

Delaware Cooperative Extension

By Maggie Moor-Orth
Delaware State University and Tracy Wootten
& Carrie Murphy
University of Delaware

CONSIDER A VEGETABLE GARDEN THIS YEAR

Introduction

Have you thought about growing a small vegetable garden for you and your family? Have you thought about growing your own food? What about being such a good gardener you could share the extra produce with neighbors, friends and/or donate to your local food bank? Have you hesitated because you think it is too difficult? What a thrill it is to harvest a squash for a dinner casserole or cucumber for your salad. Vegetable gardening is very rewarding and can be accomplished with some helpful tips.

Considerations for your garden site

- How much time do you have to plant, weed and harvest in your garden?
- A small garden is best for beginners. Go bigger as your skills and time increase.
- Do you have a sunny spot? Most vegetables require 6 to 8 hours of sunlight.
- Vegetables prefer loose, well drained soil; rich in organic matter (compost).
- Avoid low spots on your property where water may sit after a rain.
- How much usable space is available?
- For convenience, a short walk from your house to the garden is ideal.
- Try to be close to a water outlet. You will need water to establish your plants, and especially during flowering and drought periods.
- Avoid buildings and tall trees that create shade over the garden area.
- Select an area that does not have established plants nearby, they will compete with the available nutrients and water your vegetable plants will need.
- Take a soil sample from the area, six weeks before planting (most vegetables prefer a pH of 6.0 – 6.8).
- Will you grow your plants in raised beds or in the ground?



There are different ways to accommodate anyone who wants to garden. This raised bed allows people to garden at a more comfortable height.

Considerations for choosing what to plant

- How many people are in your family to feed from the garden?
- What vegetables are you or your family's favorites?
- What are you going to do with the harvested produce?
- In addition to using your fresh harvested vegetables, do you plan to freeze, can, store or donate the extras?
- Were you going to participate in the Plant a Row for the Hungry Program, then donate to your local food bank?



Other considerations for planting

Remember you can start a vegetable garden in the spring or fall.

- Warm season plants (tomatoes, peppers, melons, etc.) are planted about May 10.
- Cool season plants (collards, kale, cauliflower, cabbage, etc.) are planted in mid/late August.
- Ideally rows should run north and south, for maximum sun exposure on all plants.
- If your rows run east to west, place tall crops on the north side to ensure the taller, caged or trellised plants don't shade shorter crops.

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Easy garden crops

Cool Season Crops will germinate in cooler soil temperatures and are hardy or frost tolerant. Warm season crops are tender and need warm temperatures to grow (some are very tender and will not grow at cool temperatures). Below are some easy to grow cool and warm season crops:

Easy Cool Season Crops:

Hardy

(seeds germinate at soil temperatures of 35-40 degrees F)

asparagus	kale
broccoli	onion
brussel sprouts	peas
cabbage	spinach
greens	swiss chard

Half Hardy

(will tolerate light frost/freezes) (seeds germinate at soil temperatures of 40-45 degrees F)

beet
carrot
cauliflower
lettuce
potato

Easy Warm Season Crops: Tender

(seeds germinate at soil temperatures of 50-55 degrees F)

sweet corn
snap beans
tomato

Very Tender

Plant after the last danger of frost, Mother's Day, approximately May 10 (seeds germinate at soil temperatures of 60 degrees F).

* get a head start on the season – start these plants indoors

cantaloupe
cucumber
eggplant
lima beans
squash
sweet potato
pepper
pumpkins
watermelon

