



Planning your Garden

Garden Site

Although many urban gardeners have little choice, selecting a garden site is extremely important. An area exposed to full or near-full sunlight, with deep, well-drained, fertile soil is ideal. The location should be near a water outlet and free of competition from existing shrubs or trees. By modifying certain cultural practices and crop selections, almost any site can become a highly productive garden.

Crop Selections

As a home gardener, one of your first major decisions is deciding what vegetables to grow. Table 1 lists crops suitable for small and large gardens. Raise vegetables which return a good portion of nutritious food for the time and space required. Vine crops such as watermelons, cantaloupes, winter squash and cucumbers require large amounts of space. Locating the garden near a fence or trellis may allow for growing vine crops in less space. Plant according to family needs and resist over planting any particular vegetable, although surpluses may be preserved.

Table 1. Home Garden Vegetables			
Small Garden Vegetables		Large Garden Vegetables	
Beets	Green beans	Cantaloupes	Potatoes
Broccoli	Lettuce	Cauliflower	Pumpkins
Bush squash	Onions	Collards	Sweet corn
Cabbage	Parsley	Cucumbers	Sweet potatoes
Carrots	Peppers	Mustard	Watermelon
Eggplant	Radishes	Okra	
English peas	Spinach		
Garlic	Tomatoes		

Proper variety selection is an important key to successful gardening. The wrong variety may not produce satisfactory yields regardless of subsequent care and attention. Buy seeds that grow in your area. If your garden is not in an area receiving full or near-full sunlight, try leafy crops such as leaf lettuce, mustard, and parsley. Table 2 indicates vegetable crops which do well in full sunlight and those that tolerate partial shade.

Garden Plan

Long-term crops require a long growing period. Plant them where they won't interfere with care and harvesting of short-term crops. Plant tall-growing crops where they will not shade or interfere with growth of smaller crops. Plant tall vegetables such as, staked tomatoes, pole beans, and sweet corn on the garden's north side to avoid shading lower-growing crops such as radishes, leaf lettuce, onions, and bush beans. Group crops according to the rate of maturity. Table 3 indicates the relative maturity rate of various vegetable crops. By grouping vegetables according to maturity rate, one crop can be planted to take the place of another as soon as it is removed. Try to plant crops totally unrelated to the previous crop. For example, follow early beans with beets, bush squash, or bell peppers. Crop rotation helps prevent diseases and insect buildups.

Table 2. Light Requirements of Common Plants

Require Bright Sunlight

Beans
Broccoli
Cantaloupes
Cauliflower
Cucumbers

Eggplant
Okra
Onions
Peas
Peppers

Potatoes
Pumpkin
Squash
Tomatoes
Watermelons

Tolerate Partial Shade

Beets
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots

Collards
Kale
Lettuce
Mustard

Parsley
Radish
Spinach
Turnips

Table 3. Maturity Rate

Quick (30-60 Days)

Beets
Bush Beans
Leaf lettuce

Mustard
Radishes
Spinach

Summer squash
Turnips
Turnip greens

Moderate (60-80 Days)

Broccoli
Cabbage, Chinese
Carrots
Cucumbers

Green onions
Kohlrabi
Lima beans, bush
Okra

Parsley
Peppers
Tomatoes, cherry

Slow (80 Days or More)

Brussels sprouts
Bulb onions
Cabbage
Cantaloupes

Cauliflower
Eggplant
Garlic
Irish potatoes

Pumpkins
Sweet potatoes
Tomatoes
Watermelon