

10 Steps to Success With Your Vegetable Garden

- 1. Pick a good site** The best site is one that's near the house, receives full sun all day, contains no large rocks, perennial weeds or grasses, has good air circulation and is sheltered from strong winds.
- 2. Start with good soil and keep improving it.** Plants do best in deep, loose, well-drained topsoil. Improve it with compost, aged manure, cover crops and organic mulches. Have soil tested every three years.
- 3. Plan carefully** Don't plant crops from the same plant family in the same spot two years in succession. Consider the path of the sun, so tall crops do not shade shorter ones. Space plants so outer leaves on mature plants will just touch those of their neighbors.
- 4. Start small.** There's a lot to learn in a vegetable garden. Experience success with a small garden, then gradually increase its size.
- 5. Grow only what you like to eat.** You'll take better care of what you look forward to eating.
- 6. Select crop varieties with care.** Look for crops bred to do well in short seasons with cold, wet springs and extremes of temperature and moisture. Also consider disease resistance, tolerance of adverse conditions, the variety's growth habit and length of harvest season.
- 7. Water only when necessary, then water deeply and early in the day.** Vegetables need about an inch of water a week. Conserve water by building soil organic matter and mulching crops to reduce soil moisture evaporation. When soil around plants is dry a couple of inches below the surface, soak the soil deeply, preferably with a drip or soaker hose. Water as early in the day as possible.
- 8. Visit your garden every day.** Check for signs of pests and diseases so you can take care of problems before they get out of hand. Of course, visit also for the sheer joy of it!
- 9. Make sure you've correctly identified the cause of a problem before applying a "treatment."** Inappropriate use of pesticides is expensive, threatens the health of humans, pets and the environment, and may itself cause more damage than it remedies.
- 10. Maintain good garden sanitation.** Remove diseased leaves, fruits and vines; control weeds.