

Horticulture Study Guide for Beginners 2009

YOUR VEGETABLE GARDEN

4-H-154 (Revised 2009)

Here is a great way to get outdoors this summer and grow healthy food for you and your family. Plant a Vegetable Garden!

Your Garden Site

A garden plot should be in a place that is:

- away from trees
- where it will get at least eight (8) hours of sunlight each day.

Preparing the Soil

Do a good job of preparing your garden for planting. A nice soft, smooth bed of dirt is best for a garden plot. Vegetable seeds grow better in a well-prepared bed. Preparing the soil includes spading and raking until there are no large dirt clods in the garden bed.

1. Spade the soil down to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Turn the soil over completely. Do not work the soil when it is wet because it may form big, hard, clods of soil.
2. Spread a commercially mixed fertilizer over the soil, or use well-rotted manure, grass clippings, or old leaves. Fertilizer helps provide food for the young plants. Well-rotted manure, grass clippings, or old leaves provide some food for plants and improves the soil. Mix into the soil.
3. Rake and level the soil.

Planting the Garden

Now you are ready to plant. Plant seeds in straight rows; they are neater and easier to hoe. Tiny seeds need to be planted shallow (not too deep), because they don't have enough strength to push through a lot of soil. But if you plant the small seeds too shallow they may wash away with the first rain. Press down gently on the rows after you have covered the seeds with soil.



Use a string tied between two stakes to make a straight line. Make a trench along the string line for the seeds by using the edge of a hoe or a hand trowel.



For smaller seeds, tear off a corner of the seed packet. Scatter the seeds into the trench by tapping the packet with your finger. For large seeds, take seeds out of the packet and place each one in the trench. Cover seeds with soil and gently press.



Tomato and cabbage transplants should be planted up to the first leaf. Water the transplants well and keep as much soil from the container as possible with each transplant so the roots do not dry out. Leave a little ditch around each plant and water well.

Always wash your hands after planting seeds and seedlings.

Watering

All plants need moisture to grow and thrive. Some places do not get much rain and the garden plants will need to be watered often.

1. Sprinkle your garden gently each day until all the seeds have started growing. You need to be gentle because you don't want to wash all your seeds away! Use a sprinkling can or a watering can. Or, make a watering can by using an old clean plastic jug with holes punched in it.
2. Vegetable plants need 1 to 1 ½ inches of water per week. More water is needed if it is really hot, windy and dry. Use a trowel to check soil moisture at the 4 to 6 inch level near the row you have planted. If the soil at this level is dry, water is needed. If the soil is dripping, you have watered too much. If the soil is moist, it is just right!

Weed and Insect Control

Weeds fight with your plants for food, water and sun. Besides, they don't look very good in your garden. Never let weeds get big! They will make seeds and then there will be lots of weeds in your garden next year. Always ask an adult for help in using a spray or powder to get rid of weeds, insects or diseases.

1. Pull weeds as soon as you see them. Plan to weed the garden about once a week.
2. Thin the plants by removing some of the young plants in the row. This gives the other plants room to grow. Check the seed packet for the right space between plants.
3. If insects or diseases show up in your garden, ask your parents or your 4-H club leader for help. Some insects are helpers and you want to keep them in your garden. Also, sometimes plants look like they have a disease but some spots or brown leaves are not harmful.

Supplies and Equipment to care for your garden

Hoe	Hand trowel	Seeds and transplants
Rake	String	Garden hose or watering can
Spade or shovel	Stakes, metal or wooden	

Plant the seeds for these vegetables as soon as possible in the spring:

- Radishes
- Carrots
- Beets
- Leaf lettuce
- Peas

You can have fresh radishes and leaf lettuce again by planting more seeds in late summer. They will need a little extra watering.

When all danger of frost is past (late-May), plant these vegetables and fruits:

- Tomatoes
- Beans
- Squash
- Cucumbers
- Watermelon