

Vegetable Garden Planning

Gardening is enjoyable, especially if you love to eat what you grow. No one can produce a tastier tomato than you, so start dreaming of the freshest vegetables you'll ever eat.

How Much is Enough?

The size of your garden is determined by the available sunny space (vegetables require full sun), amount of energy and time available for gardening, the size of your family, and your interest in canning or freezing. Some varieties produce more than you'd expect, so check the chart on the back for guidance.

For many people, especially first-timers, a small garden (20' x 30') makes sense. It will be easier to keep in good condition and you'll be less likely to become overwhelmed by it.

Location

Choose a sunny site with fertile soil and nearby water, away from towering trees and out of the wind. A site close to your back door will make it easier to tend.

The shape of the garden may be a simple square, rectangle or any shape that takes advantage of sun and well-drained, fertile soil. Some gardeners creatively plant vegetables in flower borders and landscape beds.

In areas where the soil is poor, improve the texture by adding compost, manure or peat moss. Also test the soil to determine whether you need to add lime before planting to reduce the acidity. Soil pH should be 6.5 for most vegetables, 5.5 for potatoes.

Plan Before You Plant

Always garden on paper before you start digging in the ground - it'll save you time, money and energy. Start by listing your family's favorite vegetables.

Cool-season crops such as peas, onions, spinach, carrots, broccoli and cabbage can be planted first. Once there is no more chance of frost, plant such warm-season types as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and eggplants. Increase your yields by replanting areas used for short-season vegetables (peas, spinach, lettuce, etc.) with a second crop such as green beans or late carrots.

Vegetables can be arranged in single rows, wide rows or blocks. Rows should run north to south, with the taller vegetables at the north end and the shorter ones at the south end. Use trellises and containers and interplant crops to save space. Use space efficiently, but make sure the plants have enough room to grow properly.

7 Tips for Planning a Vegetable Garden

1. *Grow What You Eat*
List your favorite vegetables and herbs.

2. *Plan on Paper*

Sketch your garden plan on graph paper and include your list of vegetables. Arrange crops in rows and blocks. Check spacing for each vegetable and keep onions, tomatoes, peppers and eggplants in the brightest sun. Tuck lettuce, spinach, radishes, even parsley and mint, in less sun.

Gardening takes time and energy, so keep the size of the vegetable garden in proportion to your available time. Small, well-managed plots with successive plantings often produce more than large gardens that are overridden with weeds.

3. *Schedule Crops For Three Seasons*

Plan spring, summer and fall plantings to make the best use of the garden space. For example, replant an early spring row of peas or spinach with green beans or late carrots. Successive, small plantings provide top quality and bounty with little waste.

Spring Crops

Onions	Chives	Swiss Chard
Beets	Peas	Spinach
Broccoli	Lettuce	Carrots
Radishes	Cabbage	Cauliflower
Parsley	Turnips	Brussels Sprouts

Summer Crops (after there is no chance to frost)

Tomatoes	Peppers	Sage
Cucumbers	Eggplants	Melons
Sweet Potatoes	Sweet Corn	Beans
Basil	Dill	Pumpkins
Rosemary	Lavendar	

Fall Crops (will tolerate light frost)

Beets	Lettuce	Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage	Broccoli	Chinese Cabbage
Kale	Carrots	Parsley
Radishes	Swiss Chard	Spinach

4. *Select A Site*

Select a level garden site with well-drained soil, plenty of sun (at least 8 hours) and a nearby water source.

If existing soil is heavy and poorly drained, add peat moss, compost, manure and grass clippings to improve soil texture each season. Till the garden soil 8 - 12 inches deep and do not work the soil when it is very wet because it will compact into hard clods.

Ask a garden expert about testing the soil to determine the need to add lime and fertilizer. Most soils should have a pH of 6.0 - 6.8 for growing vegetables. A basic fertilizer recommendation is 2.5 lbs. of 12-24-12 per 1,000 sq. ft. or 5 lbs. per 100 sq. ft. of 5-10-5. Always work lime and fertilizer into soil and level before planting.

5. *Plant Quality*

Buy quality seed. Seedway has a wide selection of vegetable seeds tested for excellent germination. Seed spinach, carrots, beans, peas, beets, radishes, kale and sweet corn directly into the garden.

Select sturdy, dark green plants with no signs of pale yellow leaves or hungry insects. Set out transplants of long-season vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, tomatoes, peppers, eggplants) as weather permits.

6. *Water And Weed*

Water vegetable plants regularly to keep them growing. Weed garden so desirable plants do not compete with weeds for water, nutrients and sunlight. Spread a 2-inch layer of grass clippings or other mulch to reduce weedy competition and conserve moisture.

7. *Harvest*

Enjoy the delicious flavor of your own fresh harvest. Pick vegetables frequently so plants continue to produce through the season.