.
- Add the onion and sauté until golden, about 10 minutes.
- Add the garlic, carrots, sweet potato, ginger, curry powder, and cumin. Sauté two to three minutes.
- Add the vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer. Cook until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.
- Puree using an immersion blender or food processor. Return to the stockpot.
- Add the milk and season to taste with salt and pepper.
- Bring the soup up to serving temperature. Serve and enjoy!



ROASTED CARROTS

Four servings

Ingredients:

6 medium carrots (2 cups)
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons mustard
1 teaspoon honey
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon chopped fresh garlic or garlic powder
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
Black pepper to taste (optional)



Courtesy of Heather Arndt Anderson

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 400°F.
- Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray or line it with foil or parchment paper.
- Wash and peel the carrots. Cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diagonal slices.
- Toss with the olive oil mustard, honey, garlic, salt, and pepper.
- Arrange on the baking sheet so the carrots are not crowded or they will steam instead of roasting. Roast for 15 to 20 minutes, until crisp-tender and slightly browned. Every oven is a little different, so check the carrots to see when they are done.

Notes:

- For a variation on this recipe, you can leave out the mustard and honey. Instead, add one-half teaspoon of your favorite dried herb, such as thyme, oregano, or basil.
 - This recipe can be used with different vegetables. For example, try broccoli or cauliflower instead of carrots.

Recipes by Kathy Block-Brown of Portland, trained chef and Nutrition Education Coordinator at Oregon Food Bank.

Recipes by
Lisa Bell
(zucchini
muffins) and
Carol Kast (green
beans), Oregon
Food Bank
Education
Programs
volunteers.

Courtesy of Sarah Poe



GREEN BEANS WITH JALAPEÑO-LIME BUTTER

Four servings

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons softened butter
1 tablespoon minced fresh garlic
Grated zest of 1 lime (or lemon)
1 teaspoon lime juice (or lemon juice)
1 teaspoon minced jalapeño pepper
3/4 pound green beans, trimmed and
sliced diagonally into bite-sized pieces

Directions:

- For the flavored butter, stir together the butter, garlic, lime zest, lime juice, and jalapeño in a small bowl until well combined.
- Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the green beans and cook until just soft, three to four minutes.



Courtesy of Sarah Poe

- Drain the green beans in a colander and run cold water over them to stop cooking.
- Return the green beans to the pot or place in a serving bowl. Toss with the flavored butter.
- Serve warm.

LEMON ZUCCHINI MUFFINS

12 muffins

Ingredients:

2 cups grated zucchini
(about 2 medium zucchini)
1 cup low-fat yogurt
1/3 cup vegetable oil
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Directions:

- Preheat the oven to 375°F. Spray muffin cups with nonstick cooking spray and dust with flour.
- Squeeze as much water out of the grated zucchini as possible. In a large bowl, whisk together the yogurt, oil, sugar, eggs, and lemon juice until well mixed.
- Stir in the zucchini.
- In another medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda until combined.
- Gently fold the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients until the batter just comes together.
- Divide the batter among the muffin cups and bake for 20 to 24 minutes, or until the tops are springy and a wooden skewer inserted in the top of a muffin comes out clean. Let cool in the pan two to three minutes. Cool completely on a wire rack.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SEED SAVING

Open-pollination. Heirloom varieties are open-pollinated plants that have been passed down from generation after generation. When grown season to season they maintain the exact characteristics as the parent plant by solely pollinating in its same species. An heirloom variety must be open-pollinated, but not all open-pollinated plants are heirlooms.

Benefits. A grower has the ability to save the seed in order to have natural evolution and adaptation to the immediate environment. This is also a less costly way of growing your food crop. The superiority of flavor and nutrient intensity is unmatched.

Hybrid. Hybridization of seeds can occur naturally but also can be accomplished through human intervention to create a plant with certain, desired characteristics. It occurs when two different species are naturally or deliberately pollinated. Usually labeled as F1 on seed packets, hybrids can be saved but will not be true to type in the following season.

Benefits. Many hybrid seeds have been bred for disease resistance which helps support in damage control. Your garden will provide clients with uniform produce and hybrid seeds tend to yield larger quantities.

Genetically Modified. This is a method of breeding that occurs within a laboratory environment where one species of seed is implanted within another.



Source: Cornell Cooperative
Extension

SEED SAVING BASICS

Choose your plants. This rolls back into garden planning. If your intentions are to save seed then it would be best to choose one species of each vegetable that you desire to avoid cross-pollination. Have proper spacing and understand that some plants may need to stay in the ground for a longer period of time.

Understand your plants. Certain plants are pollinated in different ways. For example, corn is normally pollinated via wind whereas squash is pollinated via insects. Noticing when the vegetables or fruits are being pollinated will help you figure out when to harvest the seed.

Keep it Simple. Begin saving seed with vegetables and flowers such as tomatoes, peppers, beans, zinnias, and basil. Once you feel comfortable with these varieties of produce attempt more challenging ones.

Different Seed Saving Methods:

Wet fruited. Tomatoes, cucumbers, and eggplant are all vegetables that must mature first before the seed is viable for saving. It is important for each of these vegetables to be grown on the plant for as long as possible before rotting. At this point cut open the vegetable and let the flesh separate from the seed. Dry the seed and store in an airtight container.



Dry fruited. Beans, lettuce, and basil are examples of plants that can be handpicked once the seeds are hard and dry. Lettuce and basil seeds are in the flower of the plant whereas bean seeds are within the seedpod itself. Separate the pod or excess foliage from the seed and store in an airtight container.

Reflection:

Do you have a favorite recipe? A favorite vegetable? A preserving technique that you can share with the class?