



Easy Gardening

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A good plan is the first step in establishing a flourishing home vegetable garden. Planning includes selecting the garden location; deciding on the size of the garden; determining the types and varieties of vegetables to plant; and planning where, when, and how much of each vegetable to plant in the garden.

Site selection

Choose a place where the soil is loose, rich, level, and well-drained. Do not choose low areas where water stands or the soil stays wet. Vegetables will not grow in poorly drained areas.

Do not plant where weeds do not grow; vegetables will not grow well there either.

Vegetables need sunlight to grow well. Do not plant where buildings, trees or shrubs will shade the garden. Most vegetables need at least 6 hours of sunlight daily.

Do not plant vegetables under the branches of large trees or near shrubs because they rob vegetables of food and water.



Figure 1. A successful garden begins with a good design.

Plant the garden near a water supply if possible. In many areas a garden can grow without watering, but it is more likely to be successful if it is irrigated. Water is needed especially during long dry periods or when planting seeds.

Few people have the perfect garden location, so look for the best spot possible.

Garden size

Making the garden too large is one of the most common mistakes of enthusiastic, first-time gardeners. A garden that is too large will be too much work. When determining the size of your garden, consider these factors:

Available room. For apartment dwellers, the garden may be a planter box. In a suburban or rural area, however, there may be plenty of ground space for a garden.

Available time. If the only time you have for gardening is after work or school, or on weekends, there may not be enough time to care for a large garden.

Family size. If gardening is a family activity, a large space can be cared for. A larger family also can use more vegetables.

Reason for gardening. If the garden is purely a recreational activity, a container or flower bed garden may be big enough. If you want to grow vegetables for canning or freezing, a bigger area is needed.

Types of vegetables to be grown. Some vegetables take a lot of room. Most need at least 3 feet of space between rows. If you want to plant ten rows of vegetables, the garden must be 30 feet wide.

Deciding what to grow

What to grow in the garden is as big a decision as where to locate it. Consider the following points in selecting vegetables:

Space available. Do not plant watermelons in a small garden. They take up too much room. Other vine crops such as cucumbers and cantaloupes can be grown in small gardens by trellising them on a fence some other structure.

Expected production from the crop. The smaller the garden, the more important it is to get high production from each row. Small, fast-maturing crops such as radishes, turnips and beets yield quickly and do not require much space. Tomatoes, bush beans, squash and peppers require more space but produce over a long season.

Cost of vegetables if purchased. Plant vegetables that are expensive to buy at the grocery store. Broccoli is usually one of the more expensive vegetables that can be grown in most home gardens.

Food value of vegetables. All vegetables are good, but some are more nutritious than others. Grow different kinds of vegetables to put more variety in your diet.

Personal preference. This is especially important if the garden is purely for recreation or personal enjoyment. Grow vegetables your family likes to eat.

Suggested Vegetables for a Small Garden			
Bush beans	Chard	Onions	Radishes
Tomatoes	Turnips	Lettuce	Squash
Eggplant	Beets	Broccoli	
Carrots	Peppers		

Location of vegetables in the garden

Arrange vegetables in a way that makes the most efficient use of space and light. Group tall vegetables such as okra, corn and tomatoes together on the north side of the garden where they won't shade shorter vegetables such as bush beans. Also, group vegetables according to maturity. This makes it easier to replant after removing an early crop such as lettuce or beets (Fig. 2).

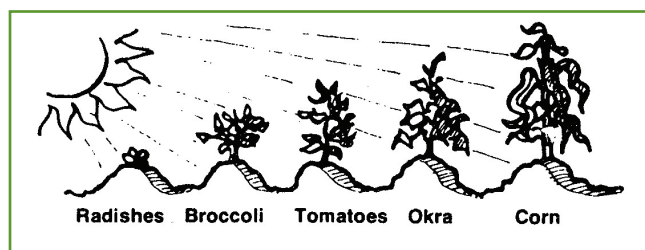


Figure 2. Plant tall vegetables where they won't shade shorter plants.

Plant small, fast-maturing vegetables between larger ones. Plant vine crops near a fence or trellis if possible.

Make a drawing on paper to show the location and spacing of vegetables in the garden (Fig. 3.)

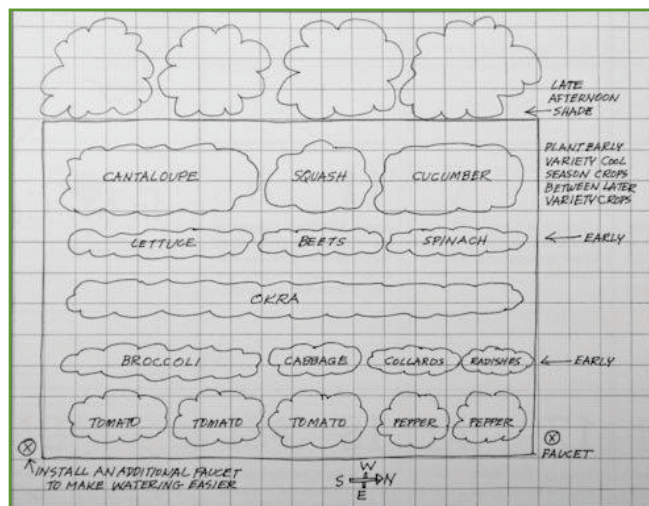


Figure 3. A garden planting guide.

Timing of planting

Vegetables are divided into two general groups— warm season and cool season. Cool-season crops can stand lower temperatures; plant them before the soil warms in the spring. They also can be planted in late summer to harvest after the first frost in the fall.

Warm-season crops cannot tolerate frost and will not grow when the soil temperature is cool. Plant them after the last frost in the spring and early enough to mature before frost in the fall.

Temperature classification of some vegetables

Cool season		Warm season	
Beet	Greens	Corn	Squash
Carrot	Radish	Bean	Cucumber
Cabbage	Turnip	Okra	Tomato
Broccoli	Lettuce	Pepper	Eggplant
Onion	Collard		

How much to plant

Some vegetables produce more than others so fewer plants will be needed. The amount to plant depends on family size, expected production, and whether or not you plan to do any freezing or canning. Do not plant too much. Over-planting is wasteful and takes too much work.

Amount to Plant Per Person

Vegetable	Use fresh	Preserve
	Approximate amount to plant	
Beet	10 feet	20 feet
Carrot	10 feet	15 feet
Corn	15 feet	50 feet
Bush green bean	15 feet	20 feet
Pole green bean	5 feet	10 feet
Greens	10 feet	10 feet
Leaf lettuce	10 feet	—
Okra	6 feet	10 feet
Onion	5 feet	30 feet
Pepper	3 plants	5 plants
Radish	5 feet	—
Squash, summer	2 hills	3 hills
Tomato	3 plants	5 plants
Turnip	10 feet	10 feet
Broccoli	4 plants	8 plants
Cucumber	2 hills	5 hills
Collard	5 feet	10 feet

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